

MEETING OF THE STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
11th February 2016
Ulster Bank, 11-16 Donegall Square East, Belfast, BT1 5UB

In attendance

Mr Philip McDonagh (Chair)

Mr Derek Bond

Mr John Compton

Mrs Sharon McNicholl

Dr Chris Morris

Mrs Esther Ervin

Mr Richard Ramsey

Dr Bernie Stuart

Dr James Gillan

Mrs Oonagh Neenan

NISRA

Dr Alan McClelland

NISRA

Dr David Marshall

NISRA

Dr Tracy Power

NISRA

Miss Ruth Fulton

NISRA

Mrs Marie Webb

NISRA, Secretary

Mrs Eilish Murtagh

NISRA, Secretariat

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Mrs Neenan and Dr McClelland who were attending to address specific items on the agenda, and Miss Fulton who has recently joined Statistical Support and Business Planning branch in NISRA.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Professor David Jones and Dr Kieran Payne.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes and Matters arising from June Meeting</p> <p>The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting (October 2015), subject to the amendment noted by Dr Gillan i.e. item 5 to read "In particular he advised the Committee that NISRA are continuing to work with the ONS Methodology team to develop the Purchases Inquiry questionnaire and methodology required to enable this survey to begin in February and May 2016". Mrs Webb to amend the minutes of the October 2015 meeting as noted.</p> <p>All actions from the previous meeting were recorded as complete.</p>	<p>Mrs Webb to amend the minutes of the October 2015 meeting as noted.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>Mr McDonagh updated the Committee on the meeting which he, Mr Bond and Dr Morris attended with Jil Matheson, former National Statistician, and Chair of the Impartiality Review of BBC reporting of Statistics.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh further noted that the next meeting of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (SSISI) will be held at 4pm on 24th March in McAuley House Board Room. Details will be circulated to members.</p> <p>In view of their imminent retirement plans, Mr McDonagh thanked Mrs Webb for her work as Secretary for the Committee in recent years and Mrs Murtagh for her secretariat support.</p>	<p>Mrs Webb to circulate further details of SSISI meeting.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Committee Forward Meeting Programme</p> <p>Given the two roles of the Committee as outlined in the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 (i.e. advising on the collection of statistical information from businesses under the Order, and advising on other issues referred by Departments), Mr McDonagh proposed that future agendas should include both of these elements, supplemented by an item on topical issues. The intention to invite the business representatives to attend a Committee meeting on an annual basis was also noted. Finally, given the departmental restructuring programme, it was proposed that each future meeting should include an invitation to a Departmental Head of Statistics to present to the Committee on a rotational basis.</p> <p>In discussion, members agreed that meetings should be held in February, June and October. It was also suggested that the agenda should differentiate clearly between statutory and non-statutory items.</p> <p>It was agreed that Business representatives will be invited to attend the June meeting which will also include a presentation from Tracy Power on PFG.</p> <p>Dr Marshall will circulate details of a proposed forward meeting programme for consideration by members.</p>	<p>Dr Marshall to circulate details of forward meeting programme to members.</p> <p>Dr Power to take forward stakeholder engagement with business representatives as part of PFG process.</p> <p>Secretariat to structure agenda to clearly identify statutory and non-statutory issues.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>NISRA Economic and Labour Market Statistics</p> <p>Dr Gillan updated the Committee on NISRA's economic and labour market statistics as detailed in SAC 02/2016.</p> <p>In relation to statutory issues, the Committee was consulted on the NI Quarterly Business Survey (QBS) which is planned for March 2016. The QBS combines the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) questions which are</p>	

voluntary, with those on the quarterly outputs survey, which is statutory, using an integrated questionnaire. The new survey will mean fewer forms being issued to NI businesses, and an associated reduction in compliance costs. Other benefits include the harmonisation of methodology; consistent processes; and a reduced number of surveys and systems to maintain in the long term. In response to a question from Mr Ramsey, Dr Gillan noted that there are no plans in the short term to merge the IOP/IOS and QES publication but a user consultation will be carried out to explore this further. Dr Gillan further noted that the agricultural sector is outside the scope of the QBS. In response to a query from Mrs McNicholl about providing quarterly District Council Area based estimates, Dr Gillan indicated that the design for the quarterly survey precluded this as returns were not collected by DCA. Such information was only collected annually to reduce the burden on business. Dr Gillan outlined the basis of the sample design for the survey.

After discussion the Committee endorsed the proposed way ahead in relation to QBS.

Dr Gillan updated the Committee on a range of non-statutory issues as detailed in SAC 02/2016. In particular he advised the Committee that NISRA is continuing to liaise with ONS on the Purchases Inquiry. The questionnaire has been agreed and the NI sample boost has been integrated into the survey selection parameters. The survey will go live at end February 2016. The Committee members noted the development of the Inquiry.

Dr Gillan also updated members on ongoing work on the Quarterly Construction Enquiry (QCE) necessitated by the plans to integrate the QCE into the new Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). After user consultation NISRA has developed a new QCE questionnaire which incorporates additional questions on work done in GB, ROI and the rest of the world. The new questionnaire is being piloted by Central Survey Unit with a view to moving to the new design permanently in July 2016.

The Committee noted that ONS is continuing to progress work on a quarterly turnover survey using administrative data sources for the short term indicators and National Accounts at UK level. Dr Gillan indicated that NISRA is investigating whether NI can adopt a similar approach in due course, subject to appropriate data sharing gateways being in place.

Following the publication of the NI Broad Economy Exports methodology paper in March 2015, covering data for 2011 and 2012, work is on going to update this series with the latest 2013 and 2014 data, with publication planned for 17th February. In response to a question from Mr Ramsey, Dr Gillan noted that data is already published for the manufacturing sector.

Dr Gillan apprised the Committee of the latest development in relation to Regional and Economic Accounts.

It was also noted that BRES and QES are both back on track in terms of publication dates.

	<p>Mrs Neenan gave a short update on the latest Labour Market indicators as outlined in SAC 02/2016. She updated members on methodological improvements to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) using a pooled sample approach. The larger available sample will allow the production of more robust estimates from the LFS. Central Survey Unit, in consultation with ELMS and ONS, is also currently assessing potential ways to improve LFS response rates which have been decreasing recently, including the feasibility of introducing a boost to the LFS sample.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>DETI –Analytical Services Unit</p> <p>Dr McClelland updated the Committee on the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy Survey 2015, which is statutory. The survey was issued to 41,483 businesses in February 2015 of which 3,600 were businesses in Northern Ireland. In line with the results for the UK as a whole, the response rate for NI was 78.3% with 9.7% of sampled NI businesses reporting low carbon or renewable energy activity.</p> <p>ONS published key findings for 2014 in December 2015 and this will be followed by additional focused articles and reports over the coming months. The final report due in April 2016 will represent the comprehensive final estimate of the economic contribution of the low carbon and renewable energy business activities to the UK economy.</p> <p>In terms of the burden on business provisional figures for the UK as a whole for 2015 were £62k, with the NI figure being £2,500.</p> <p>Following the successful completion of the 2015 survey, funders agreed to repeat the survey in 2016.</p> <p>Dr McClelland drew the Committee’s attention to recent statistical publications and key analytical work currently underway within DETI’s Analytical Services Unit as outlined in SAC 03/2016.</p> <p>In discussion, Dr McClelland noted that the analytical work on the National Living Wage will not use any secondary factors and will not link into the impact of Universal Credit. Mrs Ervin noted that the farming community is concerned about the impact of the latter.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Independent Review of UK Economic Statistics</p> <p>Dr Marshall updated the Committee on the Bean Review of Economic Statistics, noting the key points made by NISRA in its response to the consultation exercise. The interim report which was published in December 2015 focussed largely on UK/ONS issues. However, Dr Marshall noted that, subsequent to the publication of the interim report, he and Dr Gillan met with Sir Charles Bean and raised a number of issues particularly pertinent to NISRA, including access to administrative data and governance issues. It is hoped that these points will be reflected in the final report.</p>	<p>Committee Sub-group to submit a response to the Bean Review.</p>

	<p>After further discussion it was agreed that a sub-group of the Committee comprising Mr McDonagh, Dr Stuart, Mrs McNicholl, and Mr Compton, will submit a response to the Bean Review on behalf of the Committee.</p> <p>The Bean Review will be discussed further at the June meeting.</p>	<p>Secretary to include Bean Review on agenda for June meeting.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Survey Control</p> <p>Dr Power updated the Committee on the key points contained in the “Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments 2014/15” published on 7 January 2016. It was noted that in 2014/15 the estimated cost to business in NI of complying with government statistical surveys was £1.1m, down by 13% from 2013/14. Over three quarters (79%) of the cost was attributable to DFP surveys and 13% to DARD surveys.</p> <p>NISRA's 2014/15 survey control data have for the first time been included in the ONS On-line List of Government Statistical Surveys (OLGSS). This list provides a comprehensive picture of government statistical surveys to businesses and local authorities in England, Wales and NI. Unlike England and Wales, NISRA continues to produce a survey control report to meet user need. Scotland does not currently publish a report or produce an on-line list.</p> <p>The 2014/15 data collection exercise was the first to include data at household and individual level. NISRA is currently quality assuring the data and will consider publication if appropriate after the May election.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Update of Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM 2017)</p> <p>Dr Power invited members to note progress to date on updating the current multiple deprivation measures (NIMDM 2010). The work commenced in October 2015 and it is expected that the planned new measure will be published in mid-2017.</p> <p>The project will be overseen by a cross Departmental/Organisational steering group which will include representatives from all NI Government Departments, Local Government Districts, the Rural Development Council, and other relevant bodies.</p> <p>Dr Power outlined the 3 main phases of the project as described in SAC 05/2016 and noted the launch on 10th February of a 12 week user consultation on the options for the geographical levels for which NIMDM 2017 outputs will be produced and published. Secretariat will issue link to consultation on geographical levels for NIMDM 2015 outputs.</p> <p>The rural dimension of the update is of particular importance and Dr Power noted that she is due to appear at the ARD committee on 23rd February to</p>	<p>Secretariat to issue link to consultation on geographical levels for NIMDM 2015 outputs.</p>

	<p>discuss.</p> <p>In discussion about NUTS 3 areas, Dr Power informed the Committee that the new NUT 3 areas is likely to be at the new local government geography. When the decision has been publically announced, Dr Power will write to Council CEs to inform them of the position.</p> <p>It was further noted that as part of the change to the new local government geography, NISRA will be producing some back series on the new boundary basis. Dr Power will circulate details of existing datasets which will be rerun on the basis of the new local council boundaries.</p>	<p>After Eurostat decision on NUTs 3 Dr Power to write to Council CEs advising them of the position.</p> <p>Dr Power to circulate details of existing datasets which will be recast on the basis of the new Council boundaries.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Official Statistics Update</p> <p>Dr Power updated the Committee on official statistics issues, noting that statisticians are currently working through the requirements of the assessment reports on (a) population estimates and projections for NI and (b) Police Recorded Crime statistics. The re-assessment of the NI Crime and Justice Survey is expected to begin in the near future and an assessment of tourism statistics has recently commenced.</p> <p>The Committee noted the 3 reported breaches of the Code of Practice which had occurred since the October meeting.</p> <p>Full details of the breach are published on the Authority's website.</p> <p>Dr Power referred to the current stock take of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics which is being taken forward by the Statistics Authority. Members can input through (a) completion of an on-line questionnaire available on the Authority's website and (b) attending a workshop on 10th March in NISRA, McAuley House.</p> <p>Miss Fulton will circulate details of Code of Practice stock take workshops, including details of registration process.</p>	<p>Miss Fulton to circulate details of Code of Practice stock take workshops, including details of registration process.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>AOB/Date of next meeting</p> <p>Mr Bond drew members attention to a forthcoming OECD conference in Lisbon, 29 June- 1 July, on indicators required within Europe for economic policy and evaluation.</p> <p>Dr Gillan noted that ONS will be convening an Economic Statistics Forum in Belfast after the forthcoming Assembly election in May.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh thanked Mr Ramsey for hosting the meeting.</p>	

	Date for next Committee meeting to be agreed. (Avoiding Wednesdays and Fridays if possible as these are not usually suitable for Mrs McNicholl and Mr Compton respectively).	
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Marie Webb Secretary February 2016