

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Minutes

Thursday 22 March 2018

Boardroom, Newport

### Present

#### UK Statistics Authority

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)

Professor Sir Adrian Smith (Deputy Chair)

Mr Jonathan Athow

Mr Iain Bell

Dame Colette Bowe

Professor David Hand

Mr Ed Humpherson

Ms Sian Jones

Dr David Levy

Ms Nora Nanayakkara

Mr John Pullinger

Ms Heather Savory

### Also in attendance

Mr Nick Bateson (from item 11)

Mr Peter Benton (from item 11)

Mr Owen Brace (from item 11)

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Ms Siobhan Carey (from item 11)

Mr Garnett Compton (for item 9)

Mr Joe Cuddeford

Ms Pam Everett (from item 11)

Ms Sarah Henry (from item 11)

Mr Richard Heys (from item 11)

Ms Danielle House (from item 11)

Mr Ben Humberstone (for item 9)

Ms Frankie Kay (from item 11)

Ms Abbie Self (from item 11)

Dr Tom Smith (from item 11)

Mr Simon Taylor (from item 11)

Mr Sean Whellams (from item 11)

Mr Ben Whitestone (for item 14)

### Apologies

Professor Jonathan Haskel

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Haskel.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

## **3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 March 2018 were agreed.

3.2 The Chair noted that this was Dame Colette's last Board meeting. Dame Colette had been a member of the Authority Board for eight years and was previously a member of the Statistics Commission. The Chair paid tribute to her strength of purpose, judgement, guidance and support to members of the Board and staff across the organisation.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair**

4.1 The Chair noted that ONS had published a new report on the shortcomings of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and the Chair had issued a statement where he had expressed concern about the widespread use of RPI. The Board recognised that it was clear the RPI was inadequate and discussed whether any further action could be taken to reduce its usage. Mr Pullinger would consider this further with Mr Athow.

4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the last meeting which included correspondence on the topic of school funding and police funding; and preparations for a celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Statistics Authority and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

## **5. Report from Chair of the Regulation Committee**

5.1 Sir Adrian reported on the recent Regulation Committee meeting. The meeting had considered:

- i. the business plan and work programme for the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR);
- ii. a systemic review of statistics on children, schools and skills;
- iii. progress with improving statistics on international trade and explaining trade asymmetries with other countries;
- iv. the landscape of developments around data linkage; and
- v. construction statistics.

## **6. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

6.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the recent meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The meeting had considered issues including data handling, payroll and census security. The Committee had asked for further assurance around the timescales and delivery plan for the Census.

## **7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(18)16]**

7.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting.

## **8. Business Plan and Budget for the Office for Statistics Regulation [SA(18)17]**

8.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a paper which sought approval of the OSR Business Plan and Regulatory Work Plan.

8.2 The Board welcomed the emphasis on 'value' which framed the regulatory contribution in terms of the questions the country needed to answer. Increasingly, ONS was working to develop ambitious one-off pieces which cut across multiple data sources and OSR could play an enabling role here, considering how it would assess the trustworthiness and quality of such work.

8.3 The plan was approved. Mr Humpherson would consider producing an 'on a page' version which would clarify the priorities for work in the coming year.

## **9. Update on the Census**

9.1 Mr Bell provided an update on the census programme. Mr Humberstone ran through the key milestones and Mr Compton provided an update on finalising the questionnaire content.

9.2 The Board considered the current position of delivery and the achievability of the timetable up to the October 2019 rehearsal. It was noted that there was a relatively short window of time to integrate the suppliers and build necessary systems prior to the rehearsal. Mr Bell provided reassurance on this point and committed to setting out a full assurance plan for the year ahead.

9.3 The Board considered the criticality and complexity of the census programme. It was agreed that the census and associated data collection transformation would be a standing item at future Board meetings.

## **10. Any other business**

10.1 There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 26 April 2018 at 09:15 in London.

## **11. Joint meeting of the Authority Board and National Statistics Executive Group**

11.1 Sir David opened the joint meeting of the Board and the National Statistics Executive Group by welcoming all attendees and setting out the structure of the afternoon.

## **12. Report from the Chief Executive**

12.1 Mr Pullinger provided an oral report on developments since the last meeting, which included the following.

- i. Mr Pullinger had met with the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP. They had discussed the strategy for official statistics, the census, and the constitutional arrangements for official statistics.
- ii. ONS had published an article on the shortcomings of the RPI.
- iii. The ONS Senior Civil Service (SCS) had met for a day in Swindon.
- iv. Electronic tablets had been issued to nearly all field force members for more efficient data collection.
- v. Steps were being taken to decommission Model 204.
- vi. The GSS Heads of Profession had met and Mr Bell was taking a leadership role with Heads of Profession, seeking a shift in departments working together collectively on topics from migration to housing.
- vii. A number of important developments had been secured at the recent meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission in New York.
- viii. ONS had supported the Data for Development Festival in Bristol and arranged for a field trip of 150 delegates from the festival to visit the Newport site to tour the Data Science Campus and learn about how the UK is reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **13. Communications**

13.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Brace who had recently taken up post as Director of Policy and Communications, and invited Mr Brace to share his first impressions and initial priorities.

13.2 Mr Brace noted the review of communications that had taken place last year. There was no easy fix for communications, but there was a collective desire to get it right. Communication was about getting the right information, to the right people, at the right time, in the right way. It was also a two-way process and at ONS it seemed sometimes

that an understanding of the external environment could be enhanced. ONS was perhaps too dictated by its publication calendar and by getting outputs out to certain audiences. There needed to be more horizon scanning and more capability to react and respond when needed. This would allow ONS to plan for the big issues and make collective decisions about how to inform debates. It was important that communication was considered at early stages of work. In terms of internal communications, it would be helpful if more staff were able to articulate our strategy in terms of where we want to be and how we will get there.

13.3 Mr Brace had two initial questions for consideration: Which audiences are we trying to communicate with? How do we want to position the role of ONS?

13.4 The following comments were made in discussion.

- i. Internally, there was more to be done beyond the traditional corporate channels, e.g. the intranet. Most people get information from their line manager.
- ii. New parts of the organisation, such as the Data Science Campus, were engaging and exciting and were a signal of the kind of organisation we want to be. But it was important for all staff to see themselves in this.
- iii. Culture change was important. The change had happened in some areas and was permeating across, but different parts of the business were at different stages.
- iv. There was also challenge regarding the rest of GSS. Partly this was a digital challenge about enabling coherent publishing of statistics by theme.
- v. There was also a joining-up task to be done, with various internal grids and sources coming together to provide a single view of activity.

#### **14. Business Plan and Budget**

14.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a revised Business Plan for 2018/19 to 2020/21. The plan had been updated in light of Board feedback and also suggestions from a workshop on metrics with Ms Jones. New information had been included on deliverables which cut across the GSS.

14.2 The Board approved the Business Plan.

#### **15. Group discussions**

15.1 Attendees broke into small groups and discussed the questions 'How are we going to ensure we deliver this business plan?' and 'What might get in the way of us doing so?'

#### **16. Reporting back and conclusions**

16.1 The meeting reconvened and Sir David asked groups to report back. Some of the themes arising included:

- i. communication and understanding;
- ii. the need for prioritisation;
- iii. recognition that there was still work to be done to break down silos and recognise the interdependence between areas; and
- iv. the need for more staff at different levels to be able to articulate sharply our strategy, purpose and vision.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Agenda

22 March 2018, 10:30 to 16:00

Boardroom, Newport

**Chair:** Sir David Norgrove

**Apologies:** None

### 10:30 – 11:30: Non-Executive Session

1 11:30-11:35 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declarations of interest</li></ul>	Meeting of 1 March 2018
2 11:35-11:45 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 11:45-11:55 15 mins	Reports from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulation Committee</li><li>• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</li></ul>	Oral reports Professor Sir Adrian Smith Ms Nora Nanayakkara
4 11:55-12:05 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(18)16 Mr Ed Humpherson
5 12:05-12:50 45 mins	Business Plan and Budget for the Office for Statistics Regulation	SA(18)17 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 12:50-13:05 15 mins	Update on the Census	Oral report Mr Ben Humberstone and Mr Garnett Compton
7 13:05-13:10	Any other business	

### 13:10 – 13:30: Lunch

### Joint meeting of the Authority Board and National Statistics Executive Group

8 13:30-13:35 5 mins	Introduction	Sir David Norgrove
9 13:35-13:40 5 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	Oral report Mr John Pullinger
10 13:40-13:55 15 mins	Communications	Oral report Mr Owen Brace
11 13:55-14:10 15 mins	Business Plan and Budget	SA(18)19 Mr John Pullinger
12 14:10-15:10 60 mins	Discussions in small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How are we going to ensure we deliver this business plan?</li><li>• What might get in the way of us doing so?</li></ul>	Group discussions
13 15:10-15:40 30 mins	Reporting back and conclusions	Roundtable discussion Sir David Norgrove

**Next meeting: 26 April 2018, London, 09:15 to 14:00**



*Report from the Director General for Regulation*

**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on regulation activity since the last Board meeting.

**Recommendation**

2. Members of the Board are invited to note the activities and proposed actions.

**Discussion**

3. The last Board meeting was on 1 March. This short update covers the last three weeks:
  - i. **Code of Practice:** We continue the process of raising awareness, providing an interview for Significance magazine, a blog for Civil Service World, and speaking at the Statistics User Forum and Heads of Profession event;
  - ii. **Scottish Parliament:** As part of our aim to extend our communications beyond the statistical community, we are looking to develop stronger relationships with the UK's Parliaments. On 8 March we presented the work of the Office of Statistics Regulation to clerks and researchers at the Scottish Parliament;
  - iii. **Trade statistics:** We discussed the asymmetry issue at the Regulation Committee and continue to support the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) work to understand it better;
  - iv. **Business Plan:** We have closed the consultation on our work programme and discussed it and the Business Plan with the Regulation Committee. We have provided a separate paper to this month's Board; and
  - v. **Education casework:** We progressed three pieces of work on education. First we published a letter from Sir David Norgrove on pupil funding. Our intervention led the Secretary of State to correct Hansard. Second, we are finalising a long-running case about the National Pupil Database. Third, we published a letter on statistics on the performance of 14-19 years colleges in the school performance tables, concluding that the Department of Education could improve the presentation of the statistics.
4. The main challenges continue to be:
  - i. Supporting the Code roll-out: While the roll-out is as much the responsibility of the GSS as it is for my team, we are happy to support the roll-out by presenting at other people's events;
  - ii. We continue to get a number of items of health casework; and
  - iii. We are mid-way through our recruitment round to respond to staff turnover.
5. The dashboard summary of regulatory activities is at **Annex A**.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 22 February 2018**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Regulatory Activities**



## Annex A Regulatory Activities February 2018

Economy	Health and social care	Business, industry, energy and trade	Crime and justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional GVA:</b> Completed our user feedback on the new ONS Regional GVA Balanced Estimates.</li> <li>• <b>Productivity:</b> Started work on updating the findings of the March 2015 seminar on productivity puzzle.</li> <li>• <b>UK House Price Index:</b> Ongoing dialogue with the team to discuss progress on addressing requirements from Assessment. Proposal for NS designation to be presented to June Regulation Committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> ONS has requested an assessment of cancer survival and avoidable mortality statistics. We have been looking at data quality issues in Scottish A&amp;E statistics, where we plan to make a public statement on whether National Statistics status should be suspended.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Sir David has written to the First Minister of Wales confirming the Prime Minister's comparison in parliament of Welsh and English accident and emergency (A&amp;E) waiting times was not valid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>UK Trade:</b> ONS published an article on trade asymmetries on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. ONS's new trade system coming on-line with errors in production virtually eradicated. Case for re-designation discussed at March Reg Comm.</li> <li>• <b>Construction Output and Prices statistics:</b> Three main issues being addressed; 1. Revision bias in new output series. 2. Coherence of Construction New Orders series, with Construction Output and regional perspectives. 3. Appetite to take forward a Construction Satellite account with BEIS. Evidence for re-designation expected after June.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Police Recorded Crime:</b> ONS's latest crime bulletin addressed the concerns we raised in December about the presentation of PRC statistics; though media coverage still focussed on police recorded crime.</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Scottish Crime &amp; Justice Survey assessment requirements met; ONS fraud statistics from Crime Survey for England and Wales designated as National Statistics.</li> <li>• <b>Engagement:</b> Keynote lecture at Nottingham Trent University social science conference 27 Feb.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> We have been asked to comment on statements about police funding in England &amp; Wales again.</li> </ul>
Labour market	Housing, planning and local services	Children, education and skills	Travel, transport and tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Income/Earnings:</b> Met with stakeholders from ONS, HMRC and DWP on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb to discuss next phase of Income and Earnings review.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> New casework on ONS effects of Tax &amp; Benefits, and DWP statements on Universal Credit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Reviewing evidence for assessment of Welsh Housing Conditions Survey. Ongoing follow-up with producers of Northern Ireland Housing Conditions Survey, to feedback on draft statistics report ahead of publication in May.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Checks:</b> Continued dialogue with ONS about ongoing compliance check of Household Projections in England with public letter from OSR published on 14 March. Progressing checks for MHCLG's new build dwellings, net additional dwellings and dwelling stock statistics.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Ongoing dialogue with ONS who are leading collaborative work across GSS to improve housing statistics in response to review. Expecting action plan in April 2018.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Innovation Systemic Review:</b> Interviews almost complete. Review to report through March and April.</li> <li>• <b>Skills Systemic Review:</b> Initial research and user engagement ongoing to shape scope of longer term project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compliance check:</b> Reviewed DfT's Search and Rescue statistics.</li> <li>• <b>Passenger Survey:</b> Engaged with Transport Focus to improve the presentation of Rail Passenger Survey.</li> </ul>
Population	Culture and identity	Security, defence and intl relations	Agriculture and environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity</li> </ul>



**OSR Business Plan**

This document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

The document is available at:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/osr/what-we-do/business-plan/>



**Business Plan**

This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/strategy-and-business-plan/>