

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Minutes

**Tuesday, 30 July 2013
Boardroom, London**

Present

UK Statistics Authority

Sir Andrew Dilnot (Chair)
Mr Richard Alldritt
Dr Colette Bowe
Mr Partha Dasgupta
Professor David Hand
Dr David Levy
Ms Jil Matheson
Professor David Rhind
Mr Glen Watson

Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead
Mr Joe Cuddeford

Apologies

Ms Carolyn Fairbairn
Dame Moira Gibb
Professor Sir Adrian Smith

Other Attendees

Mr Paul Layland (for items 7 and 8)
Mr Peter Benton, Mr Alistair Calder and Mr Ian Cope (for item 9)

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Ms Fairbairn, Dame Moira Gibb and Professor Sir Adrian Smith.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meetings

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 June 2013 were agreed.
- 3.2 It was confirmed that a paper from ONS about progress with reducing pre-release access to ONS statistics would be considered at the October meeting of the Authority Board. It was confirmed that a draft Monitoring Report about releasing ONS statistics at 9.30am would be considered alongside the management response to that report at the September meeting of the ONS Board.

4. Authority Chair's Report

- 4.1 The Chair noted that since the last meeting the Authority had published a report of its review of the treatment in the public sector finance statistics of changes to the cash management arrangements between the Bank of England Asset Purchase Facility Fund and HM Treasury.
- 4.2 The Chair had recently attended a meeting of Permanent Secretaries, had met with Maurice Williamson, the New Zealand Minister with responsibility for statistics, and had spoken with the Minister for Pensions about statistics published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). He would be visiting the Newport ONS site in August. Interviews for the post of the Head of Assessment would be held in early September.

5. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs

Committee for Official Statistics

- 5.1 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics held on 17 July. The meeting had considered the assurance mechanisms for the Beyond 2011 programme and the potential implications for the wider statistical system of a move to a new system for population statistics. The meeting had also considered emerging findings from work to define a data strategy for the Government Statistical Service (GSS), statistical work in HM Revenue and Customs, a draft Monitoring Review about school-level examination results statistics, a summary of issues raised with the Authority, ONS work to produce a compendium of comparable statistics across the UK and emerging findings from a Monitoring Review about official statistics in the context of the referendum on Scottish independence.

Assessment Committee

- 5.2 Professor Rhind reported on the meeting of the Assessment Committee held on 17 July. The meeting had considered and approved five draft Assessment Reports. It had also considered proposals to enhance the procedures for following up on the Requirements made in Assessment Reports, and a draft Monitoring Review about releasing ONS statistics at 9.30am.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

- 5.3 Dr Levy reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 18 June. The meeting had considered an indicative budget for 2013/14, the conclusions from the ONS review of classifications processes and procedures, the corporate governance framework for ONS, and issues related to information technology services.
- 5.4 Dr Levy also reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 23 July. The meeting had heard that an error had been discovered in business investment data published as part of the June GDP release. The error had not affected overall GDP, had now been corrected, and a review into the underlying causes had been commissioned. The meeting had also considered problems in obtaining information from DWP about jobseekers who were part of the universal credit pilot, the ONS budget for 2013/14, information technology services, ONS's potential role as an administrative data research centre, and progress with the Improving Dissemination Programme. A draft ONS Business Plan had also been considered.
- 5.5 The ONS Board had also held its annual review of self effectiveness on 23 July. The meeting had considered business over the past year, the forward agenda for the coming year, and ways of working.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 5.6 Mr Dasgupta reported on the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 27 June. The meeting had approved the Authority's Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13. The Comptroller and Auditor General had given an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements.

6. The Monitoring Function of the Authority [SA(13)35]

- 6.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which discussed the Monitoring function in detail and invited discussion of its future development.
- 6.2 The Board discussed the capability and capacity of the Monitoring team, the impact of past Monitoring work and the strategic direction of the future Monitoring work programme. The following comments were made in the discussion:
- i. the Monitoring team had been allocated a budget and, while estimating the cost of producing each report was not straightforward, the cost was somewhere in the region of one person-year per report;
 - ii. one constraint on the volume of Monitoring output was the current capacity of senior managers to edit draft reports;
 - iii. it would be worth considering whether there were areas of material importance which had not yet been addressed sufficiently by the Monitoring function;
 - iv. timeliness of the production of reports was also an important consideration;
 - v. the list of topics for future Monitoring Reviews could be reviewed in light of the Authority's strategic priorities;
 - vi. the impact of Monitoring should be evaluated in relation to the Authority's strategic priorities; and
 - vii. securing specific expertise through short-term contracts was an option for the future. Increased use of secondments was also an option.
- 6.3 It was confirmed that the Monitoring Review about statistics in the context of the referendum on Scottish independence would be given priority attention over the coming weeks. The meeting considered which topics should be next in line for attention following

the completion of the current priorities. It would be important to seek views from a wide range of stakeholders on the future work programme, and to ensure that important issues were identified through horizon-scanning. It was suggested that the planning arrangements for statistics across the GSS, and the adequacy of statistics relating to payment by results, were potential candidates for early attention.

7. Financial Reporting Update [SA(13)36]

7.1 Mr Layland presented the Authority's budget for 2013/14 and forecast budgets for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

7.2 The Board considered the capital expenditure breakdown, contingencies currently held across the office, the investment portfolio and the income breakdown. The uncertainty surrounding long-term financial planning was noted. The Board considered the 2013/14 budget in detail and asked to receive further information on some aspects. Subject to that, the Authority's budget for 2013/14 was approved.

8. ONS Business Plan 2013/14 [SA(13)37]

8.1 Mr Watson and Mr Layland introduced a paper which covered the draft ONS Business Plan for 2013/14. The draft had been considered at the July meeting of the ONS Board and would be considered again at the September meeting of the ONS Board.

8.2 The meeting considered the ten draft key performance indicators, noted that the ONS Board would be discussing these in more detail in September, and suggested ways which they might be further developed.

9. Beyond 2011 [SA(13)38]

9.1 Mr Benton and Mr Cope introduced a paper which provided an update on the Beyond 2011 programme. It covered progress since the last Authority Board meeting on 6 June and plans for the rest of the year. The Board welcomed the work to date, considered the current plans and the proposed approach to the initial consultation, and suggested how these plans could be developed further.

10. Delivering the Authority's Strategy [SA(13)39]

10.1 Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which provided an update on progress with implementing the objectives set out in the Authority's Statement of Strategy.

10.2 The Board welcomed the update and agreed to receive further updates at regular intervals. It was also agreed that the Board would dedicate a large part of a future meeting to a detailed examination of progress with delivering the strategic objectives.

11. Improving Commentary for ONS Statistics [SA(13)40]

11.1 Mr Watson introduced a paper which provided an update on progress with improving the presentation and communication of ONS statistical releases.

11.2 The Board noted that there had been a number of improvements to statistical releases since the last update in February 2013 and more improvements were planned. It was suggested that while good progress had been made in some areas, improvements might be applied more consistently and systematically across ONS. It was agreed that the Director of Analysis and Dissemination would be invited to attend the November meeting of the Authority Board to provide a strategic overview of the plan for improving the presentation and communication of ONS statistics.

12. Administrative Data Research Centres [SA(13)41]

- 12.1 The Board considered a paper which set out the possible role of the UK Statistics Authority in relation to the governance of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN), which had been proposed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It was noted that ONS was separately considering its own potential role in the England Administrative Data Research Centre and the Administrative Data Service.
- 12.2 The Board expressed its support for the overall initiative that the ESRC had proposed. It was agreed that Ms Matheson and Mr Bumpstead would meet with the Chief Executive of the ESRC to explore the possible role for the Authority.

13. Any other business

- 13.1 There was no other business. The Authority Board would meet next on 3 October 2013 at 12:00 in London. *[Subsequently proposed that the Authority Board would instead meet in Edinburgh on 3 October 2013.]*

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Agenda

Tuesday, 30 July 2013

Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 12:00 - 16:00

Chair: Sir Andrew Dilnot

Apologies: Dame Moira Gibb and Professor Sir Adrian Smith

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings Declarations of interest	Meeting of 060613
2	Authority Chair's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of the Head of Assessment • Authority Reviews • ONS Website 	Oral report Mr Andrew Dilnot
3	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COS and Assessment Committee • ONS Board • Audit Committee 	Oral reports Professor David Rhind Dr David Levy Mr Partha Dasgupta
4	The Monitoring Function of the Authority	SA(13)35 Mr Richard Alldritt
5	Financial Reporting update	SA(13)36 Mr Glen Watson and Mr Paul Layland
6	ONS Business Plan 2013/14	SA(13)37 Mr Glen Watson and Mr Paul Layland
7	Beyond 2011	SA(13)38 Mr Peter Benton and Mr Ian Cope
8	Delivering the Authority's Strategy	SA(13)39 Mr Robert Bumpstead
9	Improving commentary for ONS statistics	SA(13)40 Mr Glen Watson
10	Administrative Data Research Centres	SA(13)41 Mr Glen Watson
11	Any other business	

Next Meeting: Thursday, 3 October 2013, Edinburgh, 09:30 – 13:00

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)35

The Monitoring Function of the Authority

Information relating to the UK Statistics Authority's monitoring function can be found at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/index.html>

SA(13)36 – Financial Reporting Update

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)36

Financial Reporting Update

The UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Resource 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>

SA(13)37 – ONS Business Plan 2013/14

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)37

ONS Business Plan 2013/14

The ONS Business Plan is published on the Office for National Statistics website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/ons-business-plan.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)38

Beyond 2011 programme - progress and plans

This document has been published on the Office for National Statistics website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/who-ons-are/programmes-and-projects/beyond-2011/reports-and-publications/beyond-2011--narrowing-down-the-options--o3-.pdf>

SA(13)39 – The Authority's Strategy

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)39

Delivering the Authority's Strategy

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

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/statistics-authority-statement-of-strategy.pdf>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)40

*Improving commentary for ONS statistics***Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update for the Authority Board on ONS's progress in improving its statistical products. It outlines accomplishments between February and June 2013 and improvement plans over the next few months.

Timing

2. This is the quarterly update collated by the ONS Statistical Products Working Group.

Recommendations

3. The Authority Board is invited to note and comment on progress made.

Discussion

4. ONS has continued to focus on improving its statistical presentation and commentary, with a large number of improvements having been introduced since the last report to the Authority Board. Improvements implemented between February and June 2013 are detailed in **Annex A**. These include improvements to the commentary and the inclusion of more graphs of long run time series in the Quarterly National Accounts bulletin, which were subsequently lifted and used directly by several national newspapers.
5. Many more improvements are planned, and there is a strong focus on continuous improvement. The work does not stop once a new change has been introduced; attention immediately switches to thinking about the next potential improvement. Details of prioritised improvements to be carried out across ONS in the next quarter are set out in **Annex B**.
6. The improvements to statistical products are managed within the relevant business areas across ONS, with updates disseminated via the Statistical Products Working Group (SPWG). The Newport SPWG, led by Jacqui Jones, has continued to meet on a monthly basis, with Titchfield representatives joining via audio link. The first meeting of the Titchfield SPWG, led by Paul Vickers, was held on 9 April 2013.
7. The first joint Newport and Titchfield event, 'ONS Outputs - Past, Present and Future', was held on the Newport site on 14 June 2013. Will Moy of Full Fact spoke at the event; his talk was very thought provoking, looking at our outputs from a user perspective, and he was complimentary about what ONS has achieved so far in terms of improving its statistical presentation. Prior to the event, a DVD was made of ONS output areas showing their improvements, which was shown on all sites.
8. To ensure we are working towards improving our products to meet user requirements, a user feedback sub group has been set up. The group has initiated 'Sharing Seminars', with the first being held on 26 June. Richard Cracknell, Head of Social Statistics at the House of Commons Library Research Service, gave a talk about how his team use ONS and other official statistics in Parliament.
9. Future quarterly updates to the Authority Board will focus on the improvements made over the most recent quarter, demonstrating the focus on continuous improvement and the commitment and enthusiasm for change evident across ONS.

Jacqui Jones and Gail Rowles
Business Indicators and Balance of Payments Branch, ONS
14 June 2013

List of annexes

Annex A Improvements made between February and June 2013
Annex B Priority Improvements over the next few months

Annex A Improvements made between February and June 2013

Economic Statistics Improvements

1. Improvements were made to the Quarterly National Accounts bulletin; key findings were revamped, and were lifted and used by the Daily Mail. The long run graphs were also used by the Guardian and the Times. To gain greater insight into users' understanding of some of the statistical terms used, Quarterly National Accounts have developed a user questionnaire on the terminology used to describe e.g. constant prices and seasonal adjustment.
2. To maximise exposure of the Blue Book consistent dataset and support understanding and content published in the Quarterly National Accounts bulletin, a video summary was released on 'Long-term GDP Revisions'.
3. Improvements were made to the Gross Domestic Product Preliminary Estimate bulletin. Despite pulling out the key story onto the front page of the preliminary estimate of GDP bulletin the team still received numerous phone calls on the day of release. All phone calls could be answered by referring users to the front page of the bulletin. The feedback received was that users were only reading the first few bullet points.
4. The Producer Prices Index (PPI) statistical bulletin no longer includes records but publishes a summary every month with copies circulated to the press office, media and those on our pre-release list. The PPI statistical bulletin has taken on board CPI implemented improvements where feasible, therefore making Prices products similar where possible.
5. Public Sector Finances bulletin was revamped to give better clarity and detailed commentary, and new graphs and additional tables have been included.
6. The Annual Business Survey is undergoing a total overhaul and new graphics were included in the 13 June release.
7. A Retail Sales infographic was developed and used in the February and March releases. Within the infographic key points for a wide range of data were highlighted in a visual way.
8. The infographics developed by the Household Labour Market and Development Team were lifted and used by BBC, Mail, Financial Planner and the Telegraph.
9. Graphical improvements were made in the International Trade In Services release, which was tweeted by Alan Smith and then retweeted by ED Conway of Sky News to his 12,000+ followers.
10. Improvements were made to the MQ5 Bulletin. An Annual Business Survey short story on importers and exporters was developed and used by the media.
11. Internet Access Statistical Bulletin published 20 February included an infographic summary. Further improvements were made to the Bulletin in May. Two short stories on Internet Access were released in June - they covered Social Media and Internet access on the go.
12. Mergers and Acquisitions improved the graphics included in their June release.
13. Business Prices have developed an Index Contributions Analysis Tool (ICAT). This tool compares index values year on year. ICAT is currently Excel based, for internal use, but it is hoped to make this more web-friendly so that users can directly compare datasets.
14. The Retail Sales team agreed that the bulletin could be tested with a reference group that the Good Practice team have set up to review statistical bulletins. They received valuable user feedback to further inform improvements.
15. Labour Productivity, produced by Office of the Chief Economic Advisor, has received a

letter of notification from the Statistics Authority of a successful review.

16. The labour market census analysis team have been trying out longer infographics that stand alone to tell a full story.

Social Statistics Improvements

1. Improved Style and Content of Publications. Improvements include explanations of key words and phrases, captions for all pictures, Braille versions of publications and audio options being made available. Theme pages and podcasts have been introduced and twitter Q&A for users conducted.
2. Measuring National Well-being conducted a user consultation. The information gathered will be used to improve the next statistical output (30 July), for example, by using detail captured on the presentation of text - make it easy to understand, interesting and relevant.

Population and Demography Statistics Improvements

1. Life events and Population Sources made improvements to statistical commentary, which has been highlighted as an example of good practice. The Cancer annual reference volume was rewritten for the web with hyperlinks set up to improve access to content.
2. On 23 May the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report was published and was accompanied by two further products, Short Term International Migration and Seasonal Patterns of Long Term Migration.
3. The population theme page was launched two months ago, with links to short stories and visualisations.
4. The Health and Social Care theme page went live on 28 April.

Census Statistics Improvements

1. Improvements were made to the Census statistical commentary in the '2011 Census: Quick Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011'.

Annex B Priority Improvements over the next few months

The Statistical Products Working Groups will focus on how to answer Parliamentary Questions; what should be included in the background notes of bulletins; reviewing lessons learned so further improvements can be made; and continuing to provide communication and support across ONS.

Business areas have identified the following priority areas for improvements over the next few months:

Corporate

1. Infographics will be reviewed and guidance on the corporate design and style to be used will be published by IDP.
2. Work will be undertaken to improve the accessibility of ONS outputs through the use of relevant and informative infographics and short stories.
3. The Data Visualisation Centre is concentrating on moving the interactive visualisation portfolio. This will mean that all of our interactives will work with the latest generation web browsers, including tablets and mobile phones.

Business areas

1. The second estimate of GDP statistical bulletin will preannounce the introduction of a Financial Year table in the Q2 2013 Quarterly National Accounts and the availability of longer run time series.
2. It is intended to carry out a review of the revisions analysis / presentation we include in the month 2 and month 3 GDP bulletins and to develop an improvement plan based of the results of this exercise.
3. Work will be carried out to improve the statistical commentary and content of the Construction and UK Trade bulletins.
4. Development of a suite of 'myth-busting' products to help dispel some of the long-standing misconceptions of consumer price statistics held by many users.
5. Development of the Index Contributions Analysis Tool (ICAT) will continue in conjunction with the Data Visualisation team. This tool enables the visualisation of price time series data and has the potential to be used for other time series.
6. A substantial improvement will be made to the way the tables are presented in the Labour Market release to be published on 17 July. This should make it easier for our users to find the reference tables on the website.
7. Consultation with users on the publication of labour market statistics with a view towards identifying possible improvements.
8. Following engagement with users the quarterly Labour Productivity release will incorporate data previously published on an ad-hoc basis into the main release.
9. Planned short story (date not yet announced) on 'older people divorcing'.
10. Development of interactive upper tier local authority maps enabling users to select their age, gender and local authority to determine their expectation of life and health. This will enable local authority planners to compare their areas with others and with the national average. There will also be complementary information on the local authority's rank and a short summary podcast published alongside the bulletin describing healthy life expectancy in layman's language.
11. Trend in all-cause premature mortality plan to include interactive charts.

12. Timeliness and frequency of Public Sector publications are being reviewed.
13. Reviews are being carried out on how the publications meet the needs of the different user groups and draws together the information required in order to understand Public Sector Finances.
14. Increased support from the Office of the Chief Economist is currently being planned.
15. Further improvements to the Economic Review include more in-depth analytical work and the development of a more strategic approach to content and coverage, a summary table of demand and supply-side ONS releases and consideration of an overview of leading short-term indicators for the economy.
16. Celebration of 40 years of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) events are being planned, including a short story and infographics on 1973 LFS figures, a one day conference and a video of survey collection through to statistical production emphasising data security.
17. A short story format with greater use of infographics is being planned for the General Lifestyle Survey.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(13)41

Administrative Data Research Centres

Sir Andrew Dilnot's letter to Sir Alan Langlands has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-dilnot-to-sir-alan-langlands-12112013.pdf>