

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

**Draft Minutes
Thursday 30 April 2020
Via Videoconference**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir David Norgrove (Chair)
Ms Sian Jones (Deputy Chair)
Mr Jonathan Athow
Ms Helen Boaden
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Professor David Hand
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Mr Ed Humpherson
Ms Nora Nanayakkara
Professor Anne Trefethen

Also in attendance

Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Mr Pete Benton (for item 6)
Mr Owen Brace
Ms Ceinwen Blake (for item 6)
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)
Mr Greg Ceely (for item 6)
Mr Grant Fitzner (for item 6)
Mr Ben Humberstone (for item 6)
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
Ms Frankie Kay
Ms Louisa Nolan (for item 6)
Mr Darren Morgan (for item 6)
Ms Emma Rourke (for item 6)
Ms Rachel Skentelbery (for item 6)
Mr Hugh Stickland (for item 6)
Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 9)
Ms Amy Williams (Secretariat)

Apologies

None

1. Apologies

- 1.1 There were no apologies received.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 March 2020 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

- 4.1 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met, noting that the appointment process for two new Non-Executive Directors was going through the final stages of approval.
- 4.2 On 28 April Sir David, Professor Sir Ian Diamond and Mr Humpherson had discussed the Authority's response to COVID-19 with Mr William Wragg, Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC). It was noted that a written update would be provided to Mr Wragg setting out the Authority's response to the recommendations from the PACAC Report on the Governance of Official Statistics.
- 4.3 The consultation on the reform to Retail Prices Index (RPI) methodology launched on 11 March had been extended with a new closing date of 21 August 2020.

5. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)25]

- 5.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting. The Board heard that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had committed to publishing a range of Universal Credit information. What was published on 21 April was less than expected without explanation. Mr Humpherson had written to the Head of Profession at DWP setting out OSR's concerns regarding this issue and was awaiting a response.
- 5.2 Mr Humpherson informed the Board that he would also be writing to Mr Richard Pengelly (Permanent Secretary, Department of Health Northern Ireland) regarding the provision of statistical information relating to COVID-19 in Northern Ireland. The responsibility for the daily reporting of data had moved from the Public Health Authority to the Department of Health on 19 April with the release of a dashboard on COVID-19 statistics. The dashboard had been suspended two days later with limited explanation.
- 5.3 The report of the review of HMRC's Statistical Quality Management was scheduled for publication later that day (30 April). The OSR team had also undertaken a comprehensive review of statistics on post 16 years of age skills and education across the UK.
- 5.4 The Board heard that OSR had undertaken rapid regulatory reviews on data from the ONS: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, and from Coronavirus the UK economy and society faster economic indicators.
- 5.5 Mr Humpherson went on to report that Regulation Committee had considered OSR's draft strategic delivery plan at its recent meeting on 23 April. The Committee had agreed to pause the publication of OSR's five-year strategy in order to take account of the changing context in the plan. Board members discussed the one-year plan and agreed the proposed approach for publication of the five-year strategy.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)26]

- 6.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for April with a focus on the ONS response to COVID-19. The wellbeing of staff continued to be a key concern, with the introduction of a range of new policies designed to provide a high level of support during this period of remote working.

- 6.2 The Board heard that ONS continued to produce a wide range of data and analysis on COVID-19 in the UK and its effect on society and the economy in order to inform decision-making across government and to inform the public. New statistical releases included:
- i. weekly statistics on deaths from COVID-19 registered in England and Wales, which had received significant media coverage;
 - ii. a Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS);
 - iii. a revised version of the Opinion and Lifestyle Survey to measure the social impact of COVID-19; and
 - iv. a new weekly output on faster economic indicators to measure the economic impact of COVID-19.
- 6.3 The ONS was also jointly leading the government's large-scale virus infection and antibody test study with the Department for Health and Social Care and the University of Oxford. The COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) is a major long-term study that will track the spread of COVID-19 in the general population and include antibody testing to help understand levels of immunity. The study forms part of pillar four of the Government's COVID-19 testing strategy.
- 6.4 The Board went on to receive an update from Directors on the work that had been undertaken across the organisation in response to the pandemic, including the new statistical releases and the CIS.
- 6.5 In turn the Board heard about the following developments:
- i. Enabling home working (Ms Ceinwen Blake);
 - ii. Faster economic indicators (Mr Grant Fitzner);
 - iii. Consumer spending (Ms Louisa Nolan);
 - iv. Opinion and Lifestyle Survey (Mr Hugh Stickland);
 - v. Business impact of COVID-19 Survey (Mr Darren Morgan);
 - vi. Registered deaths (Mr Greg Ceely);
 - vii. COVID-19 Infection Survey (Mr Pete Benton);
 - viii. Air quality and COVID-19 (Ms Emma Rourke); and
 - ix. Survey methodology (Ms Rachel Skentelbery).
- 6.6 Sir David recorded thanks on behalf of the Board to all staff for the work that had been undertaken across the organisation in response to COVID-19, noting that the results were 'professional, thorough, independent, well thought through, imaginative and timely'.

7. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee

- 7.1 Professor Trefethen reported on the work of the Regulation Committee, which had met on 23 April 2020.
- 7.2 As noted earlier in the meeting, the Committee had discussed the OSR five-year strategic plan and had agreed to pause its publication to align with the development of the Authority strategy and take account of the changing context.
- 7.3 Committee members had also considered:
- i. a draft report on the Skills Systemic Review, which was commended by the Committee;
 - ii. OSR's intervention regarding DWP's publication of Universal Credit statistics;
 - iii. the approach to the Annual Report 2019/20; and
 - iv. OSR's draft work programme.

8. ONS Business Plan [SA(20)27]

- 8.1 Mr Bateson introduced a paper which set out the latest draft of the ONS Business Plan and sought the Board's endorsement of the narrative, drivers and objectives.

- 8.2 Board members discussed the plan and welcomed the progress made. It was acknowledged that the plan would need to reflect the current context and the way in which the organisation could change over the course of the plan e.g. cross-government working as a result of the Integrated Data Platform (IDP). The Board agreed that the Authority Strategy, and the ONS and OSR plans would be published together.
- 8.3 It was noted that the strategic outline business case for the IDP programme had been submitted to HM Treasury; the governance structure was in place; and the analytical lighthouse projects being undertaken related to COVID-19. Board members discussed the challenges associated with the IDP, which were being mitigated as part of the programme.

9. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) update [SA(20)28]

- 9.1 Mr Bell and Ms Tyson-Payne introduced a paper which provided an update on the CDCTP programme, focussing on the challenges posed by the Census and the response to COVID-19, as well as areas where transformation had been accelerated.
- 9.2 The Board heard that the delivery of a Census in March 2021 remained achievable. As requested by the Board at the previous meeting, scenario planning had been undertaken in order to assess the risks to delivery of the programme as a result of COVID-19. The scenarios had been considered in line with the risks identified that could impact the critical functions needed for delivery. It was noted that this work was being undertaken in parallel with National Records Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in order to provide mutual support and aim to maintain coherence. An additional UK Census Committee meeting was scheduled for 4 May to discuss co-ordination across the UK.
- 9.3 A number of adjustments had been made to the Census build in response to the pandemic. The field address check had been cancelled in favour of a transition to a desk-based approach. The recruitment of some of the community engagement field force had been delayed. Neither would impact on delivery.
- 9.4 With regard to the legislative timetable, although there was a slight delay in the debate of the Draft Census Order due to changes to parliamentary working, it was still achievable.
- 9.5 Mr Bell noted that the readiness assessment points scheduled for April, June, September and December would enable the Programme Board to have confidence of delivery and manage any optimism bias within the programme. Scenario planning would continue to be developed with close monitoring of Census operations and planning in other countries.
- 9.6 Board members discussed the robustness of the scenario planning; and endorsed the approach being taken.

10. Scenarios [SA(20)29]

- 10.1 Mr Cameron introduced a paper which set out the proposed approach to scenario planning over the short to medium term as requested by the Board in March. The paper set out the approach to scenario planning ahead of a substantive discussion at the May meeting. The Census scenarios had been developed to reflect current understanding with a number of suggested lenses for consideration.
- 10.2 The Board noted the proposed approach and looked forward to a substantive discussion at the May meeting.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Authority Board would meet next on Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 11:30 by videoconference.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

30 April 2020, 09:00 to 11:15, via videoconference

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Professor Anne Trefethen (08.30-10.00)

Attendees: Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 7)

NED Session: 08:30-09:00

1 09:00-09:05 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declarations of interest	Meeting of 26 March 2020
2 09:05-09:15 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 09:15-09:25 10 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSR Business Plan	SA(20)25 Mr Ed Humpherson
4 09:25-10:20 55 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(20)26 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
5 10:20-10:25 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulation Committee	Oral report Prof. Anne Trefethen
6 10:25-10:30 5 mins	ONS Business Plan	SA(20)27 Mr Nick Bateson
7 10:30-10:55 25 mins	Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme Update	SA(20)28 Mr Iain Bell Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne
8 10:55-11:10 15 mins	COVID-19 Scenario Planning	SA(20)29 Mr Douglas Cameron
9 11:10-11:15 5 mins	Any other business	

Next meeting: 27 May, 11:30-13:00 Remote meeting via teleconference

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

2. Since the last Board meeting, there have been several key activities surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, which are noted below.

COVID-19

3. OSR's approach has been to focus on supporting producers, as they make changes to outputs, and as they innovate to produce new outputs on aspects of the pandemic.

Support to producers

4. Support measures include OSR [guidance](#) on factors that producers should consider when making changes to data collection, statistics production and release; and a new [approach to rapid regulatory reviews](#). We also set up a dedicated [webpage](#) on our website. The webpage includes four tables to keep a transparent log of:
 - i. outcomes of rapid regulatory reviews;
 - ii. agreed suspensions of National Statistics status; and
 - iii. agreed exemptions to specific practices of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Rapid regulatory reviews

5. The rapid reviews provide assurance on new outputs published by producers which inform the public about the coronavirus and its economic and social impacts.
6. To date, we have carried out two rapid reviews – on data from ONS's [opinions survey](#), and ONS's [faster economic indicators](#). Between the writing of this paper and the Board meeting, we will conduct further reviews of new data on school attendance during lockdown in Wales, and in England. We are happy to conduct further rapid reviews to provide public assurance, for example of any published outputs based on the new household survey of viral infection and antibody prevalence announced earlier this week.

Improvements to COVID-19 data, including on deaths

7. We have responded to concerns raised about the publication of data on COVID-19 cases and deaths. We have discussed improvements in the information provided by government with the relevant producers, and there have been steady improvements in what is published, both on a daily basis (the leading indicator of cases and deaths, largely based on hospital data) and a weekly basis (a much more comprehensive picture). We summarised the current position in a [report](#) published on 21 April.

Failure to publish Universal Credit management information

8. One feature of the pandemic has been the use of a wide range of near-time management information to inform government decisions. This is an essential part of a well-structured government response. Some of this management information has been used in public briefings. In general, approaches to the release of this information have been appropriate in all parts of the UK (and especially in Scotland, which has taken a very rigorous approach).
9. However, management information on universal credit applications has been used by Ministers in briefings but has not been formally published. The Department for Work and Pensions committed to publishing a wide range of Universal Credit information and pre-announced a publication date of 21 April. In fact, what was published on 21 April was

minimal, with no explanation of why less was published than promised. We wrote to the Department's head of profession signalling our concern (our aim is to support the head of profession in internal discussions, and our letter aims to give him further leverage).

Other regulatory work

10. Although COVID-19 has been a very significant component of our work over the last few weeks, we have also progressed other key outputs, as shown by our Regulatory Dashboard (**Annex A**). These include:
 - i. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Review: due to be published on 30 April. The Review concludes that, while much of HMRC's statistical production is sound, quality assurance is not always adequate. We make 9 recommendations for improvement in HMRC's approach to statistics and quality assurance. HMRC have been supportive of the review, including up to Ministerial level: I spoke to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman MP) last week who welcomed the report and thanked us for doing it;
 - ii. Skills: the OSR education team are finalising a comprehensive review of statistics on post-16 skills and education across the UK. This is a superb overview which brings out the complexity of the landscape and the difficulties in getting a coherent overview of the state of skills and higher levels of education; and
 - iii. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA): the OSR environment team are finalising a review of how Defra engage with the very wide range of users of their statistics. The review provides a possible template for how to assess other producers' approaches to stakeholder engagement.

Strategy

11. We have developed a five year strategic delivery plan for OSR, which translates the Authority's system-wide strategy into regulatory priorities. However, COVID-19 represents such a significant change to the landscape that it is not sensible to publish a five year strategy at this point. We will defer finalisation of the five year plan until later in the summer at the earliest.
12. We are however keen to publish a high level 2020/21 plan, adjusted for COVID-19's impacts on producers and on the questions of interest to users. It is important that we live up to the same standards of transparency about forward plans that we expect of producers, and we will always have the flexibility to adjust plans if necessary.
13. We have a short plan on which we would welcome Board views ahead of publication. The plan provides clarity on our priorities, and emphasises how the pandemic changes the context of our work. The pandemic illustrates how important statistics and data are to public understanding, and the plan makes this point too.

Challenges

14. In last month's update to the Board, I mentioned our work to improve our processes of report production. The three examples listed above (HMRC, DEFRA, Skills) at paragraph 10 show the sort of clarity and quality we are aiming for; the challenge now is to bring this structure into our reports earlier in our production process.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 18 March 2020

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Annex A Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Regulatory Activities April 2020

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Population and Society	Children, Education and skills	Crime and Security
<p>HMRC Quality Assurance Review: Finalising report and letters for publication 30 April; met with FST</p> <p>Regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of ONS's progress in enhancing experimental Labour Productivity statistics preparatory to designation as National Statistics Preparation of briefing material ahead of OSR attendance in any RPI consultation event <p>Rapid Review: ONS's Faster Economic Indicators which ONS are releasing at pace as one of the new Covid-19 related outputs</p> <p>Casework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responded to complaint on ONS's presentation of productivity puzzle Looking at Scottish budget figures. <p>Blog:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating sectoral balance across economic statistics between manufacturing and other sectors in preparation for possible blog Published blog about ONS's engagement with Cambridge Ahead about differences in employment growth figures for Greater Cambridge region. 	<p>Assessment: Business Demography: Summarising and reviewing evidence gathered from users and stakeholders.</p> <p>UK Trade – Reviewing ONS Trade Development plan to inform OSR position statement on the status of the assessment of UK Trade statistics.</p> <p>Casework: Discussing with DiT and ONS the need to provide users with greater detail on the causes of changes in UK Trade statistics.</p> <p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail Sales: Continue to examine the circumstances and evidence behind the introduction of VAT data into economic and retail sales statistics. 	<p>Rapid Review - Covid-19 questions ONS has added to the Opinions & Lifestyles Survey, which are now being published as new official statistics. Focused on ONS's approach to upholding trustworthiness, quality and value while delivering these statistics at pace.</p> <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sessions with NRS and NISRA held on data sources for census following findings from Phase 1 assessment. Vital event statistics NRS. Evidence list received from NRS and user consultation launched. Given current situation and demands on NRS team, reviewing timing for this assessment Wellbeing of Wales assessment kicked off, starting to engage with users and gather evidence. <p>Systemic Review:</p> <p>Loneliness In its final scoping stages, reviewing evidence gathered from initial user and producer conversations.</p> <p>Sex and Gender Data Update meeting with ONS topic lead and Roger Halliday on the progress of guidance in Scotland.</p>	<p>Rapid Review: undertaking review of WG new COVID-19 related school statistics</p> <p>Casework: Working on - Comparisons of per pupil funding across England and Wales. 11-plus and grammar school entrance. Closed case on sure start centres</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Published letter on DfE school funding statistics.</p> <p>Systemic Review:</p> <p>Skills The report has been restructured for review at April Regulation Committee.</p> <p>Children and Young People This review has been paused since January 2019. A note of the progress to date and future vision for the review has been produced and it will be prioritised alongside other OSR projects.</p>	<p>Assessment: We have postponed the final outcome of our regulatory work on the NI Safe Community Survey, while the producer team decide how they will handle the survey during the COVID pandemic.</p> <p>Casework: Closed case on TV licence prison sentencing.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Ongoing work on MoJ proven reoffending and criminal justice quarterly statistics, which still plans to report in April.</p> <p>Police Recorded Crime statistics: We have started research for a 'position statement' about PRC, to be published in the autumn. This will set out the journey these statistics have been on since they were de-designated in 2014, and what still needs to be done. We recently had a really good discussion with ONS about this. We intend to speak with HMICFRS and HO as well.</p> <p>Raising awareness of OSR: Presentations to MOD and MoJ analysts about OSR have been postponed until Autumn.</p>
Health and Social Care	Labour Market and Welfare	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Travel, Transport and Tourism
<p>Assessments: assessment of Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) with NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA).</p> <p>Casework: discussions with producers to improve the coherence and orderly release of COVID-19 cases and deaths statistics.</p> <p>Systemic Review:</p> <p>Mental Health Analysis of evidence is underway and report for England statistics is planned for summer 2020.</p> <p>Social Care All outputs published. Ongoing virtual engagement activity is planned</p>	<p>Labour Market: Published the package of outputs relating to labour market statistics including: the ONS assessment report, 3 devolved nations' CC letter and 2 blogs.</p> <p>Assessment: Had the kick off meeting with DWP for the assessment of their Quarterly Benefits Summary; will need to review timing in light of demands on DWP.</p>	<p>Compliance Checks: Published letters for Forest Research's Timber Price Indices in March and Scottish Government's Rural Scotland Key Facts statistics in early April.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Defra user engagement Draft report shared with April Regulation Committee and Defra.</p>	<p>Assessments: Report on Northern Ireland Planning Statistics assessment prepared for publication (early May 20)</p> <p>Casework: Published response to John Healey letter on rough sleeping</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Initiating compliance checks on MHCLG and WG rough sleeping estimates</p> <p>Systemic Review: Housing Two-year update report published 27 February following publication of cross-GSS updated workplan and review formally closed.</p>	<p>Assessment: Report for Transport Focus' National Rail Passenger Survey was published in early January. Transport Focus published an action plan for addressing the requirements at the start of February.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Compliance check finding letters for road safety statistics produced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were published at the start of March, along with a suite of comms including a blog and tweets.</p>

Chief Executive's Report, April 2020

Purpose

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

Summary

2. I have spent the past month meeting with Senior Officials across Government, providing decision makers with timely analysis to help inform the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as ensuring that colleagues throughout the UK Statistics Authority are equipped to continue working as normal remotely where possible.

Review of recent activities

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
 - i. a range of new policies have been introduced covering topics such as annual leave and volunteering which incorporate the impact that the current COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have on people's lives;
 - ii. on 31 March we published our first release which explored the total number of deaths from COVID-19. There have been subsequent releases on 7, 14 and 21 April and these will continue to be weekly for the foreseeable future;
 - iii. I have spent time discussing with colleagues throughout government the divergencies between the death figures reported by the Department for Health and Social Care and those produced by ONS and how factors such as definitional differences and lags in data resulted in such divergences. These discussions have culminated in 'Deaths in all settings' being added to the daily media briefings;
 - iv. on 2 April, we published a new weekly output on economic indicators to measure the economic impact of COVID-19. This included measures of price change for a basket of high-demand products such as paracetamol and pasta, using data scraped from online retailers;
 - v. business prioritisation planning has also taken place which has identified three levels of escalating priority – supporting our people through the crisis, providing data and analysis to support decision making in relation to the crisis, and ensuring that we continue to deliver the Census. This exercise will ensure that we maintain focus through the crisis and into the future on the areas of delivery that add most value;
 - vi. we have introduced a revised version of the Opinion and Lifestyle Survey which has sought to capture the social impact of COVID-19 through measuring topics such as well-being and social interaction;
 - vii. the Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS) has been introduced which has sought to capture the financial impacts of COVID-19 through measuring matter such as furlough and businesses financial situations; and
 - viii. on 21 and 23 April I chaired two 'Your Call' sessions with all staff in which a range of questions were put to me from colleagues throughout the business.
4. I have also asked relevant leads to join the meeting to provide brief updates on the work that has been undertaken in their areas to address the main opportunities and challenges we have encountered.

Future look

5. A primary focus for May will be to continue exploration of how ONS can provide timely and meaningful insights to help understand the impact of COVID-19 on society and the economy.

6. Alongside this, we will continue to assess how our business as usual surveys can continue to be administered. A topic for consideration is the effect of household surveys moving to online/telephone only, with an expected fall in response rates. We expect business surveys to be more robust, but not without challenge. Work is ongoing to explore how to overcome these difficulties. Work will also continue to ensure that field force and telephone operations staff are able to continue administering surveys from home where possible.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 21 April 2020

ONS Strategic Business Plan

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the latest draft of the ONS Strategic Business Plan (SBP) and seeks the Authority Board's endorsement of the strategic narrative, drivers and objectives.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. review and endorse the strategic narrative, drivers, objectives and outline benefits; and
 - ii. recommend that National Statistician's Executive Group (NSEG) oversee the final stage of development in relation to the full suite of Accountability Framework Objectives, and related finance and people plans before a final version with full supporting information is brought to the Board for sign-off in June.

Background

3. The Board considered the emerging Authority Strategy in March and agreed that the internal consultation and other development activities carried out to date have provided an enduring set of strategic themes and drivers. The strategy sets out the core principles for the UK statistical system to be Inclusive, Ambitious, Sustainable and Radical. The Board concluded in March that further development of the strategy would be paused in the context of COVID-19 and the rapid changes to the organisation.
4. The ONS SBP details the key role that the ONS will have, working with the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and Analysis Function, in delivering the ambitions of the Authority Strategy.
5. The SBP has been developed collaboratively, with support from a cross-ONS working group, to reflect a coherent and holistic view of how statistics, data, analysis and key professional and support functions will work together.
6. The SBP provides a clear pathway from enabling activity delivered by ONS to the Authority strategic principles and drivers, setting out:
 - i. Strategic Drivers referenced in the Authority Strategy that encapsulate a future ambition for ONS, and link directly to the principles laid out in the strategy;
 - ii. Cross-cutting Strategic Objectives that contribute to one or more of the Strategic Drivers and provide ambitious targets over the next five years, which will form the mechanism for reporting progress on the business plan to the Authority Board;
 - iii. Five Key Programmes that will drive the delivery of the Strategic Drivers and Objectives;
 - iv. Five Key Benefits that will form the basis of measuring the overall success of the business plan; and
 - v. Level Zero milestones, owned by ONS business areas, that contribute to one or more Strategic Objectives.
7. Progress against the Strategic Drivers, Strategic Objectives, Key Programmes and Key Benefits will form the basis of the Management Information (MI) we will provide to the Board into the future. This information together with the Level 0 milestones, will be overseen by NSEG, and its sub-committees, via a robust control framework.

Discussion

8. Since the last Authority Board, we have:
 - i. finalised a set of cross-cutting strategic objectives that align with and contribute directly to one or more strategic drivers. The objectives are designed to reflect a cross-organisational approach, and do not therefore map to particular business areas. Successful delivery against these objectives will require collaboration both internally and externally;
 - ii. developed a draft set of strategic benefits that will stem from successful delivery of our business plan. The detail underpinning these benefits will be developed further with Directors;
 - iii. further developed the Strategic People Plan that was reviewed by the Strategic People Committee earlier in April, and details the following five action areas: (1) ONS Employment Offer; (2) Strengthening Critical Workforce Groups; (3) Leadership and Management of Change; (4) Life Beyond Census; and (5) Organisational Flexibility; and
 - iv. progressed development of an Outline Business Case for the Integrated Data Platform (IDP), including delivery against the IDP projects that align to our response to COVID-19.
9. Work is ongoing to complete the next level of detail in the SBP that will see a full suite of Accountability Framework Objectives (Level Zero milestones) that contribute to the strategic objectives, with associated benefits, risks, dependencies, assumptions, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
10. The impact of COVID-19 on the organisation's finances and people plans for this year and into the future is still being fully understood. This detail will be included in the final SBP, which will also provide costings for our key outputs.
11. In terms of overall finalisation of the SBP, we aim to complete and produce a final version for internal use and monitoring which will be presented to the Board with a revised set of MI at the end of June. External publication will be placed on hold so that we can ensure that the external version aligns with the finalised Authority Strategy and the results of the Spending Review, which is currently expected for early Autumn.

Conclusion

12. This paper provides an update on the development of ONS's SBP that will support delivery against the emerging Authority Strategy. The Board are invited to approve the overall narrative, the strategic drivers, strategic objectives and outline strategic benefits.
13. Work is ongoing throughout April and May to complete the development of a suite of Level Zero milestones in this context and to refine the detail of benefits, KPIs, risks, dependencies and assumptions, finance and people elements.
14. NSEG will oversee the final stages of development of the SBP as the impact of COVID-19 is more fully understood. The final SBP with a full suite of supporting documentation will be provided to the Board for final approval in June, with external publication planned to align with the Authority Strategy.

Nick Bateson and Megan Cooper, Finance, Planning and Performance, ONS, 22 April 2020

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2019/20 ONS Strategic Business Plan

This document will be published on the UK Statistics Authority Website in due course:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/strategy-and-business-plan/>

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the programme focusing on the Census, our response to COVID-19, both in terms of challenges, and areas where transformation has been accelerated.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the programme remains at amber. We have adapted to new ways of working and progress on wider transformation has accelerated. Despite small changes to our plans, and the continued challenge of securing administrative data, the programme remains on track;
 - ii. the delivery of a Census on 21 March 2021 remains achievable. Critical functions and risks have been identified and assessed against a series of COVID-19 scenarios. Assuming most disruption is resolved by the end of 2020, existing plans can be updated to ensure delivery. We are considering alternative methods of delivery if disruption continues into 2021;
 - iii. this work is being carried out in parallel with National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to maintain harmonisation and provide mutual support around achieving delivery;
 - iv. we have already acquired more administrative data at record level than has been used in 2011. We are now ensuring that we prioritise every acquisition against the increase in quality of Census and administrative-based estimates;
 - v. legislation has been impacted by changes to Parliamentary working arrangements in response to COVID-19. As with all Parliamentary business, the debate on the Census Order has been delayed.
 - vi. there has been significant 'rapid transformation' within Business Statistics and Social Surveys which will continue, and we will exploit emerging opportunities for innovation and new ways of working.

Discussion

Programme Update

3. The programme remains at Amber. The challenges presented by COVID-19 to our ways of working have been met and progress to both Census build and the wider transformation remains positive.
4. The Census build is continuing in line with the updated Wave of Contract model. Detailed metrics will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as agreed. However, several adjustments have been made to accommodate the pandemic, including moving from a field address check, to a more enhanced clerical, desk-based activity check, and the delay of some community engagement field force recruitment. None of these changes impact the delivery plan. The acquisition of administrative data is being worked through. Further details are provided at the end of this report.
5. The supply chain has reacted positively to the challenges of COVID-19. We are maintaining regular contact to understand the issues being faced and to keep them informed. We have actively involved suppliers in our scenario planning through the key supplier meetings.
6. The Census Processing and Outputs Rehearsal is progressing well having completed assurance of the pre-processing and build activities. It will now move onto assurance of

statistical methods and outputs. By the middle of May, the Rehearsal will have exceeded the preparation levels achieved in 2011.

Preparations for Census During COVID-19

7. The delivery of a Census on 21 March 2021 remains the focus. Only two changes have been necessary and pose minimal risk to delivery. The Change team, working with HR, are providing practical tips and help to support staff through this period of uncertainty.
8. The scenarios we have developed are in line with the latest academic thinking from Imperial College and Johns Hopkins. They reflect our early work and will be subject to further discussion, and can be summarised as:
 - i. operational restriction in place for three months with up to two months transition back into normal operations by the end of July 2020;
 - ii. as per the previous scenario, but restrictions are re-imposed in October 2020 for a further three months but back into normal operations by February 2021; and
 - iii. as per the first scenario, but with a rolling set of:
 - (a) planned restrictions for up to a year based on three months restricted and three months unrestricted; and
 - (b) unplanned restrictions for an undefined amount of time over an undefined period.
9. The programme has defined a series of critical functions for delivery of the Census. These include the ability to establish and build awareness of the Census, ensuring we can support respondents completing the questionnaire, securing the supply of materials and equipment through working with the supply chain and the ability to run the Census Coverage Survey.
10. Additionally, we have identified the persistent risks impacting all scenarios. These include: the potential for requiring social distancing, the dynamics of the supply chain and our requirement to engage with local authorities. They also take account of the potential for cumulative risk to build over the coming months.
11. The conclusions from the scenario planning can be broadly summarised as:
 - i. should the return to normal operations occur by July 2020 (scenario i), delivery can be maintained, and we can achieve the statistical quality critical success factors;
 - ii. should the return to normal operations in July 2020 be interrupted by a further disruption in September until December (para 8, scenario ii), there will be an increased risk of statistical quality degradation. This is because of the reduced community engagement activities and possible interruptions to field follow-up to achieve response rates. We would also be likely to incur additional cost from design changes and adaptation to operational delivery. In this scenario, the Census Coverage Survey will ensure a high-quality set of Census estimates and mitigate these concerns; and
 - iii. should the return to normal operations be continually disrupted by rolling restrictions (para 8, scenario iii), the delivery of a Census as currently planned will likely be unachievable without delaying or switching to an alternative delivery model. This is because the key milestone deliveries will be disrupted, and statistical quality would fall below an acceptable standard. We are currently exploring options available to us in this scenario. However, they are likely to include the use of digital only for census, an increased focus on exploitation of administrative data, an increased reliance on the media campaign and utilisation of coverage surveys. It is possible in this instance that further legislation may be required.
12. Should there be any further restrictions (an 'additional wave') during live field operations, our existing statistical and operational risk contingency plans will apply. These are currently being refreshed for all COVID-19 related risks. In all scenarios, it is likely we will need to have in place policies, procedures, ways of working, training and potentially PPE

to manage any virus transmission liability during live operations. The supporting operational procedures to manage, audit and assure are also being updated. It is also likely that there would be an increased dependence on administrative data. The statistical contingency plans and supporting procedures are also being updated.

13. The programme is also meeting regularly with colleagues in National Records Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to share progress in relation to the scenario planning, identify opportunities to support each other and to coordinate respective responses.
14. In recognition of the uncertainties, we are continuing to further plan for each of these scenarios, understanding the necessary 'readiness assessment points' and information required at each point. These points are at the end of April, June, September and December and will allow the Programme Board to have confidence of delivery.

Acquisition of Administrative Data

15. We have mobilised a taskforce to focus on expediting the use of administrative data.
16. We have agreed that we have an understanding of the quality of our existing administrative datasets and are ensuring our priorities deliver the maximum increase in quality of administrative data.
17. Challenges remain in the supply of data due to the impact of COVID-19 upon suppliers. We have identified further mitigating actions and the taskforce are working through them with Iain Bell and Frankie Kay chairing a weekly meeting to ensure continued progress.

Legislative Progress

18. The Census Order is now in Parliament. Subject to the approval of the Census Order, the Regulations for England will then be laid in Parliament at the conclusion of the process to be in force 21 days later. Regulations for Wales in Senedd Cymru follow a similar timescale.

Wider Transformation

19. Though COVID-19 has presented challenges to the programme, it has generated opportunities for accelerating and changing the way we approach transformation.
20. Business Statistics launched a new online survey to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on businesses. The survey has a sample size of approximately 18,000 covering all industrial sectors, with geographic coverage across the UK. The survey runs on the ONS Statistical Data Collection Platform, utilising a basic but effective electronic questionnaire (eQ) design. Business Statistics have accelerated the delivery of the Construction and Allied Trades survey by three months and are on target to create an online quarterly International Trade in Services survey by June 2020. With the existing surveys on track to move online during the 2020/21 financial year and the accelerated delivery of these other surveys, excluding the COVID-19 survey, it is feasible that Business Statistics will have dispatched 975,000 business surveys online in 2020/21, consistent with the end of year milestone.
21. Social Surveys launched the Labour Market Survey and Opinions and Lifestyle survey online using the Blaise system. The outputs of which are providing weekly reports to the Cabinet.
22. The programme is capturing the new ways of working that have generated this 'rapid transformation' and how this may alter our future approach. This will be built into our plans for returning to normal non-restricted work.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy

Nicola Tyson-Payne, Interim Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy

16 April 2020

COVID-19 Scenario Planning

Purpose

1. This paper sets out our proposed approach to scenario planning over the short to medium term.

Recommendations

2. The Board is asked to review the approach and:
 - i. advise on the scenarios they would like the organisation to focus on; and
 - ii. advise on the lenses through which planning should take place;

Background

3. At the Authority Board meeting in March, the Board asked that scenario planning for the statistical system beyond the current pandemic was brought to the next meeting.
4. This paper seeks to set the parameters in which this scenario planning can take place, ahead of a fuller discussion in May.

Discussion

5. The suggested scenarios are set out below.
 - i. the UK remains with the majority of current restrictions until July 2020, followed by a gradual relaxation over 2 months;
 - ii. the UK remains with the majority of current restrictions until July 2020, followed by a gradual relaxation over 12 months;
 - iii. the UK remains with the majority of current restrictions until July 2020, which are then relaxed before being reinstated with the onset of a 'second wave' in November/December 2020;
 - iv. the UK remains with the majority of current restrictions until July 2020 which are then relaxed before being reinstated with the onset of a 'second wave' in February 2021; and
 - v. the UK remains with the majority of current restrictions until April 2021.
6. The suggested lenses are as follows:
 - i. new outputs/products to meet the changing user demand;
 - ii. adapting our Series: Population, Health, GDP, Prices, Labour Market, Crime and Migration;
 - iii. People and resources;
 - iv. Census;
 - v. Wellbeing; and
 - vi. cross-government links.

Conclusion

7. This paper asks for feedback on an approach to scenario planning, ahead of a paper in May.

Douglas Cameron, Central Policy Secretariat, 24 April 2020