

REPORT TO CABINET - MAY 2008
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EAST MIDLANDS (LGEM)
EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (EMRA)

INTRODUCTION

Just over a year ago and prior to being elected to serve as a Gedling Borough Councillor, the terms LGEM and EMRA were only vaguely familiar acronyms to me. After being appointed the Boroughs Representative to these assemblies I decided to give myself 6 months to familiarise myself with the purpose and operation of LGEM and EMRA. Since then it has undoubtedly been, and still is, a massive (but very interesting) learning curve for me.

Appendix A and B of these notes briefly outline the purpose and function of LGEM and EMRA.

LGEM

The general assembly of LGEM meet twice a year. Each meeting lasts about 2 hours which hardly seems long enough considering the length of the Agenda. There are other meetings, sub committees etc which meet on a regular basis to conduct LGEM's day to day business. As yet, I am not a member of any of these working groups or committees.

It became clear at the first meeting I attended that the Conservatives were effectively in control for the first time following their successes in the May 2007 local elections. Consequently the Chairmen of the Assembly and Committee/Working Group Chairman and Vice Chairman are all now Conservative. It will be interesting to see how LGEM develops under their guidance.

Following the announcement to disband EMRA and all its implications has cast somewhat of a shadow over LGEM and its future roll. There are moves underway now to reinvent LGEM (some call it 'Son of LGEM'?) but as yet no firm decisions have been made. Hopefully in the next few weeks the future will become a little clearer.

EMRA

The general assembly of EMRA meet 4 times a year. Similarly to LGEM, each meeting lasts about 2 hours and again seems hardly long enough considering the size of the Agenda. The structure of EMRA is also similar to that of LGEM with working groups and committees meeting on a regular basis to conduct the day to day business. Again as yet, I am not a member of any working group or committee.

The first meeting I attended was just after the announcement by the Government that it was to disband regional assemblies. On the day, the meeting followed the agenda but it was understandable that the Agenda items were secondary; all the talk was about the future and what it holds and to some extent has been so at subsequent meetings of EMRA.

As I understand it, EMRA ceases to function sometime in 2010 with EMDA taking over the majority of its functions. There has however been some suggestion that Scrutiny will be going to LGEM?

SUMMARY

It is difficult after half a dozen meetings to make any sort of meaningful assessment of LGEM and EMRA or any significant contribution to the meetings, especially with the large numbers of delegates attending and the time allowed for each meeting. I am not aware of and it does not concern me how my predecessors approached the meetings, whether it was just to attend and vote on party lines or to take a more active roll on various committees and working groups. What I am sure about is that I see my roll as making sure Gedling Borough Council get full value for their membership. To this end (and if the Leader and Chief Executive agree) I intend to try and get involved with the work undertaken by some of the committees and sub groups. I would also like to think that if some of the delegates don't know anything about Gedling or where it is, they soon will!

I have thought long and hard on the best way to keep people informed and because these assemblies and meetings cover a broad range of topics /activities I have decided the best way to do this is to make available my own Regional Government file and notes available to anyone who is interested.

All the meetings that I have attended are minuted and are available for study on the appropriate web sites as is the projects and work currently being undertaken by these assemblies. I also keep a hard copy of the minutes together with any relevant papers issued. In the future, any 'non confidential' information email will be circulated to interested members.

My own 'Regional Government' file is split into two parts i.e.

1. A rolling summary of the meetings I have attended

These are my notes for each meeting I have attended and summarised into a single 'Rolling' document which will grow as time goes by

2. The Appendices

Each Appendix refers to a particular meeting or event and is cross indexed to the rolling summary.

Rather than try to précis all the information into a single (or two) page report, I feel that this approach gives the flexibility of a brief summary together with further information readily at hand for a more in depth investigation if required. To this end the attached notes are only the Rolling Summary to date.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EAST MIDLANDS (LGEM)

LGEM is a body established and managed by local government in the East Midlands, which provides services to all East Midlands' councils. It is managed by an executive committee of councillors and accountable, through them, to all its member authorities (currently all authorities in the East Midlands).

Local Government East Midlands is the representative body for councils in the region. All 46 local authorities are in membership. LGEM provides a democratic voice for councils, and for the residents and businesses they serve, to regional agencies such as the Government Office and East Midlands Development Agency – and also to government. It advocates the shared interests of local authorities far more effectively than individual councils could do alone.

Its key employees have worked in local government and maintain close professional links with officers and Members in local councils and with public service partners at regional and national level. These include the IDeA, LGA, Local Government Employers, Government Office for the East Midlands, the East Midlands Development Agency, the East Midlands Regional Assembly, the East Midlands Regional Centre of Excellence and local universities.

LGEM claims an understanding of the functions undertaken by local authorities, the circumstances they work in and their priority improvement needs.

LGEM aims to help fulfil an authority's ambitions by

- Providing support and opportunities for improvement
- Speaking up for local government on the regional stage.

Regional agencies seeking to engage the local government sector usually turn to LGEM as a gateway to the whole sector. This interface is one of the main benefits which LGEM provides to its member authorities. We in turn engage councils through our extensive networks of advisers and contacts in authorities.

LGEM staff work with other regional agencies, helping them understand and work effectively with local authorities, particularly on new policy developments.

LGEM OBJECTIVES

LGEM Vision - Achieve excellence and support improvement in the East Midlands

LGEM Mission - To enable East Midlands Local Authorities to lead in the delivery of excellent public services

LGEM works with local authorities to introduce modern working practices across a broad range of disciplines and service areas. These include corporate and departmental structure reviews, development and training, performance management, partnership working, human resources, marketing, communications, public relations, job evaluation, salary reviews and recruitment. LGEM also provides a bespoke event management service.

LGEM was originally formed through the amalgamation of three former bodies which delivered employment, planning and training services to the region's 46 local authorities. Each authority can be a full member of LGEM and elected members from those councils serve on a range of committees and forums, including the Executive Committee, which is chaired by Cllr Roger Begy, a member of Rutland County Council. LGEM also provides the infrastructure for the region's Employers'

Organisation, which is chaired by Cllr Ian Fleetwood, a member of Lincolnshire County Council. There are also Associate members, organisations that work alongside local government, such as police authorities, fire services, and town and parish councils.

Voting

Authorities shall be entitled to cast votes at meetings of the Association as follows:-

- (a) In areas with both County and District Councils each District Council shall have 1 vote and the County Council shall have votes equal to the number of District Councils in its area.
- (b) Derby, Leicester and Nottingham Councils shall each have 5 votes and Rutland Council shall have 2.

In the case of an equality of votes the Chair of the meeting shall have the casting vote in addition to any votes he or she may be entitled to cast as a member.

NOTE: The above information is taken from the LGEM website. Further details of the services LGEM provide can be found at www.lg-em.gov.uk

EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (EMRA)

The East Midlands Regional Assembly is one of eight established in England (outside London). It is responsible for scrutinising the development and delivery, by the region's economic development agency (EMDA) of a successful economic strategy for the East Midlands.

The East Midlands Regional Assembly is made up of 111 members: 70 nominated from the 46 local authorities in the East Midlands, 35 from the wider social and business community and the region's six MEPs. It makes a determined effort to ensure the full and active participation of representatives of all the region's citizens, especially those often under-represented in public life, including women, ethnic minorities, young people and disabled people.

Regional Planning - as Regional Planning Bodies, Assemblies are responsible for preparing statutory Regional Spatial Strategies including Regional Transport Strategies. This work involves developing, monitoring and reviewing strategic planning and transport policies. The final decisions rest with the Secretary of State

Regional Housing - they are responsible for taking an overview of the housing markets in their regions, for producing the Regional Housing Strategies (Regional strategies) and for advising Ministers on the distribution of resources to support the new supply of affordable housing (delivered through the Housing Corporation) improvements to existing stock (through support to local housing authorities), and the refurbishment and new provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

As the regional planning body, the Assembly advises the Government on strategic land use planning and transport issues and has responsibility for the preparation and review of regional planning guidance, taking into account the views of local authorities, organisations and residents.

It plays a leading role in ensuring that the East Midlands is positively engaged with the European Union, building mutually beneficial relations with the bodies and regions of the EU and ensuring maximum benefit for the economy, environment and social fabric of the East Midlands.

Regional Assemblies have four main roles.

They have been designated under the provisions of the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 as the body a Regional Development Agency (RDA) must consult in the preparation of its regional economic strategy.

They have similarly been designated in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA) as the body the Secretary of State recognises as the Regional Planning Body (RPB) for the region with a duty to prepare the regional spatial strategy which includes the regional transport strategy and the regional waste strategy.

They also have a role as the voice of the region and can prepare regional strategies such as regional sustainable development frameworks (RSDFs), taking the lead role in some regions. Further details can be found on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs web site.

Meetings are held four times a year at PERA in Melton Mowbray and are open to the public.

The current form and function of the Regional Assemblies

Voluntary, multi-party and inclusive Regional Assemblies have been established in each of the eight English regions outside London, building on the partnership working arrangements that already existed in some regions between local authorities and regional partners. Assemblies operate within the same boundaries of the Government Offices in the regions and the RDAs. Their constitutions vary from region to region.

Following recommendations made by Kate Barker in her 'Review of Housing Supply' 2004, by September 2006, all Regional Assemblies had accepted Ministers' invitation to take responsibility for the work of the Regional Housing Boards and thereby build on the synergies of their work as Regional Planning Bodies.

Regional Assemblies are bodies of their regions and the Government takes the view that parties involved must be able to agree arrangements that they believe best reflect the particular circumstances of their region: it does not impose a uniform rigid framework for the form of each Assembly.

Who do the Assemblies represent?

Each Assembly strives to be representative of the region it serves. Under guidance issued by the Secretary of State, this representation comprises up to 70% local authority members, including National Park Authorities and at least 30% drawn from regional stakeholders, including higher and further education, the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, chambers of commerce, the small business sector, parish and town councils, the National Health Service, voluntary organisations, Learning and Skills Councils, regional cultural consortia, rural and environmental groups and other regional stakeholders.

What do Regional Assemblies do?

All Assemblies perform the same four core activities, they may also engage in other work according to regional circumstances and priorities:

Advocacy and Policy Development - representing the voices of regions to Whitehall and European institutions. Assemblies provide a strategic focus for integrating regional strategy development and partnership working

Scrutinising the work of Regional Development Agencies. Some Assemblies also scrutinise other public sector bodies

Do Regional Assemblies work with other bodies?

Partnership working is at the centre of Regional Assembly activities. In each region the Assembly has established a network of working arrangements involving the full spectrum of local authority, social, economic and environmental partners.

English Regions Network

The English Regions Network is the umbrella organisation for the Regional Assemblies. The current ERN chair is Councillor Keith Mitchell, Chairman of South East England Regional Assembly.

To represent the collective view of Regional Assemblies to Government and other key institutions

To encourage new thinking and research on the regional agenda

To share best practice and facilitate inter regional networking amongst Assemblies

Regional Assembly Grant Support

When first designated Regional Assemblies were reliant for funding on subscriptions/contributions from local government and regional stakeholders. From 2001 the Government provided funding to enhance Assemblies' role of scrutinising the RDAs and to strengthen regional accountability. Further grant became payable when assemblies assumed their Regional Planning Body responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Regional Housing Boards. Assemblies may continue to receive financial support from local authorities or other bodies to support their work.

Past and current grants are as follows:

		£	£	£	£	£
	2001-02	200203	200304	200405	2005-06	2006-07
North East	500,000	600,000	1,408,000	1,708,000	1,708,000	1,899,000
North West	500,000	600,000	1,837,000	2,536,000	2,536,000	2,637,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	500,000	600,000	1,655,000	1,923,000	1,923,000	2,064,000
West Midlands	500,000	600,000	1,671,000	2,071,000	2,071,000	2,218,210
East Midlands	500,000	600,000	1,631,000	2,056,000	2,056,000	2,197,000
East	500,000	600,000	1,874,000	2,112,000	2,112,000	2,353,000
South East	500,000	600,000	2,186,000	3,280,000	3,280,000	3,381,000
South West	500,000	600,000	1,613,000	2,101,000	2,101,000	2,289,500
English Regions Network	1000,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	240,000
Total (£)	5,000,000	5,000,000	14,075,000	17,987,000	17,987,000	19,278,710

NOTE: The above information is taken from the EMRA website. Further details of the services EMRA provide can be found at www.emra.gov.uk

LGEM/EMRA ROLLING SUMMARY

1. MEETINGS ATTENDED

LGEM – Annual General Meeting – 26th June 2007

EMRA – Annual General Meeting – 27th July 2007

EMRA - Regional & Communities Policy Board – 11 September 2007

LGEM – Special Meeting – 29th October 2007

EMRA – General Meeting – 2nd November 2007

LGEM – General Meeting – 26th November 2007

Planning for Improvements and Efficiencies (*Developing the Regional Strategy*)

29 November 2007, Workshops – 7th December 2007

EMRA – General Meeting – 1st February 2008

I missed the EMRA General Meeting held on 25th May 2007 due to a mix-up following the Borough Elections.

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2. LGEM – MEETING SUMMARY TO DATE

Annual General Meeting – 26th June 2007

This was the first meeting I attended as the Boroughs representative. It soon became very clear that since the 2007 Borough Elections there had been a significant change in the political membership. The Conservatives now had the largest group and were in overall control.

As expected, this being the Annual General Meeting, the business was mostly confined to the election of chairs, vice chairs and membership of groups.

The most notable event of the meeting was when the newly elected Chairman, Councillor Roger Begy, reminded members of the review by the Constitution Working Group and then recommends the adoption of the revised Constitution to the Annual General Meeting. Following a vote, it was agreed that the revised Constitution be adopted. The Labour Councillors were clearly unhappy about the situation and left the meeting.

The meeting concluded with a presentation by Lord Sandy Bruce Lockhart entitled 'Our Future – A Prospectus for Local Government'

RS-Appendix 1. - The confirmed minutes of this meeting and the associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

October 2007 - A New Regional Architecture?

During the early part of October, a paper surfaced which had been prepared by the 9 Principal Authorities in the East Midlands entitled PROPOSALS FOR A NEW REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE, supposedly in response to the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. In essence the paper indicated that the county and city councils were committed towards creating a powerbase for themselves at the expense of the District authorities. It was also obvious that there had been little or no consultation with the forty plus district

councils in the region. To say the least, the paper was not well received by the district councils who strongly disputed the proposals. The difference of opinion by the districts led to a special meeting of LGEM being called for 29th October 2007.

Special Meeting – 29th October 2007

Apart from the usual Attendance/Apologies and Minutes of the previous meeting the only two items on the agenda up for discussion was

‘Regional Improvement Arrangements Report’ alternative arrangements submitted on behalf of all County and Unitary Councils. Item 3.5 and 3.6 in the Minutes (Appendix 3) list the recommendations and subsequent vote on the report.

‘Proposal for a new Regional Architecture’. Item 4.5 and 4.6 in the Minutes (Appendix 3) list the recommendations and subsequent vote on the proposal.

Clearly the purpose of this meeting was to give districts the chance to air their views on the proposals put forward by the county and city councils.

RS-Appendix 2. – Proposals for a New Regional Architecture and the confirmed Minutes of this Meeting and the associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

General Meeting – 26th November 2007

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Gillian Merron MP entitled – The Role of the Regional Minister and engagement with local government

Again, Apart from the usual Attendance/Apologies, Minutes of the previous meeting and Any Other business the only item on the agenda up for discussion was

‘Report from Cllr Roger Begy – Chairman of LGEM

The Chairman reported on the meetings held since the 29th October and reminded the members of the proposals agreed at that meeting and put forward the following recommendations.

- That the General Meeting agrees an indicative budget setting a subscription rate from 2008/09 of a maximum of £9,500.
- That the Executive Committee be delegated to agree the business plan for the streamlined LGEM.
- That funding is sought from EMIP under spends to resource the recruitment of the Director of the RIEP
- That a revised constitution be developed which reflects the new arrangements for ratification by the General Meeting.

A vote was taken on the recommendations which were unanimously accepted

RS-Appendix 3. – The essential papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

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EMRA – MEETING SUMMARY TO DATE

Annual General Meeting – 27th July 2007

A few weeks prior to this meeting the government announced its intention to disband Regional assemblies and unfortunately this resulted in a major talking point for all the members to the extent of pushing the agenda for the meeting into the background.

This being the annual general meeting the initial business was confined to the election of chairs, vice chairs and membership of groups.

Following the Questions to the Chair item Cllr David Parsons presented the Annual Report 2006/2007 and concluded with a policy statement to members regarding the Sub National Review. (See supplement 1 to these notes). It was then agreed that a recess be held in order for parties to discuss the statement. After the recess the Policy statement was discussed at length, some minor amendments made and put to the vote (63 For, 12 Against, 2 Abstentions.) Addendum 1 to these notes is the Policy Statement which was put to the vote.

Jane Todd summarised the report issued by the Government Office for the East Midlands.

The Assembly received the following items for consideration

- European Session – Cllr David Parsons
 - Glenis Willmott MEP
 - Derek Clarke MEP
 - Bill Dunn MEP

A Report of the Director of Public Health for the East Midlands – Judy Jones
Mori Poll presentation – Andrew Collinge, MORI

The Assembly received the following for information

- Regional Policy Board – John Freeman
- Regional Housing, Planning & Transport Joint Board – Cllr Jim Harker
- Regional Scrutiny Board Report – Martin Traynor

During the afternoon there was a poorly attended Training and Development Induction Seminar covering the range of work of the Assembly.

RS-Appendix 4. – The confirmed Minutes of this Meeting and the associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

General Meeting – 2nd November 2007

Following the Questions to the Chairman there were the assembly reports from Housing, Planning and Transport Joint Board The Chairman of EMRA
Regional Scrutiny Board
Regional and Communities Policy Board

External reports also received

GOEM

Director of Public Health for the East Midlands
European Issues

There were also two presentations but because the meeting was running short of time they were severely curtailed. The presentations were

Eurostar – Seth Williams
Olympic 2012 – Tracy Croft

RS-Appendix 5. – The associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

General Meeting – 1st February 2008

Following the Questions to the Chairman there were the assembly reports from

Chair of the East Midlands Regional Assembly
Sub National Review Update Statement for discussion
Regional Scrutiny Board
Regional Housing, Planning and Transport Joint Board
Regional and Communities Policy Board

External reports also received

GOEM

Director of Public Health for the East Midlands including presentation of the Strategy Review and Annual Report

European Issues – Members of the Committee of the Regions and Members of the European Parliament.

There were 2 presentations to the BBC East Midlands Sports Awards Winners 2007, Sam Hynd the Junior Disabled Sports Personality 2007 – a swimmer from Nottingham and Tom Styles the Disabled Sports Personality 2007 – tennis player from Leicestershire.

There was a demonstration by Paul Clapham, Enviros Consulting of 'e-learning Waste Planning'

The meeting concluded with a statement by the EMRA Chief Executive Nigel Rudd. He informed delegates of his resignation from EMRA and went on to thank all the staff and delegates who had helped him during his employment with EMRA. He announced his successor Stuart Young.

RS-Appendix 6. – The associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

EMRA Regional & Communities Policy Board – 11 September 2007

I have been interested for some time to find out what goes off at the sub groups of the assembly and when Cllr David Sprason let it be known that he could not attend this meeting and he was looking for a substitute I took up the opportunity.

The meeting followed the format where staff and members reported back on the work being done by the board. The meeting was interesting but because I had no real knowledge of the developments and work being reported on (other than that shown in the minutes) I really had nothing to offer other than an opinion or asking the odd question

RS-Appendix 7. – The confirmed Minutes of this Meeting and the associated papers and notes issued prior to the meeting.

Planning for Improvements and Efficiencies (*Developing the Regional Strategy*) - 29 November 2007, Workshops – 7th December 2007, 8th January 2008 and 16th January 2008

I was invited to attend the initial Meeting on the 29th November 2007 along with Sue Sale. The meeting was hosted by Chris Alison director EMCE, Roger Latham the then Chief Executive from Nottinghamshire County Council and facilitators from RSe Consultants. As I understand it, the purpose of the meeting was to inform delegates that the government had allocated a pot of money for the region and in order for it to be released they needed certain assurances. It was therefore requisite that the local authorities in our region needed to develop and present an Improvement and Efficiency Strategy for Local Government in the East Midlands. (According to Chris Alison, there was no other option, if the money was to be made available, we as a region had to comply and produce a strategy?). The meeting lasted 2 hours and by the end I have to admit I was utterly confused as to what they were really trying to do.

A series of Workshops were held across the region and I attended the Nottingham Workshop on 7th December 2007. The objectives were:-

1. Identify and prioritise key issues in relation to improvement and efficiency for individual authorities and the sub-region.
2. Explore and prioritise how best to respond to those issues.
3. Meet with colleagues to achieve an agreed position on improvement and efficiency in a fast moving environment.

The results of the regional workshops were collated and a draft strategy was presented to members. Two further meetings followed (8th and 16th January 2008) where the proposals were fine tuned into the final document for presentation to Government.

If I remember rightly, I was the only elected member who attended the Nottingham Workshop. In my opinion, much of the work done on the day was really aimed at Council Officers and employees rather than elected members.

I am also of the opinion that the whole exercise was nothing more than a consultant's paradise; no doubt it satisfied the Government. I am sure the proposals will ultimately be consigned to some file or other and conveniently forgotten.

Nothing in the document is new or earth shattering. The proposals, solutions, action plans etc are standard techniques which can be found in any managerial textbook. I feel sure that a few senior managers sat around a table could have produced a similar document (and probably a better one?) in 2 to 3 Days. A costly exercise?

RS-Appendix 8. – An Improvement and Efficiency Strategy for Local Government in the East Midlands 2008/11. A Framework for Sector Led Improvements. Sixth Draft 1st February 2008.