

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Thursday 30 April 2015
Boardroom, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Professor David Rhind
Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Dame Colette Bowe
Ms Carolyn Fairbairn
Dame Moira Gibb
Professor David Hand
Mr Ed Humpherson
Dr David Levy
Mr John Pullinger
Mr Glen Watson

Also in attendance

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford
Mr Ian Cope and Mr Garnett Compton (for item 8)
Ms Vanessa Holden (for item 9)
Ms Heather Savory

Apologies

None

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

3.1 The Chair welcomed Ms Heather Savory to her first meeting of the Authority Board in her new role as Deputy National Statistician for Data Capability. Mr Jonathan Athow would soon be joining the Authority as Deputy National Statistician for Economic Statistics

3.2 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 February 2015 were agreed.

3.3 The meeting reviewed actions from the last meeting. Progress was being made with preparations for the next Spending Review and a further update would be provided to the next meeting. Some non-executive directors had met with Ian Williams to discuss ideas for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) business model, and a further discussion on the business model was planned for May.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 The Chair reported on the meeting of the non-executive directors which had taken place prior to the start of the Board meeting, where the non-executive directors had discussed membership of the Authority Board. The Statistics Act allowed for three executive members of the Authority Board, one of whom shall be the National Statistician and the other two being appointed by the non-executive members. The non-executives had agreed that the Director General for Regulation would continue to be a member of the Board. Previously, the Director General for ONS had been the third executive member, but with the recent move from there being one Director General for ONS to three Deputy National Statisticians, the non-executive directors had agreed that one of the three Deputy National Statisticians would be a member of the Authority Board, on an annual rotating basis. Mr Glen Watson would be a member of the Authority Board for the first year. The three Deputy National Statisticians were equal in status and, irrespective of one of them being at any one time a member of the Authority Board, all three would usually attend meetings of the Authority Board.

4.2 The non-executive members had also discussed non-executive membership of the Authority Board. The Chair noted with great regret that Professor David Rhind's term as non-executive member and Deputy Chair for the Official Statistics System would come to an end in the summer. It was agreed that, following the streamlining of the Authority's sub-committee structure in October 2014, it was no longer necessary to maintain two Deputy Chair roles, and the Authority would instead operate with a single Deputy Chair.

4.3 The Standing Orders for the Authority Board would be amended and published to reflect the above changes.

4.4 The Chair reported on the results and suggestions arising from the Board's self review of effectiveness. One particular theme arising was a desire from non-executives for more interaction with staff across the organisation at all levels. Suggestions were made for how this might be achieved. Another theme was the need for better information to be provided to the Board on performance; the meeting heard that a new performance report was in

development. The Board would consider progress with actions to address these and other themes in September.

- 4.5 The Chair reported on his activities since the last meeting, which included meeting Will Moy to discuss Full Fact's election work, meeting Robert Devereux to discuss statistics at the Department for Work and Pensions, appearing on the Today Programme to discuss the trustworthiness of official statistics in the context of the General Election campaign, meeting with the Minister for the Cabinet Office, and speaking to staff at the Newport office with the National Statistician.

5. Reports from Committee Chairs

Remuneration Committee

- 5.1 The Chair reported on the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held earlier that day. The Committee had approved the direction of travel on Senior Civil Service pay. A substantive discussion of pay and capability would be scheduled for the Authority Board in the autumn.

Administrative Data Research Network Board

- 5.2 Professor Hand reported on the meeting of the Administrative Data Research Network Board held on 3 March. The meeting had considered:
- i. legislative issues including draft clauses which the Cabinet Office had been developing;
 - ii. the activities of the Wellcome Trust and others with regards to prospective EU legislation;
 - iii. a draft ADRN Annual Report, which would be provided to a future Authority Board meeting;
 - iv. the ethical approval process and the establishment of an approvals panel;
 - v. information security policies; and
 - vi. public engagement and communications, in particular how to keep the different parts of the network operating as one.

Regulation Committee

- 5.3 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Regulation Committee held on 12 March.
- i. A draft Monitoring and Assessment work programme for 2015/16 had been developed, which featured greater flexibility to respond to emerging concerns than had been the case in previous years.
 - ii. Five draft Assessment Reports about patient outcome statistics had identified system wide issues. The Committee had agreed that National Statistics status could not be awarded at this time and a systemic response was required.
 - iii. The meeting had considered productivity statistics and had agreed to hold a seminar on this in May.
 - iv. It was noted that Heads of Profession were increasingly willing to alert the Authority to problems with statistics which might have an impact on their designation as National Statistics. This was welcomed by the Committee.
- 5.4 Mr Humpherson reported that, since the last Regulation Committee meeting, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) had published the results of its audit of recorded crime data for Northern Ireland. The results indicated 98 per cent accuracy. The Regulation Committee would consider this at its next meeting.

- 5.5 The Board discussed the issues with health statistics as reported in the five Assessment Reports, and also more broadly the way that public debate about health statistics was being poorly served by the available data. The Board wished to see a coordinated system for health statistics and would consider ways it could offer support for a programme of improvement.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 5.6 Dame Colette reported on the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 16 March. The Committee had considered:
- i. the Authority's expenditure for the year would be within the allocated control totals;
 - ii. a new technique to determine the Board's risk appetite and tolerance. The Committee was undertaking an experimental exercise on risk appetite, involving discussions with individual Committee members, and if successful this would be rolled out to all Authority Board members; and
 - iii. a proposed structure for a series of strategic risk 'deep dives'.
- 5.7 The Board reflected that, to date, risk management had been focussed on ONS and Statistics Authority risks. Risks for the wider Government Statistical Service had been less systematically captured and managed centrally. This in part reflected the reality that the National Statistician had a responsibility for the wider statistical system, but had relatively few levers to manage risk in this domain.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(15)12]

- 6.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a report which provided the Authority Board with an overview of activity and issues for March and April. The last two months had been a busy period as the statistical system had delivered statistics against the backdrop of the General Election.
- 6.2 Mr Pullinger invited Ms Savory to provide her initial reflections on her first weeks in post. Ms Savory reported that she had had initial discussions with all of her direct reports and deputy directors, and had heard useful feedback on the history of the organisation. From the outside, customers had a natural confidence in ONS. But from the inside, cultural and procedural changes were needed in order to deliver the vision set out in the Authority's strategy. There were examples of technology projects in recent memory which had failed to deliver their expected benefits, and this had led to staff losing confidence in technology. While there were some excellent staff delivering a high quality product, the way budgets were allocated meant sometimes incentives were not as effective as they should be.
- 6.3 Ms Savory outlined her ambitions, which included a complete upgrade to the technology platform used across the office; to deliver effective tools and services to underpin what the organisation was here to do; using the Census transformation to leverage change across the whole organisation; cultural change and empowerment of staff. Her vision was to make ONS the go-to place for analytical capability and data. Achieving these ambitions would necessitate solidifying relationships and partnerships.
- 6.4 The Authority Board expressed its full support to Ms Savory.

7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(15)13]

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

7.2 The meeting noted that the Monitoring and Assessment programme for 2015/16 allowed flexibility for issues arising throughout the year. The planned crime event would be a useful pivot point between regulation and production activity in this area.

8. Census consultation [SA(15)14]

8.1 Mr Cope introduced a paper which provided an update on progress with the 2021 Census and, in particular on the planned 2021 Census topic consultation.

8.2 It was agreed that the Census was absolutely central to the UK's statistical infrastructure, and it was essential to ensure that maximum value was delivered from the investment. The National Statistician's recommendation for 2021 was for an online Census alongside greater use of administrative data as a springboard for the future. 2021 would be an opportunity to validate and benchmark administrative data.

8.3 The Census was a significant investment and would involve a complex procurement exercise. It was agreed that the risk management for the Census would be considered at the May meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

8.4 The Board discussed the proposed consultation and suggested some amendments to the wording.

8.5 It was agreed that the Board would receive updates on progress with the Census every six months. Further information about the use of administrative data in the 2021 Census would be provided to the July meeting.

9. Consumer Price Statistics [SA(15)15]

9.1 Mr Pullinger presented a paper which set out plans for the Authority's future work on consumer prices statistics, including proposals for a public consultation.

9.2 The Board discussed the proposed consultation and suggested some amendments to the wording. It was agreed that the consultation should be a freestanding document, with clear options where possible, but remaining open to all user views.

10. Monitoring during the General Election

10.1 Mr Humpherson led a discussion about the role of official statistics during the General Election Campaign. The following comments were made in the discussion.

- i. There was evidence that Ministers and Shadow Ministers were being more careful with their use of official statistics. This was perhaps partly due to the role of the Statistics Authority and independent fact checking organisations, and also perhaps partly due to the nature of the campaign. Some delicate issues had arisen in relation to the 'Purdah' rules and equality of access to data.
- ii. The role of independent fact checking organisations was now well established, performing a valuable front-line function in responding to issues in real-time. The Authority did not aim to police all political discourse, but rather to defend the value of official statistics.
- iii. The regulatory arm of the Authority adopted a thematic approach. The production side was also moving towards a more thematic approach, starting from the decisions that needed to be made, and providing a rounded picture based on relevant official statistics.
- iv. There was scope for statistics to play a greater role in raising the level of public debate.

11. Any Other business

There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 21 May 2015 at 10:30 in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**Agenda**

Thursday 30 April 2015
Board Room, London, 10:30 – 16:00

Chair: Sir Andrew Dilnot

Apologies: None

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of interest 	Meeting of 27-02-15
2	Report from the Authority Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Board Standing Orders • Annual effectiveness review 	Sir Andrew Dilnot
3	Reports from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Data Research Network Board • Regulation Committee • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 	Professor David Hand Professor David Rhind Dame Colette Bowe
4	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(15)12 Mr John Pullinger
5	Report from the Director General for Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority interventions • Work programme 2015/16 	SA(15)13 Mr Ed Humpherson

12:30 to 13:00 – Lunch

6	Census consultation	SA(15)14 Mr Ian Cope
7	Consumer price statistics	SA(15)15 Mr John Pullinger
8	Monitoring during the General Election	Discussion Mr Ed Humpherson
9	Any other business	

Next meeting: Thursday 21 May 2015, 10:30 to 16:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(15)12

Chief Executive's Report, April 2015

Purpose

1. This report provides an overview of activity and issues for March and April.

Summary

2. The last two months have been a busy period across the statistical system as we have sought to deliver our statistics against the backdrop of the general election. The end of one financial year and the start of another has provided a focus for management.

Review of recent activities

3. Our numbers are never out of the headlines, and as the pre-election debate has intensified, the importance of our work to present information clearly and impartially has been seen. Alongside our own role, the fact checking activities of major news organisations and Full Fact for example, have been an important gain compared to previous experience of elections in the UK. The Authority can feel it has played a valuable part in this development.
4. The statistical community has been effective in working together to share experience and learn. I was especially impressed by a conference held at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on the presentation and dissemination of statistics that brought out the value of clarity of writing and the power of visualisation. I was also pleased to attend an awards ceremony for excellence in analysis at the Department for Transport and a gathering of statisticians from eight organisations in South Wales and the South West of England. In my view these forums are an important way to celebrate success and encourage curiosity.
5. Within ONS, we were delighted to have been awarded a silver accreditation as an Investor in People. Our commitment to diversity was emphasised and the growing culture of helpfulness, creativity and curiosity noted. We have been actively following up on the results of the most recent People Survey. In doing so we have recognised the improvement in engagement scores and have responded to concerns raised about: how well we value our field staff; IT; change management; promotion opportunities; and pay. On the last of these, we have concluded pay negotiations with the Trade Unions. These negotiations have been challenging given the tight constraints on public sector pay and the goal to remove pay progression across the Civil Service.
6. Our finances came in on budget for the year with an encouraging endorsement from the Treasury on the progress we have made on financial management. Paul Layland and our finance team can be rightly proud of what they have accomplished over the last year. We have been working closely with the Treasury Spending team to prepare for whatever review of public finances follows the general election and will provide a further report to the Board on this.

7. We have continued with our emphasis on building data capability. Heather Savory has now started as my deputy responsible for this area. We have also appointed Bill Oates as Chief Data Scientist. Bill will join us from the Welsh Government in June. The appointment of Mike Bracken as the Government Chief Data Officer provides an opportunity for us and Heather and I will be working closely with Mike and John Manzoni at the Cabinet Office to make the most of the potential in this area. John Manzoni and Mike Bracken have been invited to our next Board meeting to discuss what we might achieve together. In the meantime we have been actively engaged with proposals for legislation on data sharing. In the recent EU Peer Review of the UK statistical system the legislative framework in this area was at the top of the list of weaknesses. Cabinet Office research suggests broad public support for data sharing for statistical purposes and the recent Public Confidence in Official Statistics report gives us a strong place from which to make the case.

Current performance

8. We have developed an integrated performance dashboard that will enable us to track progress against the business plan for the coming year. Key points are:
- i. Year end feedback from key accounts has been quite positive, continuing an upward trend. We are working to develop a richer more dynamic way to capture feedback that will help us make better and more rapid decisions about how best to develop our services and be more demanding of ourselves.
 - ii. We have been working actively to prepare for important consultations on the census and on inflation statistics that will take place over the coming months. In addition we have been developing our approach to crime statistics and statistics on income and earning ahead of events planned for June and July.
 - iii. There has been significant activity with some of our programmes and contracts this month, notably on IT, facilities management and electronic data collection. On national accounts we are on course to reach a critical milestone in May and meet the deadline for submission of data to comply with EU requirements and lift reservations on data used to calculate EU budget contributions.
 - iv. We are setting ourselves new targets to promote efficiency including through continuous improvement projects and income generation. We have won some important contracts recently including for the Family Resources Survey (from DWP) and to act as a trusted third party for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) research programme on the Troubled Families programme. We have also secured commitments from several bodies to help us fund the next wave of the Wealth and Assets Survey.
 - v. Agreement has been reached with Government Statistical Service (GSS) Heads of Profession for a more vigorous approach to talent development following the recent review of GSS capability.
 - vi. This year I am pleased to report that my office is leading on the preparation of cross-government briefing about the role of analysis and evidence for the next administration.

Finance

9. We have a balanced budget for the year ahead but given the tightness of finances this year it is already looking stretched and we are retaining controls used in the latter part of 2014-15 to ensure we start the year on a good footing.

Future look

10. Next month we will be able to review the post election landscape. We will also be taking forward our plans for the census, inflation statistics, crime and income and earnings.

John Pullinger, 23 April 2014

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(15)13

*Report from the Director General for Regulation***Purpose**

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

Recommendation

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

Discussion

3. The main points are as follows.
 - i. **Income and earnings:** we published our Review in February. Since then, we have drawn on its analysis in a number of different public interventions around living standards, which is a central election theme. We have also been planning the follow-up event on 2 July, which will we see as an essential part of our work on this theme. The aim of the July event will be for producers of statistics (HM Revenue and Customs, Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Department for Work and Pensions) to update key users on the developments and improvements they have in progress.
 - ii. **Health statistics:** following the last Board meeting, the Regulation Committee decided to postpone our suite of assessments of health statistics in England until after the election. We plan to publish the assessments in mid-to-late May. We will follow the assessments with a broader statement/report, which takes stock of the current state of health statistics across the UK. It is likely to draw out themes of poor user-friendliness; lack of coherence between different statistical outputs; and overlapping organisational responsibilities for statistical production. These factors, we will argue, undermine the great potential for high value health statistics. We also will hold an event on uses of health statistics in Wales at the end of June; and a Board discussion of health statistics in July.
 - iii. **Crime event:** The Better Statistics, Better Decisions event on crime (9 June) is now taking shape. The keynote speaker will be Baroness Onora O'Neill. The purpose of the event will be to highlight developments in crime statistics, but also to challenge statistical producers to develop responses to the evolving nature of criminality, with new forms of crime emerging but not captured by current statistics. Members of the Board would be very welcome to attend this event.
 - iv. **Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD):** We continue to communicate the regulatory standard to producers, and to implement the standard in our ongoing assessments (e.g. our re-assessment of trade statistics).
 - v. **2015-16 Monitoring Programme:** the preceding four points – on crime, health, income and earnings, and QAAD – reflect the way we are developing our monitoring programme for 2015-16. We propose a much more thematic approach, with these four themes constituting the heart of the programme, and a move away from a number of discrete, separate reports. This is because we have seen that our impact is greater where we can follow up our reports in a sustained way; integrate our reports with our assessments (e.g. QAAD and health) and public interventions (e.g. income and earnings); and use a wider range of media, beyond long-form reports,

including events and seminars. These seminars include a Regulation Committee seminar on measurement of productivity on 12 May.

In addition to the four themes of crime, health, income and earnings and QAAD, we will also launch a stock take of the Code of Practice in the autumn. This will assess the benefits of the Code since its introduction in 2008, and may act as precursor for updating the Code in 2016. The main areas of work in 2015-16 will therefore be:

- i. quality Assurance of Administrative Data;
- ii. health statistics;
- iii. crime statistics;
- iv. income and earnings statistics; and
- v. Code of Practice stock-take.

The Regulation Committee paper on the programme is included in this Board pack at item 17. We would welcome the Board's comments, advice, and agreement to this forward programme.

- vi. **Public interventions.** Before and during the Election campaign we have been active in making public interventions. We have sought to adopt a measured tone, and have been keen to avoid the appearance of pursuing media coverage for its own sake. Several of the interventions relate to income and earnings statistics. We have also been clear that we are not an all-purpose fact-checking organisation – instead our role is more regulatory: to ensure that statistics (and other data) used in public discussion are accessible to all participants; and that the integrity of the statistical system (e.g. continuing to publish pre-announced statistics throughout the purdah period) remains intact. The paper at item 16 updates the Board on our policy on interventions following discussion at the last Board meeting.
- vii. **Assessments.** We have not published any new assessments but have important assessments under way, including of health statistics (see ii) above); trade statistics (a re-assessment following de-designation); and population statistics. The paper at item 17 also includes a forward programme for assessments, including proposals for how we will manage the volume of requests from producers for assessing statistics that may not score highly against the Authority's criteria.

4. The main challenges continue to surround:

- i. ensuring that we invest enough time in the right kind of engagement on our monitoring work, both before and after publication, so that it induces the right kind of impact (changed behaviour, more valuable statistics) and not the wrong impact (defensiveness and rejection);
- ii. judging our public interventions appropriately; and
- iii. planning coherently so that we can have the right teams in place to implement the work programme, and so that we draw out the links between different outputs so that they combine together effectively.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 22 April 2015

List of Annexes

Annex A Key outputs since the last meeting

Annex A Key outputs since the last meetingAssessment

Assessment reports published:	nil
Confirmation of National Statistics status:	nil
National Statistics status removed:	nil

Monitoring

- i. Measuring 'Real' values: Taking account of price changes over time in statistical analysis. Published 20 March 2015.

We are currently working on the following 'live' monitoring topics:

- i. The Influence of Targets on Official Statistics. Final report in May 2015, post General Election period.
- ii. The UK productivity puzzle: what it is and are there measurement issues? Regulation Committee Seminar on 12 May 2015.
- iii. Use of Health Statistics in Wales: Conference in Cardiff on 26 June 2015.
- iv. Income and Earnings: Conference at RSS, London on 2 July 2015.

Casework

From	To	Regarding	Date
Sir Andrew Dilnot	David Gauke	Statistics on 'living standards' 63.5 Kb Pdf document	15 April 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Jackie Baillie MSP	Scottish Government analysis on improved economic performance 57.1 Kb Pdf document	15 April 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Antonia Cox	Statistics about growth in earnings 56.6 Kb Pdf document	24 March 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Frances O'Grady,	Analysis of earnings of	24 March

	General Secretary, Trades Union Congress	those in continuous employment 85 Kb Pdf document	2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband MP	Statistics on living standards 68.6 Kb Pdf document	24 March 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Rt. Hon. Matthew Hancock MP	Zero Hours Contracts 58.1 Kb Pdf document	12 March 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Mark Harper MP	Release date of Official Statistics 55.8 Kb Pdf document	10 March 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP	Homelessness statistics 83.3 Kb Pdf document	6 March 2015
Sir Andrew Dilnot	Lilian Greenwood MP	Rail electrification figures 68.9 Kb Pdf document	6 March 2015

SA(15)14 – Census consultation

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(15)14

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Census consultation

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

The document will be available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/index.html>

SA(15)15 – Consumer price statistics

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(15)15

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Consumer price statistics

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

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/index.html>