

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
REGULATION COMMITTEE**

Agenda

Thursday 16 July 2020

**Virtual Meeting
13:00 – 14:30**

**Chair: Professor Anne Trefethen
Apologies: None.**

1	Apologies, minutes and matters arising	Meeting of 23.04.20
2	Update from the Director General for Regulation	Mr Ed Humpherson
3	Annual Review of Casework 2020	Mr Ed Humpherson
4	Assessment: Business Demography	Mr Mark Pont
5	OSR Risk Management	Ms Mary Gregory
6	Self-Review of Effectiveness	Secretariat
7	Any other business	

Next meeting: Thursday 15 October, London, 13:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

REGULATION COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday 16 July 2020

**Virtual Meeting
13:00 – 14:30**

Members Present

Professor Anne Trefethen (Chair)
Ms Helen Boaden
Mr Richard Dobbs
Professor David Hand
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Mr Ed Humpherson
Sir David Norgrove

Other Attendees

Ms Elise Baseley
Ms Mary Gregory
Mr Mark Pont
Ms Gail Rankin

Secretariat

Ms Sarah Cobden
Ms Sally-Ann Jones
Ms Lauren Higgins

Apologies

None

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members and additional attendees were welcomed to the meeting. The Chair welcomed in particular Richard Dobbs, for whom this was his first meeting as a new member of the Regulation Committee.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting on 23 April 2020 were agreed, and actions were reviewed.

2. Overview from the Director General for Regulation

- 2.1 Mr Humpherson introduced his update, which focused on regulatory casework, Test and Trace statistics, and the Mental Health systemic review.
- 2.2 The Committee heard that the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) had seen a surge in delivery during the pandemic, including rapid reviews, policy statements, and increased volume of casework. Staff wellbeing would remain a focus for OSR, and their efforts were praised by the Committee.
- 2.3 A draft of the Mental Health systemic review report had been included for comment by correspondence. The Committee discussed the tone of the report, and the clarity of the recommendations, particularly around timeliness of mental health data. OSR planned to follow up with producers following publication of the report to provide support and ensure recommendations were understood. It was agreed that OSR would revisit and strengthen the recommendations prior to publication.
- 2.4 A letter to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) on Test and Trace statistics had been shared with the Committee. The Committee suggested greater linkage between DHSC and the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) COVID-19 Infection Study. OSR would discuss this with ONS after the meeting.
- 2.5 Mr Humpherson noted a recent piece of casework on the media's use of statistics, and reflected on the Authority's Interventions Policy. While OSR would always look to work with others in the regulatory landscape, the policy did not reference this. Furthermore, the policy did not reflect that OSR would look to work with a producer before making an issue public. It was agreed that, three years from its initial publication, OSR should review the interventions policy and return to the Committee in the autumn with recommendations for an update.

3. Annual Review of Casework 2020

- 3.1 Ms Gregory introduced a paper which provided a draft of the Annual Review of Authority Casework 2019/20 report for comment by the Committee. The report was an early draft, and would be further refined over the summer.
- 3.2 It was noted that, unlike previous years, a section had been included from outside of the reporting period covering April to June 2020, as there was a clear public interest in COVID-19-related casework.
- 3.3 Members were thanked for the comments received by correspondence; these would be incorporated into the next draft, which would be circulated by correspondence in August.

4. Assessment: Business demography

- 4.1 Mr Pont introduced a paper on the assessment of ONS business demography statistics. These statistics were not fully meeting user needs or providing sufficient detail on the landscape of UK businesses. There were also issues associated with the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) and around the timeliness of the release. OSR had been working with the responsible Deputy Director in ONS to highlight some of these issues.

- 4.2 The Committee discussed the importance of clear statistics on UK businesses, particularly post-pandemic, and the role of the IDBR in driving more insightful statistics. Based on the assessment findings, the Committee recommended writing to ONS on the statistics. Mr Humpherson and Mr Pont would take this forward and circulate for comments in August.

5. OSR Risk Management

- 5.1 Ms Gregory introduced a paper on OSR's risk profile, and invited comments on the presentation of the information. At present, OSR was comfortable that its risks were under control and sufficiently mitigated, and had developed the risk register alongside the development of the work programme, so these were closely aligned.
- 5.2 The Committee welcomed the format and detail provided, and agreed the recommendation to hold a risk discussion every six months. On the risk associated with OSR's credibility, the Committee recommended this be reviewed. Secretariat would schedule a further discussion on OSR's risk profile in December.

6. Self-Review of Effectiveness

- 6.1 Secretariat introduced a paper which presented the results of the annual review of Committee effectiveness, which had last taken place in July 2019. Members had provided positive feedback, and comments on what the Committee might focus on over the next year. A strategic forward look discussion, as recommended in comments, would be scheduled for the autumn.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 Following the earlier discussion on business data, the Committee asked what statistics might be available on foreign ownership of UK business assets. It was noted that supplementary questions are asked as part of the IDBR, but OSR would take this as an action and return to the Committee with some information.
- 7.2 The Committee would meet next on Thursday 15 October at 13:00.