

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Meeting of Tuesday 27 November 2012
Room 1003_1005, Titchfield**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Mr Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Professor David Rhind
Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Mr Richard Alldritt
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Dame Moira Gibb
Ms Jil Matheson
Mr Glen Watson

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford

Other Attendees

Mr Guy Goodwin (item 6)
Mr Ketan Varia, Mr Rob Chambers and Mr Brad Cole (item 11)

Apologies

Dr Colette Bowe
Dr David Levy

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Bowe and Dr Levy.

2. Declarations of interest

Members of the Board acknowledged that their current and future financial transactions could potentially be affected by any changes to the methodology for calculating the Retail Price Index (RPI). It was agreed that this did not debar the Board from considering such issues.

3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 October were accepted as a true and fair account.

3.2 Mr Watson reported that he was further developing the process for handling requests for Pre-Release Access to ONS statistics in a consistent way. The National Statistician would be writing to Permanent Secretaries of government departments to explain the initiative to reduce Pre-Release Access, as agreed at the previous meeting.

3.3 The meeting noted that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had released official statistics on the Work Programme that morning. Some press reporting of the statistics prior to 9.30am had given the impression that figures had been made available before the official release of the statistics. Ms Matheson reported that officials in DWP were investigating whether a breach of Pre-Release rules had occurred.

4. Authority Chair's Report and Priorities

4.1 The Chair reported on his recent activities which included:

- i. giving the Institute for Fiscal Studies annual lecture on 'numbers and public policy making';
- ii. giving the opening address at an ONS business statistics user event;
- iii. chairing a second workshop to review selected ONS statistical releases; and
- iv. meeting with the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

4.2 The Chair would be providing oral evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) on 12 December in relation to the PASC's fourth study, 'communicating and publishing statistics'. The Chair and Board welcomed PASC's interest in this and other statistical areas.

4.3 The Chair had been asked by the BBC to produce a new radio series about numbers in history. The Board agreed that this was a worthwhile activity.

4.4 The Board considered the demand from the private sector for presentations and talks by Authority Board members. If managed appropriately and transparently, such engagement opportunities could be valuable.

4.5 The meeting discussed the recent Treasury announcement about its intention to transfer excess cash held in the Bank of England's Asset Purchase Facility Fund. Ms Matheson reported that ONS had issued a statement on its website in response to this announcement. ONS would form an independent view on how the transfer would be classified in the National Accounts and Public Sector Finances, and would announce its decision in January.

5. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

Assessment Committee

- 5.1 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Assessment Committee held on 13 November 2012. The meeting had considered two draft Assessment Reports, which had been approved for publication subject to the views of the Authority Board. Other issues discussed included a possible replacement for the National Statistics label, guidelines on the use of the National Statistics label, and surveys of public and stakeholder confidence in statistics. A work programme for Assessment in 2013 had been approved and a draft work programme for Monitoring would be presented to the Authority Board in due course.
- 5.2 The Assessment Committee had also reviewed progress with inviting Heads of Profession to self-assess against the Code of Practice. The meeting had agreed that for self-assessment to be successful, random audit spot-checks on a sample of self-assessments were essential. Ms Matheson reported that Heads of Profession may also be given a role in self-assessment for forthcoming Eurostat peer reviews, as well as providing regular assurances to the National Statistician. It was suggested that there may be scope to draw these exercises together to form a coherent package of self-assessment activity.
- 5.3 Members of the Authority Board discussed the proposals for the assessment of the new Consumer Prices Index including Owner Occupiers' Housing Costs (CPIH). The meeting acknowledged the existing precedent for allowing new or changed statistics to use the National Statistics label from their first publication, noting that the 2011 Census and the Wealth and Assets Survey were examples. Assessment of two elements of the Code – the format of the statistical release and the producers' response to user feedback – was not straightforward.
- 5.4 The Board endorsed the Assessment Committee's decision that a verdict on the National Statistics designation of the CPIH should be given as soon as possible, in accordance with procedure. If it was not practicable to provide designation before the publication of the statistics, the reasons for not awarding the National Statistics designation should be clearly communicated to the public.

Committee for Official Statistics (COS)

- 5.5 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of COS held on 13 November 2012. The meeting had discussed the new round of European statistical peer reviews that would cover all departments that produce statistics for Eurostat. The strategy for the Government Statistical Service (GSS) had also been considered in the context of the Authority's review of its own strategy.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

- 5.6 Professor Sir Adrian Smith reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 16 November 2012. The meeting had received an update on programmes and projects. The meeting had also considered emerging issues in broad terms, including the main issues, risks and opportunities facing ONS. These included early indications of a gap between police recorded crime and the ONS crime survey, future decisions on National Accounts classifications and possible changes to the RPI formula.

6. Census 2011 [SA(12)52]

- 6.1 Mr Goodwin provided an update regarding progress with the 2011 Census, including an overview of the published and planned releases using Census data.

6.2 The meeting heard that a small number of local authorities had raised concerns about their population estimates. ONS was engaging with these local authorities via correspondence and meetings.

6.3 Initial results from the Scottish Census were expected to be released in December. ONS would publish figures for the UK as a whole on the same day as the Scottish figures are released. The meeting heard that the National Records of Scotland (NRS), which was responsible for the Scottish Census, had experienced challenges in processing the data. ONS had been providing support. Mr Alldritt was investigating these circumstances.

7. Mid Year Financial Position [SA(12)53]

Mr Watson provided an update on the financial position of the Authority as at the end of September 2012. The meeting noted the update.

8. Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) [SA(12)54]

8.1 The Board considered a summary of progress with the Public Administration Select Committee's (PASC) programme of work on statistics.

8.2 The meeting considered the third study in PASC's programme, concerning the regions and nations of the UK. It was suggested that there could be a need for an external institution to produce a compendium of statistics that relate to the debate on Scottish independence.

8.3 The Board discussed the prospect of repeating the surveys of public and stakeholder confidence in statistics and agreed that it would consider detailed proposals in December.

9. Update on Price Indices

Ms Matheson provided an update on the ongoing consultation regarding possible changes to the methods used to calculate the RPI. The consultation would end on 30 November. ONS would then conduct a formal review of the responses. The Board asked to be kept informed of developments.

10. Authority Strategy [SA(12)55]

10.1 Members of the Board considered a proposed outline for a new statement of the Authority's strategy.

10.2 It was agreed that the outline was a helpful starting point. There was a balance to be struck between including too much specificity and making the statement too general. Developing a matrix of 'actors' against 'principles' was a useful tool for thinking about and developing strategy, but the final Authority strategy should be clearly and concisely communicated to the public and Parliament. The strategy should begin with a high-level description of the Authority's functions and structure. It should then describe four or five strategic priorities.

10.3 The Authority Board would consider the draft strategy again in December.

11. Demonstration of theme pages on the ONS Website

11.1 Mr Varia provided a demonstration of new theme-based landing pages on the ONS website. The Board agreed that the pages were more visually engaging and appeared to provide better access to ONS statistics.

11.2 The meeting heard that responsibility for providing the information for each theme page rested with the ONS business areas. ONS was in the process of setting up a central team to coordinate and maintain the themes. The Board considered the centrality of statistical releases, which should contain a definitive statistical story which the Theme pages could draw from.

11.3 Mr Varia described the current plans for launching the pages on the ONS website. The first pages would be published in spring 2013. The Board asked to be kept informed and requested a timetable for the implementation of the pages.

12. Assessment Progress Report [SA(12)56]

12.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which provided a summary of current and planned assessment activity. The meeting agreed that the following two Assessment Reports (ARs) should be published:

- i. AR 241: Income Tax Projections (HM Revenue and Customs); and
- ii. AR 242: Statistics on Outcomes of Work Capability Assessments (Department for Work and Pensions).

12.2 The meeting confirmed National Statistics designation for the following sets of statistics:

- i. AR 100: Annual and Quarterly National Accounts (Office for National Statistics);
- ii. AR 132: Statistics on NHS Secondary Care in Scotland (Information Services Division, NHS National Services Scotland);
- iii. AR 135: Statistics on Health and Social Care in Scotland (Information Services Division, NHS National Services Scotland);
- iv. AR 189: Statistics on Scottish Businesses and Research and Development (Scottish Government);
- v. AR 193: Statistics on the Operation of Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland (Scottish Government);
- vi. AR 199: Statistics on Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland (Scottish Government); and
- vii. AR 224: Statistics on Financial Investment (Office for National Statistics).

12.3 The meeting considered the number of Requirements from Assessment reports that remained to be confirmed. Mr Alldritt reported that there were between 300 and 400 remaining.

13. Scottish Census [SA(12)56b]

13.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which reported on the steps that the National Records of Scotland (NRS) has taken to address the requirements to strengthen Code compliance made in the Assessment Report of the 2011 Census: Phase 2 (Assessment Report 115 (AR 115), published in June 2011).

13.2 The meeting agreed that the wording of the letter from the Head of Assessment to the Registrar General for Scotland confirming that the Requirements had been met should mention that the Assessment team would be returning to these statistics in the planned Phase 3 assessment.

14. Any other business

There was no other business. The next meeting of the UK Statistics Authority Board would be in London on Tuesday 18 December 2012.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Tuesday, 27 November, 2012
Room 1003_1005, Titchfield, 11:15 - 15:00

Chair: Mr Andrew Dilnot
Apologies: Dr Colette Bowe, Dr David Levy

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting Declarations of interest	Meeting of 221012
2	Authority Chair's Report	Oral Report
3	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Committee for Official Statistics and Assessment Committee● ONS Board	Oral Reports Professor David Rhind Professor Sir Adrian Smith
4	Census 2011	SA(12)52 Mr Guy Goodwin
5	Mid-Year Financial Position	SA(12)53 Mr Paul Layland
6	Public Administration Select Committee	SA(12)54 Secretariat
7	Authority Strategy	SA(12)55 Mr Richard Alldritt and Mr Rob Bumpstead
8	Update on Price Indices	Oral update Ms Jil Matheson
9	Demonstration of theme pages on the ONS Website	Presentation Mr Iain Cope and Mr Ketan Varia
10	Assessment Progress Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Scottish Census	SA(12)56 SA(12)56b Mr Richard Alldritt
11	Any other business	

SA(12)52 – Census 2011

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)52

Census 2011

Census results have been published at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/previous-and-future-releases/index.html>

SA(12)53 – Mid-Year Financial Position

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)53

Mid-Year Financial Position

The UK Statistics Authority Annual Reports and Accounts are published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see these documents go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/what-we-do/corporate-information/annual-report-and-resource-accounts/index.html>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)54

Public Administration Select Committee

Information regarding the inquiry of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) into communicating and publishing statistics and evidence provided by the Authority to PASC can be found on the Parliament website at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-administration-select-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/communicating-and-publishing-statistics/>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)55

***Authority Strategy –
Draft Outline***

Purpose

1. This note covers a proposed outline for the new statement of the Authority's strategy.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:

- i. agree that the seven priorities, identified at paragraph 5 of the outline at Annex A, are the right ones;
- ii. comment on the seven 'agents' as set out at paragraph 6 of the outline; and
- iii. comment on the proposed approach for setting out the role of each agent in delivering each priority, as illustrated at paragraph 7 of the outline.

Secretariat, November 2012

Annex A The UK Statistics Authority's Strategic Priorities – Draft Outline

Annex A The UK Statistics Authority's Strategic Priorities – Draft Outline

Discussion

1. Following discussion at the October 2012 meeting of the Authority Board, the draft strategic issues have been recast as a set of seven priorities to be pursued, as suggested below, with the support of seven 'agents' of the Authority Board. In this context, we are treating the Authority Board as the body to which the strategy relates. This has a number of advantages in terms of focus and ownership. The other parts of the legal entity which is the Statistics Authority - including the Board members separately and collectively - are treated as the agents of the Board. In essence the strategy is a set of things that the Board needs to address, together with plans for how the agents will support the Board in pursuing these things. It is for further discussion whether a set of goals or milestones should be associated with the strategy.
2. The Strategy cannot be comprehensive in terms of the things that the Board must address. There will always be a large 'and everything else' category but the aim is to include in the strategy those things which we can be sure will have to be addressed and which failure to address satisfactorily could have very damaging consequences.
3. There is an implicit matrix structure to these proposals and it may prove possible, after further discussion, to cast them in that form.

The priorities

4. Parliament gave the UK Statistics Authority the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.
5. In pursuit of this objective the Authority had identified the following seven high level strategic priorities which it will address over the next [x] years. We regard the public good associated with each of these priorities as being largely self-evident.
 - i. Promote the value of official statistics to society and government and make the case to Government for appropriate public funding for the production and publication of those statistics.
 - ii. Understand and respond to the views and concerns of Parliament, the devolved legislatures and other principal actors, including concerns about unmet statistical needs (to include resolution of issues about price indices and other key series).
 - iii. Ensure better communication of official statistics by the statistical service, if necessary at the cost of collection, to maximise the public good from the statistics.
 - iv. Resolve the future of the Census and implement what is decided.
 - v. Improve data sharing for statistical purposes to maximise efficiency and increase the potential for the exploitation of data.
 - vi. Promote equality of access to official statistics (including the Open Data agenda) and continue to make the case against privileged pre-release access.
 - vii. Improve the ONS website so that the users of ONS statistics are well supported.

The agents

6. The seven 'agents' of the Authority Board are:
 - i. The Chair, non-executive members, and secretariat of the Authority Board
 - ii. The National Statistician and her office
 - iii. The ONS Board
 - iv. The Office for National Statistics
 - v. The Assessment Committee
 - vi. The Head of Assessment and staff
 - vii. The Committee for Official Statistics

How the strategy will be delivered

7. The roles and deliverable outputs of the agents in relation to each of the priorities is for further discussion, but the following is an illustrative example contains suggestions, which could be repeated for the other six objectives in turn.

Priority 1: Promote the value of official statistics to society and government and make the case to Government for appropriate public funding of the production and publication of those statistics.

The Chair, non-executive members, etc – will make the case for official statistics in public forums and with opinion-formers, endorse resource bids and allocations, allocate actions to the other agents and monitor impact.

The National Statistician and her office – will guide the form of publication of all official statistics in government such that the value of the products is highlighted; and will advise the Board on priorities for funding within ONS.

The ONS Board – will guide ONS in relation to priorities and bids for funding.

The Office for National Statistics - will pursue the statistical and managerial priorities identified by the ONS Board and deliver the statistical products that meet the expectations of the Authority Board in terms of quality and efficiency.

The Assessment Committee – will review the work of the statistical service and guide the work of the Monitoring and Assessment Team in that context.

The Head of Assessment and staff – will investigate the use made of official statistics and the associated public value, and will use Assessment powers to encourage all parts of the statistical service to research and publish information on the value of their work.

The Committee for Official Statistics – will review the views of external commentators and advise the Authority Board on the need for intervention.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)56

Assessment Progress Report

The following Assessment Reports have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see these documents go to:

Assessment Report 241: Income Tax Projections

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-241---income-tax-projections.pdf>

Assessment Report 242: Statistics on Outcomes of Work Capability Assessments

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-242---statistics-on-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(12)56b

Assessment Progress Report: Scottish Census

This document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/confirmation-of-designation-letters/letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics--assessment-reports-28-and-115---scotland.pdf>

Assessment Report 115: Assessment Report of the 2011 Census: Phase 2

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-115---census-phase-ii.pdf>