

MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE MIGRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON 16 DECEMBER 2008

Present:

Chair	Professor David Metcalf CBE
Members	Dr Diane Coyle Dr Martin Ruhs Professor Jonathan Wadsworth Professor Robert Wilson Professor Mike Campbell OBE (Ex-officio member)
Secretariat	Mark Franks (Head of secretariat) Stephen Earl Vanna Aldin Daniel Livingstone Andrew Watton Dan James Anna Downs

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

1. Apologies for absence were received from Jonathan Sedgwick (UKBA Observer).
2. Members related any discussions or meetings they had undertaken since the last meeting.

Agenda Item 2 - Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 October 2008

3. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

Agenda Item 4 – Paper 11.2: MAC Research Programme

4. The secretariat updated the Committee on the MAC research programme. A list of projects had previously been agreed at the Committee's meeting on 12 September 2008. The secretariat circulated a detailed timeline for projects planned for completion during the current and next financial year. The projects discussed were:

Project 5 – Defining and measuring skill at the occupational and job level.

Project 6 – Estimating the potential EEA labour source to use in our top down shortage analysis.

Project 7 – Analysis of whether it is sensible to use immigrant labour in selected occupations, from an employer and economy-wide perspective.

Project 8 – Production technology, skills and migration.

Project 9 – Analysis of employer dependence on migrant labour.

Project 10 – A theoretical review of skill shortages and skill needs.

Project 11 – Review of the MAC skilled shortage methodology.

5. At the September meeting the Committee had highlighted projects 7, 8 and 11 as priority and the secretariat confirmed that these had now been advertised seeking expressions of interest to tender. Committee members were encouraged to draw the attention of these adverts to anyone who might be well placed to apply to do the work. The aim was to have outputs from these projects by July 2009. Work was continuing in developing the scoping and procurement strategies for the other projects.
6. Members commented that the first part of project 9 might be able to be done in-house. Mike Campbell said that the Commission for Education and Skills would have an interest in projects 5 and 10 and would be happy to work in partnership with the Committee on these connected projects. The Committee welcomed this proposal.
7. It was agreed that the scope for project 6 needed to be re-drafted.
8. The Committee then discussed broader research priorities. The current programme focussed on the questions of skill, shortage and sensible. Members discussed a number of broader issues including: the effectiveness of points based approaches to immigration, and shortage occupation lists elsewhere in the world; upskilling the resident labour force; regional issues and implications of the economic downturn. The last of which was cited as a priority. The secretariat agreed to work up these ideas for the next meeting.
9. The Committee also discussed the possibility of hosting an international conference. Members agreed that plans for this should be developed around a structure of two days, one a workshop to focus on specific issues of interest to the MAC (e.g. possibly shortage occupations) and a day with a larger number of attendees focusing on broader migration-related themes. Academics and policy officials should be invited. The larger event might be 50 or more people and would help to raise the Committee's international profile.
10. Members felt the smaller gathering should be more technical and something that the Committee could derive something tangible from. Some themes were discussed and the secretariat agreed to work up further plans for the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – Paper 11.3: Update on shortage work

11. The secretariat provided an update on work progressing as part of the first update of the recommended shortage occupation lists due to be presented to Government in March 2009. Requests for evidence had been sent to relevant stakeholders and Sector Skills Councils, but there would not be a formal call for evidence. Details about those occupations being reviewed had been placed on the Committee's website and a number of meetings had already been held with a range of stakeholders, with more to follow.
12. The occupations being reviewed included those the Committee had wanted to look at again and those the government had requested to be reviewed. There were also a couple of occupations that stakeholders had suggested were in shortage and the secretariat were considering whether there was sufficient

evidence to recommend that the Committee review these occupations at this stage.

13. The secretariat also reported that a letter had been sent to all Chief Executives of the Sector Skills Councils giving some more general guidance on submitting evidence to the Committee. A simple guide to submitting evidence had been produced and was available on the website.
14. The secretariat updated the Committee on plans for a forum meeting on 30 January 2009. Specific events would also be arranged later in the year for those occupations due to be reviewed in September 2009 (e.g. engineering and chefs).

Agenda Item 6 – Paper 11.4: Proposed structure of the March 2009 shortage occupation list report

15. The secretariat circulated a draft structure for the report that would detail the Committee's recommendations following the first shortage list update (March 2009). The Committee were content with it as drafted.

Agenda Item 7 – Paper 11.5: Discussion of the Worker Registration Scheme

16. The secretariat presented a paper on the Worker Registration Scheme, which needs to be reviewed by the Government by April 2009. The Committee agreed to return to the issue at the February meeting if necessary, but noted that the Government had not currently requested the Committee's advice on the issue.

Agenda Item 3 – Paper 11.1: Update on A2 work

17. The secretariat distributed final copies of the Committee's report on the impact of lifting restrictions on A2 workers. Government had considered the report and were due to make an announcement shortly.

Agenda Item 8 - AOB

18. The secretariat said that a request had been received from the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, via the UK Border Agency, to review the skill threshold that the Committee had set for sheep shearers as part of their September 2008 recommendations.
19. The requirement for a sheep shearer to have a Bronze award (as issued by the British Wool Marketing Board) or equivalent, and evidence of work at this level for three years was stricter than the criteria previously applied by the UK Border Agency and it would create a problem for recruitment during the spring of 2009.
20. The Committee therefore agreed that the removal of the three year requirement should be recommended to the UK Border Agency as a bronze award was seen as a sufficient indicator of skill on the basis of new evidence received. This change would be formalised in the Committee's March 2009 report.

Agenda Item 9 - Date of next meeting

21. Future meeting dates were agreed as follows:

- 6 February
- 6 March
- 24 April (to be confirmed)

**MAC secretariat
January 2009**