

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Friday 20 July 2012
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Mr Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Lord Rowe-Beddoe
Professor David Rhind
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dr Colette Bowe
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Dame Moira Gibb
Ms Jil Matheson
Mr Stephen Penneck (not for item 12)
Sir Jon Shortridge (to item 8)

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Mervyn Stevens

Other Attendees

Mr Glen Watson (ONS for items 6 and 7)
Mr Ben Humberstone and Ms Jacqui Jones (ONS for item 9)
Mr Richard Laux (Monitoring and Assessment for items 10 to 12)

Apologies

None.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 June were accepted as a true and fair account.

3.2 The meeting reviewed progress with actions. There were no matters arising.

4. Authority Chair's Report

4.1 On the occasion of their last meeting of the Authority Board, the Chair acknowledged on behalf of the Board the contributions made by Lord Rowe-Beddoe and Mr Penneck to the work of the Authority and ONS, and he thanked them for the support they had given him during his first few months as Authority Chair.

4.2 The Chair commented that the past week had been an important week for the Authority with the initial release of population estimates from the 2011 Census and also the release of crime statistics. The meeting agreed that these important developments should be marked by the Chair writing to the staff.

4.3 Since the last meeting the Chair had attended a conference for Scottish Government statisticians, where he had spoken about the Authority's priorities of improving the communication and dissemination of statistics.

4.4 A meeting to establish the 'good practice' team – a team comprising staff from the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment, and the National Statistician's Office who would support the Government Statistical Service in delivering good practice in communication and user engagement – would be held in the following week.

4.5 The Chair informed the meeting that he would be: meeting the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Jeremy Heywood; visiting the House of Commons Library; and meeting with the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Work and Pensions, Robert Devereux.

4.6 Interviews for the post of Director General of ONS would be held on 26 July.

4.7 Since the last meeting the Cabinet Office had announced the appointment of Professor Rhind and Professor Sir Adrian Smith as Deputy Chairs of the Authority, and the appointment of Dr David Levy as a non-executive member of the Authority Board. Following consequent changes in responsibilities at Board level, the Authority would be seeking to appoint an external independent member to the Authority's Audit Committee.

4.8 Professor Rhind reported that, following his recent appointment as Deputy Chair of the Authority with responsibility for official statistics, he had discussed the future direction for the Authority's Monitoring and Assessment function with the Authority Chair, the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment. He would be further discussing proposals with Professor Sir Adrian Smith (who would be the Deputy Chair with responsibility for ONS from 1 September), and with other members of the Authority.

- 4.9 It was agreed that proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Authority.
- 4.10 The meeting agreed that, in the meanwhile, the Monitoring and Assessment team would: assess compliance with the requirement to publish statistical releases at 09:30 a.m.; review hospital waiting time statistics; and, carry out a limited number of further Assessments on the application of different aspects of the Code of Practice.
- 4.11 The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) would be holding oral evidence sessions in September regarding its review of the use of statistics in government.

5. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

Audit Committee

- 5.1 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 2 July. The meeting had considered the final two internal audit reports from the 2011/12 assurance cycle, and had received the final assurance report for 2011/12 from the Head of Internal Audit.
- 5.2 The meeting had received the draft audit completion report for 2011/12 from the National Audit Office (NAO). The final draft of the Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 had been reviewed in the light of the NAO report, and the Committee had recommended that the Authority's Accounting Officer should sign the Accounts, and that the Report and Accounts should be published.
- 5.3 The Authority was pleased to note that the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/12 had been published and laid before Parliament and the devolved legislatures on 9 July, a week ahead of the previous year. The Report and Accounts had also been published subsequently on the Authority's website.

Office for National Statistics Board (ONS)

- 5.4 Lord Rowe-Beddoe reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 13 July. The meeting had considered budgetary issues, and proposals for improvement of the ONS website and dissemination of its statistics. These issues would be discussed by the Authority Board later in the meeting. The ONS Board had also considered the information technology (IT) strategy for ONS.

Assessment Committee

- 5.5 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Assessment Committee held earlier that day. The meeting had recommended that 10 draft Assessment Reports be published, and these would be considered later in the meeting.
- 5.6 The meeting had also considered a further draft of a Monitoring Report on the Assessment of UK official statistics from 2009 to 2012, and had recommended that this should be published as soon as possible. This draft Monitoring Report would also be considered later in the meeting.

6. Priorities for Investment [SA(12)33]

- 6.1 Mr Penneck introduced a paper which set out summary financial information for the three years to 2015, and identified resources over those years for some priorities. In particular, allocations for the delivery of enhancements to the ONS website were considered. In order that these priorities could continue to be funded to 2015 work was in hand to identify further savings over the Spending Review years, and this included evaluating work

priorities and reviewing methods of business delivery. The ONS Board had recommended to the Authority that the proposals be developed further along these lines and this was agreed.

- 6.2 It was agreed that the Authority Board would continue to monitor budgetary developments and funding for priorities at future meetings.

7. ONS Website (Improving Dissemination Project) [SA(12)34]

- 7.1 Mr Watson presented a paper which set out initial proposals for a change programme to deliver improvements to the ONS website, and for improving the dissemination and communication of ONS statistics more generally. There were various workstreams within the programme aimed at improving the reach, accessibility and presentation of ONS outputs.

- 7.2 In endorsing this outline strategy, the Authority confirmed that it was important for ONS to: engage as fully as possible with all types of users of ONS statistics at all stages; look at how other organisations communicated similar information; develop key milestones for delivery; and keep account and report on the total cost to the Authority of the development of the ONS website over the full extent of the project.

8. Developments with the Greater London Authority [SA(12)35]

- 8.1 The meeting noted that the London Assembly had passed a motion at its meeting on 11 July which called on the Mayor of London to ensure that all statistics published by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and its subsidiary bodies met the requirements of the Authority's Code of Practice.

- 8.2 Under the ambit of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* the GLA were not designated as a producer of official statistics. These limitations notwithstanding, the Authority nevertheless confirmed that it welcomed initiatives aimed at bringing statistics produced by other public sector bodies into compliance with the general principles of the Code.

9. Workshop to Review Statistical Releases: Three ONS Releases [SA(12)36]

- 9.1 Ms Matheson, Mr Humberstone and Ms Jones introduced 'mock-up' versions of three ONS releases covering: population statistics; retail sales; and gross domestic product. These reflected some changes made since the workshop to review these releases was held on 11 June.

- 9.2 The meeting heard that work by ONS on the text and presentation of the releases was on-going. The needs of different user groups were considered, together with plans by ONS to consult with these groups. The meeting agreed that optimising the statistical release in ways which best served the widest constituency of users remained the central task in hand, and that the statistical commentary and presentation workshop would be reconvened in the Autumn to further consider progress. That meeting could also usefully consider the on-line user experience. It was also suggested that reference could be made in the releases to how the user could take assurance on the quality of the statistics, and this could include links to the relevant Authority Assessment Reports.

- 9.3 The Chair thanked all involved for their continuing work and commitment to this initiative. The working group would report back to the Authority in due course.

10. Draft Monitoring Brief: Public Availability of Official Statistics – Three ONS Datasets [SA(12)37]

10.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a further draft of a Monitoring Brief on the public availability of low level data used in the production of three sets of ONS statistics. This present draft reflected consultation with ONS on earlier drafts which had taken place since the last meeting.

10.2 The meeting endorsed the Monitoring Brief for publication on the Authority's website, subject to agreed amendments and the approval of Professor Rhind and the Authority Chair.

11. Draft Monitoring Report: The Assessment of UK Official Statistics 2009 to 2012 [SA(12)38]

11.1 The meeting noted that this further draft of the Monitoring Report on the assessment of official statistics from 2009 to 2012 had been considered by the Assessment Committee earlier that day, and that the Committee had recommended various amendments prior to publication in the summer.

11.2 Following discussion, the meeting approved the Monitoring Report for publication on the Authority's website, subject to implementation of agreed amendments and the approval of Professor Rhind and the Authority Chair. It was also agreed that the report would be brought to the attention of PASC and the devolved legislatures.

12. Assessment Reports for Approval [SA(12)32]

12.1 Mr Laux reported that at its meeting earlier that day, the Assessment Committee had recommended that the following 10 Assessment Reports (ARs) should be published:

- i. AR 230: Statistics on Prisons and Probation (Ministry of Justice)
- ii. AR 231: Statistics on Hospital Episodes and Appointments (Health and Social Care Information Centre)
- iii. AR 232: Statistics on Education and Training in the UK and Vulnerable Children in England (Department for Education)
- iv. AR 233: Statistics on UK Manufacturers' Sales by Product (PRODCOM) (Office for National Statistics)
- v. AR 234: Statistics on UK Business Investment and Capital Stocks (Office for National Statistics)
- vi. AR 235: Statistics on Personal Incomes, Pensions, Investments, Savings, Research and Development Tax Credits, Revenue from UK Oil and Gas, Property, Charities and Trusts (HM Revenue & Customs)
- vii. AR 236: Statistics on Health Expectancies (Office for National Statistics)
- viii. AR 237: Statistics on Crime and Justice in Northern Ireland (Department of Justice, Northern Ireland)
- ix. AR 238: Statistics on Religious Communities and the Labour Market in Northern Ireland (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland)
- x. AR 239: Statistics on Pesticide Usage in the UK and Fertiliser Usage in GB (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Northern Ireland)

(In total 10 Assessment reports, covering 46 outputs)

- 12.2 The meeting approved these Assessment Reports for publication, subject to the amendments recommended by the Assessment Committee.
- 12.3 The meeting noted: ONS plans for dealing with the requirements from Assessment Report 206: profitability and share owner statistics; and that the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse had met the requirements for confirming designation of drug treatment statistics as National Statistics.
- 13. Any other business**
There was no other business.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Friday, 20 July, 2012

Board Room, Drummond Gate, 12:45 - 16:30

Chair: Andrew Dilnot

Apologies:

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 220612
2	Authority Chair's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Appointments to the Board● Budget● Communications● Assessment and Monitoring	Oral Report
3	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Audit Committee● ONS Board● Assessment Committee	Oral Reports Professor David Rhind Lord Rowe-Beddoe Professor David Rhind
4	Priorities for Investment	SA(12)33 Mr Stephen Penneck
5	ONS Website (Improving Dissemination Project)	SA(12)34 Mr Glen Watson
6	Developments with the Greater London Authority (GLA): <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. GLA and the Code of Practiceii. Background Documents	SA(12)35a Mr Richard Alldritt SA(12)35b Secretariat
7	Workshop to Review Statistical Releases: Three ONS Releases	SA(12)36 Ms Jacqui Jones Mr Ben Humberstone
8	Monitoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draft Monitoring Brief: Public Availability of Official Statistics - Three ONS Datasets● Draft Monitoring Report: The Assessment of UK Official Statistics 2009 to 2012	SA(12)37 SA(12)38 Mr Richard Alldritt Mr Richard Laux
9	Assessment Reports for Approval	SA(12)39 Mr Richard Laux
10	Any other business	

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)33

Priorities for Investment

The Office for National Statistics business plan for 2011 to 2015 has been published on the Office for National Statistics website.

The document is available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/ons-business-plan/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)34

ONS Website (Improving Dissemination Project)

Details of this programme are now available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/programmes---projects/web-development/index.html>

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/programmes---projects/enhancing-access-to-ons-data/index.html>

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/census-consultations/uag/census-advisory-groups/output/2011-census--dissemination---future-channels-and-tools.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)35

The Greater London Authority and the Code of Practice

Purpose

1. This note sets out some of the background to, and developments since, the Authority's publicly stated views on the need for the statistics produced by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to be treated in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Recommendations

2. This paper is for information.

Discussion

3. In March 2011, Sir Michael Scholar wrote to the Mayor of London about the release arrangements for Transport for London's (TfL) crime statistics. In that letter he said "...may I invite you to undertake in future to comply with the Code, as a matter of principle?"
4. This letter was followed up with letters to the Home Secretary and to the Minister for the Cabinet Office. These letters stated "We believe that statistics about transport in London, including statistics on crime and anti-social behaviour on the London Transport network, are of sufficient importance to be treated with the same care and propriety as other important official statistics ..." And, "I therefore request that the Cabinet Office classify TfL's statistics as Official Statistics under section 6 of the Statistics Act 2007..."
5. Replies were received from the Home Secretary and the Mayor. The Home Secretary said "Your proposal has implications not just for the GLA but also for other bodies not currently covered by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 .. such as the police and other local authorities." And, "I would not want to see any change that would set a precedent which would jeopardise the ability of police forces to give the public timely local crime data....or that would add to police bureaucracy. She also said that "Your proposal ...is an issue for the Mayor of London to consider."
6. The Mayor said "Statistical data for London is regional level data and therefore should not form part of national statistics. I see no good reason to change current arrangements."
7. In a largely unrelated letter in October 2011 to Keith Vaz MP, Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, there was a further reference to the position. Sir Michael said, "I should point out that the Mayor's office is not covered by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics; and that the Mayor declined to agree with my request several months ago that he should voluntarily undertake to conform with the requirements of the Code."
8. Transport for London is a complex statutory body but in most respects it appears to be accountable to the GLA. Thus we believe the GLA has the practical authority to decide what rules are followed in relation to TfL crime data as well as statistics produced by the GLA itself.
9. An Order under section 6 of the 2007 Act can only be made by a Minister in one of the four administrations. In the case of TfL's crime statistics, it would, we assume, need to

be made by a Minister with some responsibility for official statistics relating to England; presumably the Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Transport, Secretary of State for Local Government or the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

10. In the absence of an Order being made, GLA statistics would not be official statistics and would not be covered by the Code of Practice. The Authority would thus have little locus other than to point to poor statistical practice should there be evidence of that and point out that, regardless of the status of the statistics in question, any sort of poor statistical practice in the public sector tends to undermine trust in official statistics.
11. However, more recently, we understand that the Mayor of London has indicated in different contexts that he may be prepared to consider whether some sort of rules of good practice should be observed (we do not have a direct quote at present but understand he has said this in more than one context) and GLA officials responsible for statistical work have spoken to the Head of Assessment about the options and implications.
12. On 15 June, the GLA announced that the Mayor had commissioned a Data Dashboard for London under a more general banner of promoting transparency and accountability. The Data Dashboard appears to be a set of headline indicators updated daily.
13. On 11 July 2012, the London Assembly passed a motion as follows:
 - “This Assembly recognises that there should be complete transparency around any statistics used by the Mayor of London, the London Assembly and the Greater London Authority.
 - “This Assembly notes with concern the Mayor of London’s unwillingness to adopt the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
 - “Given the Mayor’s decision to commission a Data Dashboard for London, the Assembly now calls on the Mayor to ensure that any statistics published by the Greater London Authority on the Data Dashboard, or in any publication published by the GLA or its Functional Bodies, meet the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice.”
14. We assume that the Mayor will now respond to this motion but at the time of writing we have not heard what his response will be. One possibility which we discussed briefly with the statistical managers would be to issue a consultation document.

Correspondence between the Mayor of London and the Authority has been published on the Authority’s website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>

Richard Alldritt, July 2012

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)36

Workshop to Review Statistical Releases: Three ONS Releases

Statistical Bulletins are published on the Office for National Statistics website.

The documents are available at:

http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/index.html?content-type=Journal&content-type=Statistical+bulletin&=allDates&sortBy=pubdate&sortDirection=DESCENDING&newquery=*&pageSize=50&applyFilters=true&content-type-orig=publicationContentTypesOrigipubdateRangeTypenal

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)37

***Draft Monitoring Brief: Public Availability of Official Statistics –
Three ONS Datasets***

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-review-6-2012---public-availability-of-official-statistics---three-ons-datasets.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)38

***Draft Monitoring Brief:
The Assessment of UK Official Statistics 2009 to 2012***

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/the-assessment-of-uk-official-statistics-2009-12.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)39

Assessment Reports for Approval

These documents have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see these documents go to:

Assessment Report 230: Statistics on Prisons and Probation

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-230---statistics-on-prisons-and-probation.pdf>

Assessment Report 231: Statistics on Hospital Episodes and Appointments

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-231---statistics-on-hospital-episodes-and-appointments.pdf>

Assessment Report 232: Statistics on Education and Training in the UK and Vulnerable Children in England

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-232---statistics-on-education-and-training-in-the-uk-and-vulnerable-children-in-england.pdf>

Assessment Report 233: Statistics on UK Manufacturers' Sales by Product (PRODCOM)

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-233---statistics-on-uk-manufacturers--sales-by-product--prodcom-.pdf>

Assessment Report 234: Statistics on UK Business Investment and Capital Stocks

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-234---statistics-on-uk-business-investment-and-capital-stocks.pdf>

Assessment Report 235: Statistics on Personal Incomes, Pensions, Investments, Savings, Research and Development Tax Credits, Revenue from UK Oil and Gas, Property, Charities and Trusts

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-235---hm-revenue-and-customs-statistics.pdf>

Assessment Report 236: Statistics on Health Expectancies

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-236---statistics-on-health-expectancies.pdf>

Assessment Report 237: Statistics on Crime and Justice in Northern Ireland

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-237---statistics-on-crime-and-justice-in-northern-ireland.pdf>

SA(12)39 – Assessment Reports for Approval

Assessment Report 238: Statistics on Religious Communities and the Labour Market in Northern Ireland

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-238---statistics-on-religious-communities-and-the-labour-market-in-northern-ireland.pdf>

Assessment Report 239: Statistics on Pesticide Usage in the UK and Fertiliser Usage in GB

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-239---statistics-on-pesticide-usage-in-the-uk-and-fertiliser-usage-in-gb.pdf>