

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

Thursday 27 June 2024
London Office

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

Sir Robert Chote (Chair)
Dr Jacob Abboud
Professor Sir John Aston
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Ed Humpherson
Professor Dame Carol Propper
Emma Rourke
Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter
Penny Young

Other Attendees

Pete Benton (for item 10)
Nigel Green (for item 10)
Mike Keoghan
Sally Jones
Alex Lambert (for item 9)
Sarah Moore
Will Marks (for item 12)
Tom Taylor

Apologies

Sian Jones
Nora Nanayakkara

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Sian Jones and Nora Nanayakkara.

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 30 May were agreed, subject to a minor amendment and actions were reviewed. Sarah Moore provided an update on the development of Statistical Assembly in response to the recommendation from the Lievesley Review. Discussions had been held with the Royal Statistical Society. Timing had not yet been agreed for the first Assembly.

4. Report from the Authority Chair [SA(24)28]

- 4.1 Non-Executive Directors had met before the meeting. They had discussed progress of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) and Labour Force Survey (LFS).
- 4.2 The Chair paid warm tribute to Nora Nanayakkara, with her term ending on 1 July 2024. Nora had been a highly valued member of the Board and Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Professor Sir Ian Diamond paid tribute to Nora on behalf of the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 4.3 The Chair informed the meeting of changes to Board membership. Penny Young had agreed to take on the role as Acting Deputy Chair, which was agreed by the Board. The formal process with ministerial approval would be completed following the election. With regard to executive membership it was noted that Emma Rourke had taken on the role as the third executive member of the Board with effect from this meeting, alongside Sir Ian and Ed Humpherson.
- 4.4 The Chair reported on his recent activities since the Board last met:
- i. on 4 June Sir Robert had written to all leaders of the UK political parties regarding their transparent use of statistics during the election campaign, and had appeared on BBC Radio Four Today Programme on 6 June; and
 - ii. Sir Robert had met Baroness Neville-Rolfe on 5 June for his annual appraisal including a discussion on the key themes out of the Lievesley review.
- 4.5 Sir Robert and Sir Ian were scheduled to meet Alastair McAlpine, Chief Statistician Scottish Government that afternoon to discuss planning for the Authority Board's meeting in Edinburgh in September. It was noted that following a refresh of the National Statistician's Executive Group all Devolved Administration Chief Statisticians had been invited as members.

5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(24)29]

- 5.1 Sir Ian provided the Board with an overview of activity and issues since the last meeting, highlighting the following:
- i. as part of the King's Birthday Honours List, Philippa Bonay had been awarded an OBE for public and charitable services;
 - ii. Mary Gregory had been selected as the Royal Statistical Society William Guy Lecturer for primary schools for the 2024/25 academic year;
 - iii. the results of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry module one would be published in August;
 - iv. progress of the work on the future of population and migration statistics with a focus on strategic engagement post-election;
 - v. Richard Layard's letter in the Guardian, which referenced ONS' Annual Population Survey including a question as a measure of life satisfaction;
 - vi. the ongoing recruitment campaign for methodologists for statistical output teams, which had attracted a high volume of applications;

- vii. Sir Ian had attended the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Conference of European Statisticians; and
 - viii. ongoing work by Economic Social and Environment Group on changes to the System of National Accounts.
- 5.2 Board members discussed the update and highlighted the value of the Data Masterclass for Senior Leaders. It was noted that the Data Science Campus were considering how best to maintain the masterclass going forward.
- 6. Report from the Director General of Regulation [SA(24)30]**
- 6.1 Ed Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity, highlighting the approach by OSR to the election, with resources in place to respond quickly.
- 6.2 OSR had published a number of statements covering statistics on key topics and what to look for when used publicly. OSR had reviewed and published the Intervention Policy following Regulation Committee feedback. OSR had made a number of interventions throughout the election period and had published a statement highlighting the importance of transparency in election claims. This was a result of casework concerns following ITV's election debate on 4 June, where it had been claimed that a Labour government would mean £2000 of tax rises per working household.
- 6.3 The Board noted the Authority's refreshed Intervention Policy.
- 7. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**
- 7.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which had last met on 25 June 2025.
- 7.2 Dr Jacob Abboud reported that based on the work of the Committee during the year and assurance work carried out by external and internal auditors, it was his opinion that the Authority's governance and control framework was generally effective. The Committee had welcomed the Moderate audit opinion by the Head of Internal Audit. The Committee had noted thanks to the Finance, Risk and Assurance and Internal Audit teams for all of their work during the course of the year.
- 7.3 The Board noted their thanks to the Chair and the Committee for their work during 2023/24 and endorsed the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's annual report.
- 8. Report from the Chair of the Regulation Committee**
- 8.1 The Chair reported on the work of the Regulation Committee which had last met on Thursday 6 June.
- 8.2 The Committee had considered:
- i. changes to the Intervention Policy, which were agreed as part of OSR's work around election preparedness;
 - ii. an update on OSR's work on the regulation of Economic Statistics including the draft assessment report - Ensuring public sector classification;
 - iii. emerging findings of OSR's assessment of Administrative Based Population Estimates and a presentation by Professor Arkadiusz Wisniowski;
 - iv. OSR's draft Annual Report 2023/24; and
 - v. the Data Sharing and Linkage Report and timing for publication alongside the State of the Statistical System 2024 Report.
- 8.3 The Committee had also attended a workshop in June on the refresh of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

9. Transformed Labour Force Survey/Labour Force Survey [SA(24)31]

- 9.1 Alex Lambert introduced a paper which provided the first in a series of regular monthly updates to the Authority Board on the progress of the Labour Force Survey and the Transformed Labour Force Survey.
- 9.2 Alex Lambert informed the Board that based on ONS' internal readiness assessment, the external review by Professors Chambers and Brown and feedback from key stakeholders the TLFS/LFS project was proceeding on the basis that the parallel run for the TLFS and LFS would continue, and that labour market statistics would not transition to the TLFS in September. It was noted that a cross office collaborative approach was being taken to address the challenges around TLFS/LFS. Maintaining LFS operational performance and statistical quality during the parallel run would continue to be a key focus. A short strategic design review was being undertaken to inform the approach going forward and a discussion by the Executive Committee (ExCo) early July to confirm final parallel run decisions including cost implications, any proposed design changes to the TLFS and an updated forward plan. As part of the review options for improving the quality of the TLFS including reducing the length of the current questionnaire were being considered. Following the discussion by ExCo internal and external engagement communication of the way forward would be issued. It was noted that progress against updated milestones, performance against agreed quality and decommissioning criteria and mitigation of key risks and issues would form the basis for the monthly updates to Board.
- 9.3 Board members discussed the progress of the TLFS/LFS. The following points were made in discussion:
- i. the need to understand the cost implications of extending the parallel run beyond June and the wider impact on other surveys;
 - ii. the impact of extending the parallel run on the Social Surveys Quality Recovery Plan, which had been based on reassigning field force staff working on the LFS to other social surveys;
 - iii. the challenges of managing an increasing field force and its capabilities in addition to addressing the ongoing statistical and methodological challenges. It was noted that an increased field force would help maintain the quality of the LFS during the parallel run;
 - iv. the need to mitigate the risk of destabilising the comparability of the parallel run dataset as a result of the number of changes proposed to improve the quality of the TLFS;
 - v. the importance of transparent reporting to the Board in the coming months and an acknowledgement that evidence based decisions by the Executive would be made at the appropriate time, not imminently;
 - vi. the importance of effective user and stakeholder engagement and communication regarding delivery progress, any delays and the implications of a shorter TLFS survey, including the removal of non-labour market questions. The current published position is that ONS would transition to the TLFS as the main source of labour market statistics from September 2024;
 - vii. as part of stakeholder engagement the first National Statistician's Stakeholder Advisory Panel, chaired by Professor Jonathan Portes had been held in June. The panel had supported the view that extending the parallel run was needed and the proposal to update the LFS and TLFS to use the latest population estimates;
 - viii. consideration by ExCo in July to broaden project engagement by convening a stakeholder engagement group including the Bank of England, Office for Budget Responsibility, Home Office and the Department of Work and Pensions; and
 - ix. the value of updating LFS and TLFS to use the latest population estimates to address users concerns with the under-recording of population totals in the LFS.

9.4 The Board noted the update and highlighted the importance of transparent reporting to the Board in the coming months, setting out clearly the delivery plans, challenges, risks to delivery and how they were being mitigated. It was agreed that Sir Ian would meet regularly with Penny Young to discuss delivery progress of the TLFS/LFS.

10. Integrated Data Service [SA(24)32]

10.1 Pete Benton and Nigel Green introduced a paper which provided an update on the progress of delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS), highlighting that since the last meeting the programme had been reset to provide clarity on the key priorities and to strengthen and simplify governance.

10.2 The Board heard that the rescoped programme set out the service design and prioritised the delivery of a robust user centric service. Programme governance had been strengthened and was being implemented. An action plan was in development in response to the recommendations from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority targeted review of programme delivery. Critical success factors for the programme included the need for high value linked datasets available for analysis.

10.3 Board members discussed the update. The following points were considered in discussion:

- i. the revised programme scope with a focus on prioritising government analysts to enable rapid access to linked datasets;
- ii. concern around the shift in programme scope at this point, which seemed heavily reliant on a cultural change in behaviours amongst data providers;
- iii. the importance of delivering the IDS as planned as a greenfield project and dependency in relation to future funding;
- iv. the complexity of data sharing across government and a renewed focus to identify use cases that would enable analysts to access and use the data more rapidly;
- v. the change in timing for migrating users from the Secure Research Service (SRS). The revised timeline would see users of the SRS migrated at the right point in time;
- vi. the potential uses of administrative data in population and business statistics, subject to access to departmental data sets; and
- vii. the link between the future of population and migration statistics and delivery of the IDS.

10.4 The Board noted the update and highlighted the need for a clear timeline for delivery of the rescoped programme, and future reporting against the critical success factors.

11. Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 [SA(24)34]

11.1 Tom Taylor introduced the final draft of the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24, which had been reviewed and approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

11.2 Members noted the achievements made by the organisation over the last year with a suggestion for a minor amendment to the foreword.

11.3 The Board approved the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 for signature by Sir Ian as Accounting Officer in readiness for certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The aim was to lay the report before Parliament before the summer recess.

12. General Election (day one readiness) [SA(24)33]

12.1 Will Marks provided an update on the work undertaken in preparation for the pre and post-election period being led by the National Statistician's Private Office in collaboration with colleagues across the office including the Parliamentary Unit, Analytical Hub and Policy Liaison Unit.

- 12.2 The Board heard that work had been undertaken to develop a plan of action for day one briefings and potential opportunities. It was noted that the pre-election period had delayed the publication of the recommendation on the Future of population and Migration Statistics, which had not impacted delivery. The Authority's response to the Lievesley review would be published once the pre-election period concluded. Work was ongoing in preparation for engagement and response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee report on Transforming the UK Evidence Base.
- 12.3 Board members discussed the potential areas of focus post-election. It was noted that initial preparations had begun on the next spending review.

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 The Board would next meet on Thursday 25 July.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Thursday 27 June, 11.15-14.00
London Boardroom, Hybrid Meeting

Chair: Sir Robert Chote

Apologies: Sian Jones, Nora Nanayakkara

Attendees: Pete Benton (for item 7), Nigel Green (for item 7), Alex Lambert (for item 6),
Will Marks (for item 8)

NED Session: 10.30-11.15

1 11.15-11.20 5 mins	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 30 May 2024
2 11.20-11.30 10 mins	Report from the Authority Chair	SA(24)28 Sir Robert Chote
3 11.30-12.00 30 mins	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(24)29 Prof. Sir Ian Diamond
4 12.00-12.10 10 mins	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(24)30 Ed Humpherson
5 12.10-12.20 10 mins	Report from Committee Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit and Risk Assurance Committee• Regulation Committee	Oral update Dr Jacob Abboud Penny Young
12.20-12.25 5 mins	Break	
6 12.25-12.50 25 mins	Transformed Labour Force Survey and Labour Force Survey	SA(24)31 Mike Keogh Alex Lambert
7 12.50-13.10 20 mins	Integrated Data Service	SA(24)32 Nigel Green Pete Benton
8 13.10-13.30 20 mins	General Election Planning	SA(24)33 Will Marks
9 13.30-13.40 10 mins	Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24	SA(24)34 Tom Taylor
10 13.40-14.00 20 mins	Any Other Business	

Next meeting: 25 July 2024, London Boardroom

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(24)28

Chair's Report, June 2024

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Authority Board with an overview of the Chair's activity in late May and June.

Review of recent activities

2. On 4 June, I wrote a letter to leaders of UK political parties to ask that their parties and candidates use statistics appropriately and transparently during the General Election campaign. At the first of the televised leader's debates, the Prime Minister repeated a claim that a Labour government would cost households £2000 more in tax. The Office for Statistics Regulation, prompted by complaints, opened an investigation which resulted in a written statement on 6 June setting out its position on the claim. I appeared on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme on the morning of 6 June to talk about my letter and the principles of intelligent transparency.
3. On 5 June, I met with Tom Taylor and Lincoln Blair to discuss the outcomes of the review of the Central Policy Secretariat (CPS) division, which some non-executive colleagues contributed to. A new Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy will oversee a small division, which predominantly encompasses the functions which operate across the Authority – secretariat, Chair's and National Statistician's private offices, legal and data protection, and parliamentary. The Deputy Director will work across the Authority and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to oversee delivery of strategic business priorities in support of the Chief Executive and will provide strategic support and advice to the Chair, Chief Executive and Director General for Regulation. While details are still being worked through, other teams currently based in CPS are expected to move into ONS business areas.
4. I met with Baroness Neville-Rolfe on 5 June for my annual appraisal meeting, where we reflected on the year just gone, key achievements and key challenges, and the themes of the Lievesley review. I also conducted an end-year review with the National Statistician on 6 June.
5. I held my regular catchups with the National Statistician, Director General for Regulation, and the Chairs of the Regulation and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees.

Casework and correspondence

6. On 24 May, I responded to Jess Phillips MP about statements using crime statistics and to Sarah Olney MP on statements about the tax burden.
7. On 13 June, I responded to Karin Smyth MP on NHS waiting lists.
8. On 14 June, I responded to Lord Bailey of Paddington AM about housing statistics.

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, 20 June 2024

*Chief Executive's Report, June 2024***Purpose**

1. This provides the Authority Board with an overview of activity for June 2024.

Summary

2. June has been heavily influenced by the Authority's preparations and response to the UK **General Election** – a separate paper at this Board outlines this in more depth. As a result, this has also delayed the publication of both the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) response to the Lievesley Review and our recommendation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics (FPMS). However, the publication of our statistics and data continues as usual, informing public debate albeit with more limited media and communications than usual.
3. The latest **Public Confidence in Official Statistics** results have been published and over 85 per cent of respondents said they trusted the statistics the Office for National Statistics (ONS) produce, which is at a similar level to the previous survey in 2021.
4. ONS's Director for Operations, Philippa Bonay, has been awarded an OBE for public and charitable services in the **King's Birthday Honours List**. Philippa has driven forward people capability in several public sector institutions through her career with a focus on inclusion and diversity including across the ONS and Analysis Function.
5. Mary Gregory has been selected as the **Royal Statistical Society William Guy Lecturer** for primary schools for the 2024/25 academic year. This year, the theme 'statistics in plain sight' is aimed at encouraging young people to recognise the relevance of statistics and data to their everyday lives.
6. Our innovative Explore Local Statistics service has won the **2024 Champion Award for Excellence in Official Statistics**. The panel were impressed with the engagement of users and value it offers to informing local decision makers. The output was considered to have the potential to empower and have a significant impact in local areas.

Review of recent activities

7. Actual **expenditure** for the year to date (as at end-May) is £30.9 million on average per month resource plus. Extrapolating the current average expenditure across the year suggests a modest surplus (under expenditure) of around 1-1.5 per cent against our assumed budget. However, caution is required before any conclusions are drawn at this early stage in the annual cycle.
8. I am happy to be able to include our final draft **Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24** as part of the papers for this meeting. This includes a full disclosure on the breach of Cabinet Office commercial controls, as previously notified to the Board. As with prior years we have worked through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee with National Audit Office and our external auditors (KPMG) to discharge our statutory requirements. The timing of the election will impact our original plan to lay our accounts before Parliament on 9 July, but we remain confident that we will be able to do this prior to summer recess (expected to be 23 July).
9. There is no word on the timing, focus or length of the next **Spending Review**, so I have cautioned the organisation against doing work that may turn out to be nugatory. We are focusing instead on 'no regrets' preparations such as setting up a cross-organisational working group, an internal engagement approach, and commissioning draft content for standard material we can be sure will be required. The senior executive will be deciding on the strategic direction so that any bid we submit will be centrally controlled and highly

focused on our strategic priorities to enhance the value that the Authority continues to offer.

10. Given the General Election being called, the scheduled appearance of myself, Ed Humpherson and Sir Robert Chote in front of the **Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC)** for the annual scrutiny session on 4 June was cancelled. On 24 May, PACAC also published their report on *Transforming the UK's Evidence Base Inquiry*. The report was statistically wide ranging and has many recommendations for the Authority and Government as a whole. Due to the election, the usual timescale of a response within two months of publication does not apply and we will formally respond once the Committee has been reformed following the election. We expect this to be at some point in September-October.
11. The publication of the FPMS recommendation has been delayed due to the General Election. We are taking advantage of this delay to focus on strategic engagement. Due to the pre-election guidelines, the focus is currently on internal Government stakeholders, with a plan for external sessions to take place after the General Election alongside new ministers.
12. Work continues across the ONS on the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** recovery as well as our approach to reweighting, further detail on which is provided in the separate paper. On the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), the project is carrying out a short, sharp design review to report back to the Executive Committee (ExCo) later in June. The inaugural meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Labour Market Statistics took place on 13 June. The panel is chaired by Jonathan Portes with representatives from across government, the Bank of England and from analysis bodies and academia. The Panel's remit covers the labour market statistics published by the ONS. The first meeting took a deep dive on the LFS and the TLFS.
13. Working closely with our key stakeholder, Department for Education, we have secured additional funding to continue our work in developing an online **Young Persons Safety Survey**, which will replace the Children' Crime Survey (CCSEW) for England and Wales. A pilot of the survey earlier this year showed a greater degree of engagement from children with the online survey than the current face to face CCSEW. On the development of a **Child Abuse Prevalence Survey**, Home Office colleagues have now confirmed that they are willing to fund the research on this for the rest of this year.
14. The quarterly **Government Statistical Service (GSS) Head of Profession (HoP)** meeting is due to take place on 19 June. The HoPs will receive updates from the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), the RSS, the National Statistician and the GSS People Advisory Group. The group will also discuss the GSS vision workplan and plans for the UK Statistics Assembly, mentioned as part of the Lievesley Review. Finally, the group will undertake a deep dive into the GSS Fast Stream.
15. Economic statistics hosted colleagues from HM Treasury (HMT) at the Newport site in a "teach-in" session to provide more detailed information and to look under the hood on how Prices and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are compiled. The session was welcomed by HMT and those that attended on the complexities on statistical compilation of these two high profile indicators.
16. The Data Science Campus (DSC) are working with Public Policy Analysis (PPA) and 10 Downing Street to identify a sustainable way to maintain the **Data Masterclass for Senior Leaders**, following this work initially being deprioritised during 2024/25 business planning. There will be a renewed focus on how this can meet the expectations of the Cabinet Office response to the Lievesley Review of the Authority, and how it can support the House of Commons Library in their preparation for new data literacy training following potential change in ministerial cover.

17. This month also marks the end of a **significant collaboration between PPA and DSC** to develop a method to classify job adverts according to Standard Occupational Classification using information available in job advert text and title, and to evaluate the accuracy of different methods of classification. We will be using the classification work in our next publication in late June, and within future analysis of job advert data.
18. Following a request from the Senior Responsible Owner of the IDS, the **Infrastructure and Projects Authority** has carried out a targeted piece of assurance work to assess the viability of the Integrated Data Programme's prioritisation plan. The review found that the programme has made significant strides in defining and prioritising its scope, establishing a clear vision, and engaging with stakeholders and that delivery of the revised scope by March 2025 appears feasible.
19. As a result of the performance and stability work undertaken, we are now seeing improved levels of **website stability** and positive feedback from our website users. During the busiest minute of the latest key economic release (GDP), website error rates have reduced from a high of 48 per cent in January 2024 to 0.61 per cent in June 2024.
20. On 23 May, a suite of **International Migration Estimates** was published. Publications included [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), [Reason for international migration, international students update: May 2024](#) and [International migration research, progress update: May 2024](#). The coverage was positive and focused on the continued high levels of net migration.
21. On 4 June, our first annual **"Your Experience" report** launched. This report reflects on colleague insights from the 2023/24 business year and provides a fresh approach to sharing employee experience insights, combining survey data and real-life narratives to foster a deeper understanding among leaders and colleagues to inform our current and future people practice.
22. Internationally, we hosted a visit from the new Director General for the Department for Statistics in **Jordan**. As well as meeting with myself, the delegation also met and held discussions with a number of teams including with our Methodology and Quality Directorate on reproducible analytical pipelines and how ONS could support Jordan with this; and Census 2021 colleagues to hear of ONS's lessons learnt from 2021 as part of Jordan's preparations for Jordan's next Census.
23. The Authority also welcomed a senior delegation from **Kazakhstan's** Bureau of National Statistics (BNS), which included the Head of the Bureau. The visit, taking place in both the London and Newport offices, is part of ongoing collaboration to utilise The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and World Bank funding to build and influence relations with BNS. The four-day visit included sessions on agricultural statistics, mobile data, Sustainable Development Goals, alternative data sources, and scanner data for Consume Price Inflation. Our engagement has ensured that the Authority continues to be a sustainable and ambitious partner and aligning with FCDO's strategic priorities in Central Asia.
24. The Authority and Osama Rahman hosted the Executive Director of the **United Arab Emirates's (UAE)** National Statistics Office, H.E. Mohammad Hassan, in London and Newport week commencing 3 June. In London, His Excellency met a range of senior leaders from Economic, Social and Environmental statistics Group, OSR and Whitehall departments to exchange experiences of innovating with artificial intelligence and data science in government. The highlight of his visit was his meetings with our Methodology and Quality Directorate, The Reproducible Data Science and Analysis and DSC teams to learn more about our reproducible analytical pipeline methods and discuss ways in which we could support his office with adopting them. The visit was very successful, advancing the Authority's relationship with the UAE statistical office, which is an increasingly important player on the international statistical scene.

25. Finally, we hosted **Statistics Korea** (KOSTAT) at the London Office. The visiting team are responsible for Statistical Reform at KOSTAT, who wish to use the knowledge and insight taken from the UKSA to implement a new Strategy for KOSTAT. Korean colleagues engaged with areas across the organisation and had a particular interest in quality and how the Authority continues to ensure statistics are relevant with new and emerging data. The visit was extremely successful, securing the positive relationship between the Authority and KOSTAT.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, 20 June 2024

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

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority Board with an overview of Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) activities.

Discussion

2. Our main areas of focus since the last Board meeting have been:

Ongoing work**i. Election:**

- a. as highlighted at the last meeting Sir Robert [wrote to leaders of political parties](#) reminding them of their duties to use statistics responsibly during the election period;
 - b. we have published our '[what to look out for](#)' statements on our Election page. These statements cover statistics on key topics and what to look out for when they are used publicly, drawing from our experience of investigating concerns on these topics;
 - c. following Sir Robert's appearance on the Today programme, we have [published a statement](#) highlighting the importance of transparency in election claims. This is as a result of casework concerns following ITV's election debate on 4 June, where it was claimed that a Labour government would mean £2000 of tax rises per working household. We found it was important to highlight that:
 - i. there is a long-standing practice that means officials can be asked to prepare and publish costings of Opposition policies based on the assumptions of Ministers and their Special Advisors;
 - ii. it is not appropriate that costings derived from other sources or produced by other organisations should be presented as having been produced by the Civil Service; and
 - iii. the claim on its own lacked important context like that £2000 is an estimate summed together over four years.
- we have completed a final review of the interventions policy following Regulation Committee feedback and this has been published.

- ii. **Gender Identity:** We are reviewing the timelines for the publication of the gender identity review in light of the pre-election period and other OSR outputs that had been due to be published before the summer.
- iii. **Code Refresh:** We have begun testing some of our developing thinking on a refreshed version of the Code. We discussed a vision for the Code with Regulation Committee members and held a session with the OSR team to consider how a refreshed Code would support our regulatory role. We have a workshop arranged with OSR's senior leadership team as well as three planned sessions with Heads of Professions to further develop our thinking. The feedback is helping us to focus on key areas for development and hone how we implement improvements.
- iv. **Data sharing and Linkage:** We will publish an update to our 2023 [review of data sharing and linkage across government](#) in July, which assesses progress against the recommendations from the previous review. Publishing the report will allow us to advocate for and raise awareness of positive developments, while providing challenge and direction for progress that still needs to be made. Significant progress is still needed in overcoming many of the remaining barriers to data sharing and

linkage. These include data literacy among senior civil servants. Of relevance to the Office for National Statistics, the report highlights that the Data Masterclass – previously a good tool for improving data literacy across the public sector – is currently on hold.

- v. **Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD) Assessment:** Following input from Regulation Committee members, we have finalised the reports of the sub-national and sectoral BERD data and will publish them after the election.
- vi. **Ensuring Confidence in Public Sector classifications review:** Our draft report was shared with Regulation Committee in June who provided good feedback on a classification decision's implementation and its importance. We plan to publish our report in July.

Published work

- vii. **Statistics on reported road casualties in Great Britain:** Since the last Authority Board we published our [short review](#) of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Road casualty statistics. The review (requested by DfT) examined new adjusted estimates of injury severity which have been developed to provide comparative data over time. We found this enhanced reporting to be of sufficient quality and value to be accredited as fully compliant with the Code (Accredited Official Statistics status).
- viii. **Accredited official statistics:** This month we introduced the new accredited official statistics badge, to denote official statistics that have been independently reviewed by OSR and judged to meet the standards in the Code of Practice for Statistics. A [blog](#) was also published on Reggie. The new badge replaces the National Statistics badge.

Casework

- 3. Since the last Board meeting, we have received 34 cases on topics including Gross Domestic Product, renewable energy, inflation, income, polling data and tax. We have closed 38 cases including a public intervention from me [to Daniel Kebede](#), General secretary for the National Education Union, following concerns about the use of Ofsted statistics by the Department for Education and Secretary of State for Education. The comparison of good and outstanding schools continues to feature heavily in the campaign debate and while we concluded it can be a useful indicator of school performance over time, the nuanced nature of any changes to inspections may not be fully reflected when used across an extended timeseries.
- 4. We have published four interventions from Sir Robert to [Jess Phillips MP](#) on crime statistics, [Sarah Olney MP](#) on changes in the tax burden, [Karin Smyth MP](#) on NHS waiting lists, and [Lord Bailey](#) on affordable housing in London. These cases all relate to a lack of transparency and the need to consider what a reasonable person hearing these claims would have understood from them.
- 5. We also published statements on [defence spending](#), [disability and out of work statistics](#) and [transparency in election claims](#) - the last of which is discussed in the election section. Sir Robert was invited to give several interviews when the media picked up that we were investigating, and he accepted the Today Programme using it to promote Intelligent transparency. We used this interview as the basis for our public statement.

Wider reach

- 6. **External events:** With the pre-election period restrictions I have had to cancel a number of speaking engagements. I did however meet with Statistics Korea, who were visiting the UK Statistics Authority and were particularly interested in statistical improvement and the work we do in OSR. I also attended the Health Data Research UK Pan-UK Data Governance steering group to discuss the five safes.

Issues on my mind

7. **Post election engagement:** While our primary focus has been the Election campaign and how our regulatory function is responding to concerns with statistics, my thoughts move on to how best to engage with a new government (regardless of the political party). Our intelligent transparency working group has discussed how to ensure our expectations can be made clear and I will continue to work with the team to ensure that we can maximise our engagement after the Election. I am considering the case for Sir Robert to write to new ministers, highlighting Intelligent Transparency and revisiting the expectations in the Ministerial code that relate to the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, OSR, 19 June 2024

Children, Education and Skills

▲ Continuing to monitor the data futures transformation that Jisc is undertaking with the intention to publish our findings in August.

Crime and Security

▼ Gathering and analysing evidence for the review of fraud and computer misuse statistics.

Economy, Business and Trade

▼ Completing projects on the ONS Classification process and Business Enterprise Research and Development.

Health and Social Care

▼ Published compliance review letter about statistics from the Winter Coronavirus Infection Study; drafting article about the use of statistics to support work across the UK to improve Health Inequalities.

Housing, Planning and Local Services

▲ Engaging with users and suppliers of ONS Price Index of Private Rents (PIPR) to inform accreditation assessment

Labour Market and Welfare

▼ Finalising findings of our review of ONS's reintroduced LFS-based labour market estimates. Continuing quality deep dive of ONS's TLFS

Population and Society

▼ Finalising report for our first phase of our assessment of ONS's Admin-based population estimates, to publish mid-July.

Transport, Environment and Climate Change

▼ Engaging with Defra Butterflies team to discuss its progress in meeting assessment requirements

Casework (18 June 24)

Economy, Business and Trade	We have a letter from Richard Holden MP who has raised concerns with Labours economic analysis.
Labour Market and Welfare	A letter to Paul O'Kane MSP responding to his concerns around the claim that 100,000 children have been lifted out of poverty was published last week.
Transport, Environment and Climate Change	We have a letter from Jeremy Balfour MSP who has written to us with concerns from his constituent on Sustrans as an Official Statistics provider.

Delivery (May - June 2024)

Crime and Security	Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests statistics (Home Office)
Economy, Business and Trade	Insolvency Statistics (The Insolvency Service)
Housing, Planning and Local Services	Social Housing Lettings in England (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
Policy and Standards	Code Refresh
Population and Society	2021 Census England and Wales Phase 3
Population and Society	2021 Census NI Phase 3

Published/Follow up (May - June 2024)

Crime and Security	Systemic Review of Police Recorded Crime statistics (Office for National Statistics and Home Office)
Health and Social Care	Winter Coronavirus Infections Study statistics
Research	Literature Review: Official statistics and policy

Closed (May - June 2024)

Transport, Environment and Climate Change	Reported Road Casualty statistics (Department for Transport)
Health and Social Care	Scottish Health Survey statistics
Health and Social	Winter Covid-19 Infection Study (UK Health Security Agency and Office for National Statistics)

Data and Methods

▼ We are producing a follow-on report to our 2023 review of data sharing and linkage across government. We plan to publish in mid-July 2024.

Insight

▼ State of the Statistical system report completed. Due to be published after the election.

Policy and Standards

▲ Developing options and content for the Code refresh - sessions held with the Regulation Committee and OSR team. Coming sessions in coming weeks with OSR SLT and heads of profession for statistics. Also developing ideas for refresh of Voluntary Application with community members

Research

▲ Interviewing members of the public about their use of official statistics in decision making, as part of a wider research project.

Transformed Labour Force Survey – June 2024 Update

Purpose

1. This is the first in a series of regular monthly updates on the progress of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) to the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Board are invited to note:
 - i. a strategic design review is identifying options to improve the quality of TLFS data;
 - ii. the way forward will be agreed at the start of July and communicated shortly after;
 - iii. continued progress to improve the Labour Force Survey (LFS) quality to address user concerns;
 - iv. a positive first Stakeholder Advisory Panel with clear feedback to the project; and
 - v. the decision to update TLFS and LFS to use the latest UK population totals.

Background

3. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is developing a transformed version of the LFS using an online-first multi-mode collection approach. The ambition of a TLFS is to enable a more adaptive and responsive survey to meet user needs and improve the quality of our labour market, and other, statistics. A fuller history on the project and lessons learnt will be reported to the board in September.
4. Although questions and topics are transferred from the LFS to the TLFS, mode and design change inevitably lead to differing results. To facilitate transition between the two surveys, ONS has been parallel running the LFS and TLFS. Parallel running comes at a cost, which is traded off against more data about the different results. In Financial Year (FY) 2023/24 the ambition was to run two quarters of parallel running to inform a decision as to whether to turn off the LFS and publish Labour Market Data based on the TLFS from September 2024. This timeframe was largely driven by affordability, although our understanding of the full value of the longer parallel run has matured in recent months.
5. The project's systematic assessment of ONS' and users' readiness to decommission the LFS highlighted risks around this two-quarter parallel run approach. An external academic review by Professors Chambers and Brown and senior external stakeholders including the Bank of England (BoE) have all subsequently emphasised the importance of continuing the parallel run to produce the full suite of labour market outputs and ensure any differences between the two surveys are fully understood over four seasons if a seasonality approach is our objective. For comparable results, both the LFS and TLFS must be stable.

Discussion

Project status and update since the last board

6. Based on ONS' internal readiness assessment and the external reviews and feedback, the project is working on the basis that the parallel run will continue, and labour market outputs will not transition to the TLFS in September. Within this context, the project is conducting a short strategic design review and reflecting on lessons learnt to date and the full external academic recommendations. The aim is to present final parallel run decisions, any proposed design changes to the TLFS and an updated forward plan to the

Executive at the beginning of July. Internal and external engagement and communication of the way forward would then occur after the general election.

7. Progress against updated formal milestones, performance against agreed quality and decommissioning criteria and key risks and issues will act as the basis for the monthly update to the Board once this short interregnum concludes. This initial monthly update focuses on mitigations for five key risks and issues on the project.

Achieving acceptable TLFS operational performance and statistical quality

8. TLFS performance is assessed using operational and statistical criteria, as reported previously to the Board, and has recently been subject to internal and external reviews. Recent reviews have provided evidence that ONS can have confidence in the original concept of the TLFS. Compared to the LFS, the TLFS provides a higher response rate, larger achieved sample, with reduced variability in household response patterns and the potential for more stable weighted outputs. The TLFS raw data set is, however, more biased towards older age groups and with an increased level of 'partial' responses than the LFS. Recent TLFS changes aim to improve the collection of complex industry and occupation data, but data quality when captured online, compared to interviewer led responses, remains a concern.
9. The latest analysis of headline labour market outputs based on two quarters' GB data demonstrates key differences in headline labour market outputs between the two surveys. While some of the differences are due to definitional changes, prioritised analysis is continuing to investigate the remaining differences. For users to transition to TLFS data, they will need to be provided with a quantified explanation of the differences so that they can manage how data is used in their own systems.
10. The strategic design review is exploring options to improve the quality of the TLFS, including halving the length of the current 30-minute questionnaire. Anticipated benefits of improved response and reduced bias and partial responses must be weighed against the impact of removing non-labour market questions and the risk of destabilising the comparability of the parallel run dataset. The project has agreed the importance of confirming the benefits of a shorter survey, and assessing the implementation risks, in an operational and statistical test.

Implications of extending the parallel run

11. Business planning for 2024/25 was predicated on the assumption that the LFS/TLFS dual run would last for the first quarter of the year only.
12. A decision to extend the parallel run period beyond June comes with associated costs, depending on the design options chosen. We are actively working on implications and general metrics which we will include in the July update.

Achieving acceptable LFS operational performance and statistical quality

13. The LFS' important role underpinning headline labour market statistics continues at a time of unparalleled scrutiny and heightened political sensitivity on the UK labour market. LFS performance remains below pre-pandemic levels and statistical quality continues to be a cause for concern among internal and external stakeholders. As such, there is a need to continue to invest in the LFS. Building on last year's LFS recovery actions, a boost to the LFS sample was implemented in January 2024 and the field operation is now consistently delivering the required wave one response of 850 interviews a week. As this boost flows through the longitudinal waves of the survey, the quarterly dataset size on the LFS person outputs will increase by 26 per cent over this calendar year, 45 per cent above the point at which the LFS proved unusable last year. Together with an intense focus on quality within the SSQRP, this should continue to address user quality concerns.

Improving external stakeholder engagement and confidence

14. Stakeholder support is key to a successful transition to the TLFS, and recent BoE feedback highlights the importance of building on the stakeholder engagement work to date. The last month has seen the first Stakeholder Advisory Panel on Labour Market Statistics, user feedback on the latest TLFS data and technical engagement with key users on reweighting. The Stakeholder Advisory Panel was chaired by Professor Jonathan Portes, and included policymakers, forecasters, academics, and think-tanks. Early indications showed how this new Advisory Panel is considered a welcome forum and stakeholders were keen to offer their feedback:
- i. the panel recognised there are no easy answers. They recognise the importance of this data to very significant decisions and are therefore risk averse;
 - ii. there was a strong collective view on the panel that it was imperative to update the LFS and TLFS to reflect the latest population information – see paragraph 16 below; and
 - iii. the TLFS was recognised as having the potential to provide improved labour market estimates, but a majority view recommended extending the parallel run.
15. We will continue to work with the Advisory Panel to address their concerns and build their support for a transition to the TLFS.

Updating LFS and TLFS to use the latest population estimates

16. ONS recognises user concerns with the under-recording of population totals in the LFS. In particular, we recognise that this is not reflecting the latest information that we have on the size and composition of the UK population, specifically the recent net migration flows into the UK. This in part explains some of the challenge for policymakers and forecasters in reconciling survey and administrative indicators on employment.
17. To-date the resource required to update the LFS and TLFS onto the latest population estimates is the same resource required to enable a smooth transition to the TLFS in September. With an anticipated move away from a September TLFS transition and following close engagement with Treasury, the BoE, the Office for Budget Responsibility and the Department for Work and Pensions, ONS has now decided to re-weight both the LFS and TLFS to the latest population data. Specifically, we have provisionally agreed to partially reweight both the LFS and TLFS to the interim National Population Projections back to 2019 and these will be available for labour market statistics publications in December.

Alex Lambert, Director of Social Surveys, ONS, 20 June 2024

Integrated Data Service – June 2024 Update**Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP), responsible for the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
 - i. note the progress that has been made on programme structure and governance since the last update;
 - ii. note the findings of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) review; and
 - iii. discuss programme scope, priorities, technical architecture and leadership, and actions to progress data access.

Discussion***Programme Update***

3. Over the last month, Pete Benton as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) and Nigel Green as the Interim Director General (DG) for IDP have reset the programme to set out key priorities, and to strengthen and simplify programme governance.
4. The SRO has set out a clear articulation of the service design and re-focused delivery to be aligned to delivering the major components of the service. This approach prioritises the delivery of a robust, user centric service rather than tactical workarounds to meet accreditation targets. This new approach was validated by senior programme staff at an all-day workshop in late May and has been agreed as the way forward.
5. Monthly 'maturity states' for the service are now being defined around the Critical Success Factors presented to the Board at its last meeting, and these are driving programme planning.
6. The Programme Director set out a new structure to strengthen governance and, following consultation with the existing programme board, the revised structure is now being implemented. The key change is to split out the functions of the current board into three: a Service Board, refreshed Programme Board and a Senior Sponsor Group. Each of the following boards will be chaired by the SRO.
 - i. the Service Board will endure beyond the programme and will focus on IDS performance to ensure a satisfactory service to the user;
 - ii. the refreshed Programme Board will focus on programme governance and delivery. Predominantly drawn from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it will close as and when the programme ends; and
 - iii. the Senior Sponsor Group will also endure and continue engagement with key stakeholders at Chief Data Officer/Chief Digital Information Officer/Senior analyst level to ensure it meets partners expectations, enable the expansion of the service, and shape the future direction.

Infrastructure and Projects Authority review of programme delivery

7. A targeted IPA review was commissioned by the IDP SRO to assess the progress and feasibility of the programme.
8. The review has focused on the prioritisation of work and three associated questions:
 - i. does the programme have a clear definition of the scope of the prioritised works that all stakeholders agree with?;

- ii. is there a viable plan to deliver the scope of works?; and
 - iii. is there the capacity and capability to deliver the scope of works by March 2025?
9. The outcome report, while not a full gateway review, found that the programme has made significant strides in defining and prioritising its scope, establishing a clear vision, and engaging with stakeholders. It also noted that the change of approach and pace had been well received by interviewees.
 10. While the assessors have not provided a Red Amber Green rating for what is not a full gateway report, they have confirmed the content is analogous to an 'Amber'. They have made a number of recommendations, commenting that 'if these are achieved with pace, delivery of the revised scope by March 2025 appears feasible'.
 11. The recommendations covered finalising the scope and plan; securing resources (technical specialists in particular); resolving migration issues for the Secure Research Service, implementing the new governance; embedding new ways of working; accelerating data sharing agreements with other government departments; and defining a critical mass of datasets that should be integrated into the platform by December 2024 to ensure that sufficient data is available for analysts by March 2025.
 12. The SRO has agreed with the recommendations in full and an action plan for implementation is being drafted.

Lievesley Review recommendations and broader communications and engagement

13. As part of the Public Bodies Review Programme, Professor Denise Lievesley's review of the UK Statistics Authority set out two recommendations highly pertinent to the IDS. To summarise, these were firstly that the Centre of government must help departments to prioritise data sharing for statistical and research purposes and secondly, that the purpose, scope and requirements of IDS should be clearly communicated to address data owner concerns.
14. With regard to the first recommendation, the programme's formal response sets out our strong agreement that overcoming the barriers to data sharing will require a strong drive from the centre of government.
15. With regards to the second recommendation, the scope agreed through the current planning process will sit at the heart of the IDS Communications and Engagement Strategy. In particular we are working to progress issues relating to data sharing with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, HM Treasury, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, No 10, Central Digital and Data Office and key users.

Discussion of barriers and potential resolutions to data sharing challenges

16. Accessing data from across government for use in analysis has been a challenge that ONS has been working through for a number of years, predating the IDS. Clearly, it is fundamental to the success of IDS and wider ONS initiatives such as the Future Population and Migration Statistics System.
17. There are four particular challenges relating to data sharing:
 - i. data owners wanting to retain control of any analysis published using data from their departments so that they can be confident the data have been used appropriately, taking into account the provenance of the data, data definitions and any known quality issues;
 - ii. data owners wanting retain control of the narrative in relation to any analysis that may be published and ensure coherence with their own publications;
 - iii. security concerns relating to the management of sensitive data; and
 - iv. ensuring that analysis is ethical and serves the public good.
18. To resolve these issues we are now reviewing the accreditation process to understand what is required in law, and what policies and process are then required to meet these

requirements. The current policies and processes are complex, and we would like to consider whether they can be simplified. In particular, the law requires data providers to approve access to their data for research purposes, and this can be a sticking point.

19. The SRO and interim DG have initiated a process during June to deliver specific, high value datasets into IDS. As well as providing value to users, these will be used to flush out any specific blockers so that we can streamline our internal processes and escalated any external issues with central government.

Nigel Green Interim Director General for the Integrated Data Programme, Pete Benton, IDP Senior Responsible Owner, ONS, 20 June 2024

UK Statistics Authority Election Preparations, June 2024**Purpose**

1. This paper provides the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) Board with an overview of current activity across the Authority to prepare for both the General Election on 4 July 2024 and subsequent effective engagement with government and ministers. The period following the election, in any scenario, will offer a unique opportunity for the Authority and wider Government Statistical Service (GSS) to ensure that data, statistics and analysis is at the heart of government evidence and policymaking. There will be a follow-up paper to this one at the July Board following the General Election.

Discussion***Actions taken to date across the Authority and the Office for National Statistics (ONS)***

2. Within the Authority, election work is being coordinated by the National Statistician's Private Office, in partnership with the Policy Liaison Unit, Analytical Hub and Parliamentary Unit. Together with colleagues across the Authority this is the Election Coordination Group.
3. Ahead of the announcement of the General Election, guidance was published across the ONS and GSS on publishing statistics during a pre-election period and setting out the restrictions on our other activities. This was drafted in collaboration with the Statistics Head of Profession Office within ONS and Propriety and Ethics Team in Cabinet Office.
4. Following the announcement, a full review of every scheduled release was completed by the Outputs Group within ONS.
5. Weekly meetings have been established to review any further changes to the release calendar during the pre-election period and provide an audit log of postponements and new additions to the release calendar. All changes were approved by the DNS.

Advice and guidance implementation across the GSS

6. The GSS Policy and Coordination Team has collaborated with the Statistics Head of Profession Office in ONS to provide advice and recommendations on handling publications and supporting activities in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.
7. Examples of queries and requests received during the pre-election period include postponing pre-announced releases, publishing new/ad-hoc releases, publishing corrections and reviewing releases to ensure impartiality and objectivity in commentary.

Working with the Cabinet Office and 'State of the State'

8. This is the first General Election where ONS has had its strategic partnership with Cabinet Office as part of the Joint Data and Analysis Centre (JDAC) in the Economic and Domestic Secretariat (EDS). As part of this, we are supporting their multi-pronged approach for day one and beyond briefing offer to the incoming government.
9. Several key products to support an incoming government are being created with ONS teams' involvement. These include an updated version of the State of the State presentation, as presented by Mike Keogh and Sam Beckett previously to senior leaders in the Civil Service.
10. Other strands of work are less advanced, but we will influence these in the next couple of weeks, for example, identification of data and evidence gaps and how to fill them for key commitments from the political parties, such as Labour's Five Missions, and developing a place for how any future government may enable data sharing across government.

Authority letters to parties and Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) interventions

11. In each of the most recent General Elections, the Chair of the Authority has written to the leaders of political parties reminding them of the need to use statistics responsibly and in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Sir Robert Chote [wrote to party leaders](#) on 4 June. His letter set out the principles of intelligent transparency which leaders and candidates should adhere to when using data and statistics as part of their campaigning. Sir Robert is also considering writing to incoming Secretaries of State following the election on the importance of intelligent transparency and appropriate use of statistics.
12. At the first leaders' televised debate, also on 4 June, the Prime Minister repeated a claim that a Labour government would increase household taxes by £2000, which prompted complaints to the OSR. This figure was based on a document published by the Conservative Party, informed by individual calculations of opposition policies by HM Treasury (HMT) and others, based on assumptions provided by Ministers and their special advisors. This process was clarified in a letter from the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury.
13. Sir Robert also appeared on the Radio 4 Today programme on 6 June to discuss the importance of intelligent transparency and appropriate use of statistics during election campaigning. The OSR published a short statement later that day setting out its view on the statement, primarily that it was not clear from its use that this sum would be over a period of four years and reiterating the importance of intelligent transparency.
14. OSR has also published statements in response to claims made regarding defence spending and disability/out of work benefit statistics. These statements reiterate the need for high-profile statistical or quantitative claims to be presented in a way that a reasonable person on the street will be able to understand. OSR has also published a series of "[explainer statements](#)" covering statistics on key topics and what to look out for when they are used publicly. As well as being a useful tool for the public, these have also been helpful internally to signpost to complainants to when they contact OSR on these topics. OSR has also observed a pattern of complaints around local election leaflets in which the presentation of local authority/polling data is poor, so it is working on a statement around its remit and expectations for these campaign materials. OSR's reactive work on claims using statistics continues on a day-by-day basis and Ed Humpherson will update the Board on the latest developments as part of his update.

Media handling and sensitivity

15. In line with Cabinet Office guidance, we have scaled-back pre-election media activities. Wider ONS proactive communications have also been deferred until after the election, for example videos to support public engagement on data and some corporate stakeholder engagement activity.
16. We continue to support statistical releases via factual media notes and social media, as well as responding reactively to media queries, which have been at higher levels as 'factcheckers' seek verification on key topics', notably migration, wages, and Gross Domestic Product. We are not offering broadcast interviews and comments for publication and other proactive media work, such as the podcast is on hold.
17. We have placed several ONS statisticians on attachment with national news broadcasters for the final weeks of the election campaign. This has proved a beneficial arrangement in previous elections for both the broadcasters - who benefit from our expertise - and participating colleagues who advise on the sourcing of interpretation of data while remaining bound by Civil Service obligations of impartiality. At the time of writing, one colleague is due to start with BBC News on Monday, we are in discussions with ITV and Channel Four about placements there.

Conclusion

18. The Authority is well placed in its election preparations and has already taken measures across ONS, OSR and the GSS to ensure we anticipate challenges and respond to the opportunities in the coming months. We have been proactive and ambitious in identifying these potential opportunities, such as data sharing across government.
19. The pre-election period has also meant that the publication of the recommendation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics has been delayed. This has not impacted delivery or work on the programme but has enabled us to refresh our approach to stakeholder engagement which will restart after the pre-election period.
20. Similarly, the Authority's response to the Lievesley Review will follow once the pre-election period concludes. Whilst this could have been published just before the period, it was decided to wait until a new government is formed to maximise its impact.
21. Our engagement and response to the *Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee* report on *Transforming the UK Evidence Base*, published just before the election was called, will also be important in highlighting the value of analysis as evidence across government. Our Parliamentary team is continuing to work with Cabinet Office officials in preparation for a fuller response.

Will Marks, Principal Private Secretary to the National Statistician, June 2024

Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24**Purpose**

1. This paper introduces the final draft version of the Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24, which has been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and has been subject to audit by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Recommendations

2. Members of the UK Statistics Authority Board (the Board) are invited to:
 - i. note the delivery achievements for 2023/24 set out in the Performance Report (Chapter 2) of the Annual Report and Accounts;
 - ii. note the disclosure relating to the breach of Cabinet Office commercial controls in relation to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) contract contained in the Governance Statement (Section 3.2);
 - iii. note the financial performance that is set out in the Resources and Organisation (Section 2.5.3) including the overall financial position that has been presented to ARAC and the Board, via the Integrated Performance Report, during the year; and
 - iv. authorise the Accounting Officer to sign the Annual Report and Accounts and provide the final signed version to the NAO for certification, prior to it being laid before Parliament (date to be confirmed due to the impact of the General Election).

Background and discussion**Delivery Performance**

3. The Annual Report and Accounts provides a summary for the year of the performance of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority), a statement on the governance of the organisation and the detailed statutory financial statements and supporting notes.
4. The 2023/24 version describes a continuation of successful delivery against our strategy in a challenging fiscal and resourcing environment. The highlights of the year include:
 - i. our agile and flexible response to both urgent and emergent policy issues working with the Cabinet Office Joint Data Analysis Centre. Some of our responses include the Ukraine Humanitarian Survey; analysis regarding over 50s leaving the workforce; utilisation of Census data on unemployment characteristics; analysis on the cost of living; and domestic and international implications of conflict in the Middle East;
 - ii. building on previous Census outputs we released new interactive tools – *create a customer dataset* and *create a population group profile* – to facilitate non-technical users to self-serve and extract insight from multivariate data for the first time;
 - iii. progress towards publishing our recommendation on the Future of Population and Migration Statistics. This has involved engagement events with academics, ministers, government departments and wider users as we iterate our approach;
 - iv. continuation of the Winter Covid Infection Survey (CIS) in partnership with the UK Health Surveillance Agency reusing infrastructure developed under CIS;
 - v. ongoing progress against our economic statistics transformation with a focus on quality improvements including through the Blue and Pink Books;
 - vi. delivered initial milestones under the Public Sector Productivity Review;
 - vii. our economic statistics transformation continues at pace, working towards the inclusion of new retailer scanner data in our price statistics from March 2025 – this will see us using over 30 million price points each month digitally;
 - viii. release of our Integrated Data Service Beta product and Digital Economy Act accreditation achieved for data provision (as the first cloud native trusted environment under the Act);

- ix. delivery of evidence-based efficiencies and savings of £17.8 million exceeding our target by £1 million, reducing our overall workforce by 460 full time equivalent; and
5. Underpinning this performance has been a range of ongoing and standing statistical deliveries and outputs describing the economy, society and public health. Of particular note is the overarching assessment of delivery against our Accountability Framework Objectives (88 per cent complete) in what has been a constrained resource environment.

Cabinet Office commercial control breach disclosure

6. The Governance Statement sets out the background to the control breach in depth. In summary the organisation faced a difficult pragmatic choice between awarding an improved contract for the Crime Survey England and Wales in the context of a relatively minor breach of procedural processes (Cabinet Office view); or run a new procurement exercise that would likely lead to a two-year gap in national crime statistics with far less favourable contractual terms.
7. The Authority considered the balance between meeting value for money requirements and ensuring continuity of service for national crime statistics against the technical regularity requirements. Following a statement from the Cabinet Office that the Crime Survey business case rejection due to a relatively minor procedural irregularity "*does not preclude you from making your award in line with your procurement timeline*", the Authority concluded that the best course of action was to continue with the process to let the improved contract, which was subsequently signed on 2 April 2024.
8. Whilst the breach will not lead to a qualification of our Annual Report and Accounts on the grounds of regularity for 2023/24 due to the materiality of expenditure in year, the likelihood is that the Comptroller and Auditor General will qualify his regularity opinion in 2024/25.

Financial performance

9. The report also describes the Authority's financial outturn for the year, which shows under expenditure of £4.2 million against resource (excluding depreciation) and £0.5 million against capital for the year. This level of under expenditure is considered to be in the optimal range and represents around 1.2 per cent of total gross expenditure in the context of total operational expenditure of over £400 million.
10. All control totals remained within expected parameters. We have provided HM Treasury with a detailed debrief of the financial performance for the year.

Conclusion

11. This paper sets out brief highlights from the Annual Report and Accounts that we recommend should be signed by the National Statistician as Accounting Officer for the Authority following the Board meeting.
12. The NAO will then pass the Annual Report and Accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General for signature, prior to the report being laid before Parliament.
13. The Board is asked to note the significant achievements across the year, note the disclosure relating to the breach of Cabinet Office commercial control and provide final approval of the document prior to signature.

Rhys Thomas, Deputy Director Finance, 20 June 2024