

## MEETING OF THE STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**27<sup>th</sup> September 2013**  
**Boardroom, McAuley House**

### In attendance

Mr Philip McDonagh  
 Dr Michael Anyadike-Danes  
 Mr Derek Bond  
 Mr John Compton  
 Mr Andrew Donnan  
 Mr Alvin McKinley  
 Mrs Sharon McNicholl  
 Dr Chris Morris  
 Dr Kieran Payne  
 Mr Richard Ramsey  
 Dr Bernie Stuart

Dr Norman Caven	NISRA
Dr Stephen Donnelly	NISRA
Mrs Michelle Furphy	NISRA
Dr James Gillan	NISRA
Mr Brian Green	NISRA
Mrs Deborah Lyness	NISRA
Dr Kevin Sweeney	NISRA
Mrs Marie Webb	NISRA, Secretary
Mrs Eilish Murtagh	NISRA, Secretariat

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed the new and outgoing members to the meeting. There were apologies from Mrs Esther Ervine, Professor David Jones and Professor Adele Marshall.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Matters arising.</b></p> <p>The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting (26<sup>th</sup> September 2012). All matters arising were either complete or on the agenda for further discussion with the exception of:</p> <p><u>SAC members to be invited to a NISRA Policy Day:</u> The open day for policy colleagues to which SAC members were to be invited has been put on hold since it was felt that engagement with policy colleagues is already taking place in various ways including NISRA's input into the Delivering Social Change Policy Group.</p>	

<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>New members – Background to NISRA</b></p> <p>Dr Caven welcomed the 7 new members to the Committee and thanked the outgoing members for their committed service over the last 7 years. For the benefit of the new members he outlined the history of the Committee and the legislation underpinning it and explained the structure of NISRA with its 400 staff located in various Government Departments and ALB's.</p> <p>Dr Donnelly spoke to the Committee about a review of the Agency's Business Planning process. He explained that the Agency Board wanted the strategic nature of the business planning process to be incorporated into the Agency Business Plan. This would bring the Agency plan more in line with the ONS, GSS and UK Statistics Authority's plans with their emphasise on Impact, Quality and Trust. The aim was also to make the Plan more accessible to all types of users. After discussion, it was agreed that he would circulate a draft NISRA Strategic Plan to the Committee for comment.</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b>Dr Donnelly to circulate NISRA Strategic Plan to SAC for comment</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Economic and Labour Market Statistics</b></p> <p>Dr Gillan gave a short presentation to the Committee about the work of the Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) Branch. He summarised the main areas of work and outlined how the branch sought to meet user needs. In response to questions from Mr Compton and Mr Ramsey, Dr Gillan agreed that there was a need to look at how the branch could make better use of social media such as twitter.</p> <p>Mrs Lyness updated the Committee on the latest developments in the Annual Business inquiry as outlined in Section A of Paper SAC 03/2013. She explained that the sample of 9,000 businesses was insufficient to guarantee sufficiently high levels of precision to meet user needs for industry and geographical disaggregation. To address this, ELMSB introduced a number of new sampling steps which resulted in an increase in sample size to 11,000 and Mrs Lyness asked the Committees' views on this sample increase. In response to questions from Dr Stuart and Mrs McNicholl, Mrs Lyness explained that the branch will take information over the phone for shorter surveys and take estimates or information from accounts where possible to reduce the burden on respondents.</p> <p>Dr Gillan updated members on 4 additional UK surveys (incorporating a sample of NI businesses) which are carried out by ONS under a Memorandum of Agreement.</p> <p>Members were also asked to note progress on the project to assess the feasibility of producing Input-output tables for NI. A preliminary set of Supply- Use tables has been produced and work is ongoing to further develop these in order to produce a more integrated picture of the NI economy.</p> <p>Dr Gillan explained that the Ministerial target 'To publish the Composite index by January 2013' had been met with the publication of a methodology paper and first set of results in January 2013. The</p>	

	<p>index has been published quarterly since then and has been well received by a range of users. It is classed as an experimental statistic and it is the intention to have the publication assessed as a National Statistic by the UK Statistics Authority in the future.</p> <p>Dr Gillan also asked members to note progress on the Integrated Business Survey System (IBSS). The design, build and implementation phase of the IBSS IT system was completed in April 2013 with the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) survey migrating onto the new system. Work on phase 4 –integration of the statistical package – has begun.</p> <p>He also advised the Committee that he and Dr Power attended the DEL Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September to brief the members on the latest labour market statistics including youth unemployment, NEETs, zero hours contracts and migration. They will brief the Committee again in 6 months.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh thanked Dr Gillan for his input.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Tourism Update</b></p> <p>Dr Gillan gave a presentation to the Committee on Tourism Statistics. He gave details of the key users and explained that the statistics were the primary means of monitoring progress towards PfG targets related to Tourism which aimed to increase visitor numbers and tourist revenue by Dec 2014. He covered the main data sources, the publications produced and the main issues which had been identified with the statistics ie timeliness versus completeness and the volatility of some of the quarterly estimates</p> <p>To address these issues a consultation was held in May 2013 and Dr Gillan outlined the improvements which had been implemented as a result which included delaying publication by up to 3 weeks if RoI sources are delayed, using rolling 12 month estimates in quarterly publications and adding in cruise ship visitors. He concluded the presentation with a summary of the main tourism results from Quarter 1 2013.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Census Update</b></p> <p>Mr Green updated the Committee with progress on the 2011 Census. He recapped the key milestones and the new initiatives for 2011 including the re-designed questionnaire, the questionnaire tracking system and the online completion. He also updated the Committee on the dissemination of results, noting that each of the 3 phases of cross-tabulations have been published (May- detailed characteristics covering Health, Religion and National Identity at NI level; June- detailed characteristics covering Ethnicity, Country of Birth and Language at NI level; and September detailed characteristics covering Housing and the Labour Market at NI Level). Attention is now focusing on the dissemination of results at lower level geographies.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Beyond 2011 Update</b></p>	

	<p>Dr Marshall gave a short update to the Committee on future Socio-Demographic statistics after the 2011 Census (Beyond 2011). He explained that consideration was currently being given to the production of social statistics after the 2011 Census. The issue had a wide focus and issues ranged from the use of administrative systems (which would require legislative change) to the use of statistical modelling. The options and costs were still being researched and no decision had yet been taken for Northern Ireland but that given the lead time required to carry out the Census a decision would need to be taken by 2015/16.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Survey Control Issues</b></p> <p>Dr Donnelly updated the Committee on the proposed changes to the Survey Control process for the 12/13 report to take account of changes to the methodology. Members were previously advised of these changes in June 13. He presented a 'mock-up' of the 12/13 report for the Committees consideration.</p> <p>He explained that the report will be published early in 2014. At that time it will be copied to SAC members and their comments considered for future publications at the next meeting. It is also proposed to submit the 12/13 report to the internal peer review process and to the Quality Methods and Harmonisation Tool (QMHT) which is a self assessment tool which is being piloted in the Agency. Mr Mc Donagh suggested that we also consider taking the views of business users such as the CBI.</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Dr Donnelly to circulate 12/13 Survey Control report to the Committee.</p>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Official Statistics Update</b></p> <p>Dr Donnelly updated the Committee on Official Statistics Issues.</p> <p>Since the last meeting a number of statistical products which have been assessed by the Authority have had their designation as National Statistics confirmed. These included Hospital waiting times, NI housing statistics and Agricultural statistics. Members were also asked to note 2 recent minor breaches of the Code of Practice, both of which related to release practices - full details are published on the Authority's website. Dr Donnelly also referred to the recently published Monitoring report on School Level Examination Statistics which was sent to Education Ministers by the Chair of the Authority.</p> <p>Dr Donnelly also updated the Committee on the establishment of a pilot peer review process in NISRA with the aim of improving how NISRA communicates the statistics it produces. The committee will be updated on the results of the pilot at the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Dr Donnelly to provide update on pilot peer review process.</p>
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>The Chair asked members for their thoughts on what topics they would like covered at future meetings. He felt that it might be better to have a shorter agenda which focussed on a particular area and</p>	

	<p>allowed more time for discussion.</p> <p>Mr Ramsey expressed an interest in economic statistics, particularly calculation of Regional GVA and the relationship between the composite index and GVA. Dr Gillan agreed to provide presentations on both these issues at the next meeting along with his usual update on Economic and Labour market statistics.</p> <p>Mr Mc Donagh concluded the meeting by expressing his thanks to the 5 outgoing members for their support during his term of office.</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Dr Gillan to arrange</p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting/Close</b></p> <p>Secretariat to inform members of the date of the next meeting.</p>	

Marie Webb      Secretary      October 2013