

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Minutes**

**Meeting of Thursday 27 September 2012  
Board Room, Drummond Gate, London**

### **Present**

#### **UK Statistics Authority**

Mr Andrew Dilnot (Chair)  
Professor David Rhind  
Professor Sir Adrian Smith  
Mr Richard Alldritt  
Dr Colette Bowe  
Mr Partha Dasgupta  
Dame Moira Gibb  
Dr David Levy  
Ms Jil Matheson  
Sir Jon Shortridge (from item 4)

#### **Secretariat**

Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Mr Joe Cuddeford

#### **Other Attendees**

Mr Derek Bird (for item 6)  
Mr Glen Watson

#### **Apologies**

None

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Declarations of interest**

The Chair noted that he was a personal associate of an executive at Capita. Ms Bowe noted that she had taken up a position as a visiting fellow at Nuffield College.

**3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meeting**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 July were accepted as a true and fair account.

3.2 The meeting reviewed progress with actions. With regards to the delay with establishing the Improving Dissemination Project (IDP), the meeting heard about leadership changes to the the new Analysis and Dissemination directorate, within which the IDP would be located. Mr Ian Cope would become Interim Director of Analysis and Dissemination, until next year, when Mr Guy Goodwin would take up the post on a permanent basis.

3.3 There were no matters arising.

**4. Authority Chair's Report and Priorities**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Sir Adrian and Dr Levy to the Board, following their appointments to the Authority as Deputy Chair of the Authority with responsibility for ONS and Non-Executive Director respectively.

4.2 The Chair reported that, in accordance with the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the Non-Executive members of the Board had agreed to appoint Mr Glen Watson as one of the three Executive members of the Authority upon him taking up the position of Director General of ONS on 1 October. In anticipation of this, the Non-Executive members had also agreed that Mr Watson might attend this meeting as an observer.

4.3 The Chair reported on his recent activities. These included an appearance before the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) alongside the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment. The Chair had also spoken about improving the communication of statistics at the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) conference. The Chair noted that the ONS website had improved, but further urgent progress was needed, in particular to the findability of relevant information. The Chair outlined matters discussed at his recent meetings with the Cabinet Secretary and the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions.

4.4 The Chair reiterated his priorities of improving the communication of statistics, improving access to ONS statistics via the internet, and developing and maintaining the Authority's relationship with Parliament. At his appearance before PASC, the Chair had reported on the recent workshop held to improve three ONS statistical releases. The Chair confirmed his intention to see the ONS releases improved further and noted that a second workshop to review ONS releases had been scheduled for 6 November.

## 5. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

### Assessment Committee

- 5.1 Professor Rhind reported on the 11 September meeting of the Assessment Committee. The meeting had marked the conclusion of the first cycle of the Assessment programme with the 240<sup>th</sup> report, on statistics about Bovine Tuberculosis. The meeting had also considered plans for future Monitoring and Assessment, which would be discussed later on the agenda.

### Committee for Official Statistics (COS)

- 5.2 Professor Rhind reported on the 11 September meeting of COS. The meeting had considered the civil service reform plan, the future of the Publication Hub in the context of the Government Digital Service, a Monitoring Brief on statistics about the future, UK compliance with EU statistical legislation, revised guidance on reporting breaches of the Code of Practice, and changes to the National Statistics Theme Groups. Professor Rhind reflected that COS was an important and valuable forum for discussion of these issues.
- 5.3 COS had also considered plans by producers of official statistics for ceasing the production of statistics. Mr Alldritt confirmed that he was investigating two possible cuts; one relating to statistics produced by the Department of Health on mortality and health, and the other on proposals by the Department for Work and Pensions to cease publication of estimates of benefit take-up. In addition, Mr Alldritt was also looking at recently announced changes to regional statistics produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 5.4 The meeting considered the UK's compliance with EU statistical legislation, and the likelihood of increased enforcement of non-compliance. Ms Matheson confirmed that she would provide periodic reports on issues of compliance to COS.

### Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

- 5.5 Sir Adrian reported on the 14 September meeting of the ONS Board. The meeting had discussed plans for improving the organisation's ability to publish statistics at 9.30am, and had asked for a progress report to be provided to the next meeting. The ONS Board had asked for briefing from ONS on the possible implications of the recommendations of the Administrative Data Taskforce on the work of ONS.
- 5.6 The ONS Board had agreed that a single strategy for ONS should be developed to replace the existing collection of strategies, and a workshop would be held on 16 November to discuss this. All Authority Board members were welcome to attend.
- 5.7 The ONS Board had discussed engagement with users and communication of statistics. These issues linked to the development of a strategy for ONS and for the Authority as a whole. The ONS Board would discuss these issues again in December.

### Audit Committee

- 5.8 Mr Dasgupta reported on the 18 September meeting of the Audit Committee. With regards to finance matters, the meeting was concerned to note that Eurostat had suspended grant payments to ONS because of a lack of supporting documentation. The meeting had also noted that the European Court of Auditors would be visiting ONS to review Gross National Income.

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- 5.9 Ms Matheson provided an update to the Board on the review by the European Court of Auditors. It was her understanding that this exercise was an audit of Eurostat procedures, rather than of data produced by individual countries.
- 5.10 The Audit Committee had considered internal audit reports, some of which highlighted areas for improvement. Issues raised included ONS's ability to publish statistics at 9.30am, the use of spreadsheets in ONS, reporting of breaches of the Code of Practice, and use of the Quality, Methods, and Harmonisation Tool.
- 5.11 The Audit Committee had received a report on the measures that were in place in ONS to prevent the fraudulent abuse of pre-release access to market sensitive statistics. The Authority Board noted the conclusion of the Audit Committee that, while the current approach did not completely eliminate the risk of abuse, alternative approaches would be disproportionate.

### **6. Consumer Prices Advisory Committee Annual Report [SA(12)40] and Consultation on the Retail Price Index [SA(12)41]**

- 6.1 The National Statistician introduced the annual report from the Consumer Prices Advisory Committee (CPAC). The meeting discussed issues around the governance arrangements for CPAC. The analysis and advice in the CPAC report was produced for the purpose of helping the National Statistician to formulate her recommendations to the Authority Board. The Board would note CPAC's advice to the National Statistician, and would then consider the National Statistician's recommendations.
- 6.2 It was suggested that, as part of a review of governance of inflation measures, the membership of CPAC could be reviewed.
- 6.3 The meeting considered the National Statistician's six recommendations. Regarding the recommendation to implement the rental equivalence approach to measure owner occupiers' housing costs (OOH), the meeting considered the presentational challenge of creating a new measure of consumer price inflation (CPIH) alongside existing measures. It was agreed that the National Statistician should further develop a communication plan, and that the Chair would discuss communications further with Dr Levy.
- 6.4 The Board discussed the risks associated with making more than one change at the same time. While it was recognised that changes are only made once a year, it was agreed that there should be a strong rationale for the timing of each proposed change.
- 6.5 With regards to the recommendation to include council tax in the proposed new additional measure, the Board discussed the appropriateness of including a tax in the measure of inflation, and the merits of this approach more broadly. It was agreed that the National Statistician would provide further advice on this matter. The meeting was content with the National Statistician's other five recommendations.
- 6.6 The meeting noted that the National Statistician had announced a consultation into options to reduce or eliminate the formula effect. The consultation document would be published on 8 October and the consultation would run until 30 November. The meeting agreed that it was important that the correct processes were followed regarding any decision to make a change.

### **7. Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) [SA(12)42]**

- 7.1 The Chair summarised the recent PASC evidence session held on 12 September, at which he had provided oral evidence along with the National Statistician and the Head of

Assessment. The session had been probing but constructive. A suggestion had arisen that the National Statistics quality mark could be replaced with a new label that better communicated what it signified, i.e. Code compliance. The secretariat would provide a discussion paper around options for a new label for National Statistics.

7.2 A call for evidence had been published for PASC's fourth study, on communicating and publishing statistics. The Authority will provide written evidence by the deadline of 12 October. It was expected that a further evidence session would not be held earlier than December.

## **8. Authority Strategy**

8.1 The Chair summarised plans to review the Authority's overall strategy and publish a strategy statement in the new year. Preliminary discussions between the Chair, National Statistician, Head of Assessment and Head of Secretariat had been held. Further conversations between the Chair and the Deputy Chairs would also be held, followed by further discussion at the next Board meeting.

8.2 The following points were made in the discussion.

- i. The strategy should explicitly identify the challenges and priorities of the Authority.
- ii. Discussion of the Authority's strategy should connect with the separate discussion of the ONS strategy and plans for Monitoring and Assessment work. The sequencing of these discussions was important.
- iii. A discussion of the strategy for the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) was also needed, particularly in the context of the next spending review.

8.3 The meeting noted the Authority's risk register. It was agreed that a fuller discussion of these risks should form a part of the development of the Authority's strategy.

8.4 It was agreed that it would be important for the development of the Authority's strategy to be informed by the relevant PASC reports on strategy.

8.5 Briefing was also needed to ensure that the strategy was developed in light of the current policy environment.

## **9. Priorities for ONS**

9.1 Ms Matheson and Mr Watson provided a summary of current and projected resources, expenditure, pressures and opportunities for ONS.

9.2 The meeting considered the balance between data collection and analysis in a climate of reduced resources. The GSS vision summarised the desirable rebalancing of resource proportionately towards analysis, dissemination, and advice and support to users. The following points were made in the discussion.

- i. There were barriers to achieving a vision of 'collect less, analyse more'. These included pressure from users to maintain data collection, and the current skills of statisticians which were not optimal for the provision of better analysis and dissemination.
- ii. ONS should be an exemplar. But it may face a tougher challenge in rebalancing its activity from collection to analysis due to its reliance on survey data collection and its responsibility to provide data to meet legal obligations.
- iii. The meeting considered the role of the GSS and ONS in relation to data collection and analysis and different models reflecting the balance of work between the GSS and ONS.

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- iv. The distinction between data and analysis could be a false one. In a rapidly changing world, it was important that data collection and analysis were iterative.
  - v. There was a vital role for the higher education sector in providing secondary analysis, which should be acknowledged. Making data more accessible and collaborating more with higher education institutions was important.
- 9.3 The meeting discussed the organisational capability of ONS and the significant management challenges that needed to be addressed. It was agreed that these challenges should be focussed on in the round. The Board reaffirmed its support for the incoming Director General of ONS in respect of these issues.
- 9.4 The Board agreed that the ONS priorities should be further developed and presented to a future meeting.
- 10. Monitoring and Assessment work programme [SA(12)44]**
- 10.1 Professor Rhind summarised progress on reaching agreement on the future arrangements for the commissioning, production and approval of Assessment Reports and Monitoring Reviews. The 11 September Assessment Committee had considered draft proposals and had concluded that while it would be relatively straightforward to agree a process for Assessment, it was more problematic to develop a new process for Monitoring.
- 10.2 The meeting considered the proposals for Assessment. It was suggested that the next round of Assessment should build upon the baseline established by the first round, and should demonstrate how Assessment has led to improvement. An independent audit of the Requirements made in Assessment Reports could be conducted. The Board approved the proposals presented in the paper for the future Assessment programme. It also agreed to receive a forward work programme for Assessment, and a report on progress with that work programme, at least annually.
- 10.3 It was suggested that Monitoring could be viewed as responding to specific, timely concerns. The National Statistician also responded to particular issues of concern. It would be important to develop an overall understanding of Monitoring and Assessment in the context of the wider governance structures of the Authority.
- 10.4 The meeting considered the overall objectives of Monitoring. It was suggested that Monitoring work should flow from the Authority's strategic objectives and should be clear on how the work improves trust or quality. Part of this could be to undertake audits of the methodology used in the production of official statistics. The meeting heard that the capability of the current team may need to be strengthened to best deliver this. The Chair reiterated that additional resources would be made available for this if required.
- 10.5 It was agreed that the Authority Board would retain a role in identifying priorities for Monitoring, and would also retain approval of Monitoring reports prior to publication. It was also agreed that the Board would not usually contribute to the ongoing drafting of the reports – this role would be delegated to a sub-committee. The meeting was content with the proposals presented in Annex C of the paper regarding initial topics for Monitoring Reviews.
- 10.6 It was further agreed that additional emphasis at Board level would be placed on the consideration of action in response to the findings of Monitoring reports.

**11. Draft Monitoring Brief: The accessibility of official statistics on health [SA(12)45]**

11.1 The meeting noted the draft Monitoring Brief, which had previously been circulated to the Board for comment, and had subsequently been revised.

11.2 The meeting agreed that the report should be published, subject to some drafting amendments by the Head of Assessment. It was agreed that the Authority Chair would write to the Chair of PASC, the Chair of the Health Select Committee, and to relevant Ministers in the four UK administrations, enclosing the report.

**12. Revised policy for reporting breaches of the Code of Practice [SA(12)46]**

12.1 The meeting considered revised guidance for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Code of Practice. Principal improvements were to clarify that the guidance was applicable to all official statistics, and to remove the distinction between reportable and 'non-reportable' breaches.

12.2 The Board approved the revised guidance.

**13. Assessment Reports for Approval [SA(12)47]**

13.1 The meeting noted the summary of current and planned assessment activity. At its meeting on 11 September, the Assessment Committee had recommended that the following Assessment Report should be published:

- i. AR 240: Statistics in Tuberculosis in Cattle (Bovine TB)

*(In total 1 Assessment report, covering 1 output)*

13.2 The meeting approved the Assessment Report for publication, subject to the amendments recommended by the Assessment Committee.

**14. Any other business**

14.1 The meeting noted that a workshop on the Beyond 2011 project would be held on 16 October.

14.2 There was no other business. The Board would meet next on 22 October 2012.

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Agenda

**Thursday, 27 September, 2012**  
**Board Room, Drummond Gate, 11:15 - 15:00**

**Chair: Andrew Dilnot**

**Apologies: None**

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 200712
2	Authority Chair's Report and Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reporting to Parliament</li> <li>● Budget</li> <li>● Communications</li> </ul>	Oral Report
3	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Committee for Official Statistics and Assessment Committee</li> <li>● ONS Board</li> <li>● Audit Committee</li> </ul>	Oral Reports Professor David Rhind  Professor Sir Adrian Smith Mr Partha Dasgupta
4	Consumer Price Indices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. CPAC Annual Report</li> <li>ii. Consultation on the Retail Price Index</li> </ol>	SA(12)40 SA(12)41 Ms Jil Matheson
5	Public Administration Select Committee	SA(12)42  Secretariat
6	Authority Strategy	Discussion  Mr Andrew Dilnot
7	Priorities for ONS	Presentation  Ms Jil Matheson
8	Monitoring and Assessment work programme	SA(12)44  Mr Richard Alldritt
9	Draft Monitoring Brief: The accessibility of official statistics on health	SA(12)45  Mr Richard Alldritt
10	Revised policy for reporting breaches of the Code of Practice	SA(12)46  Ms Jil Matheson
11	Assessment Reports for Approval	SA(12)47  Mr Richard Alldritt
12	Any other business	

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)40

***2012 CPAC Annual Report to the UK Statistics Authority***

This document will be published on the Office for National Statistics website.

The document will be available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=CPAC+Annual+Report>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)41

***Consultation on the Retail Prices Index***

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/user-engagement/consultations-and-surveys/national-statistician-s-consultation-on-options-for-improving-the-retail-prices-index/index.html>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)42

***Public Administration Select Committee***

Transcript of the oral evidence taken before the Public Administration Select Committee on 12 September 2012 has been published on the Parliament website.

The document is available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmpublicadm/c406-i/c406i.pdf>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)44

***Monitoring and Assessment work programme***

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

The document is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html>

***Draft Monitoring Brief: Public Availability of Official Statistics on health***

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-7-2012-accessibility-of-official-statistics-on-health.pdf>

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)46

***Revised policy for reporting breaches of the Code of Practice***

**Purpose**

1. This paper proposes revised arrangements for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Code of Practice. It follows consideration of the guidance at the September meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics, which recommended that the Authority Board should approve the revised policy.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to agree:
  - the updated procedures for reporting and dealing with breaches of the Code of Practice; and
  - publication and promotion of guidance outlining the updated process, including circulation to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) (**Annex A**).

**Discussion**

3. The Code of Practice (Protocol 2, Practice 8) requires some breaches (related to the inappropriate release of statistics before their publication) to be reported to the National Statistician. By implication, other breaches should be reported, but there is no clear requirement to do so.
4. Since 2010, breaches have been reported to the National Statistician, and her staff have considered, with the Assessment team, what action, if any, to recommend that the Statistics Authority might take. In the light of two years' operation of the guidelines, we propose improving them to clarify:
  - i. the importance of producer bodies dealing with breaches, including reporting them to the Statistics Authority;
  - ii. which breaches should be reported;
  - iii. who is responsible for reporting breaches; and
  - iv. what information about breaches should be reported to the Statistics Authority.
3. The revised guidance at Annex A was considered at the last meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics [SA(COS)(12)24] and has been revised in light of the comments received from the Committee.

**Tim Andrews, National Statistician's Office**

**Mark Pont, Monitoring and Assessment Team**

**September 2012**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Draft guidance to producers of official statistics about reporting breaches of the Code of Practice relating to release practices**

**Annex A      Draft guidance to producers of official statistics about reporting breaches of the Code of Practice relating to release practices**

Introduction

1. Being open about the occurrence of breaches offers a level of public accountability of the statistical service, enhances transparency, and therefore helps to build trust in it. It is inevitable that things will go wrong from time-to-time in an organisation such as a statistical producer body; being open about such circumstances, and publicising what improvements have been made to systems as a result of such events, are some of the positive ways to improve trust in the statistical service.

Which breaches to report?

2. Breaches of the Code in relation to official statistics (whether designated as National Statistics or not) must be reported to the National Statistician if at least one of the following criteria is met.
  - i. Statistics are not made equally available to all (Principle 2, practice 3).
  - ii. Statements or comments based on prior knowledge of the statistics are published ahead of the publication of the statistics (Principle 3, practice 1).
  - iii. The professional independence of statisticians is challenged (Principle 3, practices 2 to 4).
  - iv. Unpublished information is used for personal gain (Principle 3, practice 7).
  - v. Confidential (disclosive) information is inadvertently/inappropriately made available outside the producer body (Principle 5, practices 1, 2, 5, 6).
  - vi. Statistical reports have been released contrary to Protocol 2 of the Code, including where the content of a statistical report has been made public, or available to anyone not essential for statistical production who are not on the relevant pre-release access list (Protocol 2).
3. Breach reporting is the responsibility of the body producing the statistics, irrespective of whether the breach occurred within that body. It is for the relevant senior statistician (Head of Profession for statistics, or Lead Official in an arm's length body) of the body producing the set of statistics to determine whether a breach has occurred, and to document it appropriately. If in doubt about whether an event constitutes a breach, the National Statistician's Office will provide advice.

Timing of breach reporting

4. When a breach of the Code has occurred, the senior statistician should:
  - i. Issue an initial public statement explaining the breach on both the organisation's own website (in the same place that the statistics to which the breach relates have been, or should have been, published) and the National Statistics Publication Hub, as soon as he/she is aware of the breach. This should be done no later than the time of the publication of the relevant statistics if the breach has occurred before publication, or as soon as possible afterwards in other cases.
  - ii. Inform the National Statistician of the breach as soon as it is discovered.
  - iii. Ensure that the nature of the breach, the impact of the breach, and the steps taken (or planned to be taken) to reassure users and to prevent such a breach reoccurring are reported to the National Statistician as soon as possible, and ideally within one

## Annex A - SA(12)46 - Revised policy for reporting breaches of the Code of Practice

working day of the breach unless otherwise agreed with the Statistics Authority. The attached template may be used to report breaches.

- iv. Update the statement about the breach on its website as soon as practicable.

### Procedure for reporting

5. Once a breach has been reported to the National Statistician, the National Statistician's Office will discuss the breach with the producer body. It will also consider, in consultation with the Assessment Team, what action the Statistics Authority should take.

## **BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

### **1. Background information**

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output of 'landing page')

Name of Producer Organisation

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

### **2. Circumstances of breach**

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Date of occurrence

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

Reasons for breach

**3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)**

**4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

**5. Links to published statements about this breach**

**6. Any other relevant supporting material**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(12)47

***Assessment Report for Approval***

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

To see this document go to:

Assessment Report 240: Statistics on Tuberculosis in Cattle (Bovine TB)  
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-240---statistics-on-tuberculosis-in-cattle--bovine-tb-.pdf>