

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Minutes

Thursday 18 December 2018  
Boardroom, London

### **Present**

#### **UK Statistics Authority**

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)  
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Iain Bell  
Professor Sir Ian Diamond  
Professor David Hand  
Professor Jonathan Haskel  
Mr Ed Humpherson  
Dr David Levy  
Ms Nora Nanayakkara  
Mr John Pullinger  
Professor Anne Trefethen

### **Also in attendance**

Mr Jonathan Athow  
Mr Nick Bateson  
Mr Owen Brace  
Mr Robert Bumpstead (Secretariat)  
Ms Frankie Kay (for item 6)  
Ms Heather Savory  
Ms Amy Williams (Secretariat)

### **Apologies**

Professor Sir Adrian Smith

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Professor Sir Adrian Smith.

## **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 29 November 2018, were agreed.

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

4.1 The Chair reported on activity since the last meeting, noting that only a little over two weeks had passed between Board meetings.

4.2 On 7 December, Prof Trefethen and Sir Ian attended a Census workshop in Titchfield, led by Mr Bell. They heard from several colleagues across the Census team and had the opportunity to both ask and answer questions from the team.

4.3 Sir David, Mr Pullinger and Mr Humpherson were leading discussions regarding health statistics. This conversation was ongoing and the Board will be updated in due course.

4.4 The Chair noted that when the Board next meet, applications for the post of National Statistician will be closed.

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

5.1 Mr Pullinger provided an overview of activity over the last two weeks.

5.2 Mr Tom Smith, Managing Director of the Data Science Campus, appeared before the Commons Science and Technology Committee on Digital Government. This was his first select committee appearance and was well received.

5.3 The Census White Paper was published on 14 December.

5.4 Mr Athow gave a live interview to the BBC on student loans. It was noted that this was a well-managed process, and a positive step forward in terms of communicating complex statistical matters.

5.5 Mr Pullinger published the National Statistician's Quarterly Review of Confidentiality and Privacy. The Board discussed data sharing and progress in acquiring datasets. Ways of further explaining and communicating the benefits of data acquisition were considered.

5.6 The Board discussed the recent review undertaken by the OECD that ONS had initiated into international comparisons of productivity. Mr Pullinger stated that surfacing such issues had provided a good case study.

## **6. Report from the Director General for Regulation**

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

6.2 There was a notable increase in casework. Mr Humpherson believed that this would be the case going forward due to a rise in visibility and a growing confidence in initiating casework. He commented on the need to be prepared for this volume of cases.

## **7. Strategy and Financial Planning**

7.1 Mr Pullinger and Mr Bateson presented on the strategic context and financial planning aspects for the next Spending Review.

7.2 Board members considered:

- i. the potential for working with government departments;
- ii. policy making and the role the Census will play;

- iii. the potential impact of EU exit;
- iv. building stronger partnerships across the Government Statistical Service (GSS);
- v. maintaining public trust; and
- vi. the importance of setting out in the strategy what will not be done, as well as what will be done.

## **8. Census**

- 8.1 Mr Bell talked to the Board about the current state of the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme, and was joined by Ms Kay, Director of Census and Data Collection Transformation.
- 8.2 The White Paper was published. By the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting in January, the rehearsal plan will have detailed planning, with the critical path and other forms of monitoring alongside it. Ms Kay advised that the key aspect was to keep the plan simple at its core and build outwards.
- 8.3 The Board agreed that this demonstrated the right the direction of travel, but requested further reassurance about planning and approaches to address response rates among harder to reach groups, including young males.

## **9. Any other business**

- 9.1 There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 31 January 2019 at 09:15 in London.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### *Agenda*

18 December 2018, 09:15 to 11:30

Boardroom, Newport

**Chair:** Sir David Norgrove

**Apologies:** Prof Sir Adrian Smith

**Attendees:**

**09:15 – 09:35: Non-Executive Session**

1 09:35-09:40 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declarations of interest</li></ul>	Meeting of 29 November 2018
2 09:40-09:50 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 09:50-10:00 10 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(18)56 Mr John Pullinger
4 10:00-10:10 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(18)57 Mr Ed Humpherson
5 10:10-10:55 45 mins	Strategy and Financial Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The strategic context</li><li>• Financial planning and Spending Review positioning</li></ul>	Oral report Mr John Pullinger Mr Nick Bateson
6 10:55-11:25 30 mins	Census update	SA(18)59 Mr Iain Bell
7 11:25-11:30 5 mins	Any other business	

**Next meeting: 31 January 2019, London, 09:15 to 16:00**

*Chief Executive's Report, December 2018*

**Purpose**

1. This report provides the Board with an overview of activity and issues for December.

**Summary**

2. Not much time has passed since the last board meeting, and so this update is brief. Many teams have been working hard to get publications out before Christmas, on migration, loneliness, GDP, trade and other topics. We have also seen the latest work by the OECD on the labour element of productivity, and plan to share our plan to improve productivity statistics in January.
3. We also hosted the Veterans and Pensioners Christmas Lunch at our office in Newport, helping people who live locally to get together and tackle loneliness. ONS has a rich tradition of contributing the local community which adds a great deal to our collective mission of public service.

**Review of recent activities**

4. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
  - i. the first meeting of the ONS Centre for Equalities and Inclusion Strategic Board took place on 4 December. The Centre brings together people interested in equalities data and analysis from across central and local government, academia, business and the third sector to improve the evidence base for understanding equity and fairness in the UK today, enabling new insights into key policy questions;
  - ii. Tom Smith gave evidence to the Science and Technology select committee as part of their enquiry into digital government. Tom spoke about the Digital Economy Act, data access, data strategies across government, open data, transparency in outputs and the use of microdata for research;
  - iii. the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report was published in a new format, which brings together releases on migration and provided users with more direct access to the data as well as improved commentary and guidance;
  - iv. we have produced updated our guidance on writing about statistics for statistics producers and shared it across the Government Statistical Service. It now has an increased focus on how to tell an engaging and informative statistical story and includes examples of good practice; and
  - v. we have launched an economics prize for undergraduate students, the ONS Renaissance Prize. To enter applicants will submit an essay of up to 2,500 words answering the question "How can economic statistics be improved to better measure the economic developments in different geographical regions of the UK economy?".
5. This has also been a significant period for the Census, with the Census White Paper published on 14 December.
6. Other activities and risks being managed during this period include:
  - i. We have now had agreement from the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury to our Pay Business Case. We now move into discussions with Trades Union representatives, which we hope to have completed in January; and
  - ii. we are advertising a programme of rolling attachments for ONS/GSS statisticians at BBC News in London. They will advise on the interpretation and presentation of statistical claims in news stories, help journalists to find data sources and conduct ad hoc statistical analyses.

**Future look**

7. In January, I will be at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government with our Best Practice and Impact team to share good practice across the GSS and hear about work going on in those departments.

**John Pullinger, 11 December 2018**

***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. Key activities since the last Board meeting are set out below. There have been few significant developments since the last Board meeting at the end of November:
  - i. Casework: following our major intervention on education statistics in October we have experienced something of a surge in casework - both on education issues but also on a range of others, including issues as diverse as badgers and statistics on international migration. We also expressed concern about press release from the Scottish Government on mortality improvements. The team continue to cope well with this surge - and the surge itself is welcome in that it shows that people respect and seek out our opinion;
  - ii. Core regulatory work: we published assessments of DCMS's economic estimates and of ONS's avoidable mortality statistics. We confirmed the National Statistics status of the Welsh Housing Condition Survey and continue to work with ONS on the status of trade and construction statistics. We are reviewing the international migration statistics. And we have undertaken a range of light touch compliance checks across the National Statistics estate; and
  - iii. Strategy: we continue to work up our next strategy. We are particularly focused on our role beyond official statistics, and the need to develop a stronger capability to address and use research questions around public understanding and use of statistics. We will propose a strategy and associated budget at the February Regulation Committee, including a more developed proposition on a research capability.
4. The main challenges are:
  - i. addressing the surge in casework; and
  - ii. developing a coherent multi-year strategy to address the issues discussed at the end November Board meeting.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 11 December 2018**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Regulatory Activities Dashboard, December**

## Regulatory Activities December 2018

Economy	Business, industry, energy and trade	Health and social care	Labour Market and welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Met HMT on Country and Regional Analysis. UKSA/OSR met ONS to discuss assessment of Experimental Labour Productivity stats. Moving from assessment to CC.</li> <li>• <b>Public Finances Systemic Review:</b> Update Reg Comm on first stage review. Second stage starts after feedback. Speaking on findings with Devolved Administrations.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Complaint from Lord Lilley about the Govt's claims of post-Brexit usage for repayment Mechanism in tariffs.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Check:</b> Met ONS on CC of FDI stats. Alerted ONS change from assessment to CC of experimental labour productivity stats. Met HMRC on CC Measuring Tax Gaps stats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Construction Output and Prices:</b> User feedback on ONS recommendations sought. Questions remain to ONS next steps for output/new order series. Case for re-designation being evaluated.</li> <li>• <b>UK Trade:</b> Outcomes discussed following last Reg Comm suggest concern over disaggregate asymmetric data. Case to be discussed further during Feb Reg Comm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Assessment Report on Avoidable mortality statistics (ONS and NRS) published this month.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic review:</b> Highlight findings from the stakeholder engagement phase of the systemic review of Adult Social Care discussed with stats producers and plans being arranged.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Published letter concerning the presentation of ISD mortality statistics. Published a report into a number of pieces of casework about A&amp;E statistics to share the learning more widely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Attended meeting on 7/11 with the ONS harmonisation team to discuss them helping the I&amp;E team implement recommendations. Still awaiting letter from Jonathan Athow outlining plans.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Published CC letter on 9/11 on ONS's Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income release.</li> <li>• <b>Domain activities:</b> Attended meeting 5/11 to discuss the uncertainty in the Labour Market release. Investigated casework related to PMQ.</li> </ul>
Crime and Justice	Housing, planning and local services	Children, education and skills	Agriculture and Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic Reviews:</b> Policing statistics review: <a href="#">The value of statistics on policing to the public debate</a> – completed stakeholder engagement, media analysis underway.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Investigated budget statement on increased counter-terrorism funding – no action required.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Carried out three compliance checks on civil, criminal and family court statistics in England and Wales. Following up with single letter to the HoP as similar issues in all three.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Welsh Housing Conditions Survey with Assessment Report published Oct.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Drafting CC of ONS's Household Projections for England; following talks with ONS on findings and plans for Stage 2. Projections published in Dec.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Spoke to ONS on GSS work to improve housing stats, and joint plans to develop User Engagement Strategy. Expecting update on progress late November.</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Letter sent to HM Land Registry, ONS, Registers of Scotland and LPS confirming designations of HPI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Recently published casework on the attainment gap in schools, and sent private letter to DfE on use of evaluation data of 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds.</li> <li>• <b>Skills Systemic Review:</b> Currently sharing findings with official producer bodies, senior officials and ministers. Ongoing engagement with users.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Recently completed CC of YR12/14 exam performance at post primary schools in Northern Ireland, on-going work on Phonics and KS1 assessments in England and HESA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Finalising CC of Scottish Sea Fisheries and meeting with producers for UK Sea Fisheries CC in Nov. Started CC of results of the June Agricultural Census, Final results of the June Agricultural Census and Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture. Expecting to publish letters in December.</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Meeting for double assessment of Defra's Air Quality Statistics in the UK and Emissions of Air Pollutants in the UK scheduled for December.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Looking at Defra statements about the effectiveness of badger culling on incidence of bovine TB.</li> </ul>
Security, defence and intl relations	Travel, transport and tourism	Population	Culture and Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Agreed Assessment of National Rail Passenger Survey with Transport Focus to start in Feb 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Checks:</b> Finalising CC of DfT Port freight statistics. Beginning CC of GB Road Safety Statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Correspondence investigated with links to ONS's November Migration Report</li> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> Ongoing communication with 3 census offices on phase 1 assessment submissions to OSR expected early 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Domain activities:</b> Attended Cabinet Office RDA Invite: Diversity statistics in the OECD event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment:</b> DCMS Economic Estimates Assessment Report was presented to Reg Comm in Nov. Further meeting with DCMS to finalise next steps later in the month.</li> </ul>





## ***Census – Update***

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides the latest update on progress on the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme, covering:
  - i. White Paper update;
  - ii. progress made in addressing risks to the Programme; and
  - iii. brief overview of the Processing walkthrough which took place on 7 December.

### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Board are asked to note the actions that have been taken, and will be taken by the end of January.

### **Background**

3. At the Board's last meeting, members heard that risks to the Census dress rehearsal had increased – both because of recent delays in the delivery of specific milestones, and in the absence of sufficient assurance mechanisms.
4. In the period since, building on observations made by Prof Sir Ian Diamond, Ms Sian Jones, and Prof Anne Trefethen in recent workshops, we have begun work to address risks to the Programme.
5. We plan to bring detailed proposals on our plans to the January Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Authority Board meetings. This paper provides a high-level summary of what we plan to bring to each meeting, for Board members' comment.

### **White Paper Progress**

6. We have agreed Parliamentary handling plans and an expanded communications strategy.
7. The programme has a fully developed contingency plan for a range of political developments over the coming months.
8. I will update the Board in person on these events

### **Workshop with Prof Anne Trefethen and Prof Sir Ian Diamond**

9. A workshop was held on the 7 December with Professor Anne Trefethen and Professor Sir Ian Diamond to provide an overview of the current objectives, scope and plans for the Census Programme, the Processing Rehearsal which will take place in early 2020. The workshop also provided an overview of the wider approach for the transformation of the Population and Migration statistical systems and the role of the Census within this.

### **The Programme**

10. By 15 January 2019, we plan to:
  - i. start to implement an amended and more systematic approach to assessing how we prioritise service design and system delivery, more robustly challenge design decisions and make better use of established design products. Specifically, we will have developed a delivery plan for the build of the simplest household journey. An outline plan for the delivery of all user journeys, detailing the recommended delivery order, will also be produced. The approach of "building out" from the simplest journey will form the basis of the development of a clear critical path for the Collection Rehearsal, supported by critical success criteria for each level 0 milestone. This will be supported by tracking progress of both the timeline and the delivery of the critical

success factors through a set of clear metrics as discussed at the Collection Review workshop with Sian Jones;

- ii. complete assessment of key design decisions to validate and sign off, with a focus on those required to support the build delivery in January/February;
- iii. carry out an organisation wide review of the work programme to identify and agree areas for de-prioritisation to ensure a cross-ONS focus on priority work. This will include an agreed stop list of work, to free resource to work on the agreed priorities;
- iv. have a full list of data acquisition timescales and the proposed delivery model for data linking for across ONS; and
- v. have a fully agreed plan of assurance to agree with Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, together with a critical path and success criteria for the delivery of the Collection Rehearsal and completion of the design validation for the initial household user journeys.

11. In addition, by 31 January 2019, we aim to:

- i. provide the board with an updated view of the Programme's Critical Path;
- ii. confirm the scope for the Census Dress Rehearsal at a technical level;
- iii. complete a full design review of all user journeys to review and ratify all design decisions with simplicity and deliverability being a key focus. This will be carried out iteratively to allow build to start on simpler user journeys while this is completed for the more complex user journeys. This will include a full review of the two communal establishment journeys to identify where we can simplify the design and delivery;
- iv. produce a detailed, baseline plan for the delivery of all user journeys which will feed into the overall assessment of the programme delivery (see point vii below);
- v. complete a review of our governance structure and embed the plan and agreed critical success criteria for every milestone on the critical path;
- vi. agree a common view of data and processing user journeys and develop a delivery plan for the processing rehearsal, including a critical path and success factors, following on from the agreement of the Processing Rehearsal Objectives at the Programme Board on 5 December; and
- vii. complete a full assessment of the programme delivery plan (for both internal delivery and supplier delivery) ready to present the proposed plan to the CDCT Programme Board in February for formal approval. This will be supported by an overall delivery confidence dashboard which will monitor progress and provide early warning signs information (based on progress through design, build and test of user journeys). This will be developed after assessments by Digital Services and Technology (DST) of the status and delivery of all digital products (including those of appropriate external suppliers) and Methods, Data, Research (MDR) similarly for areas such as data acquisition, data linking and methodology delivery. This means we will be able to provide the Board with our view and critical path through to rehearsal with the exact scope of design, build and testing.

### Resources

12. There is still a need to further strengthen the resources and capability across the programme and the following improvements are being progressed:

- i. the Programme Director was appointed in July and we have appointed several new positions to strengthen the team;
- ii. given the need for legislation, we will need to strengthen resource in policy and legislation to support the programme;
- iii. strengthen the level of testing, security and assurance resource across the programme and identify where to strengthen the capacity and capability. Provision for additional test resource was included in the contract with our Service Integration Partner, Deloitte; and

- iv. fully explore the capability at Grade 6 level across the programme and identify how this can be strengthened urgently.

Assurance

- 13. We have been working to agree the way forward on assurance, which is currently too back-loaded and gain more assurance on the proposal
- 14. From our assessment, one of the core gaps is assurance of the design. Irrespective of the contracting model, we need independent assurance mechanisms. As SRO, I have commissioned PWC to provide assurance:
  - i. that our design (by 14 January 2019) and plans (by 31 January 2019) completely cover all necessary integrations; and
  - ii. further down the line to assure ourselves that our technical designs and delivery continue to support this.

**Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician and Francesca Kay, Transformation Director, 11 December 2018**