

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Cabinet

Date of Committee 26th May 2005

Report Title **'SMART Growth - Midlands Way' - Consultation**

Summary The inter-regional document, 'SMART Growth: the Midlands Way', was launched at the Sustainable Communities Summit in February by the Regional Development Agencies for the East and West Midlands. The recommended response to the subsequent consultation reflects views expressed by both the Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Forum and Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? Yes/No

Background Papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive
- Legal I Marriott – comments noted

- Finance
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **YES/NO** *(If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)*

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Cabinet - 26th May 2005

'SMART Growth - Midlands Way' - Consultation

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and
Economic Strategy**

Recommendation

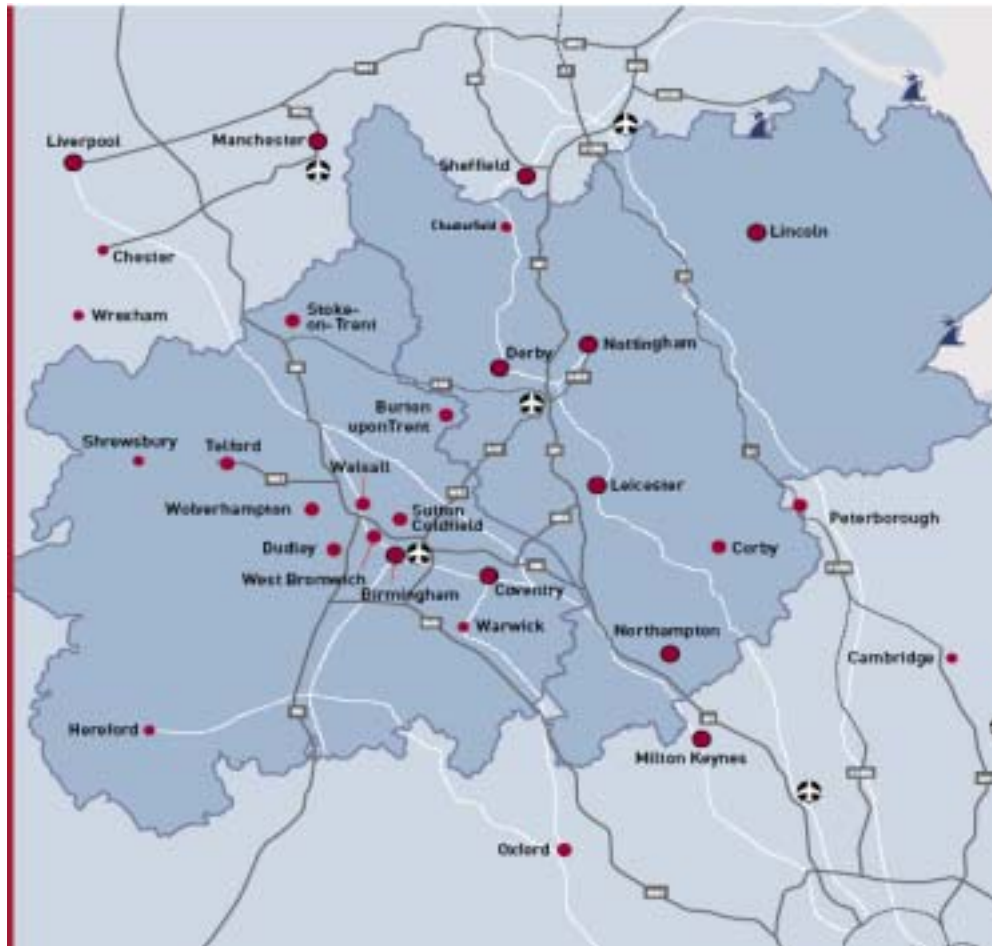
That Advantage West Midlands and the East Midlands Regional Development Agency be informed that Warwickshire County Council considers that its general support for the concept of 'SMART Growth - Midlands Way' could be expressed so long as the document is:-

- (i) Progressed to demonstrate added value to, and does not detract from, the existing West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy;

and also that it is
- (ii) Revised to address some of the more important housing, economic and transport cross boundary links between the two regions and the issues arising out of the Milton Keynes – South Midlands Growth Area proposals, particularly those critical to the Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Sub-Region.

1. Background

- 1.1 The initial impetus for SMART Growth: the Midlands Way was provided by the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, launched by the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2003. The Sustainable Communities Plan sets out to transform communities and improve the quality of life for everyone through a step change in our collective approach to economic development, planning and housing, and through the provision of extra resources. So far, the main practical effect of the Sustainable Communities Plan has been the designation of the four Major Growth Areas (i.e. Ashford, Thames Gateway; Stansted/Cambridge Corridor; Milton Keynes-South Midlands) followed by substantial commitments that concentrates Government funding on them.



- 1.2 'SMART Growth: the Midlands Way' is intended to be the Midlands contribution to taking forward the Sustainable Communities Plan agenda nationally. It aims to develop into a framework, embracing both the West and the East Midlands Regions (see map), for their future development, adding value to existing approaches in the two regions, e.g. the Regional Economic Strategies, the Regional Spatial Strategies and the Regional Housing Strategies.
- 1.3 This approach is based on the conviction that the two Midlands regions are well equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century economy, and to do it in an economically inclusive and sustainable way with collaboration between enterprise, higher education, innovation, regeneration and sustainable communities policies.

2. Engagement

- 2.1 The development of SMART Growth, the Midlands Way is being led by the two Regional Development Agencies (Advantage West Midlands and East Midlands Development Agency), working together with Government Offices, Regional Assemblies and representatives from some of the major cities of the Midlands (but excludes representatives from the 'Shires').

- 2.2 The intention is to anchor proposals in evidence and add value to, rather than duplicating, other work already completed or underway. There is a commitment to work openly and transparently with partners and understand the priorities for development across the Midlands to assist in agreement on the hard choices to be made.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 To take forward SMART Growth: the Midlands Way, three key areas of action have been identified which reflect the vision:-

- (i) 'SMART Productivity' - raising productivity through smart use of technology and knowledge.
- (ii) 'SMART Connections' - developing gateways and linkages nationally and internationally, including improvements to transport and communications links, people and community linkages.
- (iii) 'SMART Renaissance' - creating conditions for choice and growth through improved living environments and infrastructure, employment and skills, land assembly and use, and improving the public realm.

- 3.2 'SMART Growth the Midlands Way' was presented at the Sustainable Communities Summit, held in Manchester at the beginning of February 2005. This is being followed by a three month consultation, ending on 30th April 2005, involving a broad range of stakeholders throughout the Midlands, including the public, private, research and voluntary sectors. Three consultation events are planned across the Midlands during this period. Following the consultation the Regional Development Agency (RDA), Government Offices and the Regional Assemblies will discuss and confirm the overall direction, and take forward the detailed implementation planning of 'SMART Growth the Midlands Way'.

4. Observations

- 4.1 'SMART Growth: the Midlands Way' is still 'work in progress' but there is general agreement between the main parties (identified in paragraph 2.1 above) to the principal of joint working as having some value. From the West Midlands perspective this may be a pragmatic acceptance of the need to ensure that 'The Midlands' remains in Government's field of vision at a time when it is clearly focused elsewhere (i.e. on the four major growth areas) as the funding priority. It is understood that there is no 'money on the table' for 'SMART Growth: the Midlands Way' to bid for at present. The reasoning is that something needs to be ready for the day it is.
- 4.2 A report on 'Smart Growth – Midlands Way' was considered by the Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Forum (CSWF) on 11th March 2005 when it was agreed that general support for the concept of 'SMART Growth - Midlands Way' could be expressed so long as the document is:-
- (i) Progressed to demonstrate added value to, and does not detract from, the existing West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy.

and also that it is:-

- (ii) Revised to address some of the housing, economic and transport cross boundary links between the two regions and the issues arising out of the Milton Keynes – South Midlands Growth Area proposals that are critical to the Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire (CSW) Sub-Region.

4.3 In similar vein, the Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP) expresses some scepticism about the value of 'SMART Growth – Midlands Way' and, in particular, considers that:-

- (i) The links with the sub-regions identified by the consultation document are tenuous.
- (ii) It is unclear about how much involvement there had been with CSW Sub-regional partners.
- (iii) With the East Midlands border on its eastern boundary, the CSW Sub-region could not afford to ignore it.

The Partnership is proposing to arrange a workshop, to which partner bodies are to be invited to participate in developing a joint Sub-regional response to 'SMART Growth – Midlands Way' (recognising that Partners may wish to also respond to the consultation on an individual basis).

5. Conclusions

5.1 It is common ground in the CSW sub-region that, despite its questionable value, 'Smart Growth: the Midlands Way' cannot be ignored if only because of the potential weight that could be attached to it by Government in future funding decisions. Therefore, dismissal of the document (on the grounds that it is flawed) is not a realistic proposition and some form of engagement in the exercise is a necessary pragmatic response.

5.2 Pragmatism aside, there are nevertheless continuing concerns that that neither the evidence for connectivity between the two Regions nor the 'added value' has been fully developed in making it clear that 'SMART Growth: the Midlands Way' will: -

- (i) Not compromise existing West Midlands Regional Strategies.
- (ii) Address some of the more important housing, economic and transport cross boundary links between the two regions that are critical to the CSW Sub-Region.
- (iii) Address the issues arising out of the Milton Keynes – South Midlands Growth Area proposals critical to the CSW Sub-Region.

JOHN DEEGAN
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Warwick

3rd May 2005