

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Regulation Committee

Minutes

Monday 21 July 2025

Remote meeting

11:00 - 13:00

Members Present

Prof. Dame Carol Propper (Chair)
Peter Barron
Sir Robert Chote
Prof. Sir David Spiegelhalter
Ed Humpherson

Other Attendees

Penny Babb (for item 5)
Graham Brennan (for item 4)
June Bowman
Rob Kent-Smith
Marie McGhee (for item 5)
Nicky Pearce
Vicky Stone (for item 4)
Siobhan Tuohy-Smith

Observing

Angel Ezeadum
Max O'Reilly
Corinna Watts

Secretariat

Sally-Ann Jones
Fran Wigley-Jones

Apologies

Helen Miller-Bakewell
Gail Rankin

1. Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members and observers to the meeting. Apologies were received from Gail Rankin and Helen Miller-Bakewell. Previous minutes were approved and actions were reviewed.
- 1.2. The Chair noted that it would be helpful to use the action tracker to indicate important items that were due to come back to Regulation Committee, such as the State of the Statistical System Report.

2. Update from the Director General for Regulation SA(RC)(25)25

- 2.1. The Director General (DG) for Regulation provided the Committee with an overview of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) priorities and activities and highlighted some areas of focus since the last meeting.
- 2.2. The Committee heard that the State of the Statistical System report had been published on 17 July. The UK Comparability review had been published on 27 June and had been received positively across the nations of the UK. The OSR Annual Review of casework had been published on 18 June.
- 2.3. The DG for Regulation shared reflections on the recent Parliamentary and Constitutional Affairs Committee session, which members suggested could inform development of OSR's strategy.
- 2.4. Members discussed Department for Education claims on the benefits of university education, particularly in relation to a joint Institute of Fiscal Studies report. Members suggested that OSR should provide clearer information about its remit relating to research. OSR acknowledged the concern and agreed to update the interventions policy to reflect.
- 2.5. The Committee agreed the OSR recommendation to confirm accredited official statistics status on Northern Ireland's Public Transport Statistics by the Department for Infrastructure. The statistics were due to be published in September. The Committee also agreed the OSR recommendation to confirm accredited official statistics status on Earnings and Employment from Pay as You Earn Real Time Information by HMRC and ONS. The statistics were due to be published by the end of July.

3. Post Spending Review Budgeting SA(RC)(25)26

- 3.1. OSR provided an update on budgetary risks to OSR and proposals for the Committee to consider in making its recommendation to the Authority Board for the OSR budget for 2026/27 to 2027/28. OSR recommended the Committee support an intermediate budget scenario (Option B) which would deliver additional regulator capacity and sustain systemic impact. OSR sought budget certainty over the next three financial years to enable sustainable recruitment and planning.
- 3.2. Members discussed that an increase in budget would be allocated from within the UK Statistics Authority budget. Members discussed benefits of pursuing the ambitious budget (Option C) but noted that recruitment constraints may limit the ability to scale up quickly for this option.
- 3.3. The Committee supported the proposed intermediate budget scenario (Option B) and OSR's preference for an early agreement of the budget to allow OSR to proceed with the proposed increase of staff with confidence. The Authority Board would be invited to consider the recommendation of the Committee at the July Board meeting.

4. Admin-based Population Estimates – follow up to Phase One Assessment SA(RC)(25)27

- 4.1. OSR provided an update on ONS progress against the requirements outlined in the phase one Assessment Report on Admin-Based Population Estimates and proposed next steps. While progress had been made by ONS there was still considerable effort needed before OSR expectations were fully met. The review had been valuable in identifying evidence gaps within ONS and areas where OSR should apply greater scrutiny and prioritise work. A Red, Amber, Green rating had been used internally to assess progress.
- 4.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. ONS had taken requirements seriously, the complexity of the Dynamic Population Model was highlighted and the importance of understanding the degree to which it could be wrong;
 - ii. members supported the involvement of Professor Wisniowski who provided clarity on the requirements of the Bayesian model and gave rigour to the work;
 - iii. there was need to continue the follow-up work, particularly in relation to how ONS planned to meet technical requirements;
 - iv. clarity was needed around Red rated areas to confirm the issues and the likelihood of improvement; and
 - v. it was noted that ONS acknowledged that it could not resolve all issues immediately and would require more time and resource.
- 4.3. The Committee noted ONS progress to date and approved the proposed next steps for OSR to respond publicly to ONS with a cover letter clearly outlining areas for improvement and further work, and areas that were progressing well. OSR were planning a compliance review of ONS's next population estimates due to be published at the end of July.

5. Code of Practice for Official Statistics (SA(RC)(25)28

- 5.1. OSR shared an updated draft of the Code of Practice for Statistics 3.0 (the Code). OSR sought approval from the Committee to present the current version of the Code to the Authority Board at the end of July for sign off with plans to publish the revised version on 20 October 2025, aligning with World Statistics Day. Training guides and resources were being developed to support understanding and application of the Code's standards and principles and launch of the web page that would house the Code was scheduled for September.
- 5.2. Members discussed that content of the Code was better suited to a web format. Repetition within the document was intentional due to the non-linear way users would engage with the document online. Members provided suggestions for minor refinements to the language and structuring of the opening paragraphs of the document.
- 5.3. The Committee approved the final version of the Code which would be presented at the UK Statistics Authority Board meeting on 31 July for final approval.

6. Annual Self-Effectiveness Review (SA(RC)(25)29

- 6.1. Secretariat shared the results of the annual self-effectiveness review for the Committee.

6.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- i. the transparent, clear and positive way that OSR interacted with the Regulation Committee, continued directness and conciseness was encouraged;
- ii. members noted the lack of formal audit or assurance processes similar to those used by the Authority Board as a way to identify or raise problems;
- iii. it was suggested that Regulation Committee members meet OSR staff to improve visibility and trust and help staff to feel more comfortable in raising concerns and offer a different perspective; and
- iv. the 'issues on my mind' component of the regular DG for Regulation update to the Committee highlighted the value of sharing concerns, rather than only successes and it was suggested that the Committee might want to request a similar approach from the new CEO of ONS in updates to the Authority Board.

6.3. The Committee noted the update and the action for OSR to consider how to provide the Committee with enhanced assurance.

7. Presentation: Gambling

- 7.1. OSR provided a presentation focused on a complex and high risk case involving the Gambling Survey for Great Britain. This had been a significant piece of work over the past year and offered insight into OSR's regulatory approach to casework. Key issues were related to the discrepancies between the Gambling Survey for Great Britain and other data sources such as the Health Survey for England produced by NHS England. All complaints had been consolidated into a single case, diverging from usual practice, and responses were tailored to each complainant before a public statement was issued. The case reinforced the value of OSR having a clear remit and improving internal processes and the need to strike the right tone in public.
- 7.2. Members discussed how the presentation reflected on earlier discussion in the meeting, highlighting the importance of tone and continued engagement with complainants. Members suggested compiling a list of sensitive topics for future caution to consider where similar patterns might emerge.
- 7.3. The Committee noted the update and commended OSR for learning from the case and providing transparency to the Committee. Members agreed that it had been helpful to see a real world example of OSR's complex case handling.

8. Horizon Scanning and Any Other Business

- 8.1. The Chair noted that it would be useful to invite a Head of Profession for Statistics to meet with members of the Regulation Committee. It was suggested that one of the Deputy Heads of the Government Statistical Service should be invited.
- 8.2. The Committee would next meet on 16 October 2025.

Date	No	Item ref	Action	Update / Status
21 July 2025		Update from the Director General for Regulation SA(RC)(25)	The DG for Regulation shared reflections on the recent Parliamentary and Constitutional Affairs Committee session. A blog had been drafted the day after the first hearing, but a decision was taken not to publish due to tone concerns but was shared with the Committee to reflect current thinking. The blog aimed to explore how OSR presents its regulatory findings, acknowledging that while OSR is effective at identifying issues, its communication of judgments can be overly cautious or muted. The blog highlighted the need for OSR to be clear in presenting conclusions while retaining its core attribute of fair judgement, and the need for OSR to be more assertive in presenting Trustworthiness, Quality and Value as framework to the ONS. The following points were raised in discussion: i. the importance of adding value in interacting with ONS, rather than appearing punitive; ii. the reputational impact of OSR's relationship with other departments if the tone towards ONS was perceived as overly harsh; iii. members found the blog transparent and self-aware and agreed that the reflections should feed into the development of the OSR strategy; iv. the Regulation Committee had consistently encouraged clearer, firmer tone in OSR executive summaries, and the shift in tone, which was in response to Committee feedback should be embedded in the OSR strategy; v. crisper summaries would improve effectiveness and enhance impact of OSR summaries; vi. OSR culture was built on constructive effective relationships with producers; and	

			vii. members suggested repurposing the themes of the blog into a forward looking, pre strategy blog.	
21 July 2025	10	Update from the Director General for Regulation SA(RC)(25)	OSR to update the interventions policy to clarify OSR's remit relating to government research.	
21 July 2025	11	Code of Practice for Official Statistics (SA(RC)(25)	Regulation Committee members to send specific feedback and drafting points on the Code of Practice 3.0 to Penny Babb.	COMPLETE: Code of Practice agreed and signed off by Authority Board via correspondence
21 July 2025	12	Annual Self-Effectiveness Review (SA(RC)(25)	DG for Regulation and OSR SLT to consider ways to give the Regulation Committee broader assurance of OSR work.	
21 July 2025	13	Annual Self-Effectiveness Review (SA(RC)(25)	Secretariat to liaise with OSR to consider OSR staff engagement opportunities with Committee members, without senior leadership present.	
21 July 2025	14	Horizon Scanning and Any Other Business	Secretariat to arrange for a HoP for Statistics to meet with members of the Regulation Committee.	