



<p>Economy and Labour Force Topic Group</p> <p>23rd September 2010</p> <p>Minutes</p>		
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1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

Attendees

Anne Green (AG)	University of Warwick (Chair)
Nigel Garrett (NG)	National Apprenticeship Service
Evette Jayatilake (EJ)	West Midlands Regional Observatory (Secretary)
Oliver Nicholls (ON)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Rosie Paskins (RP)	West Midlands Regional Observatory (for item 5)
Neil Powell (NP)	Government Office West Midlands
Chris Ramsden (CRa*)	MedilinkWM
Clare Rapkins (CR)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Jonathan Vining (JV)	Staffordshire County Council
Kim White (KW)	Intelligent Career Insight
Caroline Williamson (CW)	CWA
Hamish Wilson (HW)	Birmingham City Council

Apologies

Gill Bentley (GB)	Birmingham University
Awen Clement (AC)	MedilinkWM
Mark Hudson (MH)	Government Office West Midlands
Sally Irgin (SI)	Advantage West Midlands
Baden Parkin (BP)	University of Birmingham
Krystyna Tarkowski (KT)	Coventry and Warwickshire Lifelong Learning Network
Gareth Wrench (GW)	Warwickshire Observatory

CRa* attended the meeting in place of Awen Clement who is on maternity leave. CR*

2. Minutes from the last meeting

- The minutes from the last topic group meeting were approved with the following actions:

Action

- KT is in the process of producing an observations post outlining details of the LMI Low Carbon group
- ON advised that 3 Authors have been confirmed to write a chapter on 'Fit for the Future: Low carbon'. ON advised that he be following up the remainder 4 other people and is hoping to get 5 authors to contribute in total

3. The impact of public sector funding cuts

CR gave a presentation on the West Midlands Skills Assessment 2010 findings and the impact of public sector job cuts.

Key messages from the research - National Context

- Employment in the public sector has grown significantly with around 1.2 million jobs created between 1998 and 2008
- It has been recommended that there will need to be a saving of £83 billion by 2016 to tackle the UK budget deficit. This is likely to lead the loss of 600,000 public sector jobs in the UK
- Public sector cuts is likely have a significant impact on the voluntary, community and private sectors
- Areas such as Wales and North of England will be worst hit

Key messages - regional level

- The West Midlands is particularly vulnerable as it has seen the biggest increase in share of jobs in the public sector
- Due to budget cuts, it is forecast that public sector employment will fall by more than 80,000 between 2010 and 2016 - this equates to nearly 35,000 in education, more than 30,000 health and social care and nearly 18,000 in other public sector organizations
- A further 310,000 jobs are at risk at private sector firms are reliant on public sector spending
- Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton have been identified as the worst affected areas

The research also looks at the following:

- The pace of growth in public sector employment by region between the period 1998 - 2008
- Change in dependence on public sector employment between 1998 - 2008
- Regional employment in the West Midlands from 2006 - 2030. It shows that employment is to fall further in 2011, remain stable in 2012 and then gradually improve from 2013 onwards.
- Forecast on public sector job losses to 2016 by Local Authority

Actions

- Any questions based on this work, please contact Andy Phillips (andy.phillips@wmro.org), alternatively Clare Rapkins (clare.rapkins@wmro.org)
- CR to circulate the report once finalised

4. Topic Group news

- CRa advised that he is carrying out a 'vox-pop' on inward investment and materials in the healthcare medical sector. This is due to the Life Long science sector which is still showing a growth in the private sector. The vox pops will be done over the next month and will feed into the general regional information for inward investment for life science companies.
- JV advised that the Local Economic Assessment (LEA) is going to go to a consultation based on their draft. This will be done at the end of week commencing 27th September. The consultation will be back to Staffordshire County Council by the 24th December.

JV mentioned that East Staffordshire district have decided that they do not want to be part of a Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), but want to join forces with Birmingham.

In terms of Staffordshire County Council, they have been asked to make cuts of 30% over the next 4 years. Staffordshire County Council has also got a new Chief Executive who is going through a re-structure and efficiency savings.

- NP advised that there should soon be some feedback on LEPs from Government on all submissions received so far. There will then be a 1 of 3 answers to each one which can be seen below:
 1. Go ahead and get started
 2. There is some more work to do
 3. There needs to be a total re-think on the submission

NP also advised that the Government has announced that Government Offices for the regions are to be abolished. A lot of work done on Performance Management will not continue. Everything else is being considered in the spending review.

NP advised that he has been helping out with some Labour Market Analysis for some estates work that's being conducted, based on buildings occupied by public bodies that are no longer going to exist.

He has also done a piece of work on the characteristics of the unemployed in Rural Areas for the Rural Partnership.

- HW advised that Birmingham Council have also been working on their LEA. HW has been doing analysis on the LEPs based on functioning economic geographies.

HW also advised that Birmingham City Council will also be going through a sizable restructure through the next few years.

- NG advised that there will be apprentices after the comprehensive spending review and that there will probably be an apprenticeship service - however name, locality and what they will do is unknown.
- ON advised that the West Midlands Regional Observatory is moving from Millennium Point to offices at AWM in the middle of October.

At the end of October, WMRO will be releasing State of the West Midlands. The Fit for the future low carbon publication will be published just before that.

ON gave a short presentation on the Integrated Policy Model, now renamed the Policy Assessment Model (PAM). It allows modelling direct and indirect impacts of a wide range of policy options and scenarios over the long term, allowing more informed decisions. It is capable of giving scenarios based on economy, the population and the local authorities within the West Midlands.

Information on PAM can be accessed [here](#).

- AG advised that Universities are facing uncertainties and they will be facing the Browne review on student funding in the next couple of weeks.

AG mentioned the Futuretrack study that Warwick University has been doing. This follows cohort of people from across the country who applied to UCAS in 2006 (see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/glmf>). There will be a series of reports released on some of the experiences of these people shortly, and there will be another number of that survey that will be going forward in that field.

- RP announced that she will be leaving WMRO at the October, with her last working day the 22nd October.

Action

- If people are interested in using PAM, please contact Stephen Howarth (Stephen.howarth@wmro.org) for further information

5. The future of the Observatory

- RP and ON updated on the future of the Observatory mentioning that core funding for the Observatory is due to cease in March 2011.
- The planning assumption of AWM's Chief Executive, Mick Laverty, is that only 25 members of staff will still be employed by AWM in September 2011.
- RP has been carrying a series of meetings between Local Authorities and partners trying to establish what work would want to be kept by LEAs. Key areas they are keen to retain include skills, economic inclusion, the annual state of the WM report, PAM, and the RDIN network.
- RP mentioned that two proposals were taken to the Observatory Board meeting on the 16/09/10. As a result of that, a preferred bidder has been selected, which may give some Observatory staff the opportunity to carry on.
- AWM will now put in place a process to take this forward, including a prospectus to be sent to other potential bidders. This will then be presented to the AWM Board at the end of October for decision.
- RP also gave an update on the future of other Observatories after attending the Association of Regional Observatories Board meeting on the 22.09.10

6. Discussion on the future of the network

The group discussed carrying on with a network beyond the Observatory, responding to a series of questions.

ON asked group members to record a short video vox pop helping promote the work of the Observatory, and help form our case for the future.

Questions and responses from topic group members can be seen below:

1. Do you see a future for the regional data & intelligence network?

There will almost certainly be a need for something, but it will need to follow whatever policy environment ultimately emerges.

There was a general consensus to keep the network going in some form. The sharing of information between people has been really useful

It was felt that the network will continue to work as long as people find value in it.

2. If the Observatory didn't continue or continued in a reduced capacity, do any of you have an appetite to continue the network voluntarily?

It is useful to meeting like this, and building up contacts. There are communities of practice emerging via the DCLG website (similar to that of a social network). An

option considered was to possibly set up a virtual community and practice online for people to share, such as LinkedIn.

It was noted that some social media websites are blocked by IT providers, but that this was not a reason on its own to do nothing.

It was felt that it would be better to meet face to face if possible as it is difficult to say things online sometimes.

Another suggestion was setting up a social enterprise model

3. *Is there any capacity within your organisation to maintain elements of the network? i.e. host meetings, coordinate meeting agendas, minute meetings.*

There was a general feeling that if the Observatory / network didn't exist anymore, that people were happy to host and co-ordinate the meeting. If there were several people in the network, people are happy to rotate the meetings around - this is the same in terms of rotating the agenda, the chair, etc.

The group suggested involving Phd students to help coordinate the meetings? Or maybe look at getting a network of supervisors?

4. *How do we protect the evidence base of the West Midlands in this time of change and beyond?*

Nothing to note, aside from making sure the Observatory website is archived effectively.

5. *How do you feel about the proposals to archive the regional resource catalogue?*

The resource catalogue is a resource on the WMRO website which holds 4000 - 5000 research resources that are relevant to policy makers and researchers in the West Midlands.

As WMRO are no longer able to maintain it after January 2011, they are looking at archiving the catalogue into an open data spreadsheet, putting it on the website so that it is kept accessible, and made available to any open data digital media specialists who might be able to use the data to make an application.

The idea is that the existing resource catalogue structure is used for the Observatories own research.

The Observatory has contacted the National Archives who will archive our website at some point in time. Due to reduced staff capacity at the Observatory, it has been considered a good exercise to get the catalogue up to date, archive it and put it online so that it is ready for anyone to use.

Action

- *ON to contact the University of Birmingham to see if there are any students to be seconded to help with this process. Contact name given: Dr Ian Grosvenor*

6. *Is it worthwhile us continuing working together to identify research gaps?*

It was mentioned that it is worthwhile still identifying research gaps and there needs to be some way to record these.

7. *How could we act together to influence consultations on future government policy re evidence?*

There is a need to influence consultations on future Government policy. Not all new organisations / entities that the Government will want to see, have the same track record. Therefore, they will need someone to frame their thoughts, looking at what has worked and what hasn't.

Actions

- *ON to share the ELF comments with the other topic group members*
- *If people are interested in making a vox pop for ON, please contact him on 0121 503 3313. Alternatively, email: oliver.nicholls@wmro.org*
- *ON to compile a document with what other topic groups say about 'the future of the network' and feed it back to each other. It may also be considered communicating to the WMRO board in December.*

AOB

- *Minutes of this meeting are to be sent with topic group members details*
- *ON to arrange a topic group meeting / get together to be arranged before Christmas, following the CSR in October*