

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 17 December 2009

agenda item number **7a ii.**

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

East Midlands Regional Assembly

On the 6th November I attended the penultimate meeting of the East Midlands Regional Assembly, which is to be abolished at the end of March 2010 and replaced by new regional structures created pursuant to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, which received Royal Assent on the 12th November.

The centrepiece of the new scheme, to be the subject of an abridged consultation before submission for ministerial approval, is to be an East Midlands Leaders' Board of 14 members, plus a representative of the Peak District National Park Authority who will be invited to attend for relevant items in relation to development and delivery of the Regional Strategy.

The Leaders' Board has been meeting in shadow form for some time and I have attended two meetings on behalf of the Leader of the Council, most recently on the 4th December. It has to be said that there is a certain air of unreality about its deliberation, as the new scheme, including the Board, a new consultation body to be known as East Midlands Councils, and revised strategic proposals will all come into existence barely a month before the most likely date for a General Election after which, whatever its outcome, there is bound to be a review of the amount of regional bureaucracy the nation can afford.

Nottinghamshire Partnership Forum

The Forum met at Worksop on the 13th November to give members the opportunity to contribute to the final draft of Nottinghamshire's Sustainable Community Strategy for the next decade. The hard work that has been put in to delivering this strategy will prove valuable if, against all the odds, the next Government, whatever its complexion, finds itself compelled by economic and political necessity to fulfil the promises of devolved government and localism to which we shall undoubtedly be treated by all the major political parties in the coming months.

Aerospace Communities Alliance

Because of the importance to the local economy of the presence of Rolls Royce in Hucknall, the County Council participates in the Aerospace Communities Alliance, which brings together similarly interested local authorities from all over the country. It currently has an annual budget of less than £35,000 and is managed by the Economic Regeneration Unit of Derby City Council.

Members of the Alliance met in Derby on the 26th November, following a low-key policy launch at Westminster in October, attended by the junior minister responsible for the aerospace industry. The consensus of the recent meeting was that the major players in the industry were fully capable of putting their case to Government without local authority assistance, but that there was an important role to be played in support of the many smaller enterprises in the industry's supply chain.

Greater Nottingham Partnership

Following emda's review of Sub Regional Partnership arrangements most Sub Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) in the region were wound up in 2009 with their emda delegated funding and functions being transferred to principal local authorities. The Greater Nottingham Partnership (GNP) was an exception because the City and County Councils could not agree on arrangements for the conurbation. As a result, the GNP has continued for another year whilst discussions continue. Emda has been negotiating with the City Council to delegate funding to them for the City area and the County Council is expected to receive emda delegated funding for the whole County area from next year (having received funding for North Nottinghamshire only in 2009/10).

In light of these impending changes, the GNP is considering the company's future. Given that a major role for the company is managing emda delegated funding it is unlikely that the company can continue without that role. I have been attending GNP board meetings and working with my fellow directors to ensure that the company's future is appropriately planned, be that in winding up or in continuing, as the circumstances demand. By taking this twin track, responsive approach it is envisaged that the needs of the company and the economic development needs of the sub-region can be best served.

COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS
Deputy Leader of the County Council