

ASSEMBLY SUPPORTS CONSULTATION ON GROWTH AREA PROPOSALS

THE draft strategy outlining alterations to the regional planning guidance and spatial strategies around Milton Keynes and the south Midlands was endorsed for public consultation by the Assembly when it met in Grantham on June 6.

The consultation, in conjunction with both the East of England and South East England assemblies, is planned to be launched in July and extend over a 12 week period.

The strategy includes parts of Northamptonshire being ear-marked as key growth areas over the next 20 years in line with the Governments Sustainable Communities Plan. It examines the impacts of increased transport, as well as healthcare, education and employment provision.

The draft strategy has also been assessed against the Assembly's Integrated Regional Strategy, the sustainable development framework for policy development which covers economic, environmental and social themes, as well as spatial.

The draft strategy for Milton Keynes and the south Midlands poses three main questions:

- How much development should take place and where?
- What infrastructure is needed to support that development?
- How should both the infrastructure and development be delivered?

Underpinning this approach is a very clear position that if the appropriate level of infrastructure investment can not be achieved, then the proposed level of growth will have to be scaled back accordingly.

The original Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study was published in October 2002. The Study's proposals have since been tested by a series of Growth Area Assessments, which have been used to inform the development of the Draft Strategy. As a result, the following revised housing figures are proposed:

- Northampton: up to 29,400 dwellings by 2021
- Corby/Kettering/Wellingborough: up to 40,000 dwellings by 2021

It is planned to launch the consultation process at an event being organised by all three regional assemblies, in Luton on July 18. The consultation period will go on until October and an independent Public Examination into the draft strategy will begin in February next year. For more information visit

www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk

Chief Executive's appointment confirmed

NIGEL RUDD, currently at the helm at Corby Borough Council, has been appointed to the newly created post of Chief Executive of the East Midlands Assembly.

Nigel, who has been Chief Executive at Corby for just over five years, will take up his new role, based at Melton Mowbray, in August. He has worked in local government since graduating from the University of Nottingham in 1977. In addition to Corby he has worked for authorities in the south west as well as in Cumbria and within Greater London.

Organisational Review – proposals go to consultation

OUTLINE recommendations proposed by the Office of Public Management, the organisation commissioned to carry out a full examination of the Assembly's processes and structure, were presented to the Assembly meeting held in Grantham on 6 June. Wider consultation will now take place among partners and forums, and other Assembly groups, before a final recommendation is put to the Assembly's September meeting. Visit www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk

SEPTEMBER DEADLINE FOR RESPONSE ON DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY

Responsibility for shaping the Assembly's response to the draft strategy for housing investment in the region has been delegated to the Housing Task Group. Its recommendation will be reported back to the Assembly's meeting in September.

The Regional Strategy for Housing Investment will be primarily concerned with the allocation of funds for housing from the single pot for a two-year period. The Regional Housing Body (RHB) will have responsibility for preparing the full East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) between July 2003 and March 2004.

This will take forward additional regional housing issues and will form the basis for advice to Ministers on strategic housing priorities for the region. The RHB will publish a full timetable in the early summer regarding the production of the RHS. Assembly representatives on the RHB have indicated that a draft housing strategy needs to be available for consideration by the full Assembly meeting in December.

Debating rural issues

The East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (EMRAF) will hold its second annual conference on 3 July, at Stoke Rochford Hall near Grantham. Jointly supported and sponsored by the Assembly, Government Office for the East Midlands, The Countryside Agency and *emda*, the event brings together professionals and volunteers actively engaged in creating sustainable communities. Further details about the event can be found on the Assembly's website at www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk

ENERGY FOR ENTERPRISE

The Assembly's Energy Task Group is one of the forces behind an event being held on 26 June at PERA Innovation Park, in Melton Mowbray. The event is being organised in association with Government Office for the East Midlands and *emda*, to examine UK energy policy and regional strategy, and looking at the opportunities and risks for the region's business managers.

The event aims to capture the views and concerns regarding UK and regional energy policy and keynote speakers will outline current energy strategies and begins at 9.30 (for registration) and ends at 1.30 p.m. Further information is available on the Assembly's website and at a dedicated site at www.energy4enterprise.org.uk. The website is not only an opportunity to register for the event but also keep abreast of the issues raised at the meeting. The event is being funded by the DTI, supported by the Assembly, GOEM, *emda* and the Carbon Trust.

CHAIR RESPONDS TO MEP'S ALLEGATIONS

SUGGESTIONS that the Assembly is 'misusing taxpayers' money' have provoked an angry and forthright response from the body's chair, Cllr Mick Young.

His comments follows a press release issued by Roger Helmer, one of the region's MEPs, in which he criticises an article that appeared in the spring issue of *Life*, the Assembly's magazine. The newly-launched publication draws together information and articles from across the East Midlands and illustrates how organisations in the public and private sector are working together at a regional level.

'Assertions that the Assembly is misusing public money are completely unfounded. In particular a claim by Mr Helmer that one of the Assembly's staff is using Government funding to promote political messages through the magazine is misleading to say the least.'

In his press release Mr Helmer names the Assembly's communications manager, Simon Brian, and states: 'It is entirely wrong for a public official to use a publicly funded magazine to promote a highly contentious cause,' writes Mr Helmer. But Cllr Young stated: 'Assembly employees are not civil servants.'

Seeking to clarify the position, Cllr Young said: 'The Assembly is funded by a grant from Government, but receiving a Government grant doesn't make employees civil servants. Similarly, if a community or voluntary group received a Government grant to support its role, that wouldn't mean that staff would become civil servants.'

'The Assembly receives no other funding from any organisation in the region, including local authorities; it is not, as some people seem to think, a subscription-based body that receives money from local authorities,' said Cllr Young, 'but I know that assemblies in other regions may be funded in this way.'

He added that the regional magazine, published by the Assembly, is commercially supported by advertising and not expected to cost the Assembly any money. 'I accept that without the correct facts it might be difficult for people to understand how the Assembly works, after all it's a relatively new body. But what I don't accept is that people who should understand those facts make false allegations against a named individual in the press.'

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