

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Minutes

Thursday, 6 November 2014  
Boardroom, London

### Present

#### UK Statistics Authority

Sir Andrew Dilnot (Chair)  
Professor Sir Adrian Smith  
Professor David Rhind  
Dame Colette Bowe  
Ms Carolyn Fairbairn  
Mr Ed Humpherson  
Dr David Levy  
Mr John Pullinger  
Mr Glen Watson

### Secretariat

Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Mr Jamie Hart

### Apologies

Dame Moira Gibb  
Professor David Hand

### Other Attendees

Mr Nick Bateson (for item 9)  
Ms Doreen Charlton (for item 8)  
Mr Ian Cope (for item 12)  
Mr Simon Crine (for item 10)  
Ms Vanessa Holden (for item 10)  
Mr Paul Layland (for item 7)  
Mr David Meyer (for item 8)  
Mr Martin Pepper (for item 8)  
Mr Ben Whitestone (for item 9)  
Ms Lisa Winstone (for item 9)  
Dr Neil Wooding (for items 8 and 9)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Dame Moira Gibb and Professor David Hand.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reported that Dame Moira had been appointed as a member of the Independent Panel Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. There were no further declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 October 2014 were agreed. The meeting reviewed progress with actions which were all complete or on the agenda for discussion.

3.2 The meeting noted that, since the last meeting of the Authority Board, the combined strategy, which brought together material from the existing Authority, ONS and GSS strategies had been published on 30 October.

**4. Report from the Authority Chair**

4.1 The Chair reported on the topics discussed at the Non-Executive Session that had taken place prior to the start of the meeting, and on his recent activities. These included, a meeting with Walter Radermacher, the EU Director General of Statistics.

4.2 The Chair reported that the 2015 Blue Book had been published and the Board noted the effort and professionalism shown by the team putting it together to meet deadlines in challenging circumstances. Members of the Board expressed their thanks to all those who had been involved in the work.

4.3 Following the error in public finance statistics in October, the Board discussed the risks arising from the use of administrative data and whether the risks were predominantly human or systemic. It was suggested that the risks varied depending on the data source, with some administrative data sources requiring a large amount of human judgement or interpretation, while other sources' risk stemmed from their systemic complexity. The Board acknowledged that such risks were likely to increase in the short term as more sources become available but that the risks would be mitigated in part by the ongoing work of the Monitoring and Assessment team.

**5. Report from the Chief Executive [SA(14)38]**

5.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a paper which updated the Board on progress since the last meeting and set out future actions. Over 430 statistical publications were released in October and the Board noted the recent examples of success included the reporting of crime statistics which featured some helpful pieces on the distinction between improvements to reporting of crime and actual changes in criminal activity.

5.2 The date of the forthcoming migration statistics release was noted and the Board considered whether, in the lead up to the General Election it would be helpful to prepare material on key issues such as migration ahead of the likely increase in correspondence from politicians and the general public.

5.3 The Board was updated on the progress with the ongoing recruitment of two director general posts, for economics and for data capability.

**6. Report from the Director General for Regulation [SA(14)39]**

6.1 Mr Humpherson provided an update on regulation activity since the last meeting. The Board heard that political activity on alleged abuse of statistics seemed to be increasing in the lead-up to the election. The Board agreed that it would be inappropriate for the Authority to become a general arbiter of political discourse however usage of official statistics should be in compliance with the Code of Practice and the Authority would continue to act in this regard.

6.2 The Board discussed whether the likely increase in regulatory correspondence would have an impact on resources. Mr Humpherson explained that in order to mitigate this risk in part the Monitoring and Assessment team would not be starting any new assessments.

**7. Mid-year financial report [SA(14)40]**

Mr Layland introduced a paper which provided the Board with a mid-year update on the forecast outturn for 2014/15 and also provided an update on key financial issues for the organisation. The meeting noted the update.

**8. Briefing: Cyber security presentation [SA(14)41]**

8.1 Mr Meyer and Ms Charlton introduced a paper which provided background to the briefing session on cyber security. The briefing covered the threats and opportunities, information risk management and governance, risk appetite and roles, and, responsibilities associated with cyber security. The Board thanked the presenters and agreed that the Audit and Risk Assurance committee would further consider this item.

8.2 Dr Wooding, the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) for ONS outlined his role in relation to cyber security which the Board noted.

**9. Risk Workshop [SA(14)42]**

Professor Smith introduced a paper which set out the background for the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was for the Board to identify a set of high-level strategic risks, which will be used to steer the agenda of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. *[A note covering the detail of the workshop will be circulated to the attendees in advance of the next Board meeting.]*

**10. Update on Prices [SA(14)43]**

10.1 Sir Andrew introduced a paper which provided an update on the Review of the Range of Prices Statistics (the Johnson review), and set out plans for the review's publication.

10.2 The Board noted that Mr Johnson intended to publish his review before Christmas. It was agreed that it would be very important for the Authority to hear the broad range of views in the user community in response to the report.

**11. Devolution and official statistics**

11.1 Mr Pullinger and Mr Humpherson led a discussion on the potential impact of devolution on official statistics and the Authority. This included, for example, a higher demand for greater disaggregation of UK statistical outputs. This could include the publication of breakdowns for each nation, or disaggregated statistics below the nation level.

11.2 The Board noted that there was also a pre-existing move towards greater disaggregation because there is a European regulation requiring production of certain economic statistics at state level.

**12. Proposal for a UK Statistics Authority Ethics Committee [SA(14)44]**

- 12.1 Mr Cope and Mr Bumpstead introduced a paper which presented a number of different roles for a UK Statistics Authority data ethics committee (DEC). A DEC could ensure that activities related to accessing, sharing and using data were appropriately informed by ethical considerations, which were communicated transparently, to provide assurance to the public.
- 12.2 The Board considered that a DEC could be system-wide and could help to establish consistency across the statistical system. The Board agreed that a DEC should be established which should be advisory to the National Statistician, contain independent members and be guided by a set of principles established and owned by the Board. It was agreed that further work on the proposals could be considered at the next meeting.

**13. Better Statistics, Better Decisions: Event [SA(14)45]**

- 13.1 Mr Pullinger introduced a paper which provided an update on the horizon-scanning event, 'Better Statistics, Better Decisions' to be held on the morning of 25 November. The event was being organised as part of the Authority's work to provide the leadership and vision for the official statistics system in the UK and to demonstrate to Parliament and the public the quality and relevance of official statistics.
- 13.2 The Board heard that invitations had been sent to a range of senior-level stakeholders, policy-makers and opinion formers from across the public and private sectors, media commentators, researchers and analysts. The event would include two panel discussions to explore what decision-makers wanted from official statistics in the future alongside what the general public and the media wanted from official statistics, and how official statistics could help and guide informed future decision-making. Over 100 guests had so far confirmed their attendance. The Board welcomed this update.

**14. Any Other business**

- 14.1 The Chair noted that the next regular self-review of Board meetings and submitted paper structures would be at the February Board meeting.
- 14.2 The Authority Board would meet next on 16 December 2014 at 10:30 in London.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### *Agenda*

**Thursday 6 November 2014**  
**Board Room, London, 10:30 – 16:00**

**Chair:** Sir Andrew Dilnot  
**Apologies:** Dame Moira Gibb, Professor David Hand

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declarations of interest</li> </ul>	Meeting of 021014
2	Report from the Authority Chair	Sir Andrew Dilnot
3	Report from the Chief Executive	SA(14)38 Mr John Pullinger
4	Report from the Director General for Regulation	SA(14)39 Mr Ed Humpherson
5	Mid-year financial report	SA(14)40 Mr Paul Layland
6	Briefing: Cyber security	SA(14)41 Mr David Meyer and Ms Doreen Charlton
7	Risk workshop	SA(14)42 Professor Sir Adrian Smith
8	Update on prices	SA(14)43 Sir Andrew Dilnot
9	Devolution and official statistics	Discussion Mr John Pullinger and Mr Ed Humpherson
10	Proposal for a UK Statistics Authority Ethics Committee	SA(14)44 Mr Ian Cope and Mr Robert Bumpstead
11	Better Statistics, Better Decisions: Event	SA(14)45 Mr John Pullinger
12	Any other business	

**Next meeting: Thursday 16 December 2014, 10:30 to 16:00**



## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)38

### *Chief Executive's Report, November 2014*

#### **Purpose**

1. My first two reports as Chief Executive focused on initial impressions and early actions. This report moves into the form I expect to maintain for the future, providing a brief review of the last period, highlighting current performance, risks and issues for the coming period and looking further ahead.

#### **Discussion**

##### Review of October

2. During October the National Statistics Executive Group met for the first time. This group includes senior executives from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and two Heads of Profession for statistics from outside ONS (Siobhan Carey from Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Glyn Jones from the Welsh Government) and made a good start in taking a strategic approach to performance, investment and risk management across the statistical system.
3. We published "Better Statistics, Better Decisions" bringing together the strategies of the Authority, ONS and the GSS into a single document with a combined narrative to make it easy for everyone to see how they play their part in the delivery of high quality statistics, analysis and advice to help Britain make better decisions.
4. We are currently recruiting for two additional top-level posts to further bolster the leadership team. Strengthening our governance, our strategic message and leadership team are all important milestones in creating a common purpose across the system.
5. It was a busy month for statistical releases. In total in October there were 172 National Statistics releases and a further 263 releases classified as statistics on gov.uk. The major releases on the national accounts are showing a stronger economic picture. Our figures are also showing big drops in unemployment, continuing weakness in prices and wages and an increase in the deficit. There is a strong appetite for us to explain how these and other numbers fit together and draw out insights from the detailed data.
6. Releases and reporting have generally gone well. The reporting of crime statistics this month included some helpfully nuanced pieces on the distinction between improvements to reporting of crime and actual changes in criminal activity. This is relevant to our efforts to move towards re-designation of police recorded crime statistics.
7. The most significant issue we faced was the discovery of a significant error in the last month's release on public sector finances. I felt that all concerned in ONS, HM Treasury and the Debt Management Office worked quickly and effectively to inform users about the problem and to rectify it. There were also delays to detailed labour market data that impacted on some users, including in Scotland. In addition a substantial briefing effort was required to explain the statistical background to the calculation of the UK contribution to the EU Budget.

8. Other noteworthy activities during the month were:
- i. an event hosted by BIS and ONS on the changing shape of UK manufacturing industry;
  - ii. our third economic forum;
  - iii. having improved their statistical releases, including more extensive use of engaging data visualisation, Department for Transport (DfT) will share experience across the GSS through workshops starting next week, working together with the Good Practice Team;
  - iv. the Demographic Users Group conference at which ONS was awarded the annual prize for its work to ensure that commercial users got the most out of the 2011 census;
  - v. ONS won the British Quality Foundation's Lean Six Sigma Award for its work on long term sickness absence in the interviewer field force involving collaboration across the organisation;
  - vi. a visit from Walter Radermacher, Director General of Eurostat;
  - vii. evidence given by me to the House of Commons Public Administration Committee; and
  - viii. the retirement of Caron Walker and Graeme Walker in ONS and the departure of Andy Sutherland as Head of Profession for Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC).

#### Current Performance

9. The main performance issues currently under review by the Executive Group are hitting the 9.30 release commitment, and reducing reliance on contractors and staff engagement. In addition, following agreement from HM Treasury to the ONS pay remit, we are negotiating a pay settlement for staff for 2014-15 in line with the government's public sector pay policy.
10. Our release schedule is very heavy but our users expect us to deliver the numbers on time and in formats they can access. Our target for release at 9.30 is not being met consistently enough and we are not releasing enough data in open formats. The Executive Group will review this issue in more detail at its next meeting.
11. We have set ourselves a challenging goal to reduce reliance on long term contractors by investing and developing our staff, especially in the IT area. We are currently on track to meet our objective of reducing numbers to 20 per cent of the IT full time equivalent by March 2015 from 33 per cent in March 2014.
12. Levels of staff engagement are an important performance indicator. The People Survey has been in the field this month and the results, looking across the whole of the GSS, will be reviewed over the coming weeks to help us assess the management actions that need to be taken.

#### Finance

13. ONS spending for the current financial year is on track but there are risks in either direction. On the downside we may have to rein in further as a result of the tightening fiscal position across government. On the upside some budgets are potentially a little soft and will be probed hard by the finance team over the coming months.
14. Next year is tougher as the additional funds to meet pressing priorities agreed by HM Treasury for 2013-14 and 2014-15 come to an end. The Finance team is currently working through the entire budget to ensure we can balance the books next year. From 2015-16 onwards the public spending outlook is harsh. We are taking a strategic look at

everything we do to prepare for the forthcoming Spending Review and will report progress to the Board in December with our strategic plan for the next three years expected in January.

### Programmes

15. The Programme Delivery Committee has been reviewing all programmes and taking a stronger leadership role in managing the portfolio to ensure good alignment with our strategy and best value for money from our investments. The main areas for consideration this month are the census, electronic data collection, the website and IT infrastructure.
16. The census business case is now with HM Treasury for review. Because of its financial scale, the outcome of this review has an impact on our statistical system well beyond that of any other single event.
17. The Executive Group reviewed current plans for electronic data collection and have asked for a thorough review to maximise the scale and pace of the digital dividend that can be achieved before a business case is submitted to HM Treasury.
18. Progress on the prototype (alpha) website is good. Clear success measures, based on meeting the requirements of those who rely on the site, are in place and we are on track to report as planned to the Authority Board in December.
19. A significant programme to refresh our IT infrastructure (PRISE) is at an important phase. This programme is designed to reduce dependence on a single contractor to save money while improving services and giving more opportunities to innovate.

### Risks and Issues

20. We currently have two new risks escalated to the Executive Group for management. These are security, and Welsh language compliance. Use of administrative data in National Statistics and the impact of Universal Credit on labour market data were two of the principal issues considered by the Group.
21. On security we have several systems whose security accreditation has expired. A programme of reviews is underway to ensure systems are compliant by the end of the financial year. Once this work is completed we expect to be able to reduce the level of this risk.
22. We have been reviewing our compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme. As a major employer in Wales as well as a UK government department we are seeking to improve our performance in this area. I will be meeting with the Welsh Language Commissioner in November to discuss how we might do this.
23. General concern about the reliance in National Statistics on administrative data continues. The error last month in public finance statistics is another example of our exposure. Our current programme of work to progressively reduce this risk has already made good progress. Future work will build on this and includes making sure Data Access Agreements are in place, promoting Authority findings across the GSS and monitoring how well GSS and ONS guidance is being followed.
24. Specific concerns about the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit on labour market data are being actively managed by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and

ONS to ensure that we give the best possible help to users who are looking for consistent time series.

25. In its most recent review the Executive Group has removed a number of issues from its list for consideration. These included:
- a. National Accounts classification for Private Finance 2; and
  - b. challenges to ONS methods of deflating National Accounts.

Future Look

26. In the month ahead we will be focusing on future planning. On 25 November we are hosting an event on "Better Statistics, Better Decisions". This will feed into our forward work plan for 2015-16 to 2017-18 and our analysis for the Spending Review.
27. By Christmas we hope to have a costed plan developed for review by the Board in January alongside the results of our latest Public Confidence in Official Statistics survey. Once this has been reviewed by the Board we will put in place more structured management information for the period from 1 April and I will issue formal delegations to budget holders before the start of the new financial year.

**John Pullinger, 30 October 2014**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)39

### *Report from the Director General for Regulation*

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on regulation activity since the last meeting.

#### **Recommendation**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to note progress and planned actions.

#### **Discussion**

3. Key developments on the regulatory side of the Authority since the last meeting of the Authority Board include
  - i. my advice on the Public Sector Finance errors. I was grateful for the Board's timely response, and agreement that the Authority should not suspend temporarily the National Statistics status of the Public Sector Finance statistics.
  - ii. Well-being: I attended an event in Washington DC to speak about the Authority's approach to measuring personal and national wellbeing. The event was hosted by the US Commission for National Statistics. They were interested in the well-being statistics - particularly because the US statistical community is reluctant to embark on a programme to measure well-being as part of their official statistics series. So they were keen to understand the factors that led the ONS to launch a comprehensive programme of well-being measurement. On well-being, I also spoke in the UK alongside Lord O'Donnell at the launch of the *What Works Well-being Centre* in Bristol.
  - iii. While in the US I also gave several presentations on the UK statistical system. The US practitioners were keen to understand how the Government Statistical Service (GSS) works in the UK, and were intrigued by the Authority's regulatory function. There is no real parallel in the US. For my part, it struck me that their list of strategic concerns aligns very closely with ours: greater use of administrative data to supplement/replace surveys; the impact of Big Data on official statistics; and, privacy. The one issue that we do not face to the same extent is pressure from Congress to cut back on the range of questions asked of citizens in annual surveys.
  - iv. On our programme of work on quality assurance of administrative data, we have continued to engage widely with statisticians and policy makers, including at events with HM Treasury, the Ministry of Defence, NHS and Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), the Northern Ireland Administration and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). We are also planning on holding a public event at the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) on 5 December.
  - v. We continue to build alliances with Full Fact, and also regulators, with whom we are exploring good practice and work shadowing/exchanges (Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact).
  - vi. We held a team event in Edinburgh, focussed on developing the National Statistics brand, enhancing our impact, and improving the regulatory content on

the Authority's website. We also discussed a revised business plan, which incorporates a proposal for a marginal increase in resources for regulation.

Concerns, risks and areas of focus for December

4. There are three main areas of focus for December:

i. Administrative data

The aim of our work on administrative data, referred to above, is to create a common framework to assess the quality of the underlying data that feeds into many official statistics. It is intended to be proportionate and constructive. However the signs from our engagement across the GSS are that we are not completely achieving this aim, with some misunderstanding and concern among statisticians. We're going to need to rethink our communications approach.

ii. Crime

This continues to be a busy area. After removing the National Statistics designation for England and Wales in January, we did the same for Scotland in August. We are now assessing the Northern Ireland statistics, which may be a more positive story. We are in active discussion in all three locations as police forces, the inspectorates and constabularies look to improve the assurance on quality of crime recording. At the same time however, there is media concern about the extent to which fraud and cybercrime are captured in official statistics.

iii. Economic statistics

We have two major reviews coming out in the next quarter: first, on using deflators to get to real numbers (for example if comparing public expenditure over time); and second, on income and earnings statistics. Given that both issues, comparisons of expenditure and standards of living, are likely to feature in the General Election, these are important outputs. The risk I see is that they may be overly technical and fail to communicate clear findings.

5. Beyond this, casework, responding to public instances of misuse of statistics, continues to be an active area, although my assessment at present is that we are handling the increased load effectively (for example the Prime Minister's (PM) references to paying down the nation's debts).

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, 31 October 2014.**

SA(14)40 – Mid-year financial report

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(14)40

***Mid-year financial report***

The Annual Report 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(14)41

4

***Briefing: Cyber Security*****Purpose**

1. This note provides background to a briefing session on cyber security, to be provided at the Authority Board meeting.

**Background**

2. The Cabinet Office wishes to raise Board level awareness and understanding of cyber security across government. A briefing will be provided at the meeting. The briefing will cover threats and opportunities, information risk management and governance, risk appetite and roles, and, responsibilities.
3. The briefing will be provided by:
  - i. Ms Doreen Charlton, Management Board Liaison Manager for the Information Assurance and Cyber Security Engagement Programme, National Archives; and
  - ii. Mr David Meyer, specialist consultant, former Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office until autumn 2013.
4. Other attendees at the briefing will be:
  - i. Mr Michael Trevett, Head of the Office of the Government Senior Information Risk Owner, responsible for managing pan-government risk on behalf of the Government Senior Information Risk Owner. Mr Trevett was formerly SIRO for ONS;
  - ii. Mr Martin Pepper, Departmental Security Officer and Head of Information Assurance for ONS; and
  - iii. Mr Neil Wooding, Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Capability, and SIRO for ONS.
5. Some Authority Board members with the necessary security clearance have received a more detailed security briefing on this subject. We are able to arrange more detailed briefings for those who have the necessary clearance.

**Joe Cuddeford, Office of the Board and Chief Executive, 29 October 2014**



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(14)42

***Authority risk workshop***

5

**Purpose**

1. This paper sets out the background for a workshop to be held at the Authority Board. The purpose of the workshop is for the Board to identify a set of high-level strategic risks, which will be used to steer the agenda of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The workshop will not be focussed on operational risk, risk recording or management, or any processes associated with mitigation. Professor Sir Adrian Smith has agreed to chair the workshop.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Authority Board are invited to participate in a discussion and prioritisation exercise to agree five or six key strategic risks.

**Background**

3. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held its first meeting with Dame Colette Bowe as the Chair on 1 October 2014. Priorities for the year were discussed. As part of that discussion it was agreed that a risk workshop to be held at the Authority Board meeting on 6 November would shape the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's forward agenda.
4. In addition to members of the Authority Board, the following additional attendees will join the meeting for the risk workshop:
  - i. Neil Wooding (Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Capability, ONS)
  - ii. Lisa Winstone (Head of Internal Audit, ONS)
  - iii. Ben Whitestone (Head of Integrated Planning, ONS)
  - iv. Nick Bateson (Director, HM Treasury Group at the National Audit Office)

**Jamie Hart, Office of the Board and Chief Executive, 29 October 2014**



SA(14)43 – Update on prices

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(14)43

***Update on prices***

The review of the range of prices statistics will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.



## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)44

### *Data Ethics Committee*

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper presents a number of different roles for a UK Statistics Authority data ethics committee (DEC). The roles presented are not mutually exclusive.
2. A number of drivers make consideration of this proposal timely:
  - i. the requirement for ethical approval to enable government and third sector researchers to access the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN);
  - ii. a need for more robust scrutiny for data shares to improve cross-government consistency in data sharing; and
  - iii. greater use of identifiable administrative data (including real-time administrative and big data) for projects related to official statistics including Beyond 2011.
3. Principal characteristics of this committee would include:
  - i. an advisory capacity;
  - ii. independence from production and regulation of statistics; and
  - iii. transparent operation.

#### **Recommendations**

4. Members of the Authority Board are invited to:
  - i. consider whether an Authority DEC is required;
  - ii. discuss the merits of the different roles presented;
  - iii. identify any other potential roles; and
  - iv. discuss the composition of such a committee.

#### **Background**

5. The strategic direction for the Authority over the next five years sets out the ambition for much greater use of routinely collected information for the production of statistical outputs. Such information includes real time, administrative and big data. Given the potential public acceptability and privacy implications of using this type of data, there is a case for the organisation to consider the benefits of a coordinated and transparent ethical advisory structure. This could ensure that activities related to accessing, sharing and using data are appropriately informed by ethical considerations which are communicated transparently. This would help to provide assurance to the public and make it easier for the Authority to defend the way in which it accesses, shares and uses data in the face of any challenge.

#### **Discussion**

6. The paragraphs below present the potential roles for a DEC. These range from providing ethical advice to projects on a case-by-case basis to developing higher level ethical frameworks for the organisation and wider government.

#### *Roles and Benefits*

7. An internal ONS Ethics Advisory Panel has existed in the past but this is no longer active. When in existence most issues which required ethical consideration related to social data collection activity. Consequently, business areas wishing to get ethical guidance and/or approval with regards to accessing, sharing and using data as well as

undertaking novel or contentious surveys, currently have no place within the organisation to go to. One role for the DEC would be to fill this gap which would benefit the organisation.

8. One option would be to create a DEC, which could provide ethical consideration of proposals to access, share and use data on a case-by-case basis. This could provide a single point of contact within the organisation for ethical consideration of these activities and could help facilitate the delivery of consistent ethical standards in relation to these activities across the office. Some government ethics committees such as Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Data Access and Ethics Committee and the ONS Ethics Advisory Panel, solely review proposed work on a case-by-case basis.
9. A DEC of this type could also benefit the wider research community by providing ethical approval for some government and third sector researchers who wish to access the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN). The ADRN is a UK wide partnership between universities, government departments and agencies, funders and the wider research community to help accredited researchers carry out social and economic research on de-identified administrative data in a secure environment. In order to gain access to the ADRN, which the Authority provides the governing body for, researchers have to confirm that their research proposal has been subjected to ethical review by a formal ethics panel. This will be problematic for most government and third sector researchers who do not have access to a formal ethics panel within their organisation. One possibility would be for the ADRN Board to establish its own ethics panel, but this would leave open the question of ethical consideration of all work outside the scope of the ADRN.
10. Another option would be to create a DEC that could develop a consistent ethical framework for relevant projects related to official statistics. For example, the Beyond 2011 Programme will continue to use government and private data in innovative ways. In addition, the Big Data Project is conducting work to understand the impact that big data may have on statistical processes and outputs. This could involve data scraping information from social media websites and using location information from mobile phones which is hard to de-identify. A DEC would be beneficial in helping to ensure maximum ethical safeguards for the use of such data in a transparent and independent manner. Under this option a subcommittee could be formed to consider current operational issues.
11. The DEC could have a Government Statistical Service (GSS) wide remit. This could involve developing an ethical data framework, and/or an ethical review panel, to consider data issues from across government. There is a case for a cross-government committee because other government department ethics committees tend to be department specific with differences in the scope and nature of each committee. This could give the Authority a lead role in developing an ethical data framework for accessing, sharing and using data within government. This is a space that other government departments are taking an active interest in. For instance, Cabinet Office, are looking into producing an ethical data framework for government, including the possibility of a government ethical review panel for data use. Any proposals from the Authority should be co-ordinated with the Cabinet Office proposals.
12. A DEC fulfilling this role could also potentially accelerate the approval of information sharing orders and improve the consistency of cross-departmental data sharing decision making.

### Characteristics

13. The DEC would be advisory and would provide advice to the chair and chief executive of the Authority.
14. The Board are invited to consider the composition of a DEC. For instance should it be chaired by a member of the Authority Board or an independent figure? Should membership of the DEC include lay members (which would help to command public support) and/or individuals from other government departments? In addition should all members of such a DEC be independent of the production and regulation of statistics?
15. An important characteristic of any potential DEC should be that it would operate transparently. Meeting agendas, papers and minutes could be made publicly available in a single space on the Authority website. In addition, an annual report on the work of the committee could be produced. This could greatly improve how the Authority disseminates information to the public on what data it accesses, shares and uses. The IPSOS Mori research, conducted in 2013, which explored the public's views on using and linking administrative data for research purposes, illustrated the importance of transparency to the public when it comes to how administrative data is used.
16. This transparency would enable the organisation to report the ethical considerations that have been taken into account when making decisions about accessing, sharing and using data. The improved visibility of these ethical considerations would make it easier for the Authority to justify, and/or defend, the way in which it accesses, shares and uses data in the face of any challenge. The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) have recently revised their practice and now publish their data shares on a quarterly basis. This is more transparent than the way in which the Authority currently operates.
17. There would be some costs associated with setting up a DEC. Although panel members would not be remunerated, the committee would require secretariat support. Should the DEC be responsible for providing ethical approval of ADRN projects, and/or work from other government departments, these organisations could be charged for some of the costs associated with any DEC.

### **Conclusion**

18. This paper presents a number of different roles for an Authority DEC. These roles are not mutually exclusive. The Board are invited to discuss the need for, and benefits of, such a committee, the different roles presented and the composition of the committee.

**Robert Bumpstead, Office of the Board and Chief Executive, and Ian Cope, Population and Demography Directorate, 24 October 2014**



## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

SA(14)45

### *Better Statistics, Better Decisions: Event*

#### **Purpose**

1. This note provides an update on the horizon-scanning event, 'Better Statistics, Better Decisions' to be held on the morning of 25 November.

#### **Background**

2. The event is being organised as part of the Authority's work (set out in the February 2013 statement of strategy) to provide the leadership and vision for the official statistics system in the UK and to demonstrate to Parliament and the public the quality and relevance of official statistics.
3. Invitations have been sent to a range of senior-level stakeholders, policy-makers and opinion formers from across the public and private sectors, media commentators, researchers and analysts. The event will include two panel discussions to explore what decision-makers want from official statistics in the future alongside what the general public and the media want from official statistics, and how official statistics can help and guide informed future decision-making.
4. It is hoped that the event will provide valuable insight and reflections from which a meaningful 'blueprint' for the future UK statistical system can be produced; inform planning around the organisational response to the 2015 Spending Review; and generally to aid further understanding of the decisions that are being, or will be, informed by official statistics and the supporting capabilities within the statistical service that are needed to ensure that happens. The event will also demonstrate the Authority's engagement with a broad audience for UK official statistics across a range of different sectors both outside government and within it.
5. Over 150 invitations have been sent in recent weeks. Just over 100 guests have so far confirmed (including 11 speakers, 66 external guests, plus Authority Board members and Office for National Statistics (ONS)/Authority staff), and those who have not responded are actively being re-contacted.
6. The event has been designed to allow for approximately a 50:50 split between contributions from speakers, and contributions from the floor. This is intended to encourage varied insights and areas of questioning which will provide rich material for the programme of work to follow.
7. The agenda for the event is at **Annex A**.

**Ross Young and Suzanne Halls, Office of the Board and Chief Executive,  
30 October 2014**

#### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Event agenda**



**Annex A      Event agenda**

**Better Statistics, Better Decisions**  
 Tuesday 25 November 2014  
 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ  
 9.30am to 12.55pm (Registration from 9.00am)

**AGENDA**

- from 9.00am **Registration** (tea and coffee, pastries)
- 9.30am **Welcome** – Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
- 9.40am **Speaker** – Rt. Hon. David Willetts MP (confirmed) (Q&A at 10.00am)
- 10.20am **Panel discussion**  
*What do decision-makers want from statistics?*  
 (Chair: Sir Andrew Dilnot) (Q&A at 10.55am)
- Panellists (*approx 5 mins*):  
 Charlotte Hogg (Bank of England) (confirmed)  
 John Vine CBE QPM (Chief Inspector of Borders) (confirmed)  
 Loraine Hawkins (Chief Analyst, NHS England) (confirmed)  
 Andrew Greenaway (Government Office for Science) (confirmed)  
 Dr Paul Leinster (Chief Executive, Environment Agency) (confirmed)
- 11.20am **Refreshments**
- 11.40am **Panel discussion**  
*What do the public want from statistics?*  
 (Q&A at 12.10pm)  
 Panellists:  
 (*approx 5 mins*)  
 Ben Page (Ipsos-Mori) (confirmed)  
 Hetan Shah (Royal Statistical Society) (confirmed)  
 Will Moy (FullFact) (confirmed)  
 Jeni Tennison (Open Data Institute) (confirmed)  
 Sue Cameron (Daily Telegraph) (confirmed)
- 12.40pm **Reflections** – John Pullinger, National Statistician and Chief Executive, UKSA
- 12.50pm **Concluding remarks** – Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
- 12.55pm Depart