

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

SCRUTINY PANEL (+ FUTURES GROUP)

8 September 2004

Sub Group to consider SW RDA performance reports

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider membership of an Assembly sub group to examine and advise on SW RDA performance reports.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Scrutiny Panel Members are invited to:

- (i) consider the need for a sub group of Members to examine and advise on SW RDA performance reports;
- (ii) consider nominations for the sub group.

3. Background

- 3.1 SW RDA reports on its performance against targets set by each of the central government departments that provide funding to the agency. Reports are sent to Government Office South West – the regional ‘sponsor’ for the RDA. Government Office assesses the reports and is in regular dialogue with the RDA over achievements and potential for improvement.
- 3.2 Reporting is on a quarterly basis – approximately 6 weeks after the end of each quarter. So, the first quarterly report is sent to Government Office in mid-August. Further reports are made in November, February and May.
- 3.3 There are proposals to simplify the RDA performance reporting structure to ensure that targets better reflect the aims of Government Department Public Service Agreements (PSAs). It is not anticipated that this will affect the reporting timetable.

Reporting to South West Regional Assembly

- 3.4 Performance reports are copied to the Assembly secretariat. This is a voluntary arrangement aimed at helping the Assembly to better understand RDA business. The performance reports have been used to inform scrutiny exercises but have not been otherwise considered by Members. Of course, the Assembly’s role is distinct from that of Government Office which, as grant provider, requires the RDA’s performance data to fulfil its sponsor role on behalf of ministers. The Assembly has a broader remit aimed to ensure that the work and strategies of the RDA fit with the wider framework of regional strategic priorities.
- 3.5 The RDA Chief Executive reports on its performance to plenary meetings of the Assembly. To date there has been little consideration by the Assembly of

the agency's performance data in advance of the meeting and the choice of emphasis of the RDA's presentation has been largely left to the agency. This has made it difficult to pose effective questions at the meeting or to steer the RDA's Chief Executive's presentation.

- 3.6 The RDA performance reporting process links poorly with the timetable of Assembly meetings. Data can be well out-of-date before it is discussed at the plenary meetings.
- 3.7 To overcome these problems, it is proposed that a small sub group of Assembly Members is established to help direct discussion on SW RDA performance reports. The group could have three key purposes:
- to consider SW RDA performance reports ahead of Assembly meetings – plenary meetings – and identify key questions to raise with the RDA;
 - to suggest topic areas on which the RDA Chief Executive should report to the Assembly;
 - to identify issues that may be of interest to other Assembly Member groups.
- 3.8 It is anticipated that the sub-group should be no larger than 6 Members and conduct its business remotely - by email - as much as possible.
- 3.9 The sub group would have an important relationship with the Scrutiny Panel. It may wish to highlight issues for Scrutiny or comment on the impact of Scrutiny reports on RDA performance. The sub group would also have critical links to the Assembly's work on the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) and plans to make a closer link between the Scrutiny programme and the IRS.
- 3.10 It is therefore suggested that the sub-group is made up of a number of Members of the Scrutiny Panel and Members of the Assembly's Futures Group. Members may wish to consider nominations to the group. Assembly Leaders are content for the membership of this group to be agreed by Scrutiny Panel and Futures Group.
- 3.11 There is an opportunity to examine the RDA's 6-monthly report (due in November) before it is discussed at the January Full Assembly meeting. It is therefore suggested that Scrutiny Panel Membership of the sub-group is agreed by the end of October.

4. Partnership Working

- 4.1 Some consideration should be give to the way in which the work of group links to SW RDA and GOSW. This may be an issue to raise with SW RDA at the next joint Leaders' meeting.

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