

West of England Partnership
25 February 2010

Audit Commission Review of Partnership Governance Arrangements

Purpose

1. To report the outcomes and actions arising from the Review and address particular recommendations.

Background

2. In the summer the Audit Commission carried out a review of Governance Arrangements in the West of England Partnership. They focused on Waste Phase 3 as a case study, but also looked more broadly at the governance of the Partnership.
3. This resulted in an Action Plan agreed by the four authorities and the Audit Commission, which is attached in Appendix 1.

Specific recommendations

4. R 1 *The Councils with the Partnership should develop criteria to decide which projects are best managed by the West of England Partnership (WEP) and those which are best carried out at an individual Council level.*

It is proposed that the criteria to be used are whether the projects are:

- cross-boundary;
- within the remit of the Partnership;
- involve setting direction or strategy, or a bidding process; and
- represent Value for Money if delivered by the Partnership.

5. R 2 *The WEP and Councils should review the roles and relationship between the Joint Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Partnership Board and the WEP Committees to ensure that all members of these groupings are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities.*

On 22 January the Joint Scrutiny Committee discussed their role in the light of this recommendation. Its terms of reference showed that it could scrutinise any of the Partnership's activities, including the work of the Partnership Board. The Joint Scrutiny Committee welcomed proposals for:

- i. The Joint Scrutiny Committee's updated Forward Plan to form a standing item on its agendas, in a similar way to the Partnership Board;
- ii. Clearer signposting to the Forward Plans of the Boards and the Joint Scrutiny Committee on the Partnership website, in a similar way to the Joint Committees.

In addition the Joint Scrutiny Committee agreed to further investigate its role and in particular how best to feed its comments into the work of the Partnership.

6. R7 *The Councils and the WEP to agree a joint performance management framework and define the performance management information required to support it - covering all aspects of the Partnership, not just the individual projects.*

A diagram of the proposed Performance Management Framework is attached in Appendix 2. The aim of this Framework is to enable the reporting of performance monitoring information for all West of England projects.

Current arrangements focus mainly on the monitoring of Transport Major Schemes and Waste, but these are being extended to all major West of England projects. It is intended that the West of England arrangements will complement the work of local authorities undertaking 'accountable body' responsibilities.

Under the Framework it is proposed that the main accountability of Project Senior Responsible Owners will be to the appropriate Joint Committee or Board. The Partnership Board will have oversight of overall performance. It is further proposed that improvements in project management practice and selective reviews of key projects will be undertaken by the Project Assurance Board comprising two Development Directors, a Finance Officer, a Legal Officer and the Partnership Chief Executive. This Board will also be a 'critical friend' to Senior Responsible Owners.

Recommendation

That Board members:

1. Note the Action Plan agreed with the Audit Commission;
2. Endorse the core criteria set out in Paragraph 4 for deciding which projects are best managed by the West of England Partnership;
3. Note the Joint Scrutiny Committee's consideration of how to improve its role;
4. Endorse the Performance Management Framework set out in Paragraph 6 and Appendix 2.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Action Plan

Appendix 2 West of England Partnership Performance Management Framework

Author: Sally Gregory, Policy Officer, West of England Partnership
Tel. 0117 903 6983; e-mail: sally.gregory@westofengland.org

Action Plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
Accountability and governance					
R1 The Councils with the Partnership should develop criteria to decide which projects are best managed by the West of England Partnership and those which are best carried out at an individual Council level.	3	WEP, Councils and the Partnership Board	Yes	WEP to draft core criteria for approval by Councils and the Partnership Board Leaders of Council 18 December Links to R12 below	February 2010
Decision-making					
R2 The WEP and Councils should review the roles and relationship between the Joint Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Partnership Board and the WEP Committees to ensure that all members of these groupings are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities.	3	WEP	Yes	Further develop and communicate the existing terms of reference, priority setting arrangements and working methods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders of Council 18 December • Joint Scrutiny Committee 22 January • Joint Committee/Boards in February 	February 2010
R3 The Councils and WEP should commit to providing training and support for Members representing Councils on the various Boards and Committees.	2	WEP/Councils' Democratic Services/Councillor training officers	Yes	Discussion and proposals to Boards/ Committees in March cycle of meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support now provided by new Partnership Secretary. • Further workshops focusing on specific issues to be organised by the Partnership Office¹ and Councils. • Concise information pack to be prepared and promoted. • Other support/training is provided by councils • Council training officers to consider how information on WEP can best be provided at induction. 	March 2010

¹ Examples of workshops:

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R4 An improved method should be determined for the Boards and Committees to allow the prioritisation of work carried out, focusing on high risk tasks.	2	WEP Chief Executive with Chairs of Boards and Committees	Yes	Discussion with Chairs in February and March. Further improved arrangements from June Annual meetings.	June 2010
Project management					
R5 The WEP to agree and secure project management resources before starting projects.	2	WEP Chief Executive, Councils and Strategic Partner Organisations	Yes	In each case negotiate blend of contributions from existing resources in the Partnership Office, Councils and Strategic Partner Organisations, based on PID objectives, milestones and risks	January 2010
R6 Councils need to agree how they will record the time and resources spent at each Council on WEP related tasks to allow proper review of project management costs and VFM.	2	Councils and WEP Chief Executive	Yes	Through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIDs and Project Management Boards; • Management of agenda of specialist Officer Boards; • Prioritisation of Partnership Boards and Committees; • Performance Management Framework; and • Standard report to March meetings 	March 2010
Performance management					
R7 The Councils and the WEP to agree a joint performance management framework and define the performance management information required to support it - covering all aspects of the Partnership, not just the individual projects.	3	WEP and Councils	Yes	Framework to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executives: 4 December • Leaders of Council: 18 December • Joint Committees/ Boards in February 	February 2010
Risk management					
R8 The Councils and WEP to develop a joint risk register covering both individual projects and the partnership as whole.	3	Senior Responsible Owners, WEP Chief Executive,	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executives: 4 December • Leaders of Council: 18 December 	December 2010

Joint Scrutiny Committee: 14/11/08 on Regional Investment Planning & Prioritisation, which prepared them for consideration of RFA2 on 12/12/08
Planning, Housing and Communities Board: 16/7/09 on the Joint Core Waste Strategy, prior to consideration of the Draft JWCS Submission Document on 7/9/09

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
		Councils' Chief Executives			
Stakeholder and public engagement					
R9 The Councils and WEP should agree their respective roles in a communications strategy	2	WEP Chief Executive and Council Development Directors	Yes	Chief Executives: 5 February	February 2010
R10 The Councils and WEP should agree a communication strategy on a project by project basis.	2	Senior Responsible Owners WEP and Council Media & PR officers	Yes	In place for all transport and some other projects. Remainder to be completed. Complete remainder by February. All to be reviewed at Project Boards in March.	March 2010
Value for Money					
R11 The Councils with the Partnership should develop value for money measures for the WEP as a whole	3	Council Chief Executives WEP Chief Executive	Yes	Chief Executives: 5 February Leaders of Council: 10 March	March 2010
R12 The Councils and WEP should develop value for money frameworks for all individual projects	3	WEP with Senior Responsible Owners	Yes	Links to R1	March 2010

West of England: Programme and Project Management Framework

- 1) Each Project Board produces a project monitor on progress against milestones, budget and risk and reports to the Committee/ Board (quarterly) and West of England Partnership (6 monthly)
- 2) Council Leaders and Chief Executives receive reports (quarterly) to monitor and review the development and delivery of the Projects.
- 3) An Officer Assurance Board monitors overall performance, undertakes selective peer reviews and leads improvement in project management
- 4) The Partnership Office oversees and supports the management and development of the Performance Framework

