

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

REGULATION COMMITTEE

Agenda

17 October 2019

Boardroom, Drummond Gate, London, 13:00 to 16:00

Chair: Professor Anne Trefethen

Apologies: Ms Helen Boaden

13:00 to 13:10 – Non-executive session

13:10 to 16:00 – Main meeting

1	Apologies, minutes and matters arising	Meeting of 18-07-19
2	Regulation Committee administration	Secretariat
Strategy and Policy		
3	Overview from the Director General for Regulation	Mr Ed Humpherson
4	OSR Vision Update	Mr Ed Humpherson
5	PACAC Recommendations: Initial review of options on OSR location and resources	Dr Penny Babb & Dr Caroline Jones
6	OSR Budget 2020/21	Ms Mary Gregory
7	Work Programme 2019/20 and success measures	Ms Mary Gregory
8	National Statistics Designation Review	Dr Penny Babb
Regulatory work		
9	Assessment: ONS Purchases Survey	Mr Mark Pont
10	Assessment: National Rail Passenger Survey	Mr Oliver Fox-Tatum & Ms Vicky Stone
11	Regulatory Services Update (incl. draft assessment reports and designations)	Ms Gail Rankin & Mr Mark Pont
Other updates		
12	List and analysis of engagement activity	Mr Ed Humpherson
13	Any other business	

Next meeting: Thursday 5 December, London, 13:00 to 16:00

Supplementary Information

List of issues raised with the Authority	Information paper
Forward look	Information paper
Presentation: Statistical Leadership Systemic Review	Information paper
Policing review phase two: media analysis	Information paper
Systemic Review – Skills: Emerging Findings	Information paper

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

Minutes

**Meeting of Thursday 17 October 2019
Boardroom, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

Members

Professor Anne Trefethen (Chair)
Professor David Hand
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Sir David Norgrove
Mr Ed Humpherson

Secretariat

Ms Vanessa Holden
Mr Rob Lewis

Other attendees

Dr Penny Babb (items 5 and 8)
Mr Nick Bateson (item 6)
Mr Oliver Fox-Tatum (items 6, 7 and 8)
Ms Mary Gregory
Dr Caroline Jones (item 5)
Mr Mark Pont
Ms Gail Rankin
Ms Vicky Stone (item 8)
Ms Amy Williams

Apologies

Ms Helen Boaden
Ms Sarah Cobden

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record. Progress with actions was reviewed; all were in hand. Gail Rankin, the new head of the OSR Edinburgh office, was introduced to the Committee.

2. Regulation Committee administration

- 2.1 Secretariat presented recommendations to the Committee on proposed changes to its administration, responding to recommendations in the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) report on publishing minutes and revised Terms of Reference.
- 2.2 Members agreed with the proposed changes, subject to minor amendments being made to the Terms of Reference ahead of their submission to the Authority Board.

3. Overview from the Director General for Regulation

- 3.1 Mr Humpherson introduced his update focusing on a recent Data Landscape Workshop event jointly hosted by OSR and the Office for National Statistics, the third of its kind.
- 3.2 The Committee heard that the event was the most successful of the series, since there was greater emphasis on practical experience in public engagement, and produced an output describing various promising approaches to engagement.

4. OSR Vision Update

- 4.1 Mr Humpherson updated the Committee on the progress of the OSR Vision (which was published in June as an exposure draft) and sought comments ahead of the OSR conference in November.
- 4.2 The Committee recommended the document elaborate on the value of advanced computing techniques given its potential for statistics regulation.
- 4.3 It was agreed that the Vision should emphasise the 'independence' of OSR, rather than 'separation', and that there should be greater mention of its relationship with the Authority. The Committee further discussed the presentation of the document, referencing impact of systemic reviews effectively, image quality and mention of specific stakeholders.
- 4.4 Mr Humpherson agreed to circulate a further draft of the document to members ahead of publication.

5. PACAC Recommendations: Initial review of options on OSR location and resources

- 5.1 Dr Babb and Dr Jones presented their item reviewing potential OSR location and funding changes in light of the PACAC report. It was noted that OSR's proximity to ONS, particularly in London and Newport, could be seen in a negative light by stakeholders in regard to its impartiality.
- 5.2 The Committee heard that the criteria against which the options were being initially considered included: stakeholder confidence in OSR independence; confidentiality; cost; benefits of conjoined services with ONS; and the future expansion of OSR.
- 5.3 The Committee discussed implications for location changes to the three OSR sites against the criteria set out in the paper. The Committee agreed that the benefits of

both proximity to the Authority, and parity of proximity to the Authority with ONS should be added to the criteria. The Committee would consider final recommendations at its December meeting.

- 5.4 The Committee then discussed potential options for the OSR workplan if its budget doubled or tripled. The Committee heard that an initial consultation had been conducted, and the criteria against which the recommendations were being presented were: public confidence in official statistics, accuracy and quality, and value (for money, and in terms of public benefit).
- 5.5 The Committee agreed that the exercise, although theoretical (due to HM Treasury funding constraints), was informative in terms of OSR's ambitions, and that it should be considered alongside and as part of the development of the wider Authority strategy. OSR would bring a further update on locations to the December meeting.

6. OSR Budget 2020/21

- 6.1 Ms Gregory, joined by Mr Bateson, introduced the item on the OSR budget for the coming financial year. Since the Committee had last discussed the OSR budget, HM Treasury had announced that the Authority's settlement for 2020-21 would be 'rolled-forward' from its 2015 Spending settlement, ahead of a multi-year settlement in 2020.
- 6.2 In the context of the Authority's overall settlement, the Committee discussed three options for the OSR budget for 2020/21. Members agreed with the recommendation that the OSR Budget be £3million for the year 2020/21.

7. Work Programme 2019/20 and success measures

- 7.1 Ms Gregory introduced the item, providing a six-month snapshot of OSR performance against the workplan agreed by the Committee earlier in the year.
- 7.2 The discussion around success criteria and the usefulness of the measures to the Committee included:
 - i. greater emphasis on tracking developments following assessments, in order to demonstrate impact, and case studies to bolster this;
 - ii. a dashboard to reflect, particularly to users, where work has been done to improve statistics; and
 - iii. value in the dashboards being seen by the Committee.
- 7.3 The Committee agreed to review progress against the work programme on a biannual basis.
- 7.4 The Committee heard that work had previously been prioritised on compliance checks and systemic reviews, however OSR is now in a better position on assessments. The Committee agreed that work into a measure of misleadingness in statistics would be welcome.

8. National Statistics Designation Review

- 8.1 Dr Babb presented an item on the results of a review of the National Statistics designation and other labels used by the Authority to reflect quality.
- 8.2 Initial findings identified confusion around the differences between the 'official statistics' and 'National Statistics' labels. It was suggested that a fitness for purpose statement would be of value to users.

- 8.3 Dr Babb explained that the labels were often more important to producers than consumers of statistics, leading to a discussion on the target audience of designation labels and how user needs are being met. Considerations discussed included:
- i. loss of designation status emerged as of greater impact than holding designation status;
 - ii. there was a greater need for visible monitoring, so holding a designation doesn't appear to be the default until issues are brought to the Authority's attention; and
 - iii. there was a perception of designations as being binary and there should be greater reflection of the spectrum of statistical quality.
- 8.4 The Committee agreed that consideration of audiences and into the use of labels by other National Statistics Institutes' regulators would be useful. OSR would bring their findings to the Committee in due course.

9. Assessment: ONS Purchases Survey

- 9.1 Mr Pont updated the Committee on OSR's findings regarding the fitness for purpose of the ONS Purchases Survey:
- i. there are substantial gaps between the findings of this survey and other purchases data collected by ONS;
 - ii. work is ongoing to rectify issues with survey design and data validation, however, more was needed to rectify ONS purchases data asymmetries; and
 - iii. many of the issues relate to companies using their own classifications for their returns, which can differ from firm to firm.
- 9.2 The Committee recognised that administrative data would be unlikely to replace the survey as the source of this data in the short term, but that engagement with business administration software designers could help in clarifying classifications used by businesses to make use of admin data possible in future.
- 9.3 The Committee also requested an assessment of the weightings of various industries against their influence on the statistical outputs.

10. Assessment: National Rail Passenger Survey

- 10.1 Mr Fox-Tatum and Ms Stone presented the findings of an assessment of the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), finding that due to significant limitations, it was unfit for purpose and in need of considerable improvement. These limitations related to the timing and design of the survey.
- 10.2 The Committee also heard that the Department for Transport (DfT) were considering discontinuing the survey due to funding considerations and the imminent development of a private survey for operational improvement purposes.
- 10.3 The Committee agreed that:
- i. the report clearly reflects that the NRPS does not adequately measure rail companies' performance or passenger satisfaction;
 - ii. there should be specific criticism of the waiver that accompanies the NRPS, since it contravenes directives in the Code of Practice; and
 - iii. a press release should accompany the report, addressing the inadequacies of the NRPS while recommending that DfT improve the survey in line with the public interest, rather than discontinue it.

10.4 It was also agreed that action taken on the above should be undertaken as quickly as possible, in order to precede the release of a report into rail franchise performance.

11. Regulatory Services Update

11.1 Mr Pont and Ms Rankin gave an update on regulatory services, of which there were no specific changes for its consideration. The key points of discussion were:

- i. OSR had been asked to quality assure HMRC's processes following an error earlier in the year, but had not yet implemented guidance;
- ii. systemic reviews are ongoing, and findings of the Post-16 Education review would be presented to the Committee in the following meeting;
- iii. the Statistical Leadership Systemic Review was well underway, with GSS engagement having been undertaken with Analysis Function leaders, and more was in the pipeline;
- iv. the one-year update of Joining Up Data for Better Statistics had received considerable traction; and
- v. Mr Humpherson proposed to produce a one-year update for the housing review in due course.

12. List and analysis of engagement activity

12.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a list of analysis and engagement.

12.2 He focused on OSR's role in data ethics leadership in discussions, and the workplan he intended to take forward in this space.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 The Committee would meet next on Thursday 5 December at 13:00 in London.