

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 15 April 2010

agenda item number **7a ii.**

## **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA)**

On 5<sup>th</sup> March I attended the final meeting of the Assembly's Regional Housing, Planning & Transport Board and, later the same day, the final meeting of the Regional Assembly itself.

From Nottinghamshire's point of view the most important outcome was the reaffirmation of the dualling of the A453 as a top priority regional road scheme and likewise confirmation of the importance of electrification of the Midland Main Line. I have written to the Secretary of State for Transport on both issues but, perhaps unsurprisingly at this stage of the electoral cycle, have received a non-committal response.

There was also confirmation of the view that a partial review of the Government's housing targets in the Regional Spatial Strategy would be premature. There should be a more fundamental review, taking into account the impact of the economic recession on housebuilding starts and immigration patterns. It should also be recognised that in some parts of the region higher housing targets might be acceptable, whilst in others the present targets are regarded as excessive.

The new structures comprising the East Midlands Leaders' Board and East Midlands Councils will replace the existing bodies after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. It also seems extremely likely that any new Government will conduct a review of the proliferation of largely unaccountable regional quangos to determine the extent to which they can be said to provide value for money.

### **County Councils Network (CCN)**

At the Network meeting in London on the 12<sup>th</sup> March there was wide cross-party agreement that the financial implications for local authorities of the Personal Care at Home Bill had been seriously underestimated. The meeting backed amendments that had been recommended to sympathetic members of the House of Lords. During the following week the Government was defeated on a series of Lords amendments and the Bill has been effectively lost.

There was also cross-party agreement on the Network's manifesto of policy aims to be commended to the political parties at the forthcoming General Election, the main thrust of which was devolution of powers and resources to local authorities.

**Greater Nottingham Partnership (GNP) and economic development governance**

The latest meeting of the GNP Board took place on 16<sup>th</sup> March, at which the GNP's formal extension to March 2011 and its contracted relationship with emda to deliver Single Programme funding in the City area were confirmed.

GNP Board Members continue to actively oversee the delivery of Single Programme activity and the County Council is involved in negotiations with the GNP over the novation of a Single Programme contract related to Arnold town centre, which will fall outside of the GNP's remit from April of this year. GNP Board Members are also rigorously examining the financial position of the company and are committed to securing as much of a surplus as possible at the point of the company winding up. The County Council will retain a Board position with the GNP until the point of closure to ensure that we have the opportunity to influence cross-border initiatives and issues such as the future of the Employment and Skills Board. Proposals to establish the Joint Leadership Board and Nottingham Core City Board are further developed and it is anticipated that the first meetings of these two important Boards will take place later in the spring.

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS**  
**Deputy Leader of the County Council**