

Notes from Spatial Planning Board meeting, 12 October 2009, Wakefield

‘Doing things Differently’

A paper was presented as an overview on how regional planning work is being done differently under the new arrangements. As reported widely, planning work will focus on 8 key strategic issues: infrastructure, housing markets, employment land, flood risk & water management, waste management, minerals supplies, renewable energy and settlement networks and patterns of development. In the minutes of the last meeting it was noted that environmental capacity, sustainable development and responding to climate change are identified as cross cutting themes for the preparation of the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS).

IRS sub regional planning assessments

In order to build the IRS from the sub regional and local level, the four Functional Sub Regions will be asked to complete a sub regional planning assessment by the end of March 2010. A framework for the assessments, based on the 8 key strategic issues (see above) was presented for discussion. I commented that environmental capacity etc, although supposedly a cross cutting theme, is not picked up in the assessments. There is a danger that, as a cross cutting theme, there is no holistic approach to it as it is easy to assume that others are covering the work. It needs to be built into the assessments. LGYH responded that the climate change workstream will pick up on it, although this hasn't yet been established and rather reinforces my view that it is being treated in a piecemeal rather than embedded way! It was agreed to push on with the assessments as described, but that my concerns should be minuted.

Infrastructure planning

The Board were updated on current activities related to infrastructure planning. Several councillors voiced concerns that the Community Infrastructure Levy will mean that less money will be forthcoming from Government for infrastructure, but that it will render some developments unviable so the money will not be made up by developers either.

Ensuring the future supply of minerals aggregates

Rob Murfin from LGYH presented a paper outlining that the Government has set regional production guidelines for aggregates, and proposing an exploratory approach to revising the sub regional apportionment of regional aggregates. The latter was quite interesting and suggested a move away from the business as usual approach of rolling forward historic shares to one which seeks to reflect sustainability objectives and reduce the GHG impacts from transport. I supported this approach, but unfortunately it went largely undebated as there was instead a much heated discussion on the fact that the Government had imposed production guidelines for the region. Although the figures weren't up for debate – they were consulted on previously – there was a call for them to be rejected. In the end it was decided that the sub regions would be contacted about this to seek their views, and the Board would then pass this onto CLG. I heard afterwards from one of the LGYH officers that the region had responded to the consultation on it earlier, and that the figures proposed (which incidentally were higher than the final figures) had been agreed and supported by the region. It all seemed a bit embarrassing

really, and it was a shame that this overshadowed the real meat of the paper, which was the suggested new approach to sub regional apportionment. Of note, Rob Murfin has now left LGYH and it has yet to be decided whether his vacancy will be filled.

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