

MEETING OF THE STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17th May 2018
Conference Room, Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast, BT9 5RR

In attendance

Mr Philip McDonagh (Chair)	
Ms Sharon McNicholl	
Dr Chris Morris	
Dr Bernie Stuart	
Mr John Compton	
Mr Derek Bond	
Dr Kieran Payne	
Mr Richard Ramsey	
Ms Siobhan Carey	NISRA
Dr David Marshall	NISRA
Mr Gerard Colgan	NISRA
Dr James Gillan	NISRA
Mr Niall O'Neil	NISRA
Mr Sandy Fitzpatrick	NISRA
Ms Cathryn Blair	NISRA
Miss Clare Kennedy	NISRA, Secretary

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that apologies were received from Professor Jones, and Dr Power. It was also noted that Mr Ramsey had to be excused from the meeting at 11am.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes from the previous two meetings (February 2018, October 2017) had been circulated and Mr McDonagh invited comments from the Committee.</p> <p>It was highlighted that the action from the October minutes regarding the committee's involvement in the preparation of the business burden report had not yet been completed.</p> <p>Dr Marshall followed this up, with the suggestion that the committee could give their advice on what improvements could be made, based on last year's report and these could be implemented in the upcoming report. Secondly, Dr Marshall added that the committee may wish to respond to the report when published by giving a statement. This could be recorded as a press release which would accompany the report on the website.</p> <p>The committee agreed that they were content with this line of action.</p> <p>The February minutes were reviewed, with Mr Bond and Dr Morris noting their absence from the minutes despite being at the meeting. Mr McDonagh mentioned that he followed up with the Business Bodies after the last meeting to thank them for attending and also provided them with a copy of the presentations on EU Exit and Economic and labour market statistics update.</p>	<p>NISRA to seek committee's advice on previously published Business Burden Report and incorporate this into the upcoming one.</p> <p>Committee to give an accompanying statement on Business Burden when the report is published.</p> <p>Secretary to add Mr Bond and Mr Morris to the February minutes.</p>

	<p>The question was posed about the progress NISRA had made with regards further engagement with the Business Bodies and data users. Dr Marshall explained that there has been engagement with the hospitality sector and in particular Colin Neil from Hospitality Ulster and that further engagement would be covered in the EU exit update, by Dr Gillan.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh also stated that the February meeting ended by thanking Robin Griffith for his hard work as secretary, wishing him luck in his new role, and welcoming the new secretary Clare Kennedy.</p>	<p>Secretary to add notes on thanking Robin for his time as secretary and welcoming Clare as new secretary to the February minutes.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>Mr McDonagh noted that he unfortunately could not attend the launch of the Revised Code of Practice.</p> <p>Ms Carey give an update on the event, noting that it was a success with a very good turnout at the City Hall. Ms Carey also took the opportunity to thank those members of the committee who were involved in reviewing the Code of Practice, which fed directly into the revised Code.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>ELMS Update</p> <p>Mr Colgan prefaced the ELMS update by noting that the paper was delayed in being issued in order to incorporate the Labour Force Survey Report, published on Tuesday 15th May.</p> <p>Statutory</p> <p>The first item on the ELMS update, was with regards the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) additional questions. Mr Colgan give an overview of the two additional questions on migration and vacancies, the potential risks associated with their inclusion and the estimated impact on Survey Burden.</p> <p>The committee asked for a brief overview of the Business Register and Employment Survey before discussing the additional questions.</p> <p>Mr Colgan explained that BRES is an annual survey of businesses which operates on a 4 yearly cycle of sample sizes, ranging from a full census of approx. 70,000 businesses to a small sample of 12,000 businesses. The survey serves two purposes: (i) to obtain employment figures, which are published at varying geographic units and industry levels, (ii) Maintain the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR).</p> <p>In respect to business burden, the full extent is unknown at the minute, however estimates indicate that the additional two questions will increase the burden on business by 12%-15%.</p> <p>Dr Stuart enquired about how someone of dual nationality would be recorded. Dr Marshall responded by noting that this was a live issue not only in this survey but in ongoing household surveys. Businesses would be required to make an overall judgement on the nationality of employees.</p> <p>Dr Morris questioned whether businesses know the nationality of their employees. Dr Marshall responded saying there is evidence that this was the case, including from the recent meeting with Hospitality Ulster.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh went on the raise the question of agency workers and how they are captured. Mrs Blair explained that currently the process for collecting the information from agencies within BRES is centred on the payroll the agency staff are paid via. For example, if an agency employee is paid via the agency itself, the agency will include the</p>	<p>NISRA to provide a progress update on the BRES additional questions at the next meeting.</p>

<p>employee in their returned figures, whereas if the employee is paid via the payroll of the business they are working for, the employee will be recorded in the survey return for the business itself. Therefore this will be the same process for the question on migrants.</p> <p>Mr Compton followed this up by asking about agency workers who fall into the category of working in Northern Ireland, but who are employed via a staffing agency that is not based in Northern Ireland. Mrs Blair conceded that this scenario is something to consider for the Business Register and Employment Survey in general and not specific to the two additional questions.</p> <p>The committee were happy with the proposed additional questions and it was agreed that there would be an update on the progress at the next meeting.</p> <p>Mr Colgan moved on to the second statutory matter, highlighting that this was not included in the paper, as it had only arisen the previous afternoon. The item is based on extending the coverage of the ONS Retail Trade Statistics from a GB basis to a UK basis, which would require a small Northern Ireland sample. This initial scoping project is part of the ONS Data Collection Transformation Programme and the proposal is to go live in October.</p> <p>One of the concerns raised is that this will be the first use of the new Statistical Business Register (SBR) which reports at enterprise level, whereas in Northern Ireland we report at reporting unit level. This would require a piece of work to identify where this differs. It will also be the first survey to incorporate the VAT/Turnover data from the new SBR. Therefore there will be a potential for increased business burden until differences in the reporting data are aligned.</p> <p>Mr Ramsey questioned whether down the line this would mean there would be an NI survey on retail trade, as IOS doesn't currently report to that level of detail. Ms Blair responded that initially there would be a small NI sample as part of the UK index, but in the future there could be a sample boost for NI in order to create a Northern Ireland specific Index.</p> <p>The committee posed questions on the thoughts given to communication with businesses who would be negatively impacted by this, or if the sample design could ensure there wouldn't be an overlap. Mrs Blair explained that despite an increase in survey burden initially, the long term survey burden should be reduced, and this should be emphasised when communicating with the businesses.</p> <p>Dr Payne suggested that as part of the communication, we could advise respondents to retain the information from the first survey to help them complete the second survey.</p> <p>Non - Statutory</p> <p>Mr Colgan give an overview of the non-statutory matters including a quick update on the meeting he attended in Edinburgh for the Devolved Economic Statistics Co-ordination group (DESC). Mr Colgan noted that it was a very useful meeting as it enables a platform for sharing information across all the devolved administrations.</p> <p>Other items highlighted by Mr. Colgan included an update on the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) targets that were surpassed by both the Quarterly Business Survey, reaching 59% response rate by EDC and ASHE surpassing the 25% response rate target for an annual survey.</p> <p>Mr Ramsey commented that there is an increasing interest in intergenerational differences in economic statistics in the light of the recent report by the</p>	<p>NISRA to circulate more information with regards the extended coverage of the ONS Retail Trade Statistics when more details emerge.</p>
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	Intergenerational Foundation and particularly the millennial generation. He suggested that economic statistics should focus on these differentials.	
5.	<p>EU Exit Update</p> <p>Dr Gillan provided the committee with an overview of the progress on the EU Exit analysis and their upcoming work.</p> <p>Dr Gillan shared an infographic of people movement and migration, summarising their work as looking for a detailed matrix of the trade of goods North-South and East-West.</p> <p>In terms of their North-South/ East-West Freight Research, they have established that they need to build a comprehensive picture of the movement of freight, ferry and haulage movement. In order to do this their next step is to engage with UK Chamber of Shipping and NIRC.</p> <p>The work to date has been based on high level information of ‘what is in the truck’ but for more detailed information, there may be a requirement for a short notice survey, hopefully run by the ONS.</p> <p>Mr Compton noted that it is important to be certain of what the data and information is needed for and to let this determine the level of detail required if a survey was put in place. If the information was required post brexit, and as part of a new tariff regime, a lower level of disaggregation would be required. Dr Gillan agreed with these sentiments. Mr Compton went on to note that if corporation tax had been triggered by the treasury, there would be information available from HMRC at an enterprise level. Dr Gillan said that currently they are receiving HMRC data of transactions per month, however there is no way of disaggregating this into individual trips.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh asked if the committee would be happy to accept correspondence as the method to agree a short term survey, to which all approved.</p> <p>Dr Gillan discussed the North South Supply Chain Survey, emphasising the complexity of the supply chains and the importance of low level data.</p> <p>The final item on the EU exit update was Trade Modelling, with NISRA providing data to DFE by linking survey data and HMRC data. This item was suggested as a possible topic for presentation for the next meeting.</p> <p>Ms McNicholl acknowledged the insight this information would provide to help us understand the impact of the various scenarios resulting from an EU Exit. However the question was raised that this work seems very resource intensive and burdensome for NISRA and Businesses, for scenarios that we aren’t even in yet.</p> <p>Ms Carey accepted this comment and recognised that NISRA have had to use resources flexibly to accommodate the work on the EU Exit. Ms Carey also noted that the last SAC meeting opened the door for us to further explore other sources of data to aid this project. Dr Gillan added that from a business perspective, businesses are very willing to help by providing their data.</p> <p>Dr Payne queried whether any technologies had been explored to help with this research. Mr Compton and Ms Carey replied by raising that the biggest issue is when the data and information is not available in the first case.</p>	<p>NISRA to explore the possibility of DFE colleagues presenting on trade modelling for the next committee meeting.</p>
6.	Census 2021 Update	

	<p>Dr Marshall provided the committee with an overview of the 2021 census, including details on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background of the census and the uses of the Census information • User engagement and public consultation • Process, scale and timeline • Procurement • Questions, content and enhanced census output • Response rates and online data collection target • Use of administrative data • Proposals paper – Autumn 2019 <p>Dr Payne suggested considering the use of commercial data sources for address checking. Dr Marshall agreed that whilst commercial data could be further explored, he was cautious of the possible costs.</p> <p>Dr Morris mentioned that he would like to see consistent geographic outputs for comparison purposes. However Dr Marshall raised the point that ward and council boundaries have changed since the last Census, with Dr Fitzpatrick adding that for the most consistent geographic outputs, grid square data was the best option as they do not change.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>NI: In Profile</p> <p>Mr O’Neil introduced his presentation on Northern Ireland: In Profile by giving everyone a short quiz to complete.</p> <p>The presentation included information on Northern Ireland with regards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Change in population and the population pyramid -Distribution of household size -Life expectancy -Health -Transport and Travel -Environment -Technology and internet -Wages -Labour Market <p>Ms Carey added that this has been shared widely and with a range of audiences from the Permanent Secretary, across Departments, and within councils.</p> <p>The committee remarked that they found the presentation very interesting and found the quiz eye opening with regards what they knew or thought they knew about Northern Ireland and statistics.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh suggested that it may be a good presentation for the likes of NICVA.</p>	<p>NISRA to explore presenting the NI: In profile information to NICVA.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Official Statistics Update</p> <p>Dr Marshall provided the official statistics update, which included information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The assessment of official statistics - Reported breaches - Code of Practice for statistics <p>Ms Carey highlighted how the learning piece on the Code of Practice is never done and the launch of the revised Code of Practice will certainly help with this issue.</p>	

<p>9.</p>	<p>SAC Membership Update</p> <p>Dr Marshall noted that for the majority of members their current term on the Statistics Advisory Committee ends at the beginning of June 2018. It was posed by Dr Marshall that membership could be extended for at least a year if the members were happy to do so.</p> <p>The committee agreed to this proposition. Dr Marshall stated that the next action to take would be to write to the commissioner and each of the members to agree the extension.</p> <p>Dr Marshall also raised the point that the review of the members would also need to be completed as part of the extension process. Mr McDonagh agreed to begin conducting the reviews and let the members know that he will be in touch soon with regards to this.</p>	<p>NISRA to write to the commissioner and each of the members to gain confirmation of their agreement to extend membership by at least one year.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh to conduct review of the SAC members.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>AOB / Dates and agenda items for October 2018 meeting</p> <p>Secretary to issue doodle poll for next meeting.</p> <p>The next meeting is due a presentation from one the Departments, and one option raised earlier in the meeting is to have DFE present on their Economic Modelling.</p> <p>Dr Stuart gave an update on the potential opportunity of CPANI mentoring, and unfortunately noted that there was poor timing for the scheme, but it still remains a possibility in the future.</p> <p>Mr Compton was eager to ask about GDPR and its impact on NISRA. Dr Marshall noted that by following the previous DPA guidance, this has given the Agency a solid understanding of data collection and asset owners.</p> <p>Mr Compton remarked that there is a very interesting section which seems appropriate for NISRA in section 6.1F which alludes to data collection if there is a common interest.</p> <p>Mr Compton also suggested that it would be worthwhile sending a copy of the quiz to the NI Business Bodies.</p>	<p>NISRA to liaise with DFE colleagues to ask if they would be willing to present to the committee on their Economic Modelling.</p> <p>NISRA to send copy of NI:IN Profile quiz to NI Business Bodies</p>