

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

Minutes

**Thursday 20 April 2023
London Boardroom/Hybrid
13:00 – 16:00**

Members Present

Sir Robert Chote (Interim Chair)
Richard Dobbs
Ed Humpherson
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Penny Young

Other Attendees

Penny Babb (for Item 10)
Emily Barrington (for Item 7)
Elise Baseley
Rob Kent-Smith
Helen Miller-Bakewell
Mark Pont
Gail Rankin
Job de Roij (for item 5)
Vicky Stone (for item 6)

Secretariat

Sally-Ann Jones
Kerri Gourley

Apologies

Professor Dame Carol Propper

Declarations of Interest

None

1. Apologies, minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Professor Dame Carol Propper. The minutes of the meeting on 16 February 2023 were agreed, and actions were reviewed.
- 1.2 Rob Kent-Smith was welcomed to his first meeting following his appointment as Deputy Director for Regulation.

2. Update from the Director General for Regulation [SA(RC)(23)08]

- 2.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulatory activity since the last meeting, highlighting the publication of the second phase of the 2022 Census in Scotland Assessment on 4 April, Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) 2022 People Survey results and the report by Professor Patrick Sturgis, an independent review of OSR's assessment of the COVID-19 Infection Survey.
- 2.2 With regard to casework, members discussed and welcomed the independent Sturgis Report which had been commissioned by OSR as a result of casework from the Better Statistics group. The report endorsed OSR's judgements and highlighted some areas for improvement. It was noted that OSR would continue to engage with Professor Sturgis and the Better Statistics group ahead of publication of the full report and OSR's action plan.
- 2.3 Members heard that OSR would be writing to ONS regarding the statistics on gender identity to be published on 24 April and based on the 2021 England and Wales Census. OSR proposes to review ONS's response to concerns raised about the robustness of the data.
- 2.4 The committee endorsed OSR's recommendations for National Statistics designation for Statistics on Key Stage 4 performance for England, produced by the Department for Education, and Statistics on the Scottish prison population, produced by the Scottish Government.

3. OSR Performance and Maturity Model [SA(RC)(23)09]

- 3.1 Ed Humpherson introduced a report on delivery of the 2022/23 business plan and five-year strategy, including the current risk profile. Members were provided with an overview of OSR's performance against current priorities ahead of the next financial year. It was noted that the Performance and Maturity Model consisted of two parts - OSR's plans for the current financial year and their broader ambitions for the next five years.
- 3.2 Members noted the progress made towards OSR's five-year ambitions. With regard to the strategic risk profile, it was noted that the independence strategic risk exposure was perhaps not as high as OSR had assessed.
- 3.3 Members welcomed the update and transparency of the work, noting the analysis that had been undertaken. It was agreed that OSR would consider handling in the event of a surge in casework around the time of the General Election.

4. Annual Business Plan 2023/24 and Regulatory Programme Proposals [SA(RC)(23)10]

- 4.1 Ed Humpherson introduced a paper which presented the Annual Business Plan 2023/24 and the associated planned update to the Rolling Regulatory Work Programme, reflecting feedback from the Authority Board meeting on 30 March.
- 4.2 Members endorsed both the Annual Business Plan 2023/24 and Regulatory Programme Proposals. It was agreed that the plan would include further reference of voluntary adoption of the Code of Practice for Statistics ahead of final submission to the Authority Board on 27 April.

5. Producer Price Inflation statistics assessment – emerging findings [SA(RC)(23)11]

- 5.1 Job de Roij introduced a paper which provided emerging findings from the assessment of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Producer Price Inflation (PPI) statistics.
- 5.2 Members discussed the emerging findings of the PPI assessment undertaken as part of the OSR's scrutiny of economic statistics. and welcomed the use of international evidence. It was noted that engagement with ONS had improved following OSR feedback.

5.3 The draft report would be brought to the Regulation Committee meeting on 25 May.

6. State of the Statistical System 2022/23 [SA(RC)(23)12]

6.1 Vicky Stone and Gail Rankin presented plans for producing the State of the Statistical System 2022/23 report and provided a summary of the findings from previous year's report.

6.1 Members discussed the six emerging themes identified this year: public demand for relevant statistics and data, quality risks, producer resource challenges, communication and misuse, intelligent transparency and UK comparability. It was highlighted that the draft report would be discussed at the Regulation Committee meeting on 25 May.

6.2 The Committee agreed members should have oversight of the final report prior to publication, scheduled for the end of June.

7. Data Sharing and Linkage Draft Report [SA(RC)(23)13]

7.1 Emily Barrington introduced the draft report that OSR had prepared to summarise the findings and recommendations from the review of data sharing and linkage across the public sector.

7.2 Members discussed the draft report and noted the need to highlight the benefits of data sharing and linkage; further emphasis of the importance of public engagement; and a further iteration of recommendations making them more specific.

7.3 Members commended OSR for their work in producing a good report. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to continue to discuss this work with external stakeholders including the Central Digital and Data Officer and the Information Commissioners Office.

8. Sex and Gender [SA(RC)(23)14]

8.1 Gail Rankin introduced a paper which stemmed from previous discussions on Sex and Gender at the February 2023 meeting.

8.2 Members discussed the new draft guidance developed by OSR, which set out practical advice for producers based on the regulatory issues that had been raised and addressed by OSR to date.

8.3 Members agreed that OSR would develop this guidance further as there was value in setting out the issues more clearly for statistical producers. It was further agreed that OSR would undertake mapping work setting out the landscape of all stakeholders involved.

9. Regulatory judgments around the Census consultation [SA(RC)(23)15]

9.1 Ed Humpherson introduced a paper which outlined options for the Committee to consider regarding the work that was appropriate for OSR to do prior to the launch of the Census 2023 consultation.

9.2 Members endorsed the recommended approach, under which OSR would provide the Authority Board with advice on the questions it should consider in reviewing the consultation process and content to satisfy itself about compliance with the Code. Members also agreed it would not be necessary for Ed Humpherson to recuse himself from Authority Board discussion at the UK Statistics Authority Board, but his observer status would be noted in the minutes of any relevant Board discussion.

10. National Statistics Designation Review: Official Statistics badges [SA(RC)(23)16]

10.1 Penny Babb introduced a paper which outlined the work OSR has done, as part of the National Statistics Designation Refresh project, and presented recommendations for new badges.

10.2 Members discussed the proposed badge designs. The general preference was to remove the reference to 'National Statistics' completely. There was also discussion around ticks on the badges as this could cause confusion around ranking if they were presented in isolation. It was agreed that conceptual progress had been made on the work and OSR welcomed the feedback provided.

10.3 Members agreed that this item would be brought back to the July Regulation Committee meeting.

11. Horizon Scanning

11.1 Ed Humpherson facilitated a discussion on Horizon Scanning. It was noted that the leaders of all major political parties would be asked to adhere to the Code of Practice in advance of a general election.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Sir Robert Chote confirmed that Penny Young would take on the role as Regulation Committee Chair henceforth.

12.2 The Committee would meet next on Thursday 25 May.