

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes Monday 25 November 2019 Boardroom, London

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 Sir Adrian Smith
Professor Anne Trefethen

Also in attendance

Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Rob Bumpstead
Ms Vanessa Holden (Secretariat)
Ms Frankie Kay

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 31 October 2019, were agreed. Following discussions at the last meeting, two afternoons of discussion on the Authority's future strategy had been scheduled for January.

3.2 Board members thanked Ms Holden for the support she had provided to the Board, ahead of her departure in December.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. They had discussed the use of statistics over the General Election period.

4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met, noting:

- i. he had written to party leaders to remind them of using statistics responsibly; and
- ii. he had attended the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) annual conference, which had been well-received.

4.3 Over the coming weeks, Sir David would be joining members of staff undertaking the Census Coverage Survey and would also be chairing a meeting of the Economic Experts Advisory Group.

5. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

5.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had met on 20 November 2019. The Committee had been joined by the organisation's new external auditor.

5.2 Committee members considered:

- i. the Authority's current financial position;
- ii. its cross-organisational approach to business-planning;
- iii. risk assurance;
- iv. corporate governance assurance systems; and
- v. key risks and controls in place around human resources.

5.3 With regards to human resources, the Committee intended to remain engaged with the people agenda and would return to the issue in the coming months. In the interim, members would consider draft terms of reference for the organisation's new Strategic People Committee via correspondence.

5.4 The Committee had also considered contract management, where good progress was being made.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(19)55]

6.1 Professor Sir Ian Diamond provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for November. In discussion he noted:

- i. statisticians within the Scottish Government had recently won the Civil Service Awards for analysis conducted on Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest;
- ii. the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, Dr Ben Broadbent, had recently attended ONS's Newport office, at which time he and the team had discussed the progress being made on economic statistics;
- iii. ONS continued to develop its range of social statistics, in areas including modern slavery and domestic and child abuse.

6.2 Mr Athow reported that ONS continued to work with officials at HM Treasury on the development of a consultation document on the Retail Prices Index (RPI). As they did so, they were liaising with the National Statistician's Advisory Panels on Consumer Prices. It was hoped that a consultation document might be published early in the new year, although Board members noted that this may be subject to the outcome of the December General Election.

6.3 Members also discussed the availability of statistics on private rental accommodation. While ONS had recently improved its statistics on the price of private rental accommodation, members heard that statistics on the social impact of private rental accommodation were less developed. A cross government working group on housing statistics was working to improve the evidence base in this area.

7. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(19)56]

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

7.2 The OSR's annual conference, held on 6 November had been welcomed by the Authority's stakeholders. The conference had featured a showcase of OSR work presented by staff, keynote presentations from Baroness Onora O'Neill and Sir David Spiegelhalter, as well as presentations from the Authority Chair and the National Statistician.

7.3 The OSR was monitoring debate over the General Election period carefully. Recently, it had responded to concerns raised with the Authority about the Scottish Government's use of statistics relating to youth unemployment.

8. Separation and co-location [SA(19)57]

8.1 Mr Humpherson introduced a paper on the location of the OSR, following the report by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC).

8.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- i. any decision on the structure of the Authority must reflect the arrangements established in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*;
- ii. the importance of ensuring parity between the Authority's two executive arms; and
- iii. the potential to make the separation of the Authority's two executive arms clearer in digital communications.

8.3 Mr Humpherson thanked the Board for the discussion and advised members that he would provide proposals to the Authority's Regulation Committee.

9. Board decision-making and effectiveness [SA(19)58]

9.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a discussion on the Board's effectiveness and decision-making following.

9.2 The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis, to identify where it is performing well and where improvements might be made.

9.3 Areas highlighted for focus in the future during its last review had included:

- i. the Board to engage with more strategic, and fewer operational issues;
- ii. further discussion on risk; and
- iii. long-term planning (including in the context of talent management, given issues around the appointment of a new National Statistician).

9.4 In discussion, Board members also highlighted where improvements might be made to Board papers.

10. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme [SA(19)59]

- 10.1 Mr Bell introduced a paper which provided an update on progress across all strands of the programme.
- 10.2 The field operation within the Census collection rehearsal completed on 13 November. Although the electronic questionnaire was no longer available, ONS expected to receive further paper returns over the coming weeks.
- 10.3 Members discussed how initial response rates compared with those achieved in 2009, what language support had been provided, and how ONS might seek to engage with hard-to-reach communities. They also considered the potential of administrative data in adjusting for any under-enumeration. Mr Bell informed the Board that ONS were developing a paper on lessons learned from the rehearsal, which would be fed back into planning for the 2021 Census. The Board was due to discuss these lessons learned in March 2020.
- 10.4 Since the Board had last met, a General Election had been called for 12 December. Accordingly, the timetable for the tabling of secondary legislation had been paused until Parliament returned. This delay was not expected to impact the overarching timetable for the delivery of the programme.
- 10.5 Members also heard that a Judicial Review of the decision on the Sikh 'tick-box' had been heard on 12 and 13 November. A decision was expected shortly.

11. Strategy [SA(19)60]

- 11.1 Ms Holden introduced a paper on the development of the Authority's next strategy. It detailed the proposed framework and timeline for developing the next strategy and sought approval of an internal consultation document.
- 11.2 Pending the Board's discussion, Ms Holden explained that the Authority intended to launch an internal consultation – across the Authority, the ONS, the OSR and the GSS – in early December. The internal consultation document reflected the Board's earlier discussions on the changing environment, and its implications for the statistical system.
- 11.3 The Board approved the framework and timeline for the development of its strategy, noting that members would meet at a series of workshops in January to consider the results of the internal consultation, the content of the strategy, and underpinning plans.
- 11.4 The Board approved the internal consultation document, subject to minor adjustments. Members agreed that it would be helpful to develop a second set of questions for external stakeholders.

12. Any other business

- 12.1 Members requested a paper on migration statistics at their next meeting.
- 12.2 The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 30 January 2020 at 09:15 in London.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

25 November 2019, 09:15 to 13.20, Boardroom, London

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies:

Attendees: Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne (for item 10)

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">Declarations of interest	Meeting of 31 Oct 2019
2 09:50-10:10 20 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	Oral report Sir David Norgrove
3 10:10-10:15 5 mins	Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	Oral report Ms Nora Nanayakkara
4 10:15-10:35 20 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(19)55 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
5 10:35-10:55 20 mins	Report from the Director-General for Regulation	SA(19)56 Mr Ed Humpherson
6 10.55-11.20 25 mins	Separation and co-location	SA(19)57 Mr Ed Humpherson
7 11.20-11.50 30 mins	Board decision-making and effectiveness	SA(19)58 Mr Rob Bumpstead
8 11.50-12.15 25 mins	Census update	SA(19)59 Mr Iain Bell Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne
12:15-12:40: Lunch		
9 12.40-13.15 35 mins	Strategy	SA(19)60 Ms Vanessa Holden
10 13:15-13:20 5 mins	Any other business	

Next meeting: 30 January, London, 09:15 to 14:00

Chief Executive's Report, November 2019

Purpose

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

Summary

2. Not much time has passed since the last Board meeting, but the statistical system has continued working at pace. As we have entered the pre-election period for the civil service, we have had to take care in ensuring the commentary in our releases remains impartial whilst continuing to provide the information decision makers need.

Review of recent activities

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
 - i. After signing a Data Sharing Agreement on 30 October, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) delivered the first supply of their benefits dataset (BIDS) and the linkage table of the Customer Information System (CIS) to Titchfield on 31 October. Use of the data at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began straight away. The second CIS tables arrived in the w/c 4 November. Jonathan Athow and colleagues presented to HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) Data Governance Board (DGB) on 28 October. Colleagues have since travelled to Newcastle to present on the usage of Pay-as-you-Earn (PAYE) data in the ONS data access platform, emphasising the separation of differing sources of hashed personal data.
 - ii. The digital response and online services for the Census Rehearsal closed on 15 November.
 - iii. The Data Science Campus will publish details of an improved set of faster economic indicators based on shipping Global Positioning System records. The background and methodology paper was published on November 19, covering a new weekly indicator; removal of vessels which are neither cargo nor tankers so that the indicators better represent trade activity; and reduced lag between the reference period and publication. The first regular statistics outputs will start with the monthly release on 22 November, with weekly updates thereafter. This data is in high demand from decision makers thinking about UK trade.
 - iv. I have had a number of productive discussions with the UK Research and Innovation board, Sir Patrick Vallance and others about the potential for enhancing the use of data for research. Further discussions with Sir Patrick, Chief Scientific Advisors from across government, Mark Sedwill and others in the next few weeks.
 - v. The ONS published the latest UK update on progress towards measuring the Sustainable Development Goals. This showed that we are reporting headline data for 182 (75 per cent) out of the 244 indicators, which is ahead of our target for this point in time.
 - vi. Following a cross-Government Statistical System collaboration, we published an analysis of affordable housing in the UK for the first time. This is an important addition to the evidence base on housing for decision makers across the UK.
 - vii. We have implemented our arrangements for publishing statistics in the pre-election period. For this election we made some changes to our approach to reduce the risk of misunderstanding of our statistics. So far, the arrangements have worked as expected.

Future look

4. In the coming months, building on discussions with the Authority Board and senior executives we will undertake many important activities to drive the development of the next strategy for the statistical system, including a presentation to all permanent secretaries, a discussion with all Heads of Profession for statistics, and an internal consultation.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 18 November 2019

Update from the Director General for Regulation

Purpose

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

Discussion

2. Key activities since the last Board meeting include:

- i. **OSR conference:** We held the OSR conference on 6 November. It featured a showcase of OSR work presented by our staff and keynote presentations from Onora O'Neill, David Spiegelhalter, and an opening presentation from David and closing presentation from Ian. Deborah Ashby (president of the Royal Statistical Society) led a panel discussion of the role of statistics in public debate.

The event was a real success. We had lots of positive feedback from attendees, who represented a wide range of sectors and roles. Comments emphasised the breadth of OSR's work that was evident in the sessions and the welcome emphasis on statistics serving the public good; the confidence and enthusiasm of the OSR presentations; and the quality of the external speakers, particularly Onora O'Neill.

- ii. **OSR location:** As part of our response to the PACAC report, we have been considering OSR location options, and there is a separate paper for the Board on this topic.
- iii. **Pre-General Election:** just before the formal start of the campaign, OSR published a range of compliance checks and our review of Policing statistics (which used a new webscraping tool) and launched OSR's new Twitter account.
- iv. **General Election:** We have been more active in this Election than in previous elections. On school funding and schools rated Good or Outstanding, we have drawn attention to our past work; we published a blog on how to interpret funding claims made by political parties; and issued a statement on the use of labour market statistics by the Scottish Government. We have monitored Election debates proactively, been approached for comment on a range of other issues and been tagged on social media where users are concerned about uses of statistics. We have looked into all these issues and in most cases concluded it would be inappropriate for us to comment. I have also spoken to journalists from the BBC and Health Service Journal to explain the context to the shift of key health statistics from polling day to the following day.

Our tests for intervention are: whether the statement in question involves statistics; whether it is a sufficiently significant misstatement or misleading use to potentially influence a voter's interpretation of something (so an error of a small degree would not justify intervention); and whether the statement is gaining traction and is reused (so a one-off statement would not justify intervention).

These tests appear to be operating well and helping guide us to make quicker judgements than we have in past Elections. We have also adopted the practice of issuing statements, rather than writing to politicians (which is slower and can appear clunkier unless this misuse is very significant).

3. The main challenge surrounds implementing the PACAC report's recommendations and maintaining our capacity to respond during the Election.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 15 November 2019

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Regulatory Activities November 2019

Economy	Business, Trade and International Development	Children, Education and skills	Housing, Planning and Local Services	Crime and Security
<p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult Social Care Productivity in England. - CPIH - HMRC Survey of Personal Incomes <p>Assessment: will request designation of HM Treasury's Public Expenditure: Country and Regional Analysis statistics at the 5 Dec Regulation Committee</p> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We met with a representative of Lord Dunlop's Review of UK Government Union Capability to emphasise the importance of statistics. - HM Treasury has committed to adopt the Code for its Block Grant statistics. - Our review of HMRC's statistical quality assurance processes is ongoing. We published the review's scope. - We are planning to meet with ONS to discuss the major error in the Public Sector Finance and then decide what regulatory action is needed. - We have published a blog on things to bear in mind when considering statements around public funding. 	<p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Investment: We will examine the impact of ONS changes on the quality of the estimates - important given the ongoing impact of Brexit on UK investment. - Retail Sales: OSR proposed this review following the introduction of VAT data and a potential reduced coverage of internet sales. We will also re-examine the coherence of ONS estimates with external data from the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the CBI. To start in December. <p>Assessment: Business Demography: Starting in January - likely to include: coherence between ONS, BEIS and Companies House estimates; the factors driving the regional distribution of business births; and the timeliness and availability of these figures for use by policy makers.</p>	<p>Casework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education funding: Published responses to various concerns about future school funding figures and the Government's statement that it has increased funding by £14bn; contacted Conservative Party and tweeted following further concerns. - Higher Education Initial Participation Rates: Published letter to DfE encouraging improvements to explanation of HEIPR following misreporting in the media. - Teaching Excellence Framework: Currently assessing the Independent Review's findings and awaiting the final report publication. <p>Compliance Checks: published CCs on 30 October on: Scottish School Leaver Attainment and Initial Destinations Statistics; and Further Education and Skills in England.</p> <p>Skills Review: Finalising report and developing communications plan for publication in early 2020.</p>	<p>Compliance Checks: published a CC on 31 October on 2 sets of Scottish Government's Housing Statistics.</p> <p>Assessments: starting our assessment of Northern Ireland Planning Statistics.</p> <p>Housing review: Range of recent outputs from the cross-government Housing Group in response to the Housing Systemic review are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ONS National Statistical blog on the release of the 'Across UK Homelessness Analysis' article. - GSS Harmonisation work on the homelessness conceptual framework. - New UK affordable housing statistics on 6 November. - Planning review update for early 2020. 	<p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home Office statistics (Police Powers and Procedures Statistics and Police Workforce Statistics). - Scottish Government statistics (Recorded Crime Statistics). To publish after the election. <p>Assessments: Assessment of Northern Ireland Motoring Offences statistics: will present a draft report to Regulation Committee on 5 December.</p> <p>Policing Review: second phase published on 1 November.</p>
Population and Society	Labour Market and Welfare	Health and Social Care	Agriculture, Energy and Environment	Travel, transport and tourism
<p>Casework: Correspondence issued between Ed Humpherson and Paul Lincoln, Border Force, on the use of statistics on e-borders.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Sub National Population projections (ONS, NRS, Welsh Government and NISRA).</p> <p>Published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A statement on the Home Office's commitment to improve EU settlement Scheme statistics. <p>Correspondence issued between Ed Humpherson and Iain Bell, ahead of November's release of the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report.</p>	<p>Casework: Looking at youth unemployment in Scotland following latest release and statements by Scottish Government.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Civil Service statistics</p> <p>Assessment: ONS Labour Market Statistics: analysing our evidence and will discuss our findings with the ONS at the end of November.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health Review: stakeholder engagement is ongoing and scheduled to be completed by February 2020, with report publication in spring 2020. - Social Care Review: reports covering Scotland, England and UK -wide are planned for publication following the election. 	<p>Compliance Check: Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment</p> <p>Assessment: decided that a compliance check of Scottish Waste Statistics would be more appropriate than assessment at this stage, to be initiated in Q1 2020.</p> <p>User engagement review: Held user engagement workshop with Defra Group statistics teams and designing user survey (to be launched January 2020).</p>	<p>Compliance Checks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Published CCs of ONS Overseas Travel and Tourism and the Office of Rail and Road's suite of rail statistics. - Starting CC on road safety statistics produced by the devolved administrations. <p>Assessment: Finalising report for Transport Focus' National Rail Passenger Survey.</p>

Office for Statistics Regulation: Location options

Purpose

1. This paper seeks a steer from the Board on options for the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) location, following the report by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs (PACAC).

Discussion

2. One of the recommendations of the PACAC report was to separate OSR physically from the production side of the Authority:

The Committee therefore reiterates previous recommendations that UK Statistics Authority should take more concrete and visible steps to separate its roles of producer and regulator. The only way to secure public confidence is to ensure that OSR has a separate role and is independent. We recommend that OSR relocates its offices to separate premises from ONS. (Paragraph 86)

3. We have explored practical options that would implement this recommendation, and we would like a Board steer on the strategic implications:
 - i. what is the Board's overall view on the need for greater physical separation; and
 - ii. are the practical options outlined below sufficient; or would the Board prefer a stronger signal of independence through greater physical separation.

Background

4. OSR currently occupies three locations and staff (35 FTEs) are split roughly equally between them:
 - i. Edinburgh: the OSR team are based in the Scotland Office's building in Edinburgh. There are no statistical producers based in the building. In spring next year, the OSR team will move to the new Government hub in Edinburgh, taking space in a building that will be largely occupied by HMRC and DWP. However, no statistical leadership functions will be in the new hub building. We do not propose any change to these arrangements: the Edinburgh OSR office is already clearly separate from ONS and other producers.
 - ii. London: the OSR team occupy the same floor of Drummond Gate as the rest of the Authority in an open plan space, located near the Central Policy Secretariat of the Authority and ONS senior leadership.
 - iii. Newport: the OSR team occupy a separate large room on the ONS site, clearly marked as exclusively OSR space.
 - iv. We do not have an office in Northern Ireland or in any region of England. We do not at this stage propose the creation of a Northern Ireland office. We will reconsider in future as and when the Stormont assembly resumes operation. We will also consider the case for a presence outside London - regional governance units like city regions and combined authorities are becoming more significant users of statistics, and closer proximity to them could be very beneficial. Any expansion in the number of offices would be contingent on increased resources. But neither the Northern Ireland nor regional location issue is considered further in this paper, which considers our current locations in England and Wales.
5. Location is just one component of our thinking in terms of clarifying and enhancing OSR's role. We have run a successful conference; published a Purpose document; are refreshing our communications platforms to demonstrate the separation (including a new Twitter account); and are refreshing our public material on the Authority's different roles and terms of reference for the Regulation Committee. And I will take on a role as

secondary Accounting Officer. So location is one part of a bigger programme to address the issue of separation.

Discussion

Board steer

6. What appear to be practical questions of office moves are actually quite strategic, and really about the future relationship between different parts of the Authority.
7. I would therefore welcome the Board's views on the following questions:
 - i. what is the Board's overall view on the need for greater physical separation; and
 - ii. are there practical options to address these issues which would not involve major relocation; or would the Board prefer a stronger signal of independence through greater physical separation - or indeed to maintain current arrangements.

Ed Humpherson, Office for Statistics Regulation, 18 November 2019

Board decision-making and effectiveness

Purpose

1. This paper explores and invites comment on the Board's effectiveness and decision-making. It follows a request from non-executive members.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note members' recent reflections on Board decision-making and effectiveness (as set out at paragraphs 3 through 7);
 - ii. confirm that the distinction agreed in previous discussions – between the Board's responsibilities for setting strategy, approving business plans, and monitoring progress against strategy, and the executive's role in developing and delivering against those plans (as summarised at paragraph 7),– remains a helpful framework for Board decision-making; and
 - iii. offer suggestions on lessons learned in the course of recent decision-making.

Background

3. The Board is invited to review its effectiveness on an annual basis, to identify where it is performing well and where improvements might be made.
4. The results of the Board's most recent self-review of effectiveness were tabled at the July 2019 meeting. In general, the responses submitted by members indicated an improvement in the operation of the Board in the following areas:
 - i. strategy and business planning;
 - ii. the relationship between executive and non-executive members;
 - iii. opportunities to engage with staff outside of Board meetings;
 - iv. the quality of papers; and
 - v. the support provided by the Secretariat.
5. Areas highlighted for focus in the future included:
 - i. the Board to engage with more strategic, and fewer operational issues;
 - ii. further discussion on risk;
 - iii. long-term planning (including in the context of talent management, given issues around the appointment of a new National Statistician); and
 - iv. the frequency of meetings, which members suggested might be cut back to allow for other forms of engagement across the organisation.
6. Comments around decision-making did not feature in any of the responses provided by members during the most recent review of the Board effectiveness. They did feature in the Board's previous self-review of effectiveness in 2018, at which time members discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Board and its executives, particularly in the context of the Census. In response to the issues raised at that time:
 - i. Board members agreed a note on role and responsibilities of the Board;
 - ii. Board members agreed a more detailed note on their role with regard to Census governance; and
 - iii. the Board's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee scrutinised financial delegations in further detail.

Discussion

7. In previous discussions on roles and responsibilities, members have agreed that the Board is responsible for:

- i. setting the strategy for the statistical system;
 - ii. approving business plans developed by the executive team; and
 - iii. monitoring – through updates from executive members – on the delivery of the strategy and business plan.
8. Members noted the weight granted by legislation to the National Statistician's advice on statistical matters and agreed that the Board would be advised by him on statistical issues and by the Director-General for Regulation on regulatory issues.
9. Members agreed that the Board may choose to focus on specific issues from time-to-time, and might request information, assurance and discussion from the executive on any issue.

Vanessa Holden, Central Policy Secretariat, 12 November 2019

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(19)59

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme update

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Board with an update on progress across all strands of the programme. It sets out the initial learnings from the collection rehearsal and progress towards the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) and Processing rehearsal. It also updates the Board on progress across social and business survey transformations.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. initial learnings from the field operation, within the census collection rehearsal, which closed on the 13 November 2019. The CCS rehearsal begins on 18 November 2019. The Board will continue to receive a weekly update on progress until Christmas;
 - ii. a full evaluation report of the rehearsal will be provided to the Board in the Spring;
 - iii. planning for the Processing and Outputs Rehearsal remains on track and we plan to start the processing elements on 3 February 2020;
 - iv. laying of the Order is now planned for January following the calling of the General Election. There remains sufficient time for secondary legislation to be put in place.
 - v. the judicial review hearing is now complete. As expected, the Judge has reserved judgement. We expect to hear the outcome before Christmas; and
 - vi. progress with the business and social survey transformation – particularly, that the Opinion survey is now live. This is the first online mixed-mode social survey we have deployed. The first response rates are good at 40 per cent online with telephone follow-up now in progress.

Discussion

Census Collection Rehearsal update

3. The field operation within the census collection rehearsal completed on 13 November 2019. Although the electronic questionnaire is no longer available, we still expect to receive some paper returns over the coming weeks.
4. We made a 'go' decision on 12 November for the Census Coverage Survey rehearsal, after a formal presentation of our readiness for operations. Our decision to go-live was taken after full assessment of our readiness.
5. The CCS is a follow-up survey to the Census in order to adjust for any under-enumeration at the national, local and small area level. It consists of a completely independent and intensive face to face survey. The CCS rehearsal uses a sample of postcodes drawn from the rehearsal areas. Field staff are asked to interview all households in those postcodes.
6. The CCS rehearsal will commence on 18 November 2019 as planned. It covers all four rehearsal areas with the first interviews starting on the 21 November. It will cover approximately 4,000 households and a number of smaller communal establishments (up to 50 bed spaces). We will report progress on the CCS rehearsal to the Board at the next meeting. Weekly updates will continue to be provided to all Board members, via the weekly email, until Christmas.

Initial strategic lessons learn from the Collection Rehearsal

7. The rehearsal covered just over 331,000 households across the four rehearsal areas. In total 99,251 households submitted a complete Census questionnaire, giving an overall response rate of 30.0 per cent. This is broken down as follows:

Area	No of Returns	Online	Paper	Return rate %	% online	Incomplete returns
Carlisle	24,877	20,980	3,897	47.4	84.3	2,168
Ceredigion	17,227	9,232	7,995	48.9	53.6	1,013
Hackney	25,592	22,990	2,602	22.0	89.8	6,597
Tower Hamlets	31,555	29,915	1,640	24.7	94.8	7,778
Totals	99,251	83,117	16,134	30.0	83.7	17,556

8. Overall the high-level results are very encouraging. However, we are currently analysing these figures in depth to understand how our systems and interventions have worked and to take any learning on board in our planning for the 2021 Census.
9. At a more strategic level, our initial reflections are around ensuring that our digital-first approach has been sufficiently built into the core of the Census design. We need to recognise the changes in how people now live compared to 2011 with, for example, more gated communities, more shared living accommodation, etc. Whilst the questionnaire was digital-first, we will look at how all communications and engagement, as well as field force deployment, can be more digitally aligned. Specifically:
- While we engaged with different communities through organised awareness and community events in the rehearsal areas, our approach was not always as coordinated as it could have been. We will develop a more coordinated and strategic approach for 2021 Census involving senior-level engagement with leaders from core community groups. This will help to reach the hard-to-reach and invisible communities. This will tie in with our overall engagement strategy for the 2021 Census.
 - Our model of engagement with households was very similar to the approach used in 2011. We are now combining our collected evidence with observations made to revisit our strategic design to ensure our interventions are as effective as possible. We will be analysing the impact of field visits and reminder letters, considering our messaging, methods and timing.
 - Prioritisation of digital developments before the rehearsal led to a minimal viable Management Information (MI) system. While we made some improvements to our MI during the rehearsal, we have learned there is more we can do for 2021. For example, we are now able to track daily return rates against forecasts at small area level to understand the effectiveness of the different interventions we have made. We will be building a solution to effectively use this information to drive our field and engagement decision making for 2021.
 - Our decision making during the rehearsal could have been more timely. In some instances, we did not act with the urgency we will need for the 2021 Census. We have wished to. This has allowed us to consider decision making timeliness and how to build this into the design for the 2021 Census.
10. All the initial observations and early lessons learned will be fed into our full evaluation of the collection rehearsal and used to assist in the design and build for 2021. This is being undertaken at pace to meet the demanding design and build schedule during 2020.

Processing and Outputs Rehearsal

11. The Processing and Outputs rehearsal is scheduled to start on 3 February 2020 with the go/no-go decision on 13 January 2020. It is scheduled to end in June 2020.
12. Unlike the collection rehearsal, this rehearsal will be undertaken in a series of sprints. The overall aim is to have developed, tested and run (in live with real data) the processing pipeline at scale. This will give us confidence that we can meet our commitment to deliver first outputs within 12 months of collection, by March 2022. The first of the sprints will be undertaken in February 2020, with each consecutive sprint building capability and adding further assurance on a specific aspect of the overall pipeline. We are still finalising the metrics that will demonstrate progress through the rehearsal. Once complete we will share them with the Board.

Legislative progress and the Judicial Review

13. Since the last update to the Board, a General Election has been called. While this has impacted the timetable for secondary legislation, there remains sufficient time for the legislation to be in place. We are planning on the basis that the Order will be approved in Privy Council meeting in March 2021 with the regulations laid in Parliament shortly after the Order is approved.
14. The judicial review was heard on 12 and 13 November.

Social Survey and Business Statistics Transformation

15. While the Census has been at the forefront of our reporting to the Board, significant work and progress has been made on our social survey and business statistics transformations. This is despite the challenges brought by the office-wide prioritisation of the Census which has impacted on our ability to meet some of our non-census milestones.
16. Social survey transformation is being achieved mainly through the improvement of field technology and processes, and the build of improved online and mixed-mode surveys. Our recent successes have been:
 - i. the completion of a successful Labour Market Survey (LMS) pilot over the summer, where we maintained very high levels of online take up at 30 per cent and an overall response rate of 62 per cent. We are currently fully evaluating the results but early indications are that adding the online mode does not bias results; and
 - ii. the first online mixed-mode (online first with telephone follow-up) social survey, the Opinion Survey (OPN), went live this month. This saw the move from telephone only to mixed-mode collection. From now on, OPN data are collected using an online self-completion questionnaire with the option to conduct the interview by telephone if required. After nearly two weeks, the initial online response rates are good at 40 per cent, with telephone top-up bringing the response rate up to 47 per cent. We expect this to increase to 60 per cent following telephone follow-up.
17. We have paused work on the Household Financial Surveys. The next stage of transformation is dependent on use of data from HMRC and DWP to replace survey questions with administrative data. Once the data have been made available, we will restart the work in this area. Work is now focussed on the build and implementation of a new and transformed survey mechanism which will support all surveys, not just the financial survey. This will incorporate the LMS and a Populations Characteristics Survey, as well as a variety of other modules where a requirement for survey collection remains.
18. Business statistics transformation has been moving our business surveys online. This year, for the first time, we expect to receive more than 50 per cent of business survey responses online. While the IPR shows red, two recent developments mean that this situation will change imminently:

- i. The release of the functionality from the Census rehearsal enables us to plan and progress the next phase of online business surveys for the 2020/21 financial year; and
- ii. Agreement on the best architecture for editing and processing combined administrative and survey data, means that the technology for the first truly integrated administrative survey will be delivered by end of March 2020

Conclusion

19. The Board is asked to note the progress to date and that we will keep them up to date with developments.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy
Nicola Tyson-Payne, Interim Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy,
15 November 2019

Strategy

Purpose

1. This paper provides material requested by Board members at their last meeting. It details the proposed framework and timeline for developing the next strategy and seeks approval of an internal consultation document.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the progress against *Better Statistics, Better Decisions*;
 - ii. discuss and agree the framework and timelines for the development of its next strategy; and
 - iii. discuss and agree the internal consultation document.

Background

3. Over the last year, Board members have held several discussions on future strategy. Members have considered progress against *Better Statistics, Better Decisions*, have spoken with the heads of other National Statistical Institutes about the changing external environment, and have heard from members of the executive team about opportunities and risks to production and regulation over the period 2020 to 2025.
4. At its October meeting, following the commencement of the new Chief Executive, Board members returned to their discussions of strategy. Members considered questions of content as well as options for the development and communication of the strategy. While agreeing proposals for the development of a single overarching strategy supported by separate strategic delivery plans, members requested further detail on progress against the current strategy, and the timelines and framework for the development of the next strategy. They also agreed to consider a draft internal consultation document at their November meeting.

Discussion

Better Statistics, Better Decisions – what is left to do?

5. *Better Statistics, Better Decisions*, launched in 2015, was the first combined strategy for the UK's statistical system. It is due to end in March 2020.

Framework and Timeline

6. Since the Board meeting in October, the timeline and framework for the next strategy have been further developed.
7. Pending the Board's discussion today, we intend to launch an internal consultation – across the Authority, the ONS, the OSR and the GSS – in early December. More details on the internal consultation are set out in paragraphs 12 through 15.
8. While the pre-election period guidance prevents the Authority from launching a formal external consultation ahead of 12 December, we intend to continue our engagement with external stakeholders over this period. Having identified those external stakeholders that are crucial to the successful launch of our next strategy, we will use existing engagements (such as Permanent Secretary meetings, the Authority's Economic Experts Advisory Group, and bilaterals with individuals such as the Chief Scientific Officer) to gauge views on our next strategy.
9. The information we gather during this engagement phase will be provided to Board members, alongside an outline strategy document, for discussion at workshops in early

January. Because it was not possible to assemble the full Board on a single day, we have scheduled two half-days of workshops, which Board members will be invited to attend. Views will be captured in these workshops, before we bring the full Board together on 30 January for its meeting, at which time a draft strategy will be presented for discussion.

10. As work on the strategy progresses, the outcomes of Board discussions will be regularly fed-back to the organisation's business planning and spending review teams, to ensure alignment between the ambitions defined in our strategy, and the milestones and plans defined in underpinning documents.
11. Delivery and business plans will also be brought to the Board for approval in early 2020, so that we are able to publish the new Authority strategy, its accompanying five-year delivery plans and business plans, ahead of the new financial year beginning in April 2020.

Internal consultation

12. The internal consultation sets out a broad vision for the future statistical system, as well as a series of questions for staff.
13. The vision and questions are intended to reflect the points consistently raised by the Board in earlier discussions, such as the expansion of our work beyond official statistics, implications of the abundance of data in the context of existing standards and our regulatory model, and options for more closely drawing together the statistical system to address cross-cutting issues.
14. The staff we are attempting to reach and engage in the setting of our new priorities are diverse – from field interviewers and others engaged in delivery, to statisticians, analysts and data scientists. The internal consultation document has been drafted in a such a way that we hope all will be in a position to take part, but is likely to look different than we might expect our final strategy to. To help us reach staff across the system, the National Statistician, the DG for Regulation and a Head of Profession will promote the consultation on the Authority and GSS intranet sites, in all-staff calls, and in fora including the Heads of Profession meeting.
15. In addition to providing a useful feed of information to the Board as it develops its strategy, the results of this consultation will be invaluable as we plan how best to launch our strategy.

Vanessa Holden, Central Policy Secretariat, 15 November 2019