

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Thursday, 6 February 2014
Boardroom, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Professor David Rhind
Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Dame Colette Bowe
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Dame Moira Gibb
Professor David Hand
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Jil Matheson
Mr Glen Watson

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Mervyn Stevens

Apologies

Ms Carolyn Fairbairn
Dr David Levy

Other Attendees

Mr Ian Cope (Office for National Statistics) for item 7
Mr Simon Crine for items 7, 8 and 10
Ms Vanessa Holden (UK Statistics Authority) for items 10 and 11
Mr Ross Young (UK Statistics Authority) for item 10

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Ms Carolyn Fairbairn and Dr David Levy.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Mr Humpherson to his first meeting of the Authority Board as Head of Assessment.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes, matters arising from previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2013 were agreed and actions reviewed.

4. Authority Chair's Report

- 4.1 The Chair commented that the Authority Board would be considering how best the capacity and capability of ONS might be strengthened to continue to meet the increasing demands for economic statistics. The meeting noted that ONS had put in hand a programme of work aimed at minimising the possibilities for error in these statistics.
- 4.2 The Chair was pleased to report that, in response to a recommendation from the review of the Authority's communications and public affairs, ONS was recruiting a Head of Communications.
- 4.3 The Chair had met with the Good Practice Team from the National Statistician's Office to review progress with their work. The Authority Board was pleased to note some good examples of improvements in the communication and presentation of official statistics, and it was agreed that these developments should be documented and quantified.
- 4.4 The Chair had met with the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Jeremy Heywood to discuss the process for the appointment of a successor to Ms Matheson as National Statistician. The Chair had also met with Chris Giles from the Financial Times.

5. ONS Website

- 5.1 Ms Matheson and Mr Watson reported on recent problems in implementing taxonomy changes to the ONS website which had culminated in the website being taken down for several hours on Thursday 31 January. The publication of key statistical releases had not been affected. In order to restore stability to the website it had been necessary to revert to a former version of the website without the taxonomy changes but with the recent releases included. ONS was reviewing how the problems arose and was receiving technical advice from the Government Digital Service and the Open Data Institute.
- 5.2 While recognising the considerable efforts of the ONS digital publishing team to rectify the situation, the meeting was nevertheless most concerned to learn of these developments. It was agreed that the Authority Board needed to obtain robust assurance as soon as possible that the problems would be rectified satisfactorily as a priority and that the risk of repetition had been minimised.
- 5.3 A paper would be submitted to the next meeting of the Authority Board which would set out how ONS proposed a thorough review of the technical and cultural issues might be taken forward. It was agreed that these proposals needed to demonstrate a significant element of expert independent challenge, which should include a review of: the technical

issues; the failure of governance and risk management processes; and the maturity and capability of ONS to maintain and develop further its website. It was agreed that, in preparation for the next meeting, the Chair of the ONS Board, Professor Sir Adrian Smith would discuss with Ms Matheson and Mr Watson how the Authority's requirements should be addressed, the terms of reference for a review, and the timetable for delivery.

6. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

The meeting noted the minutes of the meeting of the ONS Board held on 21 January, and the meetings of the Committee for Official Statistics and Assessment Committee held on 23 January.

7. Draft Beyond 2011 Recommendation [SA(14)01 and SA(14)02]

7.1 Ms Matheson introduced a draft report which included her recommendation as National Statistician on the census and the future provision of demographic statistics for England and Wales. The recommendation to the Authority Board was for a blend of an on-line census in 2021 and an expansion of the use of administrative data already collected from the public and held by government. In the longer term the use of administrative data would have the potential to reduce the dependence on the decennial census.

7.2 The meeting considered and endorsed the National Statistician's recommendation. The report would be submitted to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP with a letter from the Authority Chair by the end of March. It was agreed that the Authority Chair and the National Statistician should seek to meet with Mr Maude to discuss the recommendations. It would then be for the Government to make its response to the recommendations and introduce legislation as necessary. The meeting agreed that there should also continue to be engagement with the Opposition.

8. Review of Information Technology [SA(14)03]

8.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which set out proposals to take forward initial scoping work ahead of the commissioning of an external review of information technology across the Authority and the ONS, as recommended by the review of communications and public affairs.

8.2 The meeting agreed that a pre-review working group should be established for the purpose of establishing the scope, governance and resourcing of a review of the Authority's information technology.

9. Assessment Work Programme [SA(14)04]

9.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a paper which provided the Board with the Assessment work programme for 2014/15. The work programme, which would be published on the Authority's website, would be reviewed with a view to identifying priorities for Assessment. A further update would be provided to the next meeting of the Authority Board.

9.2 The meeting noted these plans. It was agreed that the criteria for prioritising the work of the Monitoring and Assessment team should be reviewed in order that they might be reduced in number and more closely aligned to the Authority's strategy.

10. The Authority's Engagement with Parliament [SA(14)05]

10.1 Ms Holden and Mr Young introduced a paper which set out the Authority's recent engagement with Parliament, in particular in respect of the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee's (PASC) inquiry on statistics. The Authority had

provided written evidence to PASC for eight of the Committee's eleven studies into official statistics, and Authority and ONS staff had given oral evidence on six occasions. More recently the Authority Chair, the National Statistician and the Head of Assessment had given oral evidence to PASC following the Authority's de-designation of crime statistics as a National Statistic.

- 10.2 The meeting noted these developments and the present position in the Authority fulfilling commitments it had made to PASC. The Board expressed its appreciation to the members of staff who had prepared briefing and other material for the PASC hearings.

11. Prices Governance Review [SA(14)06]

11.1 Professor Smith introduced a draft report of the review of the governance arrangements for price indices. In May 2013 the Authority had announced the launch of two reviews into price statistics: a review of the range of price statistics to be conducted by Paul Johnson from the Institute for Fiscal studies; and a review of the governance arrangements and structures supporting the production of consumer price statistics to be led by Professor Smith.

11.2 Professor Smith's report supported the continued existence of an advisory function on price indices but recommended that this be carried out by two separate advisory panels: one dealing with stakeholder interests and the other dealing with technical issues. The two panels, which would replace the Consumer Prices Advisory Committee, would report to the National Statistician on behalf of the Board. ONS Prices Division would continue to produce an annual work programme for changes to price indices. It was proposed that the outcomes of the review into the range of price statistics (the Johnson review) would be taken forward within the framework of these revised governance arrangements in due course.

11.3 The meeting endorsed the recommendations, approved the report for publication on the Authority's website and requested that the National Statistician implement the recommendations.

12. Authority Strategy [SA(14)07]

12.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which reviewed the effectiveness of the Authority's process for delivering its strategy, and made proposals for strengthening those arrangements.

12.2 The meeting agreed that lead executives should review existing deliverables with a view to more fully defining the medium term outcomes, and provide a statement on the intended impact the work would have. The executive leads would also review the delivery confidence for their objectives and assess the current risks. Business areas would be asked to review their business plans and make suggestions for additional deliverables in support of the Authority's strategic priorities. The responses to these three strands would be collated and summarised for the next meeting of the Authority.

12.3 The meeting was pleased to note that a recent Internal Audit review of the Authority's governance and decision-making had concluded with an overall audit opinion of 'good'.

12.4 The Authority Board would be reviewing its governance framework at the next meeting. This review would include an evaluation of the performance of the Authority Board and its

committees in delivering its strategy. The Authority would also be reviewing its strategy during the year in preparation for the Spending Review in 2015.

13. Any other business

13.1 Mr Bumpstead reported that discussions with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) regarding the establishment of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) were continuing. The Authority would begin recruiting the members of the ADRN governing body shortly.

13.2 There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on 25 March 2014 at 12:00 in Newport.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday, 6 February 2014
Board Room, Drummond Gate, 12:00 – 16:00

Chair: Sir Andrew Dilnot
Apologies: Ms Carolyn Fairbairn and Dr David Levy

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings Declarations of interest	Meeting of 051213
2	Authority Chair's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Statistics • Parliament and Assessment • Communications 	Oral report Sir Andrew Dilnot
3	ONS Website	Oral report Sir Andrew Dilnot and Mr Glen Watson
4	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONS Board • Committee for Official Statistics and Assessment Committee 	Oral reports Professor Sir Adrian Smith Professor David Rhind
5	Draft Beyond 2011 recommendation Draft Authority response	SA(14)01 Ms Jil Matheson SA(14)02 Sir Andrew Dilnot
6	Review of Information Technology	SA(14)03 Secretariat
7	Assessment Work Programme	SA(14)04 Mr Ed Humpherson
8	The Authority's engagement with Parliament	SA(14)05 Secretariat
9	Prices Governance Review	SA(14)06 Professor Sir Adrian Smith
10	Authority Strategy	SA(14)07 Secretariat
11	Any other business	

SA(14)01 –Beyond 2011 recommendation

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)01

Beyond 2011 recommendation

This report was submitted to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon. Francis Maude MP on 27 March 2014 and has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-dilnot-to-rt-hon-francis-maude-mp-27032014.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)03

Review of Information Technology

Purpose

1. This paper sets out proposals to take forward initial scoping work ahead of the commissioning of an external review of IT across the Authority and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), as recommended by the Review of Communications and Public Affairs.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to
 - i. agree that the Authority should convene a small pre-review group with the task of establishing the scope, governance and resourcing for the Authority's IT review (paragraph 7); and
 - ii. comment on the proposed membership for this group (paragraph 8).

Background

3. The Review of Communications and Public Affairs, produced for the Authority by Simon Crine, was considered at the November meeting of the Authority Board [SA(13)50]. The Board welcomed the review and agreed that the recommendations should be progressed without delay.

Discussion

4. The Review of Communications and Public Affairs noted that:

"poor IT systems...appear to beset the ONS and, by extension, the Authority. Specific issues raised by participants included the difficulties of accessing ONS systems off-site, restrictive policies regarding the use of social media, and access to basic equipment like smart phones (essential for communications teams). The author does not pretend to have expertise in this area but has heard enough to persuade him that the Board should give urgent consideration to a swift, external review of IT support".

5. The Review recommended that the Authority commission this work:

"The Authority should commission an external review of IT and technical support (akin to this communications review) across the Authority and the ONS."

6. A paper on ONS's response to the recommendations from the Review was considered at the January meeting of the ONS Board [SA(ONS)14(06)]. With regards to the recommendation for an external IT review, the ONS paper welcomed the opportunity to participate. Additionally, ONS suggested that, if the Authority preferred, ONS would be happy to initiate the IT review, reporting to the Authority, unless the Authority wished to take the lead.
7. This paper proposes that, prior to the commissioning of the IT review, the Authority should convene a small pre-review group with the task of establishing the scope, governance and resourcing for the review. This group would also consider the alignment between the proposed review and ongoing IT development work in ONS, such as the programme of work to disconnect ONS systems from the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) and connect securely to the new Public Sector Network (PSN).
8. The suggested membership of the pre-review group is as follows:
 - i. one or two non-executive members of the Authority Board (to be decided);
 - ii. an Authority representative (nominated by Jil Matheson); and
 - iii. an ONS representative (nominated by Glen Watson).

Secretariat, 29 January 2014

SA(14)04 – Assessment Work Programme

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)04

Assessment Work Programme

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/programme-of-assessment/assessment-work-programme-2014-15---february-2014-version.doc>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)05

The Authority's engagement with Parliament

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the Authority's recent engagement with Parliament, in particular in respect of the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee's Inquiry on Statistics.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority are invited to:
 - i. note the status report on the Committee's inquiry on statistics;
 - ii. note the record of commitments by the Authority made to the Committee during the course of this inquiry; and
 - iii. consider the Authority's ongoing engagement with Parliament.

Background

3. On 19 June 2012, the Public Administration Select Committee launched a programme of work on statistics and their use in Government. At this time, the Committee indicated it would conduct this inquiry as ten short 'studies', each focusing on a discrete topic.
4. On 16 October 2013, the Committee added a further study to its programme, focussed on crime statistics.

Discussion

Status of the Committee's inquiry

5. To date, the Authority has provided written evidence to eight of the Committee's eleven studies. Representatives of the Authority and/or the ONS have also provided oral evidence on six occasions.
6. The Committee has now published three reports on: the operation of the 2007 Act; communicating and publishing statistics; and, migration statistics. The Authority has made formal responses, independently of Government, to each of these reports.
7. Since the last update to the Board, the Authority has provided written and oral evidence to the Committee for its inquiry into crime statistics. The study, which largely focuses on concerns raised by a serving police officer, PC James Patrick, about the misrecording of crime data, was widely covered in print and broadcast media.
8. The Authority's written evidence on crime statistics, which pre-dated PC Patrick's appearance before the Committee, noted that the Authority saw scope for improvement to various aspects of crime statistics, highlighting anecdotal evidence of inconsistencies in crime recording and the lack of periodic independent audit.
9. Sir Andrew, Jil Matheson, Ed Humpherson and John Flatley (Crime Statistics, ONS) provided oral evidence to the Committee on 21 January 2014, in the week following the Authority's de-designation of crime statistics. At this time, the Committee asked the panel

about factors behind the designation of the statistics as National Statistics in 2011 and the subsequent 2013 de-designation, implications of the de-designation for other statistics, and the role of audit in respect of police recorded crime statistics and other statistics which measure performance against Government targets. The Committee also asked about the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Commitments made to the Committee

10. In the course of the Committee's inquiry on statistics, the Authority and ONS have made 16 commitments to take work forward. Of these, five are now complete.
11. A further nine actions are ongoing; in these cases, the actions are due at a later point. Among these, a commitment in respect of improving the ONS website should be noted. An undertaking has been given to report on improvements to the ONS website at the end of 2013/14, both via the website and directly to the Committee.
12. At the time of writing, two actions are now overdue / incomplete:
 - providing a note on the work of the ONS's Public Policy Analysis Division (due September 2013); and
 - making the GSS Regional and Geography Committee workplan and documents publicly available on the new GSS website.
13. The Secretariat is working with the relevant business areas to resolve these issues as soon as possible, and continues to monitor progress on each of these actions.

Ongoing engagement

14. The Committee is currently preparing its reports on Open Data, and Crime Statistics. The Committee have also now announced that they will be taking oral evidence on the future of the Census on 25 February 2014. It is anticipated that academics, experts and other users of Census data will form the panel.
15. The Authority may be invited to give oral evidence at a later date, following the publication of ONS's response to the consultation on the future of the Census. The Secretariat has provided to the Committee staff copies of the responses to the consultation, which will be published along with the ONS response to the consultation. This has assisted the Committee staff in preparing for oral evidence.
16. In addition to the ongoing inquiry, the Authority Chair's office is exploring dates for a roundtable meeting with the Chair and some members of the Committee, senior representatives of the Authority, and the President of the Royal Statistical Society, at the suggestion of the Chair of the Committee.

Vanessa Holden, Authority Secretariat, 29 January 2013

SA(14)06 – Prices Governance Review

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)06

Prices Governance Review

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/current-reviews/review-of-the-governance-of-prices-statistics.pdf>

SA(14)07 – Authority Strategy

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)07

Authority Strategy

The Authority Strategy has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statistics-authority-statement-of-strategy.pdf>