

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

Minutes

Monday 19 December 2022

**Virtual Meeting, Microsoft Teams
10:00 – 13:00**

Members Present

Professor Anne Trefethen (Chair)
Sir Robert Chote
Richard Dobbs
Professor Jonathan Haskel
Ed Humpherson
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter

Other Attendees

Nisha Bunting (Shadowing)
Mary Cowan (Item 8)
Job de Roij (Item 6 and Shadowing)
Mark Pont
Anna Price
Gail Rankin
Iain Russell (Item 4)

Secretariat

Lauren Bradley
Sally-Ann Jones

Apologies

Helen Boaden
Helen Miller-Bakewell

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Helen Boaden and Helen Miller-Bakewell. The minutes of the meeting on 13 October were agreed, and actions were reviewed.

2. Update from the Director General for Regulation

- 2.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting, highlighting a focus on the underlying data around industrial classifications, sex and gender and crime statistics, with less focus than usual on outputs. There had also been positive progress around recruitment for the Deputy Director for Regulation post and two economist roles within the Office for Statistics for Regulation (OSR).
- 2.2 In the Autumn OSR had delivered a well-received seminar for government analysts on Reproducible Analytical Pipelines with over 500 people in attendance, and Professor Ben Goldacre and Public Health Scotland as speakers. OSR were in the process of further developing their 2023/24 priorities following external publication. In October OSR held a community of practice workshop for those who voluntarily apply OSR's Code to their work. In November OSR had also published a report on lessons learned for health and social care statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.3 With regard to casework, OSR had continued to receive varied cases concerning patient waiting times, small boats, poverty, COVID-19, infographics and sex and gender. There had also been engagement between OSR and the Home Office, with a further meeting with Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary for the Home Office, scheduled in January 2023 to discuss communications strategies.
- 2.4 Members approved the proposal to publish the draft assessment reports on statistics from the people and nature survey and statistics on the Scottish prison population and confirmed National Statistics (NS) Designation for statistics on funded occupational pension schemes.

3. Update on Post-Eurostat Arrangements

- 3.1 Mark Pont presented an update on the development of OSR's external scrutiny proposition. It was noted that further opportunities to develop and scale the proposition were embedded in the running and completion of the pilot assessment on Office for National Statistics (ONS) Producer Prices Index statistics.
- 3.2 It was noted that OSR had engaged with stakeholders, the ONS and experts to ensure continuous progress. Members discussed options around user engagement on areas that most assurance was needed.
- 3.3 The Committee agreed the need to continue engaging with external experts and key users and were assured that work was progressing to develop the right framework. It was agreed that a further update would be scheduled for the meeting in February.

4. UK Standard Industrial Classification Review

- 4.1 Iain Russell introduced a paper which outlined issues with the current UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and OSR's proposed engagement approach with the ONS during development of the consultation. It was noted that there had been good progress around the consultation and plans for UK SIC were due to launch in March 2023.
- 4.2 Members discussed options around working alongside the United Nations to develop an approach that allowed for joined-up improvements of SIC processes and acknowledged the challenges around the timeliness of revision and adoption. Members also considered options around machine learning approaches.
- 4.3 Members agreed that further discussions were needed to ensure the optimal approach was taken forward. The Committee heard that Iain Russell was due to retire and noted thanks for his commitment to the work of OSR.

5. Business Planning

- 5.1 Ed Humpherson updated members on OSR's business planning activities for 2023/24. It was noted that following circulation of four proposed high-level priorities for 2023/24 and the engagement proposals in November, OSR had published a blog and a news statement on 7 December and had received some early engagement from stakeholders.
- 5.2 Members considered options around widening OSR's reach to maximise effectiveness, while ensuring focus remained on key priorities. Members also discussed ways to ensure comments from users were recorded.
- 5.3 Members agreed that an assessment of OSR's budget would report to the Committee in February and noted the need to ensure discussions were focused on the bigger picture and managing impacts.

6. Police Recorded Crime

- 6.1 Gail Rankin and Job de Roij introduced a paper which outlined OSR's proposals to research and publish a think piece on police recorded crime (PRC) statistics. It was noted that the aim was to publish the think piece on PRC in Spring 2023.
- 6.2 During discussion members noted the contrasts between PRC in Scotland and Northern Ireland and England and Wales and considered the level of confidence in the ways PRC data was collected.
- 6.3 Members agreed the proposal to draft a short 'think piece' on PRC. It was also agreed that an update on PRC would be provided at the Committee meeting in February 2023.

7. Sex and Gender Discussion

- 7.1 Gail Rankin introduced a paper which outlined current issues around collecting and reporting on data and statistics about sex, gender and gender identity and set out OSR's views on their regulatory role.
- 7.2 Members agreed that it was not OSR's role to inform producers of what data to collect but to share areas that some people had found useful.
- 7.3 Members endorsed the report and discussed options around formalising and publicly communicating OSR's activity in this area through a work programme. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the Committee meeting in February 2023.

8. Research Programme – Update on Public Dialogue Work

- 8.1 Mary Cowan introduced a paper which outlined OSR's recent research, which used a UK-wide public dialogue to explore what the public perceive as 'public good' use of data for research and statistics. It was noted that the research was done in collaboration with Administrative Data Research UK.
- 8.2 The Committee heard that the 68 participants had been pragmatic and shared helpful views and had noted the need for more engagement with minority groups. Members agreed the importance of public involvement and noted the need to focus on what was viewed as the public use of statistics and to maintain best practise.
- 8.3 Members endorsed the report and were content with the proposed communications strategy to promote the work.

9. Statistical Literacy

- 9.1 Gail Rankin presented an update on research that was undertaken on OSR's behalf on statistical literacy and outlined the implications that the research could have on OSR's future work. It was noted that the research had built a better understanding of the levels of statistical literacy and how best to communicate it.
- 9.2 During discussion members noted the need to provide clear communications in order to continue building trust, and to communicate with users who understand statistical literacy. Members also noted the need to focus on the right statistical areas.

9.3 Members endorsed the report and were content with the proposal to publish both the research paper and OSR's views on what this could mean for OSR and the wider statistical system in early 2023.

10. Forward Look and Horizon Scan

10.1 Ed Humpherson facilitated a discussion on the Forward Look and Horizon Scanning. It was noted that people had become more aware of OSR, and the work undertaken by the Committee than they had been in the past.

10.2 Members discussed key pieces of work that should report to the Committee, including performance indicators, the flexibility and bandwidth of OSR, the cost of living and the knock-on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 Members thanked Professor Anne Trefethen for her dedication as Chair of the Regulation Committee and thanked Professor Jonathan Haskel and Helen Boaden for their commitments to the Committee.

11.2 The Committee would meet next on Thursday 16 February at 13:00.