

**South West Observatory  
Operational and Research Group Meeting**

Thursday 22 January 2009  
Western Power Training Centre, Taunton

**MINUTES**

**1. Attendance**

Donald Barr	SWRDA
Rose Bird	GOSW
Jules Channer	Culture Module
Nick Chase	SWO CU
Charlotte Hopley	West of England LIN
Anne Gray	Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole
Carrie-Anne Hiscock	Planning Module/SWRA
Karen McDonald	Glos CC/LIN
Paul Moore	ONS
Andy Dean	SLIM
Mark Painter	Devon LIN
Alistair Gordon	SWENVO
Shane Vallance	SWRDA
Vinita Nawathe (Chair)	SWO CU
Brenda Weston	Equality SW
Alex Knibb	SWPHHO

**Apologies**

Annette Carr	SWENVO
Ray Perrins	SWO CU
Allison McCaig	BEM/RDA
Mark Dancox	SW PHO
Ben Bolton	LINC
Jane Hiller	Somerset SIne

**2. Welcome and introductions**

VN asked the group to introduce themselves and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed. The action matrix was then discussed.

**Actions: See Matrix**

**Action 1.** VN informed the group that due to the work needed to secure future funding the focus for this action would be move to 2009/10.

**Action 2.** AG stated that this work had been completed and would be evidenced by what was seen in the forthcoming 'What's Changed' report and the update to the State of the South West web report. AG would then indicate to the group what lessons had been learned from the exercise.

**Action 3.** VN asked the LINs representatives present what the status of organisation was regarding roadshows and seminars for 2009. CH indicated that WoE were arranging an event in February and would supply details nearer the time when a firm date had been agreed. KMCD informed the group that Gloucestershire LIN were holding an event on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March and had approached both BEM and SLIM for support. The theme is around the SNR. It is thought Wiltshire will hold an event in March, date is to be confirmed.

**Action 4.** NC informed the group that he had contacted Marion Cooper who is undertaking work for the RDA around how people perceive the future demographic of the South West. He had also attended the steering group for this work. DB explained the basis of the work as he is also involved with the steering group. For further information please contact either NC or DB also see the following link

(<http://www.fountainpark.com/en/>)

NC had circulated the notes of the previous meeting of ORG and set up a further meeting of those interested to look at the evolving project on demography of the South West being led by Paul Brown of SWPHO. This meeting has taken place and notes were circulated to attendees.

**Action 5.** NC has circulated the results from the 2008 Observatory stakeholder survey to the ORG group. There were no comments received.

**Action 6.** RB had sent the draft document for a timeline of events and data releases etc. to NC. NC had circulated to the group and received some responses as to the usefulness of the document. There was a broadly positive response. VN indicated that the calendar functionality of the new SWO CMS may provide a suitable vehicle for this tool.

#### **4. SLIM Local Area Data – led by Andy Deane - SLIM**

AD gave a presentation overview of an aspect of the SLIM website. The focus for this area on the web is on Labour Market in respect of Local Area Agreements. This area of the web site is set up so that the data behind the LAA indicators is downloadable in a spreadsheet with all previous years data where available. AD asked of the group how this approach and provision of data might be improved and what additional datasets might also be added. VN asked the group how the 'network' might help further with the development of information provision. BW raised the issue of the ability to disaggregate data to a useful enough geography whilst still retain its statistical integrity. A particular data set giving problems was that associated with PSA15. This information, relating to the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, age, sexual orientation, has disaggregation problems and local authorities are finding it difficult to assess PSA15 with the available data. Robust data is required by LAs to enable them to fulfill their legal duties and currently the data available for this indicator are not deemed fit for purpose. RB asked what the LAs currently did to fill this data gap. BW indicated that they were doing little as the data was inherently difficult to attain. CAH informed the group that LAs do collect data themselves where it is difficult to obtain from the usual sources but this is done on an ad hoc basis and varied considerably authority to authority. VN thanked AD for the presentation and encouraged members of the group to make use of the existing data and to inform SLIM if they had any suggestions for improvements to content.

#### **5. Discussion on implications of SNR and economic downturn – led by Vinita Nawathe**

VN introduced this item and asked the group if there were any further questions leading on from the morning discussion at RIG. RB informed the group that with RIEP funding an individual would be commissioned to assess the needs of the Local Authorities. K McD is involved with the Economic Assessment Duty of the LAs and stated that it was difficult to assess what data was required and how this data should be analysed so as to inform the assessment. The draft guidance was still quite vague in a number of areas. DB stated that Swindon BC had already undertaken an economic assessment and that lessons could be learned from their experience. SV asked whether the South West should wait for the published final guidance or begin to assess how an economic assessment should be done and at least be consistent across the region. Anne G was aware that a number of LAs had already begun the process and asked whether the Observatory would be consolidating the data that was required and what would be done about the gaps in data? VN stated that we need consistent agreement on how to fill the gaps and what if any information should be commissioned.

DB asked how a 'structured dialogue' might be entered into with the LAs? VN suggested that a steering group could be set up to approach a wide audience as there could be other organisations thinking about how to address information and process shortfalls. DB stated

that any evidence should be included in the regional evidence base and accessed by all relevant parties.

K McD stated that Gloucs. were currently looking at data linkages to the economic downturn to see if there are signs in the data that correlate to changes being observed. This interpretation will be fed back to processes and services. Also looking at information held in archives relating to previous economic recessions to see if this will assist.

BW indicated that Equality South West was willing to help with the provision of data relating to equalities for the LINs. MP said Devon were working with claimant count data on a monthly basis to monitor changes. AK was asked whether the PHO were undertaking specific work related to the recession that would be useful to LAs. He replied that he was not aware of any such work but would report back to the group once he had made a full assessment.

**Action: Anne G to email network to assess how potential data gaps in economic assessment are being addressed**

**Action: SV to send details of regional economic task group to ORG**

**Action: AK to assess whether PHO is producing and data that could assist LAs in EAD**

## **6. Observatory network forward planning - led by Vinita Nawathe**

VN informed the group that funding has been agreed by the RDA for those elements of the SWO funded by the RDA for the next three years. Funding for the LINs network activities will be via the Core Unit (CU). Claims forms will be managed by the CU which will effectively be the secretariat for the network with some analytical capacity.

SV asked whether the LINs are to be involved directly in the production of an economic assessment.

- Devon – not involved directly, EDO is taking lead
- Gloucs. – very involved with the production of the assessment
- Dorset – nothing formalised as to who will be responsible for the EAD

VN asked the group what the priority areas would be for the following year and 3 years.

AG – looking to develop a single environmental evidence base

MP (Devon) – Local Government reorganisation and current economic climate

SLIM – Current economic downturn and demographic analysis

Culture SW – Evidence for DCMS and the Single Regional Strategy

ONS – Integration with SWO website and sector performance analysis

Dorset – Economic Assessment Duty

GOSW – Single Regional Strategy

RDA – Single Regional Strategy

Equality SW – Get equality on organisations agenda

Gloucs. - Economic Assessment Duty

K McD asked whether the current LAAs would be reviewed in light of the MAAs being developed. RB stated that they would be reviewed annually until they finished. CAAs will not ask for information outside of what the Audit Commission asks for.

VN suggested that meetings of the LINs and the Modules should take place in the near future.

**Action: VN to propose meeting dates for LINs and Modules in February and March**

**7. Roadshows and Seminars for 2008/09**

See action matrix

**8. Self help / AOB**

DB informed the group that the RDA economic analysis team will form the basis of the Business and Economy Module and this will be run from within the RDA

**13. Review of Actions/Close of meeting**

VC thanked the group for their attendance.

**Date of next meeting – Thursday 23 April 2009**