



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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Scrutiny Commission on Regional Governance

The Government White Paper
'Your Region, Your Choice'

Elected Regional Assemblies

November 2002

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

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KIRKLEES SCRUTINY COMMISSION ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Summary

An Elected Regional Assembly (ERA), if set up, would need stronger powers than those envisaged in the White Paper, 'Your Region, Your Choice', to ensure that it did not become another layer of bureaucracy, but provided real devolution. The opportunity should be taken to reduce bureaucracy by cutting back the 'quango' state and championing transparency and accountability. An ERA should be a strategic body, with service delivery at the local level. The regional-local relationship should be the dominant one, albeit with a sub-regional dimension on the economy. Stakeholder involvement is crucial, though it should not detract from democratic accountability. The possibility of an ERA being established puts into sharper relief the need for Kirklees to have a clear vision of its place in the region. A referendum on an ERA should be held simultaneously across the three northern regions.

Background

White Paper

1. The White Paper, 'Your Region Your Choice', was published in May 2002. It set out the Government's proposed route forward for English regions outside London, setting out plans for those regions likely to choose to establish directly elected regional assemblies (ERAs).

Scrutiny Commission

2. On 12 June 2002, Kirklees Council past a motion to set up a Scrutiny Commission to look at the impact of the White Paper on Kirklees: 'Following the Government's publication of the White Paper on Regional Government, Council instructs the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny to constitute an All Party Scrutiny Commission to examine the effects of the proposals for the Borough of Kirklees, the Council and its partners and to report, as soon as practical, to a full meeting of the Council'.

Council resolution supporting ERA

3. An earlier motion past by Council on 9 January 2002 provides further background context to this debate: 'The Council supports the creation of a directly elected Assembly for Yorkshire to provide democratic accountability and responsibility for a range of regionally provided services including: Regional Development, Regional Planning, Health Services, Skills Training, Fire and Emergency Planning, Transport, Police'. The purpose of our Commission, therefore, has not been to debate the pros and cons of an ERA.

Panel membership

4. Our subsequent All Party Scrutiny Commission comprised:
 - Cllr Peter McBride (Labour) – Chair
 - Cllr Andrew Cooper (Green)
 - Cllr Robert Light (Conservative)
 - Cllr Linda Wild (Liberal Democrat)

Terms of Reference

5. We identified three elements to our work:
 - Take a view on how stakeholders can be involved in an ERA.
 - Look at a range of other issues that could impact on effectiveness – e.g. size of ERAs, the Unity Authorities debate, relations with other regional agencies, level of bureaucracy, local/regional/national demarcation lines.
 - Look at the implications for KMC, its partners and the people of Kirklees of an ERA having responsibilities in the policy areas outlined in the White Paper – i.e. economic development, business support, training and skills, European programme, Planning, Housing, Transport, Arts/tourism/sports, public health, rural policy, environment, crime reduction, civil contingency planning

Methodology

6. As well as receiving background papers, the Commission held two half-day hearings where it questioned key players within the regional debate, including the chair of the current Assembly, Regional Director of the Government's Regional Office, members of Yorkshire Forward's Board and other key stakeholders. These hearings were run on a highly interactive basis with witnesses overlapping each other. A list of those who attended as witnesses or gave written evidence is attached in Annex One.

Basis for unanimity

7. The report that follows is a unanimous one, though it is crucial to recognise the basis for that unanimity. It does not imply support for an ERA by the members concerned. Rather, it is founded on the basis that if there was an ERA, this is how it should operate to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Key findings

Clustering issues

8. Our findings have been clustered under the subject headings we used in our hearings and discussion sessions. We start with an assessment of existing arrangements as we are anxious to ensure that good practices are not lost in the event of an ERA being established. Equally, we would not want a continuation of bad practice. The threats and opportunities section is based on a very pragmatic questioning of witnesses and how they see an

ERA, as envisaged in the White Paper, developing. The remaining sections look at a range of policy and governance issues.

Strengths and weakness of existing arrangements

Confusing array of existing bodies

9. There is a plethora of organisations operating at the regional and sub-regional level. This causes confusion, even for those used to working on regional issues, and there is a consequent lack of transparency. It is not clear who makes decisions and where accountability lies. Again, even those deeply involved in regional politics find this difficult. We note with real concern the growth in the 'quango' state and the movement away from democratic accountability.

Impractical use of time and duplication

10. There is a feeling that the larger areas dominate under the present ad hoc arrangements. Council Leaders face an impossible workload as they try to run their own Councils, whilst sitting on a number of regional bodies. Duplication, delay and inefficiency seem to characterise the system.

Strong existing partnership arrangements

11. Everyone we spoke to felt that partnership arrangements were working well in this region and a great deal of effort had been put in to ensure that this happened. We also detected a real determination amongst the people we spoke with to make things work as well as possible. There was a particular willingness to try and get everyone on board and recognise concerns of partners and different areas of the region. This was probably made easier in this region by the fact that Yorkshire and Humber has a clearer public identity than many other regions.

Opportunities and threats

Reduce existing 'quango' state bureaucracy

12. We feel that an ERA would offer the opportunity to cut out a lot of regional and sub-regional bureaucracy, the 'quango' state referred to earlier, give greater clarity and provide clearer lines of accountability.

Clearer relations with Europe

13. It could also help us as a region develop stronger relationships and gain more influence with Europe, providing a clearer point of reference for MEPs in the process. However, this would all depend on the eventual powers that an ERA might be given.

Strategic lead recognising smaller interests

14. An ERA should provide a stronger strategic lead, as opposed to the ad hoc and time consuming bidding culture that many people feel exists at present. An ERA could also mean a better representation of smaller interests, such as rural ones.

15. On the down side, we believe the White Paper is a missed

Missed opportunity to debate how we are governed

opportunity to engage in a wider debate about how we are governed. Regionalism has been addressed in a vacuum. The only exception to that has been the proposal in the White Paper that wholly unitary local government structures should be a requirement in those regions voting for an ERA. We feel that requirement has hindered rather than helped debate, a point we return to later.

Danger of falling between two stools and adding to bureaucracy as currently conceived

16. Above all, there is a danger that an ERA could satisfy nobody, if its powers were as limited and vague as those described in the White Paper. For those opposed to the regional agenda it would simply offer another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy; for those in favour of regional democracy it would offer responsibility without power. We have a meeting of minds on this issue, regardless of political allegiance.

Greater Government consistency needed

17. A further concern is that the government will not get its own act together. Some of our witnesses detected different attitudes to regionalism and sub-regionalism in different government departments. This is a source of real concern as it could instil continued confusion into any new arrangements from the outset. We would also stress that if ERAs are set up but do not work, the fall out is likely to affect both local and central government in terms of a further decline in public interest in politics.

Extent of Devolution

Stronger powers and real devolution

18. We are strongly of the view that devolution should be pushed much further than anticipated in the White Paper. We fully support those, like the Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, who are concerned at the lack of real power that an ERA would have. In its submission, MYCCI highlights words like “issuing”, “influencing” and “advising” as not being strong enough and asks the question “when is devolvement not devolvement?”.

Subsidiarity

19. We strongly believe in the principle of subsidiarity and the presumption that powers should come down. We recognise that in some areas, like planning, some power should be drawn up from local authorities to an ERA. However, it becomes problematic to expect local government to give up some powers in a context where central government did not do so in any real sense.

Dividing up the national cake

20. We note the comment we received to the effect that if it is possible to divide up a budget into 8 for Regional Development Agency purposes, then it should be possible to do so in many other policy areas as well. We see a much stronger budgetary role and more clearly defined powers as essential, if an ERA is to be of real benefit to our area and gain public and political

respect. The alternative implies a lack of trust in people in the regions to make decisions about their region. Again we stress we want to build political credibility, not undermine it further.

Policy areas

Strategic and infrastructure support bodies, not service delivery ones

21. We are very clear that an ERA should be a strategic body, not a service delivery one. There are areas, such as Fire, Police and Flood Defences that we feel could be added to the list of policy areas contained in the White Paper. We are, however, careful to draw distinctions between strategic and support functions on the one hand and local service delivery on the other.

National Standards

22. In making these suggestions, we are conscious of the importance of national standards and activities that cannot be neatly restricted to a region. Whilst some of the work of the Environment Agency would fall into this category, there are areas that should fall more directly under an ERA.

Transport and Planning

23. Transport and planning are both areas where we feel there is general consensus that the region is best placed to handle matters. We are a commuting community near three large conurbations with the main arterial link to the region running through our borders. As a consequence we can be deeply affected by decisions taken by others. A more strategic approach would be greatly welcomed here.

Negotiating directly with Europe

24. Relations with Europe is another area that will benefit from a stronger regional perspective, particularly at a time of European enlargement. We note MYCCI welcomes the proposal that an ERA will take over the role currently performed by Government Regional Offices on EC structural funds. We would want it to be clear, however, that this would really mean the region negotiating directly with Europe.

Economy and the sub-regional dimension

25. On economic issues, we see the role currently undertaken by Yorkshire Forward as the suitable one for the regional dimension. However, rather than just providing an ERA with the power to appoint the Board and provide funding to it, we see this body becoming a full part of an ERA. It should in effect be abolished in its present form and we would seek stakeholder involvement, particularly that of business, through other means. On the economy, we also see a stronger presence for a sub-regional input than we do in other areas of activity, where we feel the fit should be a local-regional one.

Crime reduction and the regional-local dimension

26. On crime reduction, we share the view that policing needs to be a very local service and strongly integrated with Local Strategic Partnerships. We also recognise the difficulties that

can arise where local and national priorities and Performance Indicators can be in conflict and we would not want to see regional indicators adding to that burden. We do, however, see real opportunities for efficiency savings in areas like procurement and recruitment if operated at a regional level. Again, without sufficient powers a regional body could simply be another time consuming layer of bureaucracy for an already fully stretched police force to deal. With power and a strong presence in relation to Whitehall it could, however, provide real benefits. Whilst we think the democratic mandate should apply to policing at a regional level in terms of strategy and support, the focus of policing should be local and operational independence respected. Here we could be looking at a strong local-regional relationship.

*Learning & Skills,
Small Business
Service and
Universities*

27. On Learning and Skills, we again see the importance of a regional strategy combined with local delivery. We note that a lot of existing arrangements are based on contracting down to the local level from sub-regional structures. We find this an additional and time consuming bureaucratic burden and would prefer to see a direct relationship with an ERA and a local authority area partnership. The same is true for the Small Business Service. On Universities, we respect their independence, note the move to more localised intake and community involvement and envisage an eventual strategic funding role for an ERA.

The rural voice

28. On rural issues, we see the different rural parts of the region, such as North Yorkshire and parts of Kirklees, being able to combine to give a more powerful rural voice than at present.

*Principles behind the
approach*

29. Across all policy areas identified in the White Paper we want to see subsidiarity apply, a regional strategic role with clear powers and control of budgets and, with the exception of the economy, a strong local-regional rather than sub-regional-regional fit.

Sub-regions

*The role of sub-
regions*

30. As we have stated above, we see an important role for sub-regions on economic issues. On other issues, however, we believe they simply add a layer of bureaucracy. They also consume valuable time and often involve already stretched people on sub-regional Boards. We want to see stakeholder involvement at regional level in what might be termed a regional strategic partnership. We also want to see local partnerships and have been committed to such an approach in Kirklees for many years. However, the development of sub-regional partnerships can simply tie up already busy people to no real end.

Relationship to other structures

No 'middle' organisations or dual reporting

31. We see ERAs as an opportunity to drastically reduce bureaucracy. Unlike the White Paper, which sees bureaucracy associated with three layers of government, we see it associated with the plethora of regional and sub-regional bodies that have arisen in recent years. It is here that the real bureaucratic cutbacks can be made. We do not want middle organisations or dual reporting arrangements for funding streams. We want clarity and transparency.

Abolition or slimming down of some current regional and sub-regional bodies

32. On the basis of the above statement, we would abolish Yorkshire Forward as an independent body. We would want to see the work of GOYH largely brought under the ERA, with a much slimmed down office remaining. Learning and Skills Councils, as indicated earlier, should be abolished and the lead come from the ERA, with the direct link to the local area.

Association of Local Authorities

33. The Yorkshire and Humber Association of Local Authorities should be kept. Local authorities will be stakeholders along with others under an ERA. There must be strong collective links as well as individual local authority relationships with an ERA, given the magnitude of the interactions involved.

Basis for existence – added value

34. Where we can, however, we should use this exercise as an opportunity to slim down on regional and sub-regional bodies. The onus should be on those bodies to prove that they add real value to the quality of services in our region.

Stakeholders

A vital role for stakeholders

35. We have been impressed with the commitment of our various stakeholders to both local and regional partnerships and we note the progress that has been achieved in this region. It is clearly the view that stakeholders must have a role to play in support of an ERA, if we are to develop the workable policies that will benefit people in Yorkshire and Humber. We support that view.

Overarching stakeholder partnership

36. We also believe it important to build on the success we have had to date in this region. That would lead us towards an overarching partnership. This would combine sectoral interests, which could also meet in their own groupings anyway. Such a body should have a statutory basis, as recognition of its importance. Like the current Yorkshire and Humber Assembly (YHA), however, we believe the detail of the partnership should be determined regionally, not nationally, and note that YHA has already begun work on proposals.

Democratic

37. We are conscious that stakeholder involvement should not

legitimacy undermine democratic legitimacy. In saying that, we feel there are other ways that stakeholders or outside experts could be brought in to assist an ERA, particularly in the development of policy and scrutiny.

Scrutiny 38. On scrutiny, we believe that some existing stakeholders would be in a very different position than now if an ERA was in operation and directly subject to scrutiny themselves.

Types of stakeholder 39. We also see a clear distinction between different types of stakeholder under an elected body. Business organisations, trade unions and the voluntary sector are clearly independent agencies and we would put universities into that category too. Other public bodies like Yorkshire Forward, LSCs, Police and Health Authorities are in a different position.

Political accountability

De-couple regionalism from the unitary council debate 40. We strongly believe, along with the Regional Assembly, that local government re-structuring, the North Yorkshire issue for our region, should be decoupled from decisions about directly elected regional assemblies. We recognise why there could be concern about a third layer of government. However, we share the Assembly's concern that "proposals for strengthening regional governance, with functions drawn from central government, should not impact on structures for the delivery of local services and democracy". We have already indicated where we see the cutbacks in bureaucracy. We also feel that this whole issue is unnecessarily complicating the process and weakening the possibility of a shared, bi-partisan approach. In terms of a referendum, it should also be up to the people of North Yorkshire to determine the issue.

Proposed number of representatives on an ERA inadequate 41. All those who were in a position to opine on the issue, including our local Chamber of Commerce, felt that 25 to 35 members was insufficient to provide effective, representative regional government that would carry any credibility. We note that Wales has 60 and Scotland has 129 representatives. We are a diverse area of 5 million people and we should be thinking of doubling the suggested number of representatives, as a minimum.

Electoral areas 42. In terms of elections we are anxious that there are different lines of legitimacy for different elected representatives. For instance, we would not like to see the same constituencies used as for MPs. The electoral base would be very important in determining the approach and culture of the ERA and we suggest looking at constituencies that combine both rural and urban features.

No dual membership

43. We are very clearly of the view that there should not be dual membership of ERAs and local authorities. We want to encourage new blood into politics and we do not feel that dual membership would provide the clear, independent, region-wide perspective we are looking for.

A referendum should be held simultaneously across the 3 northern regions

44. We are also anxious to stress the links with other regions. There is bound to be a need for co-operation here and we would not wish to see regions developing as competing fortresses. In order to enhance that cross-regional approach, we feel there would be considerable merit in the three northern regions going to a referendum at the same time.

Kirklees influence

Developing the vision for Kirklees essential

45. If Kirklees is to operate effectively within an ERA then we need a very clear view of the kind of place we want Kirklees to be. We are not a major city, primarily rural region or coastal area. As a consequence, it is easy for the Kirklees interest to be overlooked. Similarly, the more an ERA can develop strategic policies in areas like transport and planning, the more we need to be clear how we help to shape and are affected by those policies. The possible establishment of an ERA would, therefore, give added urgency to this debate.

Overall analysis and recommendations

On consensus for effectiveness

46. Overall, we were struck by the fact that people who may not support an ERA in principle, would want to see a stronger form of regional devolution than envisaged in the White Paper, if an ERA became a reality. The clear message here is that “if you are going down this route, then do it properly”. There was a real concern that we could end up in some form of half-way house that suited nobody and actually increased public disengagement with politics. There was also a very strong view that people within regions had the skills and capabilities to make decisions about their regions and we sensed an annoyance that Government, through the White Paper, did not really trust us to do so. We endorse all these sentiments.

A willingness to work together

47. We were also struck by the excellent tradition of working in partnership in this region and the willingness of partners to see others' point of view and try to come to a shared understanding and way forward. We were also struck by the determination of people to make things work, regardless of where their initial position was. We feel that this bodes well for the future.

Recommendations to Council

48. Our recommendations are, therefore, that Council support:

- **the overall thrust of this report and, in particular, the**

view that if an ERA is to be set up, then it should have much stronger powers than envisaged in the White Paper, while reductions in bureaucracy should be made at the expense of the 'quango state' not local government;

- **a referendum on an ERA being held simultaneously across the three northern regions; and**
- **the wide circulation of this Scrutiny Commission report on Regional Governance.**

Re-confirming the basis for unanimity

49. We would again stress that the above recommendations do not imply support in principle for an ERA by Members of our Scrutiny Commission. The Council already has a resolution on that matter and it has not been our task to look at the pros and cons of such a body. Rather, our focus has been on the practical implications if such a body was set up.

Our thanks to those who have assisted this process

50. Finally, our thanks to all those who gave up their time to attend our hearings or submit information. We found this exercise very informative and thought the quality of the contributions we received were very high. The proposals in this paper are, however, ours and they should not necessarily be associated, in whole or in part, with those of the individuals who gave evidence.

Cllr Peter McBride (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Cooper
Cllr Robert Light
Cllr Linda Wild

15 November 2002

List of consultees and written evidence

Hearing on broad issues of governance, crime prevention and training

Cllr Peter Box	Leader of Yorkshire & Humber Assembly and Wakefield Council
Cllr Kath Pinnock	Leader Kirklees Council and member of Yorkshire Forward's Board
Tony Elson	Chief Executive Kirklees Council
Felicity Everiss	Regional Director Government Office Yorkshire & Humber (GOYH)
John Jarvis	Director of Regional Affairs (GOYH)
Jean Coburn	Principal & Chief Executive Huddersfield Technical College and member of Yorkshire Forward's Board and West Yorkshire Learning & Skills Council
John Holt	Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police, Huddersfield Division and member of Kirklees Partnership
Chris Walsh	Community Safety Performance Manager KMC

Hearing on economy, business support, Europe and skills

Howard Webster	Representing Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Bede Mullen	Project Manager Huddersfield University
John Griffiths	Head of Economic Development Service KMC

Other communications – select list

Paul Jagger	Regional Secretary Yorkshire & Humberside TUC and member of Yorkshire Forward's Board – telephone interview
Cllr John Weighell	Leader of North Yorkshire County Council – letter
Richard Corbett	MEP for Yorkshire and Humber - letter
Patrick Auterson	Policy Manager, Planning Service, KMC – written evidence
Michael Padgett	Chief Engineer Transportation, Highways Service, KMC – written evidence
Maggie Mellor	Economic Development Service, KMC – written evidence

Note:

1. Many of those mentioned above are also involved in other relevant agencies – e.g. the Association of West Yorkshire Authorities.
2. A number of other people were contacted to provide oral or written evidence, but were unable to do so due to time constraints.

Select submissions to Government

- Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce general submission
- Yorkshire & Humber Assembly's specific submissions on stakeholder involvement and proposals for unitary local government

Select background papers

- Your Region, Your Choice – Revitalising the English Regions, White Paper
- Local Government Association Briefing on the White Paper
- Yorkshire & Humber Assembly commentary on White Paper
- Select views on the White Paper – KMC compilation of initial views from LGA, South West, East Midlands and North East Regional Assemblies and business attitudes survey in Northern Regions by Regional Policy Forum

Support Officers and contact point

Mary Brooks, Secretary to Scrutiny Office, Town Hall Huddersfield – tel: 01484 221908
Jonathan Fry, Corporate Development Officer, CDU, Civic 111, Huddersfield – tel: 01484 221758

Annex 2

Key points from Scrutiny Commission's Hearings - clustered under subject headings

Below are the key points made by those who attended our two sessions, clustered under different subject headings, though some points are relevant to more than one heading. I've also included some of Paul Jagger's comments from a phone call with me.

Initials: KP – Kath Pinnock, PB – Peter Box, TE – Tony Elson, JC – Jean Coburn, JH – John Holt, BM – Bede Mullen, FE – Felicity Everiss, JJ – John Jarvis, JG – John Griffiths, HW – Howard Webster, CW Chris Walsh, PJ – Paul Jagger..

Strengths and weakness

- 1 The Regional Assembly is relatively effective, though it is difficult to compare. Good at stakeholder involvement, see it as a regional partnership, do not operate in silos at meetings. Though it can be difficult to persuade stakeholders to turn up for things where you don't really have any control. PB/KP
- 2 Relations with YF might not be as good as we would like. Good links with GOYH on funding strings. TECs locally have abolished with move to WYLSC; Business Link also moved to this level, contract had been with C&KTEC . MYCC focused on business support and training. So local authority only real body at strategic level now for this area, but having to seek influence at WY level. Complicated structure to deal with as is. JG
- 3 Too much time spent on the administrative interfaces between all these organisation to disadvantage of work we have all be charged to do to promote economic development. BM
- 4 Agencies like YF and LSC often charged with similar things, e.g. education and training YF LSC, so who do you go to? Can be confusing. JG
- 5 No a lot of logic to some of the changes that have been made to date, with many complicating factors. Why not direct contracting from YF to the old TEC areas. Business link found it convenient to contract back to individual local authority areas. JG
- 6 At present have to go through YF and GOYH re matched funded European financed project and both operate to different time-scales. JG
- 7 A lot of time is spent stressing the synergies between the LSC, Business Link and YF, yet all really in same business. BM
- 8 We are much more intelligence led about the kind of region we want develop than we were 3 or 4 years ago. BM
- 9 YF has not got its act together yet, not seeing it here, there could be a big underspend that then goes on some huge macro project somewhere. HW
- 10 Speed of decision between various regional bodies poor at the moment. Lot of time spent expressing frustration about decision making. JG
- 11 There is a bidding culture at the moment. We need to work in partnership to a clear strategy to get rid of wasteful duplication. BM
- 12 Regionalism has come on apace, with a strong partnership approach though some concern around accountability in practical terms for some of the bigger partners like

business and the unions that need to deal with – i.e. how they keep their members informed about developments. PJ

- 13 Generally accountability is not as good as should be, though the voluntary sector is doing things better. Things can be slow and cumbersome. PJ
- 14 Relatively well involved. The chamber works effectively where real work is done, though the main body is very formal. JC

Threats and opportunities

- 15 Scrutiny will make things more effective and not just in relation to YF. We must persuade other organisations they should be subject to it. PB
- 16 Importance of making the case at a European level. KP
- 17 From perspective of being involved in business support would welcome an ERA to enable a degree of direction and leadership, as much as control and guidance of system we have. BM
- 18 Three key areas (a) greater strategic coherence for region as a whole, would join things up better; (b) a formal democratic institution would improve accountability, though some accountability already this would clarify things; (c) helps in terms of way we are perceived externally, whether in other parts of country or internationally. Clear areas of benefit would be Housing, transport. FE
- 19 It would be easier to get people together to work strategically. FE
- 20 The biggest worry would be if we take our eyes off current business. There will be a period of sorting out over the next 5 years. FE
- 21 Europe and money we could leave in, better understanding of what is going on here. KP
- 22 Biggest fear would be if it meant just more synergies between lots of bodies and managing those interfaces. BM
- 23 Its harder to work out realistic economic strategy for towns than cities, what pressure to bear re YF or an ERA, suspect they will go for winners out of cities rather than towns. BM
- 24 We would have a clear strategic vision to articulate not just to UK govt but Europe. JG
- 25 Different departments of government have different views on regionalism and sub regionalism. JG
- 26 ERA would provide more opportunities to exercise influence and make sensible decisions for the whole region. Must not have inward approach though – e.g. a region only willing to deal with agencies in its region. BM
- 27 We cannot wait for an ERA to sort out all the problems. Frustrating at the moment. BM
- 28 If the cake gets bigger it would be a decided advantage. JG
- 29 There will be the opportunity to get a better perspective on Europe. JC
- 30 We must give it time to develop, to grow. We should also be willing to take risks. JC

Political accountability

- 31 Making it a proper democratic forum will alert people to its importance and significance. People can then see where the decision is being made. Who can now say that with

Regional Planning Guidance? There has to be a way of involving other public sector providers. KP

- 32 There is a need for decisions to be taken democratically in the region now. If given greater powers, then it has to add value. It must be able to make an impact on people's lives – transport an obvious example. If it fails it could undermine not just regional but local government as well. PB
- 33 The RA is generally supportive of North Yorkshire's position and that is why there should be a separate ballot. Politicians in Scarborough though might support the idea of the district becoming a unitary. PB
- 34 It is important that the RA is trying to move together. KP
- 35 We might have been better with a white paper on how we are governed full stop, rather than just on a regional basis. It's a missed opportunity. Some powers could come from local arrangement – e.g. fire transport – but is difficult to argue for this if central government then refuses to give things up. PB
- 36 There is a fear that big urban areas will dominate at expense of coastal and rural areas. I've tried to reassure on this. Sub region to lead not dominate. PB
- 37 25 to 35 members on an ERA are not enough. All
- 38 Would not want to see an elected body that felt it had to represent only little bits of the region – it dilutes resources and fails to recognise how investment here can benefit people in other parts of the region. BM
- 39 Fresh faces are needed for an ERA, not the same politicians in regional and local democratic structures. PJ

Sub regions

- 40 How you manage the relationship between the sub region, the region and the Council is the missing part of the debate. I notice how people identify with the region and the sub region for different things. TE
- 41 On sub regions, we must make sure you don't allow interest groups of the sub region to dominate, creating a federation. People need to represent the region as a whole PB
- 42 The amount of work done at sub-regional level is greater than since 1986. JG
- 43 If more money came to the region, we could reduce some of the sub regional structures JG

Stakeholders

- 44 Must involve regional partners – where a key role could be scrutiny. Most decisions are taken by consensus now, so stakeholders could be involved in debate but not have a vote. Some stakeholders would be either directly or indirectly accountable through scrutiny. ALA will have to find a different role in some way. Individual local authorities are going to be regional partners. PB
- 45 On stakeholders, cannot have national blueprint as it differs from region to region. Some of the present stakeholders, Environment Agency, LSC, as public bodies would be in a different position than now. FE
- 46 There is a question of whether national public services agencies might not be just accountable by appointment, but by Scrutiny as well. FE

- 47 It must involve stakeholders, though the democratic principle is crucial. Local authorities would be stakeholders as well. JC
- 48 Don't lose the business interest. RA YF works quite well together. YF can't do business without the Assembly side – planning guidance, transport. JC
- 49 Importance of interest groups. Kirklees Partnership a partnership of organisations and some interests can be left out/hard to involve. JG
- 50 Dewsbury Partnership very effective– should be a partnership for the whole region. HW
- 51 Public legitimacy would be lost if partners were not involved. PJ
- 52 Option of an overarching partnership most favourable – it would give continuity as well. There should be some statutory basis for it. A strong free standing body means no need for co-optees. We do not want to undermine the democratic mandate. PJ
- 53 Overarching forum preferred – different groupings meet separately anyway. JC
- 54 Business involvement key, getting things done attitude. Do not want to lose that. JC

Relations with other structures

- 55 Not another layer of bureaucracy because already there. KP
- 56 Importance of strategic framework which districts can then operate within, but danger that the region could see itself as the voice of local government – need to be aware of that danger. PB
- 57 The case for regional government is made as long as people can be persuaded that they have to be strategic, regional features and not get stuck tinkering with what local government should be doing, which is service delivery. KP
- 58 Agree White Paper does not clarify sufficiently the relationship between an ERA and local government. PB
- 59 Concern that people might begin to think what Westminster is for a why we have local MPs. KP
- 60 MPs are not stakeholders. What about regional representation in parliament? Back to different relations again. PB
- 61 Some of what GOYH do would be done by an ERA and improved in that way. There would still be a central government voice in the region. How it would change is an interesting issue. Communications between the region and Whitehall/Ministers could change and I think MPs are interested in that one. FE
- 62 MPs getting involved in planning applications would not change. Where they had to direct their energy might – representation to ERA as well as Parliament. We have London to learn from here. FE
- 63 Where the decision rests on call-in. JJ
- 64 There is a concern amongst business about bureaucracy and talking shops and any additional costs. FE
- 65 Role of Scrutinising itself would be very important. Ought to be able to find savings to off-set costs. FE

- 66 Slim down bureaucracy, have fewer agencies better strategies more commissioning and less bidding. JG
- 67 Functions are already devolved re costs. Would get rid of some of the sub structures. JG
- 68 Bureaucracy danger yes. Do not need 3 tiers. PJ
- 69 GOYH could possibly go. JC

Policy areas

- 70 Biggest issue transport, also where new homes will be built. There are artificial boundaries between police areas in terms of who is best placed to get to the scene of a crime. KP
- 71 ERA not designed to be a service delivery organisation. Key benefit for services would be more rational effective strategy coming from region. FE
- 72 Real concern in police that we could move from 43 to 10 police forces and impact that would have on local service delivery. The stress is on local partnerships, area committees. JH
- 73 Problems where local concerns can be countered by national demands and danger that ERA would provide a third complicating factor. JH
- 74 An ERA might make it more possible to say no (re above concern). FE
- 75 There must be a logic for LSC funds from DfoE going to ERA and therefore whether you keep LSCs. JG
- 76 Are tremendous opportunities for doing some things on a regional basis vehicle fleet, uniforms, occupational health service, regional or national recruitment, but service delivery should be retained locally. The strategic issues and support infrastructure could be on a regional basis. Concern that regional agenda will dictate what happens. Don't want another layer of priorities – local, region, national. JH
- 77 Not sure on funding - JH
- 78 White Paper talks of strategies informing each other rather than direct involvement in service delivery, but still leave question open JJ
- 79 If centrally devolved to the region, it would be another matter. JH
- 80 I agree about local delivery, and from a consultation angle, but having said that, one thing that an assembly might do is make things more responsive to local regional issues than if things were coming from London. I can see advantages in both. CW
- 81 It would make sense to mirror what is at regional level re the LSC, then some sub division would be needed. Could help to offset some of the cost. JC
- 82 Skills and employment resources would be better done regionally. For some things we could go further, though not education. JC
- 83 Universities have a new role re directly funded business support, though only small, to try to stimulate the economy as in the US. BM
- 84 There is a question at the moment about whether funds for university business support should come through YF, as they are deemed to know the region. Universities are becoming more local/regional bodies in terms of work with communities and student intake. A degree of accountability to an ERA could be inevitable. Would have to face any

new arrangements. The University cherishes its independence, yet could still be an opportunity. BM

- 85 Four West Yorkshire Universities are working together to tackle falls in student numbers for specific course by ensuring courses are still viable in some of those universities. BM

Devolution

- 86 Whitehall departments are having to adapt. The outcome of the Public Expenditure Reviews includes for very first time a target that recognises regional differences. FE
- 87 Some areas a clearer than others. We are not going to run schools from the regions – relationship is national/local. ERA might influence amount of resources that comes into the region or influence service targets. We don't have regional targets at the moment – may or may not want them. FE
- 88 Present set up a mess re learning and skills. An ERA needs power to be effective. Must let go and have trust, otherwise a disaster. Need for clarity as well, otherwise we get planning blight as people feel they can't get on with things. JC
- 89 Example of West Yorkshire Partnership re Universities, LSC and Business Link getting money from YF then YF wanting to pick and choose what it likes. Devolution, then not devolution. BM
- 90 Fear that govt office would still hold the reins. JC
- 91 It would be easier to be involved at a regional level. To go to London is time out. People who go to thinks/lobby down there are nearly always from the South East. JC.
- 92 An ERA has to be transparent to have teeth. JC
- 93 We should press for more funds to come through the regional structures. JG
- 94 If not all areas wanted an ERA, we could still transfer functions to Government Offices in regions without ERAs to get uniformity. JG
- 95 If you can carve money up 8 ways for functions under a RDA, why not for other things too. JG
- 96 Different areas make sense for different things, Russian dolls - economy possibly sub-regional, relations with Europe and to rest of the world re marketing and promotion regional. Difficulty that don't think we have infrastructure that allows the clear articulation of the strategies at each particular level. BM
- 97 Power down from Whitehall and Europe. PJ
- 98 Real power needed. JC

Kirklees influence

- 99 Where does Kirklees fit in? Bradford is seen as disadvantaged, Leeds a growing economy. What about Kirklees JG
- 100 How we understand and advocate the changing needs of the area is crucial? JG
- 101 In Leeds they say the main benefit of their job growth has been for people outside, like Kirklees. We need to debate what sort of place are we going to be. JG
- 102 A better regional structure could help us get a better view about ourselves. JG

Annex 3

WHITE PAPER: `YOUR REGION, YOUR CHOICE` Response by the MID YORKSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (MYCCI)

Introduction

The Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which has a membership of around 2000 businesses, serves the metropolitan districts of Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. Whenever the timetable allows, MYCCI always carries out as extensive a consultation as possible of its members. In respect of the above White Paper, this has included discussion by its area councils in each district and detailed consideration by a dedicated cross chamber working group and to individual members through e-mail.

Powers of assemblies

MYCCI welcomes the acknowledgement by Government, that decisions such as planning and how to generate economic development are often best dealt with in the region itself. However, MYCCI has reservations about the concept of an elected assembly in relation to the reality of devolution to regional level compared with the present regional chambers/assemblies, bearing in mind that the Government intends to strengthen the role of the latter. Paragraph 3.2 of the White Paper refers to the established history of local government and that there has been no equivalent democratic development at the regional level. The issue is the extent of devolution that will be given to elected assemblies.

The White Paper states in respect of elected assemblies that:

- *The assembly will be responsible for ensuring that the Regional Development Agency properly exercises its functions.*
A regional chamber/assembly already has a monitoring and scrutiny role.
- *The development agency will develop the regional economic strategy, which will then be published by the assembly subject to any modifications it directs the Regional Development Agency to make. The assembly will appoint the Chair and Board members of the Regional development Agency.*
Regional chambers/assemblies already have concordats with their respective RDAs, as is the case for Yorkshire and Humber. But an elected assembly will have to consult the Government on the draft economic strategy and on individual Board appointments. The Government will be able to require changes to the strategy. In other words, the Government will have the final say and the question arises as to when is devolution not devolution.
- *The assembly will be responsible for preparing regional spatial strategies taking over the role from the existing regional planning bodies.*
The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly has already produced the first regional planning guidance and is now carrying out a selective review
- *The assembly will be responsible for issuing the spatial strategies (which will remain the responsibility of the Secretary of State in regions without an elected assembly).*
Does this mean that the Government will not exert the right of having the final say as in the case of economic strategy and RDAs above?

Some of the functions outlined in Chapter 4 of the White paper could be considered to be tenuous with regard to an `influencing role`:

- *The SBS will have to have regard to an assembly's economic strategy.*
It still remains a national agency with an agenda set by the Government

- *Elected assemblies will assume responsibility for drawing up and organising Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action*
The local learning and skills councils still remain part of the national agency - Learning and Skills Council

Transport

- *responsibility for advising central government on the allocation of funding for local transport*
 - *powers to make proposals to the Highways Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority*
 - *being consulted by national organisations such as the Highways Authority and the SRS*
- The question arises as to how much notice will be given of advice given, bearing in mind that whoever holds the purse strings is in a strong position to prevail

Involvement of key stakeholders

While the White Paper suggests that one of four main ways in which stakeholders might be involved directly in the work of regional assemblies is as full members, the Government makes it clear that it does not believe that this would be correct. There is also the difficulty of establishing a definitive list of stakeholders with nominated seats and the practical aspect of representation. How does one person represent the tens of thousands of businesses in the region of all sizes, sectors and location. Interestingly, the local authorities also regard themselves as among the stakeholders. Their members on the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly state that they have enjoyed working alongside other stakeholders including business, on an equal footing with equal voting rights.

Paragraph 7.14 includes the comment:-

We are conscious that stakeholders may be concerned that elected members of assemblies may not give sufficient attention to involving unelected people and that it could be desirable for the Government to set out some basic principles or requirements

MYCCI is certainly among those who would be concerned and with reference to paragraph 7.15, strongly advocate that:-

BASIC PRINCIPLES OR COMMON REQUIREMENTS SHOULD SET OUT IN LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD BE BINDING

With regard to other ways in which stakeholders might be involved directly in the work of the regional assemblies, MYCCI favours a consultative forum on the lines of the Partnership Councils which work with the Welsh Assembly. It also strongly advocates that such a consultative Partnership Council should include forums/sub-councils covering a specific policy area, e.g. one could be a regional business forum for economic issues, which would be as far as practicable, representative of businesses in terms of size, sectors and location in the region. These forums/sub councils should have the right in certain circumstances, to make representations direct to the assembly and not have them `diluted` by the full Partnership Council.

The MYCCI also favours co-option from outside an assembly onto scrutiny committees, which could include members of the Partnership Forum mentioned above. In addition to taking the form of a post-event enquiry, MYCCI advocates that scrutiny committees should also act as a `sounding board` and source of ideas and other views as policy is developed and prior to formal decisions being taken by the executive or the assembly as a whole

MYCCI is doubtful about the proposal for policy advisers and is certainly opposed to appointments of a political nature, which have proliferated in Government departments. There is also the question of special interest bias

Size of assemblies

MYCCI believes that for a region so large and diverse as Yorkshire and Humber, the proposed maximum of 35 members is not sufficient. It notes that the Government in comparison relates numbers to the extent of devolved powers i.e. Wales justifies 60 and Scotland 129.

Electoral system for regional assemblies

In supporting the Additional Member System, MYCCI sincerely hopes that this will lead to the election of some independent candidates, who have virtually become an extinct species in local government, bearing in mind that as they are eligible to stand, sitting councillors will be put forward, backed by their party machine.

Allowing for the one third of members to be elected from a regional list, there are just enough seats out of 35, for each local authority district in Yorkshire and Humber to be represented, bearing in mind that the change which would have to be made in North Yorkshire from county and district authorities to unitary authorities.

There is also the sub-regional dimension in a region as diverse as Yorkshire and Humber. In this context, local Learning and Skills Councils and the local franchises of the Small Business Service operate on a sub-regional basis. The RDA for Yorkshire and Humber (Yorkshire Forward), is basing its funding strategy on not going below the level of sub-regional action plans.

The cost of regional assemblies

The White Paper just gives a lump sum estimate. Presumably, the £5million out of the £25 million for transfer of staff from existing public bodies e.g. the Government Regional Office, represents the level of devolvement and the rest of the staff will be an additional structure for the `monitoring` and `advising` etc., role of an assembly, plus the remuneration of up to 35 members.

Region's ability to raise additional funding

It would seem appropriate that a region voting for an elected assembly should pay something towards its cost. However, there would be the same situation as prevails in local government –namely, that quite a number of voters are not council tax payers and therefore would not be personally affected by the amount of the precept levied to contribute towards the operating costs of an assembly

This applies even more so in respect of an assembly being allowed to set a higher precept within the region to fund additional expenditure for projects over and above the total amount allocated by central government. The MYCCI believes that it is essential for the Government to limit assembly precepts by a capping regime. However, this is not the whole picture, because year after year, local authorities have been imposing council tax increases above the level of inflation, in some cases quite significantly, in order `just to` maintain their “standstill” budgets. When pressed for an explanation, each year the invariable answer is that central government has shifted the balance of funding, so that in effect, more money has to be raised at local level. In this context,

European programmes

MYCCI welcomes the proposal that an elected assembly will take over the role currently performed by Government Regional Offices on EC structural funds and will thereby be able to negotiate directly with the European Commission.

Annex 4

Your Region, Your Choice – response to government on stakeholder involvement in an ERA: Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

Introduction

1. In May 2002, the White Paper – *Your Region, Your Choice* – was published. Whilst seeking general comments, it specifically requested a response on one issue, stakeholder involvement in directly elected regional assemblies. To quote:

“What principles or requirements should be laid down by central government for all regional assemblies, or should assemblies be given a free hand? If there are to be basic principles or common requirements, should these be set out in legislation (which should be binding, but could be inflexible) or in statutory guidance (to which assemblies would only have regard, but which would be more flexible)?”

This note addresses that issue only. It does not look at strengthening existing arrangements, which is being considered in parallel.

The debate within our region

2. The Assembly made some early comments on the White Paper at its May meeting. Since then, these have been developed through a series of public meetings involving around 400 people held across the region. These have been supplemented by several sector specific meetings organised by Assembly members or other regional organisations such as Yorkshire Universities, the Regional Forum (for voluntary and community organisations), the National Housing Federation, Leeds Chamber of Commerce. All included discussion about stakeholder involvement.
3. The stakeholder issue has been addressed specifically by a general meeting to which all Assembly and Commission members were invited; by the Assembly’s Executive Board; by a meeting of the current stakeholders involved in the Assembly i.e. the 13 current social, economic and environmental partners and finally by the Assembly, again, at its AGM in July. This last discussion was based on a commentary and papers prepared as a result of all the previous input.
4. It should be noted that there has been constant concern about what is felt to be the small size of the proposed Assembly. This has inevitably increased interest in the role of stakeholders as a means of involvement in the work of any future Elected Regional Assembly.
5. Another concern has been the lack of practical detail throughout the White Paper. This has led to repeated and frequent requests for clarification.

These are the responses:

6. The region is firmly committed to the involvement of stakeholders in the present indirectly elected assembly and in any directly elected assembly that might develop. There was strong support, in principle, for maintaining and developing this valued and productive involvement.
7. So far as an Elected Regional Assembly is concerned it was recognised that the stakeholder group will expand beyond those currently involved to include local authorities and others and potentially MPs, MEPs and peers.
8. There was also strong support for using the opportunity of a new political structure to actively seek the inclusion of those traditionally excluded from decision making – by gender, age, profile, ethnicity, geographical location and socio-economic background.

9. The need for principles covering stakeholder involvement should be covered by legislation, not statutory guidance. In this way, the role and functions of the directly elected regional assembly should be clear, less open to interpretation and debate.
10. The Government should not however dictate structures for involvement, nor should it be left to a future elected regional assembly to determine. The existing Yorkshire and Humber Assembly should develop a model for stakeholder involvement in any future directly elected regional assembly which is most appropriate to our region. This work has already begun and will continue in the autumn, working with partners from communities and sectors throughout the region.
11. This would be based on these preferred principles which are expressed in order of priority:
 - a. Stakeholders should be fully involved in decision making and decision taking as voting members of the Assembly
 - or
 - b. Stakeholders should be fully involved in decision making as members of the Assembly, but without a vote and fully involved in policy development and scrutiny
 - or
 - c. Stakeholders should work alongside the Assembly offering policy advice, monitoring and carrying out scrutiny, developing new work and providing a mechanism for consultation. These arrangements must be robust and rigorous, recognised "to have teeth".

Stakeholders should also have the opportunity to put their views direct to the Assembly and become involved in the equivalent of select committees, through chairing these and having a vote.

Conclusions

12. In the range of discussions undertaken so far, the messages have been clear within Yorkshire and Humber:
 - There is a need to maintain and develop stakeholder involvement in an elected regional assembly
 - This should have a statutory basis
 - The current Assembly should develop, with partners and within the region, a model that is most appropriate for the needs and ambitions of Yorkshire and Humber.

Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
September 2002

Annex 5

‘Your Region, Your Choice’ – response to government on the proposal for unitary local government: Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

The debate within our region

1. The Government's proposals for directly elected regional assemblies contained in the *Your Region, Your Choice* have been widely discussed by the Assembly and through a series of public meetings involving around 400 people held across the region. These have been supplemented by several sector specific meetings organised by Assembly members or other regional organisations such as Yorkshire Universities, the Regional Forum (for voluntary and community organisations), the National Housing Federation, Leeds Chamber of Commerce and the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Local Authorities. All included discussion about the impact on local authorities and in particular the requirement for unitary local government in those regions voting to have a directly elected regional assembly.
2. This has also been considered by the Assembly's Executive Board, then at the Assembly's Annual General Meeting in July. There are three main issues:
 - Should unitary local government be a prerequisite for directly elected regional government?
 - Who should be taking the decision?
 - Who should be consulted and on what?
3. This response carries forward the principles agreed at the Assembly's AGM.

The need for Local Government re-organisation

4. The White Paper states that almost all of the functions of a directly elected regional assembly would be taken from central government, not local government. Nevertheless the Government's clear view is that in areas which currently have a county and district council, an elected regional assembly would add a third tier of government below national level, which would be unacceptable. The White Paper concludes that a wholly unitary local government structure, put forward after a review by the Boundary Commission for England, should be a requirement in those regions voting for an elected regional assembly.
5. Whilst there has been some sympathy in Yorkshire and Humber for reducing the burden of government (and not adding to the existing number of tiers) strong arguments have been put forward that proposals for strengthening regional governance, with function drawn from central government, should not impact on structures for the delivery of local services and democracy. This leads to the conclusion that local government re-organisation to a wholly unitary structure should not be a prerequisite for directly elected assemblies and the two issues should be decoupled. In practical terms too there are very considerable concerns about the impact on local service delivery. It is inevitable that there would be significant disruption and cost and this needs to be recognised.

Who should decide?

6. The second issue is about who should be making decisions about possible local government reorganisation. In Yorkshire and Humber, 89% of the population is served by unitary local government and 11% by the two tier structure of North Yorkshire County Council and seven District Councils. At our consultation meetings throughout the region, the appropriateness and fairness of 89% of the region's

population being able to determine the local authority structure in an area where they do not live has been consistently rejected.

7. If Government is determined to link a decision on a directly elected regional assembly with a decision on unitary local government, then two separate questions should be posed at referendum to two different constituencies.
 - a) The whole region should be asked whether they want elected regional government.
 - b) The current two tier area (in our case North Yorkshire excluding the unitary area of York) should be asked (as an independent second question) whether they want a review of local government [or as an alternative whether they want the unitary structure of local government as proposed by the Boundary Commission].

Consultation

8. If neither of the above approaches is supported by Government, then at a minimum we are seeking an unequivocal commitment from Government that the Boundary Committee will be absolutely transparent in undertaking its review. There must not be a repeat of Banham – which was damaging both to central and local government and to service delivery.
9. This transparency must include proper consultation on the criteria which the Government is proposing to give to the Boundary Commission as the basis for the review. There must also be consultation on the Boundary Commission's preferred outcome before decisions are taken by Government on the unitary structure to be put forward to the electorate as part of any referendum on a directly elected assembly. [N.B. we have received some reassurance on this point from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister but there is still value in flagging it up here].
10. In conclusion, the Assembly's principles in order of priority are as follows:
 - a) Local government restructuring should be decoupled from decisions about directly elected regional assemblies.
 - b) Two separate questions should be asked of the appropriate constituencies, on elected regional assemblies (the whole region) and restructuring two tier areas (North Yorkshire only).
 - c) Consultation should take place on the criteria the Government proposes giving to the Boundary Commission and on the proposed restructuring before this is put to a vote in a referendum.

Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
September 2002

KIRKLEES SCRUTINY COMMISSION ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

How might an Elected Regional Assembly impact on Kirklees?

Policy issue: Planning & related housing	Name and position: Patrick Auterson, Policy Manager, Planning Services
<p>a) Is this an area where powers and responsibilities will be devolved from central government, or is it one that is likely to draw up from local Councils?</p> <p>There could be some “drawing up” from council level because the RA is proposed to have a role in the statutory planning process, confirming (or not) that the content of local development frameworks (LDFs) (the successors to UDPs) are in conformity with the regional spatial strategy (RSS) which is to replace RPG, and commenting/advising councils on major planning applications. (Under the current system a council will be told by GOYH if it is deemed to have transgressed national or regional policy in its plan proposals or intentions in respect of a planning application. While the RA will get a statutory role in these areas GOYH will still have powers to intervene on behalf of the SoS.)</p>	
<p>b) How well is this activity undertaken at present and are we likely to lose anything if it becomes the responsibility of an elected regional assembly?</p> <p>By and large things work reasonably well – we all know the rules – with the RA in the background, facilitating the development of regional policy. It could be argued that councils will lose a degree of autonomy with the RA intervening where it deems this to be necessary. The positive view is that this process will add value in ensuring consistency in councils’ activities and improving the quality of decision making through tougher invigilation; a negative view is that there could be sterile argument with decisions delayed and an adverse effect on development progress.</p>	
<p>c) Will elected regional assembly involvement quicken or slow down the decision-making process and what will be the cost impact?</p> <p>It seems unlikely that a slowing down could be avoided where a difference of view occurred. Where the two levels are in agreement there could be some delay because of the need to establish this formally. Presumably there will be a cost element because of the need for consultation reports, attendance at meetings etc.</p>	
<p>d) Is the activity likely to be made more or less accountable through an elected regional assembly?</p> <p>If endorsement of decisions by two sets of elected members increases accountability then there will be more accountability. Perhaps the more significant point is that there will be accountability at both levels – at present the “regional interest” is not clearly represented (but it might sometimes be difficult to decide what the regional interest is).</p>	
<p>e) Will we gain or lose expertise under a regional elected assembly and how can partners be involved in this activity?</p> <p>The RA is already building up expertise through the employment of specialist staff. While this is not directly available to councils they are invited to participate in studies etc and can benefit from the outputs. Assuming that this continues and grows there is a prospect of councils gaining access to new expertise. Conversely, if the RA “takes over” specialist areas councils could perhaps lose expertise they currently have – on balance this seems fairly unlikely.</p>	
<p>f) What will KMC need to do to ensure the regional policy is developed effectively and that the people of Kirklees benefit?</p> <p>Be aware of the current agenda; lobby for policy development in areas which are priorities for Kirklees (the key issue); get involved in policy development as a partner where this is possible; take up opportunities to comment.</p>	
<p>g) What will be the biggest impact on people in Kirklees?</p> <p>Perhaps less flexibility in decision making because there will be regional constraints; more positively, perhaps a better share of resources needed to bring about the things residents would like to see. However, as there is rarely unanimity of view about what is best, there may well be no discernible impact.</p>	
<p>Any other comment you wish to make not covered by the above:</p> <p>The above comments are based primarily on the content of the ODPM statements on sustainable communities, housing and planning published on 18 July, not on the regional white paper.</p>	
<p>Return to: jonathan.fry@kirkleesmc.gov.uk</p>	

KIRKLEES SCRUTINY COMMISSION ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

How might an Elected Regional Assembly impact on Kirklees?

Policy issue: Transport

Name and position : Michael Padgett, Chief Engineer, Transportation

a) Is this an area where powers and responsibilities will be devolved from central government, or is it one that is likely to draw up from local Councils?

Full responsibility for the Regional Transport Strategy would be devolved to the assembly from central government as an elected assembly would be able to issue its own Regional Spatial Strategy whereas at the present time the Secretary of State issues Regional Planning Guidance.

If the Planning Green Paper becomes law we shall see the replacement of Unitary Development Plans by Local Development Frameworks (within the framework of the Spatial Strategy), and this implies a considerable transfer from District to region. However, the extent of this is somewhat unclear at the moment, as there are provisions for sub-regional working within the Regional Spatial Strategy but these have not been fully defined yet.

The planning issues of this are perhaps better explained by Patrick Auterson, but given the present well-developed working on Local Transport Plans (which will continue) the impact on transport work by individual districts may be relatively unaffected. LTPs will be required to conform to the Spatial Strategy, but this principle is already established. Elected assemblies will have responsibility for advising Government on allocation of funding for local transport, but it is not clear that this represents a real transfer of funding powers from central Government.

b) How well is this activity undertaken at present and are we likely to lose anything if it becomes the responsibility of an elected regional assembly?

The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly is already the Regional Planning Body and therefore responsible for Regional Planning Guidance and, as an integral part of that, Regional Transport Strategy.

The DfT is producing a guide on best practice in preparing Regional Transport Strategies and this includes several examples of good practice drawn from RPG12, which is the current RPG for this region. One in particular is the development in Yorkshire and Humber of a shared vision set out in *Advancing Together*, which provides a framework for the main regional strategies.

If the recommendations of the Planning Green Paper are adopted, the RPG will become a statutory Regional Spatial Strategy.

Introducing an elected regional assembly would take this process further by making the issuing of the Spatial Strategy a responsibility of the assembly whereas now this power/ responsibility is held by the Secretary of State.

In theory an elected assembly should be able to carry out the transport function better than a non-elected one by virtue of having more powers, but Para. 4.38 of the White Paper appears to offer little new apart from the power to issue Rail Passenger Partnership grants.

c) Will elected regional assembly involvement quicken or slow down the decision-making process and what will be the cost impact?

There might be a speeding-up of the process of preparing RPG as with the present arrangements the Secretary of State carries out consultations and after the Examination-in-Public there is a period in which the Secretary of State's comments are included in the process. In theory it might be quicker if the process were all "in-house" at the Region.

It is difficult to assess any cost impact. The current time which is taken up by the Secretary of State's deliberations allows time for work to be done by civil servants at GOYH. It is probably unlikely that any cost savings would be identified.

However, the White Paper proposes that direct funding will be given to (unelected) assemblies to enable them to carry out their role of Regional Planning Body, whereas at present funding for this activity is routed through the principal planning authorities.

d) Is the activity likely to be made more or less accountable through an elected regional assembly?

The White Paper emphasises that accountability will be improved by having more decisions taken in the region rather than in Whitehall. In respect of transport there would be the transfer of responsibility for spatial strategies, as noted above, but not much else of great significance.

It would appear that an assembly would be able to determine its own structure and way of working, thus offering flexibility. This flexibility can be used to ensure that there is full stakeholder involvement in regional

government.

This should build on the strengths of the current arrangements. At the time of writing, formal agreement was still being sought to establishing a new Regional Transport Forum, whereby the process of determining transport policies would involve agencies such as the Highways Agency, the Strategic Rail Authority and Railtrack, in addition to representatives of the transport providers and environmental groups.

In terms of engaging stakeholders and indeed the general public, this would depend on the approach to consultative working adopted by a future assembly.

e) Will we gain or lose expertise under a regional elected assembly and how can partners be involved in this activity?

This question is somewhat difficult to interpret. It is unlikely that there will be many areas where the assembly maintains a pool of expertise such that Kirklees becomes wholly dependent on it. With regard to transport it appears likely that Kirklees will have to maintain its own competence as a key player in the West Yorkshire LTP. There will be areas of specialist expertise at the Region where Kirklees may be able to benefit by drawing on those specialist skills.

The involvement of partners in transport is very important – particularly since most public transport is now provided by the private sector and if policies and strategies are to be made to work these private sector actors have to be persuaded to reconcile their commercial considerations with the Regional Transport Strategy.

f) What will KMC need to do to ensure the regional policy is developed effectively and that the people of Kirklees benefit?

Kirklees Council will have to develop strong working relationships with any elected assembly and open up channels of communication to advocate Kirklees interests at the Region and ensure that regional-level activities are understood and shared by the Council and the residents of Kirklees.

g) What will be the biggest impact on people in Kirklees?

Hopefully there would be some positive impacts in the sense that an elected assembly with statutory transport planning powers should have greater influence over the investment decisions of the SRA and the Highways Agency. This should make it possible for stronger representations to be made in respect of issues such as the strong southern bias in the SRA's Strategic Plan.

Any other comment you wish to make not covered by the above:

One overall comment is that for transport there does not appear to be a significant difference between the powers of an elected assembly compared to one which is not elected. Para. 4.38 of the White Paper refers to "important tools" which elected assemblies will be given to help them to deliver their transport strategies, but most of these are powers to make representation which in practice already exist.

HMP 10.9.02.

Return to: jonathan.fry@kirkleesmc.gov.uk

KIRKLEES SCRUTINY COMMISSION ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

How might an Elected Regional Assembly impact on Kirklees?

Policy issue: RURAL

Name and position: Maggie Mellor KMC EDS

a) Is this an area where powers and responsibilities will be devolved from central government, or is it one that is likely to draw up from local Councils?

Devolved from Central Government

b) How well is this activity undertaken at present and are we likely to lose anything if it becomes the responsibility of an elected regional assembly?

Activity very disjointed at present with responsibility for rural policy and funding streams shared amongst a number of agencies – DEFRA, GOYH, Countryside Agency, KMC and Yorkshire Forward.

Much to gain by integrated approach which both recognises the special issues facing rural communities and economies whilst also ensuring rural areas are not treated less favourably in mainstream activity (rural proofing).

c) Will elected regional assembly involvement quicken or slow down the decision-making process and what will be the cost impact?

Difficult to assess the impact. Depends largely on the processes and delivery of decisions. An ERA should simplify access to policy and funds and prevent enquiries being passed from agency to agency. It should also lead to consistency across the region.

Both DEFRA (formerly MAFF) and the RDA have recently undergone comprehensive reorganisation including changes in Departmental responsibility which has led to delays and communication difficulties. A further reorganisation to an ERA will no doubt have an adverse short-term effect on efficiency as the new ways of working are implemented. This comes on the back of a difficult year for rural communities suffering the effects of FMD – despite there being no confirmed outbreaks in the District.

d) Is the activity likely to be made more or less accountable through an elected regional assembly?

More accountable.

e) Will we gain or lose expertise under a regional elected assembly and how can partners be involved in this activity?

Regional Rural Affairs Forum (RRAF) will have a directly comparable body to deal with in the ERA, which will strengthen both partners. West Yorks. has a representative on the RRAF elected through AWYA (Cllr G Carter, Calderdale). The RRAF reports to the National Rural Affairs Forum, chaired by the Minister. Traditionally, KMC has centred rural economic activity around the Pennine Rural Priority Area (Colne Valley West and Holme Valley North along with 4 Calderdale wards). The PRPA attracted ringfenced funding to deliver economic outputs in the area from Yorkshire Forward. Under new YF priorities this arrangement is being phased out alongside the development of new arrangements. A new sub-regional rural partnership is being explored with a view to maximising involvement and funding from all sources to deliver a programme of actions and interventions across the sub-region. The aim is to develop local action in the context of the RRAF – this group would need to accommodate rural policy from ERA. Cllr Chris Harpin (Denby Dale) and an EDS officer will attend the West Yorks Rural Forum.

f) What will KMC need to do to ensure the regional policy is developed effectively and that the people of Kirklees benefit?

Kirklees has a significant rural dimension. At least 45,000 people (11% of totals) live in “non built-up parts” of the District (Kirklees CDU). Firms in rural areas contribute around 21,500 jobs to the local economy (13% of totals).

Four Wards are regarded as rural – Colne Valley West, Holme Valley North, Holme Valley South and Denby Dale. They have a combined population of around 61,000 (16% of Kirklees totals) and cover 20,236 hectares (nearly half of Kirklees’ 41,000 hectares).

Two other Wards in South Kirklees – Kirkburton and Golcar (formerly Colne Valley East) with a combined population of 31,600 – are semi-rural.

The southern Holme Valley is one of the least densely populated areas in Kirklees. Much of its southern and western edges are open, uninhabited Pennine moorland of outstanding natural beauty and high environmental value. The western fringe is within the boundary of the Peak District National Park.

Despite the rural nature of the area there are significant centres of population – Marsden, Meltham, Holmfirth, Denby Dale and Slaithwaite – with a tradition of manufacturing that goes back to the Industrial Revolution. Despite job losses and mill/factory closures over the past two decades, 36% of jobs in the four rural Wards are in manufacturing against a Kirklees average of 26%.

There are pockets of real deprivation in other parts of rural Kirklees – Denby Dale and Holme Valley South in particular – but they tend to be overlooked since they are often next to areas of real affluence and the patterns are less noticeable at Ward level. Access to jobs and services are key issues.

KMC will need to promote the rural areas of the district positively, as there is the danger that North (and East?) Yorks. will dominate the rural agenda. Often rural issues are centred around farming and tourism, which only form a small part of the picture in Kirklees.

The Countryside Agency and others are developing better ways of measuring rural deprivation – however, even they regard metropolitan areas as predominantly urban.

g) What will be the biggest impact on people in Kirklees?

A more coherent approach to policy which affects a significant proportion of the population.

Any other comment you wish to make not covered by the above:

Risks:

- ERA have little interest in rural affairs, leaving it to RRAF, resulting in policy but no action. cont'd.....
- ERA concentrates on 'deep' rural issues less relevant to KMC
- loss of local focus – rural issues often best identified and dealt with at local level
- difficult to make the case for rural deprivation even at local level. Regional body may not wish to examine the case at less than ward level
- Local elected members less interested in 'rural' than 'urban' affairs

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