

Draft Minutes

Operational & Research Group

Meeting held on Thursday 15 October 2009 in Taunton

Attendance

Vinita Nawathe (Chair)	SWO CU
Rose Bird	GOSW
Hollie Bryant	Intelligence West
Mark Dancox	SW PHO
Eleanor Field	Economy Module
Janine Gamon	SINe
Alistair Gordon	Environment Module
Jackie Guinness	Wiltshire LIN
Sarah Hardwick	SWO Core Unit
Rachel Hartnell (mins)	SWO Core Unit
Darren Horn	Planning Module
Karen McDonald	Glos LIN
Paul Moore	ONS
Ben Nield	SLIM
Mark Painter	inDevon
Lucinda Procter	Swindon LIN
Susie Read	Wiltshire LIN
Richard Scott	Devon CC

Apologies

Jules Channer	SWO Culture Module
Lorna Gibbons	SWO CU
Anne Gray	BDP LIN
Patrick Hartop	Plymouth LIN
Carrie-Anne Hiscock	SWO Planning
Matt Lobley	University of Exeter
Ray Perrins	SWO CU
Keith Woodhead	SW Councils

Item	Subject	Action
1	Welcome and apologies VN welcomed the group and members introduced themselves.	
2	Minutes from previous meeting VN said that draft minutes should be circulated within 3 weeks of the meeting. EF requested a prompt when the minutes were available on the SWO website. ACTION	Action: Core Unit
3	Matters arising (Action Matrix) (1) SH had collated work plans for inclusion in the overall network plan. New LINs were expected to send theirs shortly. (2) VN thanked the LINs who had volunteered to host a policy seminar. The first seminar was due to take place on 5 November in Gloucestershire, followed by 8 December in Devon, 26 January in Plymouth and 24 February in Bristol (initial flyer circulated). (3) VN also thanked the network for their contributions to the 2008/09 annual report which was well received by the Board at the September AGM and good feedback from other recipients since then. (4) VN - it had been agreed at a previous ORG this could be done by signposting rather than something new.	

	<p>(5) EF reported that discussions had taken place with Anne Gray (unable to attend today). AG was leading and had written a brief on economic linkages. This had been circulated to the network by Lorna Gibbons (LEA co-ordinator). Some work was coming up on Functional Economic Zones led by SWO (LG), the RDA and SWC, which would hopefully incorporate the proposals on economic linkages - certainly both aspects need to be linked. Watch this space!</p> <p>VN reported that LG is holding an event on 3 November in Exeter to discuss core indicators. It is important to see where this fits in with the work on Functional Economic Zones, and economic linkages, as outlined in (5) above. This should become clearer as a brief for this work is developed.</p> <p>(6) VN asked LINs if the new funding arrangements were an improvement on the old system. LINs present felt that the administration was much simpler and were happy with how it was going. Plymouth would be joining from quarter 2.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Data Tools</p> <p>SH firstly referred to data tools developed by LAs or LSPs, such as those developed to assist the production of statutory documents like the JSNA, and secondly data visualisation tools, such as Instant Atlas, and asked LINs whether the Core Unit had a role in sharing information across the network and providing an overview.</p> <p>AG recommended CLG's recent report on data visualization http://www.improving-visualisation.org and http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/www.worldmapper.org SWO could promote better practice. RB said it would be interesting and useful to know who has what skills in different tools across the network.</p> <p>JGa had recently seen a demonstration of Instant Atlas which looked quite useful. HB said that it was quite labour intensive although SH queried whether later versions of the software had improved. AG also recommended a Swedish presentation on the clever use of statistics http://www.nme.com/artists/hans-rosling</p> <p>VN summarised by saying that the Core Unit could survey what is being used and who are the experts across the network in the form of a tool and skills audit. ACTION</p>	<p>Action: SH</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Possible Cross-Network Work</p> <p><i>a. Economic Linkages and Functional Economic Zones</i></p> <p>VN noted that this had been covered earlier in the meeting, and enquired whether there were any comments on how to proceed with this work. There were no particular issues. JGa felt that, whilst at the moment it sat more with officers at Somerset working on the LEA, it was an area in which she would be likely to become more involved. LG working on the brief as mentioned earlier, which will be circulated when complete.</p>	

b. Culture/Tourism – update on meeting held in August

The LINs had previously discussed Jane Hiller’s research project suggestion at a meeting held in August. SH reported that there were 3 main actions from the meeting:

1. One was the production of indicative, comparable, business and employee counts at a regional/sub-regional level for the cultural sector and sub-domains. PM had completed these and they have been circulated to the network. SH asked PM what methodology he had used. PM replied that he had used the IDBR to identify counts for business/employment, rounded to nearest 100, for the seven sub-domains of the cultural sector, as identified within work previously commissioned by Jules Channer (JC) to the ONS. The sub-domains are based on DCMS SIC codes and some additional SIC codes identified by Burns Owens Partnership (BOP). KM noted that they usually use just the DCMS definitions to identify counts for the sector. PM commented that this remains a grey area but that work is ongoing to identify a consistent national approach to cultural sector definitions – and in particular creative industries within that.

2. The second was regarding tourist behaviour – North Somerset Council overlaid Mosaic data with information sourced from the Council’s database of enquiries to look at why tourists were visiting and not visiting the area. Natalie had forwarded details which had been circulated by SH for info.

In addition the meeting had been used to raise awareness of the wealth of info on tourist behaviour included within SW Tourism’s Value of Tourism report: <http://www.swtourism.org.uk/documents/q/category/finance-facts-figures-documents/value-of-tourism-archive/value-of-tourism-report-2007/>

3. Regional Accounts: it may be possible to use the accounts to look at the effect of tourism on the economy, possibly to a sub-regional level. The network has been asked whether they were interested in a presentation from colleagues at the Economy Module on this. AG/KM noted their interest. EF noted that this might not be straightforward, but that she could look into how the Regional Accounts might be used for this purpose.

ACTION

Action:
EF

Finally it was noted that there may be the possibility to incorporate some additional, sub-regionally specific questions to the Value of Tourism survey. SH to follow up with SW Tourism. **ACTION**

Action:
SH

c. User Groups - Customer Insight?

SH had added this item in response to JGa’s suggestion. She suggested that a user group might be useful if there was a need. JGa added that she had been asked to look at this for Somerset and there seemed to be a lack of consistency so she was interested in other local authorities who might be dealing with this. SR had a key role in Wiltshire’s customer insight research. There were differences in which authority teams dealt with customer insight and at what depth. JGa added that it emphasised LINs operate in different ways.

6	<p>Policy Seminars and Annual Conference</p> <p>VN thanked the LIN hosts for volunteering and reminded the group that the Gloucestershire ‘population/demographics’ seminar was first to take place on 5 November. KM reported that there were 4 confirmed speakers so far but she was waiting for final details from SLIM and PHO.</p> <p>MP reported that the arrangements for the second ‘Land and Food’ seminar in Exeter on 8 December were on track (by other members of the team) although there were concerns that a similar University of Exeter event was taking place just a few weeks before. Following a brief discussion, it was felt that the University event was part of an academic network series of events with a different target audience, and was chargeable. VN planned to attend and provide feedback.</p> <p>There was no-one present from Plymouth to report on progress with the third ‘Energy’ seminar on 26 January at Plymouth Pavilions. SH was in contact with Jackie Young, the organiser.</p> <p>HB reported that there were already 2 confirmed speakers for the fourth and final ‘Skills for the Future’ event in Bristol on 24 February. SLIM had volunteered a speaker and they were hopeful that PHO might be able to contribute although they were already involved in other events (MD to follow up). EF volunteered some useful information about future occupations/sectors. AG recommended Forum for the Future as a potential contributor.</p> <p>VN reported that progress was being made with the arrangements for the SWO network’s 7th annual conference ‘Health, Wealth and Happiness: What makes a prosperous region?’ taking place on 31 March in Taunton. A range of speakers had been confirmed but further suggestions were welcome. There would be some presentations and question time style panels.</p> <p>Speakers/panelists confirmed so far: Matthew Taylor (CE of RSA) possibly to chair a panel, Jonathan Lepper (Treasury), Tom Schuller/Simon Mauger (NIACE), Dr Gabriel Scally (PHO), Dame Suzi Leather (Charity Commission), Colin Molton (HCA) and Nigel Jump (RDA). Jonathon Porritt may be able to make a late appearance. Martin Boddy was being asked to present! <i>(Dame Suzi has since withdrawn)</i></p> <p>PM referred to some recent press coverage about the South West residents having a good standard of living but a lousy life. VN mentioned the 1968 Bobby Kennedy speech on You Tube that Martin Boddy used in UWEs Regional Masters programme. EF felt that behavioural change was an important angle. AG added, there would be more behavioural science in public policy in order to reach targets.</p> <p>The Regional Minister, Jim Knight, had been invited. The (female) Head of Sustainable Consumption from DEFRA was recommended. <i>(EF subsequently confirmed contact as Sara Eppel.)</i> AG wondered whether there were any South West based speakers from the recent ‘woman of the year’ awards.</p>	

	<p>VN said a conference 'taster' would be circulated within the next few weeks and thanked the group for their suggestions and contributions to the seminars and conference.</p>	
7	<p>State of the South West update</p> <p>SH had updated the Regional Intelligence Group earlier that day. The publication date was still the end of March (for the annual conference). It was intended that the report would be shorter and snappier than previous years and there would be better cross-referencing and enhanced cross-cutting themes. PDFs of the full chapters will still be available for download from the SWO website, should people require more detail than will be covered in the summary report. LINs were asked to help with reviewing the document in January, eg looking at datasets and helping with links.</p> <p>SH queried how data for the new unitary authorities of Cornwall and Wiltshire unitary should be analysed and mapped. There was some discussion and JGu/SR confirmed that Wiltshire were now displaying and analysing all data at a unitary level. Any lower level analysis is based on geographies defined by Wiltshire Council (community areas), such that no analysis is now being done using the former district-level geographies. Surrounding areas, eg LP from Swindon, were particularly interested to know what was happening. SH agreed to contact Cornwall and consider how best to present both unitaries in the final report. ACTION</p>	<p>Action: SH</p>
8	<p>Self-help/AOB</p> <p>VN reminded the group that the ORG meeting is for the benefit of the SWO network members and any of them were welcome to supply agenda items and flag up items of interest and issues. ACTION</p> <p>EF queried with LIN representatives whether they were interested in collecting non-domestic/business rates data (owners of unoccupied properties receiving a discount). She felt this would be useful when looking at the impact on the recession. The group wondered whether CLG would hold this nationally. RB could find out. If requesting from districts, it was agreed that it would need to be made clear <i>why</i> this was being collected and how it would be used. EF agreed to send sample questions to RB. ACTION</p> <p>EF requested that the quarterly module reports be made available to ORG members. ACTION</p> <p>JGa mentioned some forthcoming demonstrations of data analysis tools and thought it would be useful for SH to attend.</p> <p>VN asked how familiar the group was with the up and coming 'Total Place', officially piloted by Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. This examined public services spending and the Canadians had made savings. Some of the group had come across it but not in any detail. AG said that the Agency's Director of Evidence is on the Board and a tool is being used to capture</p>	<p>Action: All <i>(ongoing - not in matrix)</i></p> <p>Action: EF</p> <p>Action: Core Unit</p>

	<p>public sector spending by area. AG used the example of 1000 Agency staff per region but each region has different requirements. RB added that the local government place team was dealing with this at GOSW – she was aware that it was a big initiative and was happy to provide further information before the next meeting. ACTION</p> <p>The group was also interested in hearing an update on the pilot's progress but Anne Gray was not present. This was postponed until the next meeting. ACTION</p> <p>VN reported that progress had been made improving SWO's relationship with HERDA and HEIs. She had recently had a very positive meeting with the new CE, Jeff Brown and he had agreed to represent HEIs on the SWO Strategic Advisory Board. VN added that the SWO immediate network should now include: modules, LINS, ONS and HEIs. Martin Boddy chairs the South West Regional Studies Association and they have complementary aims.</p> <p>It was agreed that subsequent meetings should start earlier, at 1.15pm. The agenda for the next meeting in January would reflect the change.</p>	<p>Action: RB</p> <p>Action: AGr</p> <p>All to note</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Close of meeting VN thanked the group for their input and reiterated that the meeting is for the members' use.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Date of next meeting: Thursday 28 January 2010 (for the benefit of any new members, subsequent dates are: Thursday 29 April 2010, Thursday 15 July, Thursday 14 October.)</p>	