

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Minutes**

**Thursday 26 July 2018**  
**Boardroom, London**

### **Present**

#### **UK Statistics Authority**

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)

Professor Sir Adrian Smith (Deputy Chair)

Mr Jonathan Athow

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Professor David Hand

Professor Jonathan Haskel

Mr Ed Humpherson

Ms Sian Jones

Dr David Levy

Mr John Pullinger

Prof Anne Trefethen

### **Also in attendance**

Mr Iain Bell

Mr Owen Brace

Mr Robert Bumpstead

Ms Vanessa Holden

### **Apologies**

Ms Nora Nanayakkara

Ms Heather Savory

## **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Ms Nanayakkara and Ms Savory.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 Members reviewed declarations of interest, noting that Mr Humpherson had been appointed as a trustee at Pro Bono Economics. It was agreed that the published register would be updated.

## **3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings**

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 June 2018 were agreed.

## **4. Report from the Authority Chair**

- 4.1 The Chair introduced Sir Ian, and welcomed him to the Board.
- 4.2 The Chair also provided an update on recent activity, highlighting:
- i. recent meetings with the Rt Hon Tom Brake MP regarding the Authority's interventions policy, and Baroness Stroud on the work of the Social Metrics Commission; and
  - ii. Mr Pullinger's appearance before the Lords Economic Affairs Committee on the Retail Prices Index (RPI).
- 4.3 Members discussed the interest in RPI among Select Committees.

## **5. Report from the Director General for Regulation**

- 5.1 Mr Humpherson reported on recent regulatory activity.
- 5.2 The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) intended to publish its report on the value of linked data in September. Members of the Board agreed that data linkage was an important issue for the OSR to consider.
- 5.3 Mr Humpherson also reported that the Greater London Authority had adopted the Code of Practice for Statistics on a voluntary basis, and that the Department for Education had chosen to publish its estimates of student loan forecasts as official statistics.

## **6. Report from the Chief Executive**

- 6.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a report on activity over July, highlighting:
- i. the commencement of the *Digital Economy Act 2017*, after it cleared final Parliamentary stages;
  - ii. the publication of the first monthly estimates of GDP by the Office for National Statistics (ONS); and
  - iii. the publication of migration statistics on 16 July. The release had drawn in additional administrative data sources, to provide a more rounded picture of trends in migration.
- 6.2 Board members inquired about ONS's recent announcement regarding the classification of student loans in the National Accounts. Mr Athow and Mr Pullinger spoke about the process by which classification decisions are made, describing the role and membership of the National Accounts Committee. Board members noted that the Regulation Committee would soon be considering a report from the OSR on these structures and processes.
- 6.3 The Board also discussed progress to date in acquiring administrative data for ONS.

## **7. 2021 Census for England and Wales**

- 7.1 Mr Bell provided an update on preparations for the 2021 Census for England and Wales. Discussion focussed on:

- i. progress in service design and integration;
- ii. media interest in ethnicity 'tick-boxes';
- iii. the Performance Assessment Review being conducted by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority; and
- iv. learnings from New Zealand's recent Census.

**8. Strategy: Beyond Better Statistics, Better Decisions**

- 8.1 Mr Pullinger reflected on progress made against the Authority's *Better Statistics, Better Decisions* strategy since the beginning of 2015.
- 8.2 Board members discussed the changing environment, and the role of the Authority beyond the current strategy.

**9. Any other business**

- 9.1 There was no other business. The Authority Board would next meet on Thursday 27 September 2018 at 9:15 in London.



# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## *Agenda*

**26 July 2018, 09:15 to 14:00**

**Boardroom, London**

**Chair:** Sir David Norgrove

**Apologies:** Ms Nora Nanayakkara, Ms Heather Savory

**Attendees:** Ms Sarah Henry (for items 6 - 9)

### **09:15 – 09:45: Non-Executive Session**

1 09:45-09:50 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declarations of interest</li></ul>	Meeting of 28 June 2018
2 09:50-10:15 25 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10:15-10:30 15 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(18)37 Mr Ed Humpherson
4 10:30-10:50 20 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(18)38 Mr John Pullinger
5 10:50-11:15 25 mins	2021 Census for England and Wales	Oral report Mr Iain Bell
6 11:15-11:35 20 mins	Strategy: Reflecting on Better Statistics, Better Decisions	SA(18)39 Mr John Pullinger
7 11:35-12:15 40 mins	Strategy: A changing environment	SA(18)40 Mr Rob Bumpstead

### **12:15 – 12:45: Lunch**

8 12:45-13:25 40 mins	Strategy: Where next?	Discussion Mr John Pullinger
9 13:50-13:55 5 mins	Strategy: Next steps	SA(18)41 Mr Rob Bumpstead
10 13:55-14:00 5 mins	Any other business	

**Next meeting: 27 September 2018, London, 09:15 to 14:00**



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

**Purpose**

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

**Recommendation**

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

**Discussion**

3. Key activities since the last Board meeting include:

Data linkage

4. Our draft report on data linkage is out for consultation with key stakeholders, including ONS and other bodies who have a role in the data sharing landscape, such as NHS Digital, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Royal Statistical Society. We will share it with the Regulation Committee for comment and then agreement before publication. We have already shared the ideas underpinning the report widely through presentations at various events, including the GSS Methodology Symposium.
5. The report highlights the opportunities from linked datasets, and sets out the conditions for taking advantage of this opportunities and circumventing the barriers to linkage, drawing on the experience of the Administrative Data Research Centres and our research exercise involving interactions with over 30 organisations.
6. We see this as a key output for OSR, setting out our ambition to support greater linkage and supporting the work of ONS teams who are building the infrastructure and case studies for more data linkage.

The Code of Practice

7. We continue to see extensive take-up of the Code. Most prominently, the Greater London Authority announced on 11 July that it was adopting the Code on a voluntary basis for all key statistical outputs. In addition, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) told us that it has adopted the Code for a wider range of analytical reports i.e. not just official statistics. And this wider take-up was recognised by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), when awarding the Code a special commendation at its recent annual awards ceremony – with Sir David Spiegelhalter highlighting the philosophy underpinning the Code and the emphasis on trustworthiness and quality in particular.
8. We also held a discussion with a group of Departmental Directors of Analysis at which we set out the potential use of the Code on a voluntary basis for research and analysis. They responded very positively. They suggested that the Code's framework could form a central plank of the new government-wide Analytical Function.

Positive recognition

9. In the course of late June/July we wrote publicly to praise the ONS's work to provide better statistics on city-regions – particularly through more timely regional Gross Value Added statistics – and the Department for Education's recent publication of official statistics on its student loan forecasts. We also welcomed the publication by the Home Office of an official statistics output on police funding. This Home Office output represents a significant impact from our past public interventions, where we have criticised Government claims of "protecting police funding". We called for an authoritative statistical source to provide the basis information on police funding. Both the Department

for Education and Home Office outputs are good case example of how the GSS, supported by OSR, is steadily extending the range of information that is published as official statistics.

#### European Statistical System conference

10. I missed the last Board meeting because I was attending the ESS conference in Cracow. I gave two presentations: about the role of OSR, and about the development of the Code. Delegates found that the latter provided an interesting contrast to the recent Eurostat process for revising the European Code of Practice: our approach was seen as much more focussed on public value and on consultation than the European approach. More broadly, my main reflection was that the UK system of statistics stands out in its focus on responding flexibly to user needs. I also presented at the European Regulatory Governance conference, the leading academic conference on the study of regulation. There was a lot of interest in how we have embedded the Onora O'Neill ideas of trustworthiness into the Code.

#### Communications strategy

11. We are preparing a communications strategy for OSR for discussion at the September Regulation Committee. The strategy will focus on our communication aims, and identify our key audiences, recognising a distinction between producers of statistics as a primary audience and those who use statistics.

#### Challenges

12. The main challenges continue to be:
- i. ensuring that our regulatory stance on data governance and data ethics is impactful and supports the case for more linked datasets within an appropriate data governance context; and
  - ii. recruitment – we have not been as successful as we would have liked in recruiting researcher level staff. This is impacting on our ability to deliver our work programme and we have done some reprogramming of work as part of our programme review. This reprogramming involves deferring some of our systemic reviews and compliance checks to later in the year. We have also put in place actions to address these issues, including arranging loans of staff from producer organisations.
13. The dashboard summary of regulatory activities is at **Annex A**.

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 18 July 2018**

#### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Regulatory Activities**



## Annex A Regulatory Activities July 2018

Economy	Business, industry, energy and trade	Health and social care	Labour Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kicked off an assessment of ONS experimental labour productivity statistics scheduled to conclude in the fourth quarter of the financial year.</li> <li>• Published our outline of the systemic review into the public value of public finance statistics in a devolved UK.</li> <li>• We're gently probing assertions that official productivity statistics lend themselves to insights which play up supply-side causes of the productivity puzzle in the UK e.g. hapless management, lack of business investment, low skilled workers and give less prominence to potential causes resulting from demand-side austerity measures e.g. declining labour income shares.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Construction Output and Prices statistics:</b> ONS presented a recently published paper to the June Regulatory Committee. Paper covered the resolution of the revisions bias detected by the Bank of England and the re-modelled new orders data. We will monitor feedback and revisions to the series.</li> <li>• <b>UK Trade:</b> Jonathan Athow will be at the next regulation committee to discuss trade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Undertaking assessments of ONS's cancer survival &amp; avoidable mortality statistics, and NRS's avoidable mortality statistics.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic review:</b> Systemic review of Adult Social Care well underway, with extensive engagement with users and producers across all four UK nations.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Applied pressure to NHS Digital and they published a notice letting users know when the statistics from the children's mental health survey will be published (Nov 2018); Evidence submitted by ISD Scotland about data quality issues in NHS Lothian affecting A&amp;E performance statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Income/Earnings:</b> Awaiting letter from Jonathan Athow outlining the ONS/DWP/HMRC work plan for income and earnings statistics (as agreed during meeting in early June)</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Started a compliance check of ONS's Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income release.</li> <li>• <b>Other activities:</b> Discussed with DWP head of Universal Credit analysis feedback on methods and quality information in the Universal Credit Full Business Case. Met with key user of DWP benefit sanction statistics to discuss quality and value issues.</li> </ul>
Crime and Justice	Housing, planning and local services	Children, education and skills	Culture and identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crime:</b> Continuing to monitor reporting of crime statistics and quality of police recorded crime in England and Wales.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance:</b> Meeting NISRA and DoJNI to discuss outcome of compliance check of survey set-up phase for the Northern Ireland Safe Communities (formerly Crime) Survey. Plan to publish letter in August.</li> <li>• <b>Justice:</b> Public statement on systemic review of justice statistics published in July. Starting follow-up on maximising statistical opportunities from digitisation of court systems and improving publication of court statistics in Scotland.</li> <li>• <b>Justice:</b> Beginning programme of eight compliance checks of justice statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Welsh Housing Conditions Survey Assessment ongoing, user views collected and awaiting further evidence from Welsh Government.</li> <li>• <b>Systemic reviews:</b> Continued dialogue with ONS about GSS work to improve housing statistics. Publicly welcomed the collaborative work programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Innovation Systemic Review:</b> All four articles/blogs have been published; ongoing discussions about sharing learning further.</li> <li>• <b>Skills Systemic Review:</b> Producer conversations ongoing, project scope has been formally launched with outline plan published.</li> <li>• <b>Children and Young People System Review:</b> Initial research ongoing, scope of project drafted to be tested with users/producers.</li> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Discussed with DfE claims that 1.9 million more children are in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. Public letter sent to DfE to commend them on publishing student loans forecasts and the teacher supply model as official statistics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessments:</b> Regulation Committee agreed to pause Community Life Survey assessment. Assessment of DCMS Economic; Estimates now at the stage of analysing evidence to assess code compliance and drafting requirements.</li> </ul>
Security, defence and intl relations	Travel, transport and tourism	Population	Agriculture and environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Compliance Checks:</b> Statistics International Development (SID) check underway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Casework:</b> Begun casework into statistics from the National Rail Passenger Survey, Transport Focus.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance Checks:</b> National Travel Survey and Search and Rescue Helicopter CC's completed. Started International Passenger Survey CC into communication and transparency of recent methods changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Systemic review:</b> Engaging with producers on progress against commitments made and OSR recommendations from the migration roundtable. OSR will publish an update on outcomes of the roundtable scheduled for July/August</li> <li>• <b>Compliance checks:</b> Engaging with HO regarding initial immigration statistics compliance check findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No significant activity.</b></li> </ul>



*Chief Executive's Report, July 2018*

**Purpose**

1. This report provides the Board with an overview of activity and issues for July.

**Summary**

2. A major milestone was reached this month, as the codes of practice for the Digital Economy Act passed through their final parliamentary stages. We can now utilise the provisions to enable better research and statistics.

**Review of recent activities**

3. The Analytical Function has been a major feature of Civil Service Live events around the country. This has provided an opportunity to promote the work of analysts and importance of understanding evidence and analysis to a large number of civil servants. The opening video for each Civil Service Live event also includes footage of the Data Science Campus, further enhancing our reputation as a leader in data science and innovation across government.
4. There has also been intense coverage of the use of RPI, driven by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee enquiry. Following David Norgrove and Jonathan Athow's appearance in front of the committee, they have heard evidence from Liz Truss (Chief Secretary to the Treasury) and Robert Stheeman (Chief Executive of the Debt Management Office), as well as a further evidence session with me. We remain clear that RPI is not a good measure of inflation and that a move to alternative measures of inflation should be choreographed.
5. Other developments include:
  - i. We published a new, Monthly GDP release which was positively received by media and stakeholders;
  - ii. Our latest migration statistics included a clearer presentation of uncertainty as well as an analysis based on all available sources;
  - iii. Along with the Best Practice and Impact team, I have been presenting to GSS teams in Sheffield (DfE) and Edinburgh (NHS Scotland). These opportunities have also given a good chance for me to hear about the impressive work going on and consider how good practice can best be shared across the GSS;
  - iv. Our forward work plan for national accounts classifications was published, which included work on student loans;
  - v. We hosted a 'Beyond Better Statistics' event, with all ONS and GSS Senior Civil Servants, as well as Senior Leaders from the Analysis Function. This included sessions on opportunities and threats to the future of the GSS, ethical challenges to using data, and the readiness of the analysis function to respond to crises;
  - vi. The Official Statistics Order passed through Parliament with positive comment from ministers. The Minister for the Constitution thanked the authority for its important work, saying "we can all take confidence in its independence and ability to head up the [official statistics] framework" The order updates bodies defined as 'producers' of official statistics under legislation;
  - vii. The Annual Report and Accounts was presented to parliament on 5 July, after being signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General; and
  - viii. The GSS took an active role in Evidence week in Parliament. Guidance on 'Statistics for Policy Professionals: what you need to know' was very positively received.

6. Key developments in the Census have been:
  - i. Progress with procurements. We are on track for the first supplier onboarding on 14 September;
  - ii. Work on service integration. A major risk remains around the procurement of a service integration partner but the team continues to actively manage this to ensure a partner is on board at the right time;
  - iii. A deep dive on all aspects of finances, including benefits realisation is underway; and
  - iv. A Project Assessment Review is in progress. Iain Bell will update on the emerging findings at the Board.
7. Performance and risks to highlight this month are:
  - i. Data acquisition. There remain several 'red' and 'amber' risks relating to acquisition of data from HMRC and DWP for use in statistical production. There are likely to be implications for some economic statistics transformation milestones and some other possible impacts on business plan delivery dates; and
  - ii. Financial forecast data shows a volatile position at present. We aim to have a robust and settled position at the end of July. This work will incorporate current developments in workforce planning.

**Future look**

8. Census procurements will continue throughout August, and we will continue to develop our future strategy following discussion at today's board meeting.

**John Pullinger, National Statistician, 19 July 2018**

***Better Statistics, Better Decisions***

**Purpose**

1. As the Board begins to shape a new strategy, this paper reflects on progress in delivering the Authority's current strategy. It summarises what has been achieved, and what we expect to have delivered ahead of 2020.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. consider the Authority's progress in delivering its current strategy; and
  - ii. note what is expected to have been delivered at the point the new strategy is launched.

**Background**

3. *Better Statistics, Better Decisions* is the first, combined strategy for the UK's statistical system. It is a five-year strategy, which runs until 2020.
4. Developed and published shortly after Mr Pullinger's appointment in 2014, the strategy identifies a collective mission for the Authority, its regulatory office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS). That mission is: To mobilise the power of data to help Britain make better decisions.
5. Over the lifetime of the strategy, the Authority Board has overseen the development of business plans, to support the delivery of its strategic priorities.
6. The Authority's Business Plan describes how the organisation intends to deliver its strategy in the context of ONS and the GSS. Separately, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) Business Plan defines a work programme for the regulatory office.

**Discussion**

7. In the period to April 2018, ONS, OSR and the GSS have taken significant steps to realise the strategic ambitions set out in *Better Statistics, Better Decisions*.
8. Broadly, the first two years of our strategy focussed on getting plans and leadership in place, securing investment, and beginning to transform our systems and capability.
9. This initial activity laid the groundwork for the third year, during which the changes we had introduced internally began to be reflected publicly. ONS and the GSS have delivered a range of new outputs to decision-makers in priority areas, and OSR delivered the Authority's refreshed Code of Practice.
10. As we enter the final years of the current strategy, the focus is on staff, their skills and how we work together to maximise our collective contribution.
11. Achievements against the strategy are set out at **Annex A**, alongside the changes we intend to make ahead of 2020.

**Conclusion**

12. As the Board begins to consider a strategy for the Authority beyond 2020, this paper summarises what has changed since 2015, and sets out what we expect to already have achieved by the time a new strategy is launched.

**Vanessa Holden, Central Policy Secretariat, 19 July 2018**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A Progress against the strategy**

## Annex A Progress in delivering Better Statistics, Better Decisions

1. The *Better Statistics, Better Decisions* strategy defines five perspectives, against which specific priorities are aligned, and against which progress has been assessed. This short note captures key activity against each perspective, in the period to April 2018. It also captures what we expect to have achieved by the end of 2019.
2. This is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of performance against the strategy, but rather an indication of what the organisation will look like at the point we launch our new strategy.

### Helpful

**Inform decision-making; Support democratic debate; Improve communication; Challenge the misuse of official statistics**

#### What progress have we made?

- ONS and the GSS have delivered a **new range of statistics** to decision-makers in priority areas (eg, productivity, migration between EU and UK, fraud and cybercrime).
- ONS have improved the **timeliness and granularity** of key existing measures (eg trade, monthly GDP).
- ONS have delivered (and continue to improve) a **new website**, incorporating new visual material, and expanding engagement with users on social media.
- The Authority and OSR continue to **challenge the misuse of statistics**, and have refreshed and published our criteria on interventions.

#### What will we have achieved by the end of the current strategy?

- Programmes of work on **migration, housing, crime, health and inequalities statistics** which meet the needs of users, by working across government.
- A new approach to measuring changes in **costs to households**.
- A full set of '**Flow of Funds**' outputs by the end of 2019.
- '**Double deflation**' introduced as part of the UK National Accounts from 2019.
- Established a cross-government framework for **crime statistics**.
- Support for UK research community through the **Secure Research Service**.

### Professional

**Deliver high quality statistics, analysis and advice**

#### What progress have we made?

- The Authority have developed and published a new **Code of Practice for Statistics**, to ensure statistics are high quality, trustworthy, and valuable.
- OSR have issued new standards on the **quality assurance of administrative data**.

#### What will we have achieved by the end of the current strategy?

- ONS will retain **National Statistics** status for all key outputs and regain National Statistics status for Trade and Construction. Crime statistics will have been reassessed on basis on providing best overall assessment of trends in crime.





- ONS have **ended pre-release access** to official statistics.
- ONS will be relevant to policy-makers, bringing the wealth of data to bear on policy questions through the provision of high quality data to meet central and local government decision-making needs.
- ONS will improve the **timeliness** of outputs to as close to real time as possible.
- ONS will develop a new programme of cross-cutting **National Statistics Quality Reviews** and act on any recommendations for improvement.

## Innovative

### Develop and implement innovative methods

#### What progress have we made?

- The **Digital Economy Act** received Royal Assent in 2017, helping statisticians to unlock new sources of data.
- The **Data Science Campus** opened its doors in 2017, to explore new data sources and techniques.
- We have **moved several key business surveys online**, including the Retail Sales Inquiry, the Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey, and the Monthly Business Survey.

#### What will we have achieved by the end of the current strategy?

- Statisticians will **develop our capability to acquire, prepare and link non-survey data** using a fit for purpose Data Architecture. This will include the acquisition of large data sets aligned to our priority areas in 2018, and collection through an integrated model from April 2019.
- The **2021 census will deliver high quality** has the most ambitious target in the world for online collection. A rehearsal in 2019 will be accompanied by a well-developed approach to gathering census data.
- Our work on administrative data will have transformed population and migration statistics and the research will be well underway for decision on the future of the Census in 2023.
- Implementation of **Data Access Platform** in ONS production areas.
- Our business surveys will all be online and we will have added online mode to social surveys to help increase response rates while delivering unbiased results. These will be using administrative data where possible.



## Efficient

### Demonstrate value for money

#### What progress have we made?

- We are on course to deliver a **real terms efficiency gain of 19%** on our core operations by 2020 through increasing the productivity of our business and focussing on the 'digital dividend' from online data collection and administrative data.
- Through **efficiency and the continuous improvement** of our processes we have been able to release £5.4 million in efficiency savings in 2016/17 and are on track towards our 2020 target.

#### What will we have achieved by the end of the current strategy?

- We will demonstrate how we have reinvested over £30 million from 2016 to 2020 in reforming our business processes. This will include tracking benefits we have delivered and a programme of continuous improvement in the collection of data.
- All key Census procurements will be in place by January 2019.
- The survey transformations will have continued to realise further efficiency savings.

## Capable

### Build Capability

#### What progress have we made?

- ONS have dramatically improved its **analytical capacity**. It has achieved its target of increasing the number of economists in ONS to over 100, has recruited ONS Fellows, and has established the **Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence**.
- **Analysis Function** launched.
- Established Centre of Expertise model as primary vehicle for building capability in justice, migration, demography and ageing.

#### What will we have achieved by the end of the current strategy?

- ONS will **re-shape the workforce** to be smaller and more highly skilled. They will increase the share of ONS staff who are in an analytical profession from 19% of the workforce in 2016 to 28% in 2020.
- ONS will have significantly improved its communications capability increasing the impact of our work.



***Strategy: A changing environment***

**Purpose**

1. Having considered progress against the previous strategy, this paper invites Board members to consider changes in the external environment.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. consider contributions made in recent discussions about strategy, by leaders across the Government Statistical Service;
  - ii. note the strategic priorities being adopted by other National Statistical Institutes (NSIs); and
  - iii. discuss the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) factors, which will influence the Authority's strategy beyond 2020.

**Background**

3. Over the course of our current strategy, the external environment has changed enormously. The drafting of the current strategy has allowed us to respond flexibly to developments in the external environment, including:
  - i. the launch of Sir Charles Bean's Review of Economic Statistics, and the establishment of the OSR as a distinct identity;
  - ii. the outcome of the referendum of the UK's membership of the European Union, and the resulting changes in demands for data;
  - iii. the 2017 snap election; and
  - iv. events such as Grenfell, Windrush, etc, which have pushed specific demands.

**Vanessa Holden, Central Policy Secretariat, 19 July 2018**

**List of Annexes**

**Annex A Thoughts from leaders across the GSS**



## **Annex A      Thoughts from leaders across the GSS**

### ***A new strategy: discussions to date***

#### **Purpose**

1. Over the past six months, the Board and the broader statistical community have held a series of discussions on the future of the UK's statistical system. This note summarises these discussions, highlighting points of consensus and debate.

#### **Background**

2. Last month ONS's senior leaders, and Heads of Profession from across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) were invited to explore their ambitions for the statistical system beyond 2020.
3. This exercise followed the Board's discussion on Beyond BSBD, earlier this year.

#### **Discussion**

4. In discussions, members of the statistical community have explored the following, inter-related questions:

##### *What is our remit?*

5. The legislation which established the UK Statistics Authority defined our work entirely in the context of statistics and research.
6. In discussions, participants have frequently noted that the lines between statistics and other forms of data are increasingly blurred. For example, the Authority is often approached with questions about the presentation and use of non-statistical data (for example, financial data or management information) and the new *Code of Practice* (and the concept of voluntary compliance) provide a mechanism for producers of non-statistical data to comply with the standards set by the Authority and the OSR.
7. The launch of the cross-Government analytical function similarly reflects a growing ambition to draw from a range of data (statistical and otherwise) in decision-making.
8. There is broad agreement among the statistical community that the Authority and the statistical community should not limit itself to statistics alone. Different views have been expressed about how far it might extend itself, with suggestions including:
  - i. offering a 'national evidence service'; and
  - ii. expanding into predictive analytics.

##### *What data do people need?*

9. Recent discussions have also focused on gaps in the current evidence base. Broadly, discussions have suggested pursuing:
  - i. 'joined-up' data which follows the journey of individuals, rather than presenting single interactions;
  - ii. 'real-time' data;
  - iii. increasing the insight provided alongside data; and
  - iv. granular statistics, that are relevant to individuals.
10. It may be helpful for the Board to discuss what tensions exist between these ambitions. For example, to what degree will the organisation be able to add insight to debate, where individuals are encouraged to find their own stories within data (considering distinct time-periods, geographies, etc)?
11. Discussions among ONS's senior leaders and GSS Heads of Profession have also highlighted a desire among some to more clearly define priorities. Some comments

suggested that statisticians felt they were currently trying to cater to too broad a set of 'priority' data demands.

12. Other contributions suggested the strategy should focus less on identifying specific outputs, and more on building the capacity of the system to respond quickly to changing demands.

*How to build relationships with our customers?*

13. Questions about what we produce are closely related to questions about how we relate to our customers.
14. In considering our future strategy, several participants have focussed first and foremost on our relationship with members of the public, suggesting the development of specific suites of statistics (such as 'fact-packs', ahead of elections). In this context our role could be seen to help public in decision-making with success measured by smaller gaps between public perception and trends demonstrated in our data.
15. Other contributions, particularly from leaders across the GSS, have focussed closely on the role of evidence in policy-making, highlighting the need to build stronger links with Ministers.
16. Members of the academic and research community, and members of the media are also customers with distinctive requirements.
17. Several participants have questioned how best to meet the different demands of these communities, and the Board may wish to consider what tensions (if any) exist in delivering to these customers.



***Strategy: Next steps***

**Purpose**

1. This paper recommends a course for the development of a new strategy, highlighting dependencies with the upcoming spending review process.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to consider and agree the below approach and timeline for developing a new strategy.

**Background**

3. At last month's Board meeting, members noted that there was one main issue to be considered as a new strategy is developed: the 2019 Spending Review.
4. Board members also requested that, in developing a new strategy, the Secretariat build in opportunities for the Board to hear from external stakeholders.

**Discussion**

**Next steps**

5. Following today's discussion on strategy, it is recommended that:
  - i. the Board use its September, October and November meetings to explore what might be possible and desirable in Economic Statistics, Population and Public Policy, and Data Capability respectively;
  - ii. external stakeholders be invited to a portion of each of these meetings, to provide additional perspectives on the changing external environment and the role of the Authority;
  - iii. these meetings inform ongoing discussion of the Authority's SR19 bid, and a near-final position paper is tabled for consideration at the Board's December 2019 meeting;
  - iv. the Authority concludes its SR19 negotiations in Spring 2019; and
  - v. the Board considers and approves a draft strategy in Autumn 2019.
6. This timetable is reflected in the forward agenda appended to this month's meeting papers. It remains high-level, and feedback from Board members on whether there are additional elements they would like to build in would be welcome.

**Vanessa Holden, Central Policy Secretariat, 17 July 2018**