

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes
Thursday 30 June 2020
Via Videoconference

Present

UK Statistics Authority

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

Also in attendance

Mr Jonathan Athrow
Mr Nick Bateson
Mr Iain Bell
Mr Owen Brace
Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Douglas Cameron (Secretariat)
Ms Sally-Ann Jones (Secretariat)
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 27 May 2020 were agreed.

4. Report from the Authority Chair

4.1 Non-executive directors had met prior to the Board. They had discussed the speech made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the Ditchley Annual Lecture. The speech emphasised the need for greater statistical literacy across the Civil Service. The non-executive directors had also discussed the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) and its impact on the organisation, and test and trace statistics.

4.2 The Chair reported on his recent activity since the Board last met. Sir David had responded to the letter from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regarding the COVID-19 testing statistics and had discussed test and trace statistics with Baroness Harding. ONS and OSR continued to advise the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) on the development of test and trace statistics.

4.3 Prof Sir David Spiegelhalter informed the meeting of his discussion with the health secretary on the communication of COVID-19 statistics.

4.4 Board members discussed the potential impact of CIS on the organisation and the methodology underpinning the production of death statistics in different countries.

5. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(20)37]

5.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting. The Board heard that, as a result of the work by both OSR and ONS with producers, OSR had seen an improvement in the production of COVID-19 data at a national level. Further work was needed regarding local area/regional data.

5.2 A steering group had met to consider the National Statistics designation review. The group, chaired by Ms Helen Boaden, would consider how to develop the role of the National Statistics designation.

6. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(20)38]

6.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues for June, highlighting the following:

6.2 ONS had played a critical role in the production of timely analysis to help inform the response to the pandemic and would continue to do so. As discussed earlier in the meeting, Consideration was also being given to the priority data sets needed to inform a changing agenda. Mr Athow provided an update on the long-term flow of funds project.

6.3 Sir Ian outlined the role for the organisation in strengthening statistical literacy across government. While training would form part of the solution, a key element was the accessibility, sharing and linking of data. This related to the work on the Integrated Data Platform (IDP), the aim of which is to deliver a data-driven analytical capability to enable policy questions to be answered using data from across government. Ms Kay provided further detail on the development of the IDP. The outline business case had been submitted to HM Treasury; progress had been made in joining up the IDP with other data initiatives; and a number of analytical lighthouse projects included.

6.4 Sir Ian noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the expansion of the CIS. Recruitment across the organisation was increasing and had not been adversely impacted by the current situation. The work undertaken by Mr Cameron and Ms Kay

on the organisation's attitude to change in response to the pandemic included 'location blind' recruitment and a more flexible working environment.

6.5 Sir Ian highlighted the work on inclusion and diversity by the senior leadership team working with the BAME network. Inclusion was a key principle of the Authority strategy.

6.6 The Board welcomed the update and would continue to remain engaged with the development of CIS and IDP.

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

7.1 Ms Nanayakkara reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which had met on 18 June 2020.

7.2 Committee members had considered the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 and recommended the National Statistician's approval.

7.3 Ms Nanayakkara reported that based on the work of the Committee during the year and assurance work carried out by external and internal auditors, it was her opinion that the Authority's governance and control framework was generally effective. The Committee recognised that this was the fourth consecutive year with an overall limited opinion by the Head of Internal Audit. The three areas in which improvement was needed in order to address the weaknesses included: strengthening risk and oversight functions; developing the culture of ownership and accountability; and strengthening governance of shared responsibilities across the office.

7.4 The Board heard that a programme of work was in place to address these issues. The business plan would provide clear accountability and a more structured approach to the delivery of a shared programme of work. The risk and assurance mechanisms would be strengthened with an increased focus on assurance in key risk areas.

7.5 The Board commended the Chair and the Committee for their work during 2019/20.

8. Annual Report and Accounts [SA(20)39]

8.1 Mr Bateson introduced a paper which provided an overview of the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts and the key audit findings for 2019/20.

8.2 Mr Bateson advised that the Annual Report and Accounts had been approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 18 June and would be signed by the National Statistician on 7 July.

8.3 The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 ahead of publication.

9. Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) update [SA(20)40]

9.1 Mr Bell introduced a paper which provided an update on the CDCTP programme.

9.2 The Board heard that that the delivery of a Census in March 2021 remained achievable. Mr Bell reported that:

- i. the processing and outputs rehearsal continued to make good progress;
- ii. the printing of Census paper questionnaires for those unable to complete the census on-line had commenced;
- iii. full end to end testing on the Census build was on schedule for September;
- iv. the position on data acquisition had improved with a focus on delivery of DWP data and contingencies being explored for council tax data;
- v. the design of field force operations had been amended including the requirement for Personal Protective Equipment and new forms of community engagement;
- vi. the planning for the link between CIS and the Census coverage survey was being considered; and
- vii. the work on the future of a census was being considered as part of the programme.

9.3 Board members discussed the update and highlighted the importance of communication in relation to the digital response to the Census.

10. Draft Authority Strategy; Draft ONS Business Plan ; and Draft OSR Business Plan [SA(20)41]

10.1 Mr Cameron introduced a paper which provided an update on the development of the Authority strategy, which Board members had discussed a number of times over the last year. The key principles (Radical, Ambitious, Sustainable and Inclusive) were reflected throughout the strategy and supporting business plans for ONS and OSR. Mr Cameron highlighted that the response of the statistical system to the pandemic had built on these principles to demonstrate the potential for evidence and data in public life. Trust in official statistics had been a cornerstone of both decision making for, and reporting of, the pandemic.

10.2 Mr Bateson introduced the draft ONS business plan and highlighted the need to finalise the funding position for the CIS and IDP ahead of publication. The 2020 Spending Review is anticipated to launch in the summer, and further work was scheduled on risk for the Board in July.

10.3 Mr Humpherson introduced the draft OSR business plan noting that the draft strategy had provided the framework for the development of the plan.

10.4 The Board heard about the proposed plans for the launch of the strategy and the business plans later in July. Board members went on to discuss the draft strategy, including the strapline and mission, alongside the supporting draft business plans for ONS and OSR.

10.5 The Board commended Mr Cameron, Mr Bateson, Mr Humpherson and their respective teams for their excellent work over the last twelve months in reaching this point. The Board endorsed the Authority Strategy and ONS and OSR business plans for publication (date to be agreed).

11. Scenarios Planning [SA(20)42]

11.1 Mr Cameron introduced a paper which provided a high-level summary of scenario planning from across the ONS. The scenarios would be kept under review to ensure that the organisation could respond to changes in the internal and external environments.

11.2 Board members discussed the update, noting that it provided assurance on the robustness of the organisation given the way in which the ONS had responded to the pandemic.

12. Any other business

12.1 Sir David noted that it was not practical to plan for the September Board meeting in Edinburgh in the current circumstances. The meeting may need to take place remotely.

12.2 With regard to the classifications for regional statistics following the EU Exit, the Board endorsed the approach for maintaining a geographical classification on a domestic basis.

12.3 The Authority Board would meet next on Thursday 30 July by videoconference.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

30 June 2020, 08:30 to 11:30, via videoconference

Chair: Sir David Norgrove

Apologies: Mr Ed Humpherson (09.30-10.30)

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

NED Session: 08:30-09:00

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|------------------------------|--|---|
| 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 27 May 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 | SA(20)37 Mr Ed Humpherson |
| 4 09.25-.9.45 20 mins | Report from the Chief Executive | SA(20)38 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond |
| 5 09.45-09.55 10 mins | Report from Committee Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee | Oral report Ms Nora Nanayakkara |
| 6 09.55-10.05 10 mins | Annual Report and Accounts | SA(20)39 Mr Nick Bateson |
| 7 10.05-10.20 15 mins | Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme update | SA(20)40 Mr Iain Bell Ms Nicola Tyson-Payne |
| 8 10.20-11.00 40 mins | Draft Authority Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Business Plan – ONS• Draft Business Plan – OSR | SA(20)41 Mr Douglas Cameron Mr Nick Bateson Mr Ed Humpherson |
| 9 11.00-11.15 15 mins | Scenario Planning | SA(20)42 Mr Douglas Cameron |
| 10 11.15-11.25 10 mins | Any Other Business | |

Next meeting: 30 July, 08:30-11:30, remote meeting

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

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

Discussion

2. Key activities since the last Board meeting have focused on COVID-19.

Rapid regulatory reviews

3. Since the last Board meeting, we have published one rapid review, of Natural England's People and Nature Survey.

Improvements to COVID-19 data

4. The Board will be aware that the Chair wrote to [Matt Hancock](#) on 2 June about the presentation of testing data. Matt Hancock's [reply](#) committed to working with the Authority to improve the statistics on testing.
5. The Department of Health and Social Care have since published its first data from the test and trace programme. This represents a step forward in terms of clarity and explanation, though it is clearly early days for both the data reporting and the programme, and we expect to see much more granularity on the delivery of the testing programme in the coming weeks.
6. We continue to push for further improvements in COVID-19 data, for example around the Number Ten daily briefing. With extensive input from ONS staff, the Number 10 daily briefings have clearer explanations of what the data are and where they are from and the underlying data are now published in a structured way by the relevant Departments. This is an important development and I plan to write to Sir Ian to commend both ONS and the GSS for their roles in these improvements.
7. We have looked at a range of other issues and worked with producers to enhance the data that are published. These include the Scottish daily briefing, including a letter for the Chair to a Labour MSP who raised concerns about the Scottish Government's approach (the Chair's letter did not endorse these concerns but pointed out areas for improvement); the approach taken across the UK to publishing the R number; the publication of data on COVID-19 in care homes; the publication of Home Office data on migrants not eligible for benefit support during the pandemic (letter from Stephen Timms MP); and changes to the publication of testing data in Northern Ireland. In all cases we have pushed for better availability of data, and have seen improvements as a result.
8. To give some context to this effort, my team is currently looking into something like 15 separate issues a week related to coronavirus data, some identified by the public and some by our own reviews. While some of the cases cover similar ground, this is still a significant demand and I am very impressed by OSR's response.

Management Information

9. We published [a statement](#) on 18 May setting out our regulatory stance, which is to support transparency and openness. Since then, we have pursued a number of different cases including the Welsh Government and NHS England. Through this, we have secured publication of new data – for example, we wrote to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the use of unpublished data on rough sleeping, which they since [published](#). We have also liaised with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), working with Sir Ian, and MoJ have committed to publishing data that their Ministers have been using on COVID-19 in the prison population.

Communication

10. I published a blog – [Out of the Shadows](#) – which was published on both the Admin Data Research website (run by the Economic and Social Research Council) and our own website.
11. We also published a blog on [connectedness and loneliness](#), which sought to emphasise that behind data lie human stories, based on some personal reflections from members of the OSR team. I think it's a very engaging and personal way of looking at the topic.

Defra review

12. We published a review of how [Defra engages](#) with users of statistics. We focused on Defra because of the very widespread NGO and civil society interest in aspects of Defra's statistical output, so we considered that Defra provided a good testbed for broader principles of user engagement. This review also demonstrates that we have responded to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee recommendations around user engagement.

National Statistics Review

13. We held the first meeting of the steering group looking into how to develop the role of the National Statistics designation. The group was chaired by Helen Boaden. The key themes were to look further into how other regulators signal value to users; to consider further who are the users of the National Statistics designation; and to consider how producers can best signal the uncertainties and limitations of their statistics. The next meeting will be in the autumn.

Challenges

14. It remains a challenge to respond to the current volume of casework. We have reorganised how we approach this work which has enabled us to scale up how we handle cases, and team members in OSR have shown great flexibility in stepping in to support colleagues working on these cases.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 23 June 2020

List of Annexes

Annex A Regulatory Activities Dashboard

Regulatory Activities June 2020

| Economy | Business, Trade and International Development | Population and Society | Children, Education and skills | Crime and Security |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with ONS to discuss the latest mitigation measures in measuring consumer price inflation. Compliance check of HMRC's Survey of Personal Incomes to start in July. Drafting OSR position statement on RPI. Discussing with HMRC a possible rapid review of their COVID-19 statistics. <p>Casework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responded to casework on the latest consumer price inflation statistics not according with the correspondent's personal experience of inflation. Met with IPO to discuss measures to prevent inappropriate early disclosure of patenting statistics. | <p>Assessment: Drafting report on Business Demography statistics, for review at July Regulatory Committee.</p> <p>UK Trade Drafting OSR position statement due to be published at the end of June.</p> <p>Casework: Investigated SNP claim of £33m investment to get people back to work. Writing privately to SNP on importance of communicating sources of funding.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: ONS use of VAT data - Examining the circumstances and evidence behind the introduction of VAT data into economic and retail sales statistics – to start in July.</p> | <p>COVID-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing evolving registered death statistics from ONS, NRS and NISRA. Published statement on Data and Statistics on COVID-19 impacts on the Care sector. Rapid Review started on monthly indicators from the National Survey for Wales. Casework across health and population – for example, Authority response on comparison made on Newsnight between UK daily death figures and the total for the EU. <p>Assessments:</p> <p>Census Evidence submitted to OSR on meeting phase one assessment requirements. Due to be published by census offices 15 June.</p> <p>Migration: Discussed outputs and future plans with Home Office and ONS, with meeting with DWP planned for w/c 29 June.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews:</p> <p>Loneliness Planning research stages. Published a blog on 17 June as part of Loneliness Awareness Week.</p> <p>Sex and gender identity: Met with Roger Halliday to discuss progress of the Scottish Government sex and gender in data working group. Approached by Professor Alice Sullivan regarding engagement with census offices.</p> | <p>Compliance Checks: Graduate Outcomes Survey: Starting this work once the statistics are published on 18th June.</p> <p>Casework: Graduate Outcomes Survey - Met with HESA and sent private letter response to UUK regarding their concerns and planning follow up meeting. Meeting with Ofqual to discuss queries around how school assessments will be standardised and published.</p> <p>Systemic Reviews:</p> <p>Skills Addressing producer comments and finalising report to - due to publish late June.</p> <p>Children and Young People Planning to publish a blog to renew interest in this area and recommence research activities (has been paused since 2019).</p> | <p>Crime: we are preparing an OSR position statement on crime statistics for publication in June/July.</p> <p>Casework: The Men and Boys Coalition asked us to write to the Prime Minister about his use of subjective language when describing statistics. We have judged the language used was OK in this instance and have replied privately.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: We published our CC of MOD trade, industry and contracts statistics in June.</p> <p>Raising awareness of OSR: femicide census have confirmed they are planning to go ahead and voluntarily apply the Code to their data and statistics.</p> |
| Health and Social Care | Labour Market and Welfare | Agriculture, Energy and Environment | Housing, Planning and Local Services | Travel, Transport and Tourism |
| <p>Assessments: User engagement underway for the assessment of Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) with NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA).</p> <p>Rapid review: of NHS England's Daily Deaths statistics underway.</p> <p>Casework: Dealing with elevated levels of COVID-19 casework: statistics on testing programme, comparability of UK-wide data, metadata around the daily dashboards, care home statistics. Public interventions can be viewed on our COVID-19 webpage.</p> <p>Systemic Review: Mental Health in England: Report is nearing completion. Plan to publish during summer 2020,</p> | <p>Assessment: Quarterly Benefits Summary assessment has resumed, and we are planning to conduct user interviews in June/July.</p> <p>Casework: DWP raised concerns over the media's reporting of UC claims as UK joblessness rate. Decided a formal response was not appropriate at this time.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Desk research started for Indices of Multiple Deprivation (GB).</p> | <p>Assessment: Follow up of requirement from assessment of Defra's Air Quality Statistics in the UK and Emissions of Air Pollutants in the UK statistics.</p> <p>Rapid review: Review of Natural England's interim indicators from the People and Nature Survey published on 9 June.</p> <p>Compliance checks: Waste statistics across the UK underway, expecting to publish July.</p> <p>Systemic review:</p> <p>Defra Group User Engagement report and accompanying blog published on 18 June.</p> | <p>Casework: Published a letter to the Permanent Secretary at MHCLG seeking equal access to MHCLG quoted MI on rough sleepers housed during the pandemic. Published the Permanent Secretary's response letter, and MHCLG have published part of the MI data so we are still engaging with MHCLG statisticians on getting the rest of it published.</p> <p>Compliance Checks: Carrying out compliance checks on</p> | <p>Rapid review: Rapid review of Department for Transport COVID-19 statistics published on 15 May.</p> <p>Assessment: Assessment of the Office for Rail and Road's Estimates of Station Usage statistics kicked off at the end of April. Currently carrying out user engagement.</p> |

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| considering any potential sensitivities around mental health given the current COVID-19 situation. | Meetings with producers scheduled for mid-June. | | MHCLG and Welsh Government rough sleeping estimates. | |
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Chief Executive's Report, June 2020

Purpose

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

Summary

2. I have spent the past month meeting with Senior Officials across Government, providing decision makers with timely analysis to help inform Her Majesty's government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Review of recent activities

3. Important developments in recent weeks include the following:
 - i. I have continued to attend the Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies (SAGE) as it continues to provide advice on the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - ii. I attended the inaugural Integrated Data Platform advisory group meeting to discuss the opportunities of a cross government data platform and data sharing;
 - iii. I have met with colleagues at the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to improve presentation and dissemination of test, track and trace statistics;
 - iv. I have met with colleagues from the ONS Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network to discuss their experiences of working at ONS and understand how we can make the organisation a more inclusive place to work;
 - v. I have also engaged in activities with the mainstream media, notably being interviewed by the Times on 16 June and appearing on the Andrew Marr Show on 21 June;
 - vi. ONS have continued to provide fresh insights into the relationship between characteristics and COVID-19;
 - vii. ONS released publications providing breakdowns of COVID-19 related mortality by ethnicity, religion and disability on 19 June; and
 - viii. we will continue to further expand the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS). We will be increasing our sample size to circa 28,000 households by the end of July. In addition, we will be working closely with the Welsh and Scottish governments to launch CIS in both Wales and Scotland respectively.

Future look

4. This next month will see a further iteration of the CIS study to inform decision makers of the prevalence of COVID-19 in the population.
5. We will continue to work with colleagues in DHSC on future improvements to the presentation and dissemination of test, track and trace statistics.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, 23 June 2020

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(20)39

Annual Report and Accounts Conclusions 2019/20

Purpose

1. To provide the Authority Board with an overview of the Authority's Annual Report and the key audited financial results for the year.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the final year end performance and position for 2019/20 and the narrative in the Annual Report; and
 - ii. provide final approval for the Annual Report and Accounts prior to sign off by the Accounting Officer and publication thereafter.

Discussion

Summary of the final year end performance and position for 2019/20

3. Summary outturn against our audited control totals is as follows:
 - i. in terms of Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) our year end outturn position is £18.3 million below our budget. This figure is inclusive of depreciation;
 - ii. our capital expenditure is circa £770,000 below our Capital DEL budget;
 - iii. our revised Annually Managed Expenditure is £1.1 million within budget reflecting the unwinding of unutilised provisions in the year primarily relating to Voluntary Early Severance exercises and a corresponding increase in provision relating to a change in classification of dilapidation costs from accrual to provision; and
 - iv. the combined impact of these items and the high value in accruals at the year-end, arising from the Census contracts, has resulted in a significant under utilisation of Net Cash Requirement in year of circa £15 million.
4. In summary, total budgetary expenditure, which is the focus of the Treasury's assessment of our financial performance, is within 6 per cent of our total budget.
5. The key driver for the outturn is the under expenditure across the Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme. Whilst there have been movements across the Programme budget lines both positive and negative, which would be expected in any Programme of this scale, the under expenditure in essence reflects an under-utilisation of the original programme budget contingency profile for 2019/20 of £15 million. The under-utilisation retains this contingency for potential usage within the programme in the context of the overall budget of £906 million for the programme, subject to HM Treasury approval.
6. Therefore, in the context of the position with the programme contingency and the financial year more generally, we are able to conclude that we have met our financial targets and Treasury's expectation for the utilisation of our funding.

Key year on year variances

7. In assessing the financial performance in the context of prior years the following paragraphs provide a summary of the key variances and their rationale compared with 2018/19.
8. Net Operating Expenditure grew by circa 9 per cent from £285 million in 2018/19 to £309 million in 2019/20. This increase relates to activity associated with preparations for Census 2021. It also reflects the continued delivery of the Economic Statistics

Transformation Programme, the continued work in relation to EU Exit and the ongoing operations of the Authority.

9. The Net Operating Expenditure reflects a net increase in costs of around £29 million with an increase in income of circa £5 million. Some of the key variances year on year are set out below:
 - i. staff costs increased by £21.6 million reflecting an increase in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 338 by the year end. 2019/20 also saw an increase in the level of employer pension contributions which has also impacted the overall expenditure;
 - ii. purchases of goods and services increased by £20 million. £6 million of this increase is in relation to contractors with the key driver being an increase in Census activity. 'Other expenditure' increased by £15 million. This cost category includes costs relating to key Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme (CDCTP) contracts where expenditure also increased during the year in preparation for Census 2021;
 - iii. depreciation charges decreased by £8 million which reflects our movement to e.g. cloud-based technology strategies and our policy on reducing the useful economic lives of assets. As we move away from building significant intangible assets internally and as the asset values decrease on our balance sheet the depreciation charges applied reduce;
 - iv. provision expenses reduced by £4 million which reflects the Voluntary Early Severance exercises that occurred in 2018/19 which did not occur in 2019/20; and
 - v. the increase in income is due to the sale of part of the Christchurch storage site and an increase in third party income via the Administrative Data Research Centre.
10. In terms of Balance Sheet items - our total assets have decreased by circa £6 million driven in the main by the continued increase in depreciation of intangible assets, the disposal of property in year and the recognition of a COVID-19 related impairment in respect of our estate. The depreciation of intangible assets reflects the impact of our accounting policies and our strategy to utilise cloud-based solutions over in-house technology build, which will continue to reduce the size of our asset base over time. The other two factors are specific to this financial year.

The Annual Report

11. The version provided to the Authority Board is near final, the only remaining work to complete is proof reading and production of the externally published version in line with the corporate template and formats. This work will be complete by the time of the Authority Board meeting on 30 June.
12. The narrative for the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is within a separate annex referenced within the main body of the report – to emphasise the independence of the OSR's work in the context of the Authority.

The Governance Statement

13. The Governance Statement is a key constituent element of the document and is included in section 3 of the Annual Report. In line with Treasury guidance this provides a description of the key governance processes and the role of the Authority Board and its sub-committees. The statement also sets out the risk, control and governance issues that we have managed during the year, the progress we have made and the areas we are seeking to address over the coming periods.
14. The conclusions of the Governance Statement point to the established nature of the Authority's overall governance; and the need to improve the organisation's assurance and risk management capabilities, ensure that the governance adapts to the Authority's rapidly changing context and address specific control issues. These conclusions align

with the conclusions of Internal Audit's work and the conclusions of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee review

15. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met on 18 June to review the Annual Report and Accounts; the external audit Management Report and Letter of Representation; and to consider the view it would give in respect of this year's exercise.
16. The National Audit Office recommendation, as reflected in their Management Report, is that the Annual Report and Accounts should be approved with an unqualified opinion by the Comptroller and Auditor General without modification.
17. The Audit Committee accepted this view and recommended that the Accounting Officer should sign the Annual Report and Accounts and standard Letter of Representation. Following the Authority Board's review and, if content, approval, the National Statistician will sign the documents and the Annual Report and Accounts will be published by 15 July.

Nick Bateson, Director of Finance, Planning and Performance
22 June 2020

Census and Data Collection Transformation Programme

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the programme focusing on the Census, including our response to coronavirus, and the wider transformation, some of which has been accelerated in recent months.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note:
 - i. the programme retains a rating of amber. In addition to our own regular checkpoints, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) will be undertaking a strategic assessment (G0) during July 2020 which will assess our delivery confidence, preparedness and assurance;
 - ii. despite the COVID-19 challenges we remain confident and assured of our ability to deliver a high-quality Census in March 2021. Following the approval of the Census Order by Privy Council in May we expect the regulations to be in force by 23 June, allowing for printing of questionnaires to commence on 26 June and the first recruitment to start in early July;
 - iii. the processing and outputs rehearsal continue to make good progress and will complete by the end of July. For the Census collection, our digital build continues and preparations for full end to end testing to start at end September are on track;
 - iv. since our last update, the position on data acquisition has improved across several data sources. COVID-19 has impacted on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data and council tax data from some local authorities. We are working with DWP to ensure we can deliver maximum value to the timescales of the programme. For council tax data, there are contingencies being explored using utility data and Royal Mail;
 - v. 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; and
 - vi. we are progressing our work towards the 2023 Recommendation on the future of a census and the transformed system of population, social and business statistics.

Discussion

Programme update

3. The programme remains at Amber. Delivery remains on track with all teams sustaining delivery through the challenges presented by COVID-19. Our Census on a page and programme on a page show our current milestone position and future planning.
4. Census build continues at pace and despite completion of the final functional requirements being hampered by working at home, we remain on track. Printing of questionnaires is expected to commence on 26 June and the first recruitment to start in early July. Build will continue through to September at which point full end to end and operational acceptance testing will commence. Preparations to automate this testing and ensure we can go into live operations confident of a performant solution are making good progress.
5. The programme held the second Census readiness assessment checkpoint on 18 June and concluded that readiness remained positive. Our confidence in delivery has improved since the last assessment under all scenarios. The last remaining area is our

planning for the links between the Coronavirus Infection Study and the Census coverage survey (CCS) both in the community and potentially also in care homes. Further assessments will take place in September and December to maintain confidence of delivery. An IPA Strategic Assessment (G0) is due to be undertaken between 6 and 10 July to assure our preparedness for delivery and our delivery confidence

6. The wider transformation has been impacted by COVID-19. Positively from the perspective of Business Statistics and Social Survey with work successfully capitalising on improved cross office working and a more agile approach to development. The Population and Migration Statistics transformation has been negatively impacted due to delays in data acquisition, most notably from DWP as they have been impacted by large scale demand as a result of the pandemic.

Preparations for Census

7. We remain confident and assured in our ability to deliver a high-quality census on 21 March 2021. The design of the field operation has been amended to ensure it can run successfully under any of the planned scenarios. These include the virtual candidate journey for recruitment, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements for the 'field force, new forms of community engagement and descoping the room-level detail for care homes. Further work is being undertaken around communal establishments. Additionally, we are exploring how to expand our telephone capture service and ensure our back-office operation is more efficient.
8. The digital build is continuing, and the supply chain remains positive and responsive. We have actively involved suppliers in our continuing scenario planning through the key supplier meetings.
9. The processing and outputs rehearsal continue to make good progress and has now exceeded the level rehearsed in 2011. This includes data passing in and out of the Data Access Platform (DAP) successfully. A number of administrative data sources in the rehearsal dataset have reintegrated back into the processing pipeline including Valuation Office Agency data (replacing the number of rooms question), Ministry of Defence (MoD) data (allowing us to verify responses to the Veteran's question) and Patient Register/PDS (providing age which aids the imputation of missing dates of birth). Other data sources have also been identified to support the "playbook" for under enumeration.
10. We have held a positive knowledge exchange session with Statistics Canada where we explored their response to COVID-19. This is in addition to ongoing dialogue with New Zealand and Australia. We have been able to share, openly, our respective experiences and how we were building assurance and confidence of delivery. We will continue these sessions, including others as appropriate, to share and leverage the international good practice.
11. The Census Order has been approved by Privy Council which places a legislative direction to deliver a Census in 2021. Regulations for England have been laid in Parliament and expect to be in force by 23 June. Regulations for Wales in Senedd Cymru follow a similar timescale.

Acquisition of administrative data

12. Throughout May and June, the taskforce held workshops with key stakeholders to focus on priority datasets which are at risk. These workshops have been targeted to identify and understand what options exist to reduce the impact of any loss or delay to receiving the data. Results are being reported weekly.
13. Except for DWP data and council tax data, all data feeds now have a "route to green". Whilst these routes remain challenging, the Data as a Service (DaaS) teams are providing updates and assurance that the required data will be available. The Statistical Design and Research (SDR) team are confident that the current predicted gaps for data

to support the Census have statistical alternatives to ensure resilience in our design and to minimise operational impact.

14. Work continues to resolve, but also to develop contingency, for the critical datasets of Customer Information System (CIS) and Benefits and Income Data (BIDs) from DWP and Council tax data from local authorities (LAs). This includes leveraging existing data in new ways and exploiting additional data sources, for example, utilities data to supplement council tax data.
15. The acquisition process is being altered to include a more detailed definition phase, prior to receiving the data, where ONS users will be involved in quality assurance, metadata review and access to the supplier analysts to facilitate cross-organisation understanding. This should support accelerated data engineering once the data is received. The provisioning (data ingest) process has been reduced to 6-weeks by which time the data is available for use. There will be a further 6-weeks needed for full linking and integration. Additional process improvement work is underway, including a Systems Thinking focus on the end to end value chain.

Wider transformation

16. The programme continues to capture and evaluate new ways of working from the 'rapid transformation' in response to COVID-19. This has informed future planning including the delivery of Labour Market Survey (LMS) and Household Finance Survey (HFS) and how to leverage the Coronavirus Infection Study to provide additional contingency for the Census Coverage Survey (CCS).
17. Within Business Statistics, Moving Surveys Online has proceeded at pace. In addition to construction and vacancies which have moved online this year. The International Trade in Services (ITIS) and uplift to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) surveys will increase digital data collection by a further 15,500 samples per year. This means we are on track to move 975,000 Business Surveys Online by the end of 2020/21 Distributive Trades (DTrades) continues to progress well with the Alpha (prototype building and testing) and completion is on track for June 2020.
18. Population and Migration Statistics Transformation (PMST) is designed to allow us to make the best use of available data to deliver insights into population and migration. Population estimates provide the foundation for understanding society and COVID-19 has highlighted the need for quality statistics to support decision making. Delivery of Administrative-Based Population Estimates (ABPEs) alongside the 2021 Census is a priority to allow us to move to a new approach from a well understood baseline. The delays to data acquisition due to COVID-19 have impacted on the PMST project. Recovery planning is underway to ensure we remain on track to develop the new system.
19. Whilst the work on ABPEs is progressing, we are continuing to develop population characteristics (numerators) in parallel. This is to build an evidence base for the 2023 Recommendation. We are investigating the utilisation of administrative data readily available in ONS. For example, the high-level editing and imputation strategy has been approved for the use of administrative data for room-level detail. Our use of data for housing characteristics is progressing well, with recent publications on floor space and property type.
20. Within Social Surveys, COVID-19 continues to present opportunities to accelerate the pace of our data collection transformation. The LMS continues to build and the transformed Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) has established itself as a critical information source during the COVID-19 response. The latest iteration has moved the survey to a 4-day turnaround. The emerging design of the second phase of the CIS presents opportunities to create a household survey framework that meets multiple needs including the LMS, OPN and, potentially, the coverage survey needs of the

Census. Operational solutions required for CIS provide opportunity to develop and use capability sooner. For example, automatic work allocation capability of the Fieldwork Management Tool (FWMT) is a future requirement for our transformation of social surveys.

21. Within Social Statistics Admin First (SSAF), the teams are exploring how to leverage administrative data to cover topics traditionally collected by survey. This can vary depending on the quality and coverage of the data. For example, the use of DWP benefits data will capture all benefit activity and so would be a strong replacement. SSAF continue to investigate the extent and methods we need to develop for the future.
22. As previously described, the CIS is an emerging opportunity for the programme. Phase 2 of CIS requires an issued sample of 5,000 households per week over a 12-month period. Annualised this equates to 250,000 households. A discovery exercise considered several options for delivering the required sample capacity. Consequently, it was agreed to expand the current model for the LMS. This will enable us to meet the requirements needed for the CIS whilst also providing an opportunity to prove the approach for the LMS. The additional capacity is being hosted on existing Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency IT infrastructure to mitigate threats to the delivery of Census. However, work will be undertaken during the Summer to investigate transferring onto ONS platforms.
23. We are developing the content of the survey to include additional labour market content and other requirements including protected characteristics. The survey content meets the requirements of the future Population Coverage Survey (PCS) which will be required to support a transformed population and migration statistics system. We are investigating the sample design of this early stage integrated survey. For the CIS it has been agreed to boost the sample size of the LMS 'beta' by nearly 23,000 households per week. This is significant as the current sample is 1,500 households for the LMS 'beta'. Respondents to this 'boosted LMS' will be selected for participation in the CIS. They will not be approached for further interviews at this point. Longitudinal follow-up for LMS purposes will be from the initial 1,500 households issued for LMS 'beta'. Taking this approach for the CIS sample supports transformation towards an integrated household survey design with modules being subsampled from a larger-scale survey.
24. The 2023 Recommendation on the future of a census is now established as a project within the programme. An engagement strategy is being prepared to ensure stakeholders are included within the planning and design. This will include parliamentary and ministerial engagement through the Policy team when appropriate. The business change team are developing the benefits management approach to be included within the project including other work across ONS such as the Integrated Data Platform. We expect to be able to provide a more detailed update on the 2023 Recommendation work in October following the programme business case refresh.

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy
Nicola Tyson-Payne, Interim Director of Transformation, Population and Public Policy
18 June 2020

Developing a new strategy for the UK's statistical system – Update

Purpose

1. Building on previous discussions, this paper provides an update on progress towards the development of the next UK Statistics Authority strategy.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. review the proposed draft strategy and provide feedback;
 - ii. review the proposed draft ONS business plan and provide feedback;
 - iii. review the proposed draft OSR business plan and provide feedback; and
 - iv. agree to the publication of these documents, incorporating any feedback, in July.

Background

3. Over the past year, Board members have held several discussions on our future strategy, and associated business plans. At its October 2019 meeting, the Board endorsed proposals for the development of a single overarching strategy for the UK's statistical system for the period 2020-2025. At its November meeting, the Board agreed this is to be developed through consultation with colleagues from across the system. Board workshops were then held in January 2020
4. An internal consultation received over 1,000 responses. Focus groups were held with colleagues from across the system, sessions held with Statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) and ONS Senior Civil Service, and sessions with stakeholders. A public event was held at the Royal Statistical Service (RSS) in February. The evidence gathered through these exercises is still highly relevant in setting the future direction of the statistical system.
5. There was a clear desire from all settings that the strategy set an ambitious and radical direction for ONS and the wider statistical system to help us become a society with official statistics woven through its discourse. Inclusivity and sustainability in the way the system works was considered vital. In being more inclusive and setting clear strategic priorities, the strategy will help to break down barriers between ONS and the wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) across government.
6. The response of the statistical system to COVID-19 has built on those principles to show the potential for evidence and data in public life. Trust in official statistics has been a cornerstone of both decision making for, and reporting of, the pandemic. This strategy builds on that, and seeks to ensure that the system builds on these successes and does not return to previous approach and working practices.

Discussion

Content

7. The documents have been built on the same core principles; Radical, Ambitious, Inclusive, and Sustainable. Although there is still a little work to do to ensure consistency of language between those documents, they have each been developed with the others in mind.
8. We must still decide on a strapline which captures the essence of our strategy. Three proposals are proposed.

Funding agreement

9. There are two significant funding positions that we need to secure before we launch the documents, both of which we expect to conclude by at the latest the end July and perhaps sooner. The first is the funding for the COVID-19 Infection Survey, which is highly significant in the context of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial periods. The second is approval for the Integrated Data Platform business case, which is in discussion with the Treasury and, under the current timetable, is due to be approved in mid-July. If either of these areas are not funded by the Treasury, we will need to revise the ONS Strategic Business plan or hold off from its publication.
10. The Spending Review is also due to launch in summer, under current expectations, and conclude before the Budget in Autumn. Following the conclusions of the Spending Review, we may re-issue the Strategic Business Plans with the confirmed spending settlement for the three years to the end of March 2024 (for revenue expenditure) and March 2026 for capital expenditure.
11. Despite these uncertainties, we have concluded that it is right to press ahead with the publication of the strategy and business plans at the end of the July, or perhaps sooner, to provide certainty to the organisation and to signal strongly the future direction of the organisation in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will update the Board if either of the funding positions do not conclude as we expect or if there is significant funding uncertainty related to the Spending Review that would warrant a revision to the approach.

Launch

12. We propose to launch the strategy and business plans in July. Plans for the exact format continue at pace, but it will likely include some form of virtual event, including support from the chair of Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, accompanied by written and visual communications. We will also launch the package internally and ensure that the Senior Civil Service play a key role in delivering the messages from the strategy and business plans across the organisation.

Conclusion

13. The development work has provided a rich level of analysis and set the context in which to develop an inclusive and ambitious new strategy. Time spent in each of the devolved administrations, as well as GSS HoPs meetings have been particularly helpful.
14. We would welcome feedback on and support for the launch of our new strategy and accompanying business plans.

Douglas Cameron, Central Policy Secretariat
Nick Bateson, Finance Director
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation
23 June 2020

UK Statistics Authority Strategy

ONS Strategic Business Plan

OSR Strategic Business Plan

These documents will be published on the UK Statistics Authority Website in due course:

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

Scenario Planning

Purpose

1. This paper draws together a high-level summary of scenario planning from across ONS

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. consider, given how you have seen the statistical system respond to the current pandemic, what areas will be important for focus in the future.

Background

3. At the Authority Board meeting in April, comments were provided on a framework for scenario planning given the COVID-19 pandemic. The scenarios considered ranged from a gradual easing of social distancing restriction over the next few months, to no easing of restrictions at least until 2021.
4. Since then an information collection exercise has been conducted involving all parts of the Office for National Statistics to understand the potential impacts of the different scenarios on varying lenses.
5. Following discussions after that board meeting, we have tested the sensitivity of each of the lenses to different scenarios.

Discussion

6. The work undertaken shows that many plans for transformation will have to be accelerated, in order to ensure that the statistical system can adapt and respond rapidly proactively to meet needs of users.
7. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, these scenarios will be kept under review so that we can respond with pace and ambition to changes in our internal and external environments.

Conclusion

8. This paper sets out thoughts on impacts on key aspects of our business, and seeking the Board's view on further areas for development.

Douglas Cameron, Central Policy Secretariat, 22 May 2020