

## **Regional Assemblies (Preparation) Bill - 'Soundings Exercise'**

The soundings exercise announced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, to consider the depth of support for regional governance referendums in each region, closed on 3 March.

Comments received by the Assembly's Secretariat included those from the TUC in the Midlands, which is in favour of a referendum, but at a later stage because of the need for a concerted public information initiative; Lincolnshire County Council, which said *no* to a referendum, and Northampton Borough Council, which said *yes*.

Members agreed at the March meeting that the ODPM should be advised the Assembly does not wish to trigger a referendum on support for a directly elected assembly, with the proviso that it will keep the situation under constant review.

If there is any further information you need please don't hesitate to contact Simon Brian, the Assembly's Communications Manager, on 01664 502571 or 07747 638772.

## **NEW REGIONAL PLANNING ROLE FOR THE ASSEMBLY**

The March meeting of the Assembly confirmed the arrangements for the transfer of the region's spatial planning responsibilities to the Assembly, with effect from April 1.

Members discussed a number of issues, including the introduction of a code of conduct for all members who have places on the new body, and that it should meet in public session. They expressed the view that the Assembly and new planning body needs to have a greater impact on the East Midlands and any process that encourages openness and transparency should be encouraged.

It was agreed that the term Planning Board be used instead of the previously used 'Planning Steering Group' and that the Assembly should have a formal role in 'signing off' regional planning guidance until further proposals are brought forward. It was also agreed that the economic, social and environmental partners should further review the 'Code of Conduct' and requirements for the Planning Board membership and make their views known to the Assembly Steering Group.

### **ASSEMBLY TAKES A HARD LOOK AT ITSELF!**

The first stage of mapping the current position regarding the Assembly's infrastructure, including the relationship between task groups and forums, is complete. The next stage involves consultants looking at the organisation and reporting back to the Assembly on the best way to move forward.

### **ASSEMBLY MEETING DATES**

The next meeting of the Assembly will be held on the morning of 6 June at the Marriott Hotel, Grantham and full details will be available, nearer the date, on the Assembly's website at [www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk) Meetings scheduled for the remainder of 2003 are September 12 (Leicester) and December 12 (Northampton)

## **BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGETS**

Copies of the Assembly business plan and budget for 2003-4 considered at the last meeting have been posted at the our website. The business plan is available at [www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk/documents/business\\_plan\\_2003-4.pdf](http://www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk/documents/business_plan_2003-4.pdf) and the outline budget for 2003-4 is available for viewing at [http://www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk/documents/budget\\_2003-4.pdf](http://www.eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk/documents/budget_2003-4.pdf)

## **THAT'S LIFE!**

The first issue of the new quarterly news and features magazine, *Life*, published by the Assembly, is now being distributed.

It's thanks to the strong partnerships that are emerging across the region that England's East Midlands *Life* will be a publication about the region, written by people who live and work in the region, and it will play a leading role in marketing the East Midlands' increasingly higher profile nationally and internationally. It's available free of charge to businesses, local authorities, agencies and voluntary sector organisations in the region and around 20,000 copies of the first issue were printed and an e-magazine version is planned for introduction next year.

Copies can be obtained by emailing Esther Hesford at the Assembly's Secretariat at [esther@eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk](mailto:esther@eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk) or by calling her on 01664 502563. The deadline for the June issue is May 16 and enquiries regarding editorial contributions should go to Jeremy Waterfield on 0116 270 5462 or by email to [bixgroove@aol.com](mailto:bixgroove@aol.com)

## **INTER FAITH CONFERENCE – Important Notice**

A conference and workshop for the region's faith groups, due to be held at the Midland Hotel, Derby on 5 April, has been postponed. Further information will be circulated as soon as it's available.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE**

*Revised regional planning guidance (RPG8) will be published on 8 April at an event to be held at Grantham's Marriott Hotel.*

*A 12 week public consultation period follows the launch and then a public examination will begin in November, and will be held in Nottingham. The draft was discussed at the March meeting of the Assembly and members were told that a number of appraisals have been undertaken prior to Publication of the draft guidance, including a sustainability appraisal, health impact assessment and a rural proofing exercise.*

*No major conflicts were highlighted except in the area of rural proofing with regard to two Proposed policies, but Assembly members were told the situation cannot be resolved in advance of the public examination. There were no proposed changes following the health impact assessment and only clarity changes for the sustainability appraisal. The Assembly endorsed the draft document for public consultation at its recent meeting.*

*A sub regional strategy has been proposed for the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study area which will be drafted by June 2003 and subject to a public examination early in 2004.*

## **APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Candidates for the new post have been short-listed and interviews will take place on 27 March. The Chair of the Assembly, Cllr Mick Young told members at the recent Assembly meeting that it was hoped an appointment could be made soon after the interview process had been completed.

If you need more information about any of these items you can write to  
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or by email to [simon@eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk](mailto:simon@eastmidlandsassembly.org.uk) or you can telephone him on 01664 502571 (direct line).