

**MEETING OF THE STATISTICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**14<sup>th</sup> June 2017**  
**Conference Room, Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast, BT9 5RR**

**In attendance**

Mr Philip McDonagh (Chair)	
Mrs Sharon McNicholl	
Dr Chris Morris	
Dr Bernie Stuart	
Mr John Compton	
Mr Richard Ramsey	
Mr Derek Bond	
Dr David Marshall	NISRA
Dr Tracy Power	NISRA
Dr James Gillan	NISRA
Ms Linda Keys	NISRA
Ms Cathryn Blair	NISRA
Ms Nicola Fisher	NISRA
Mr Victor Dukelow	DfE
Mr Shane Murphy	DfE
Mr Stephen Donnelly	DfE
Mr Thomas Byrne	DfE
Mr Robin Griffith	NISRA, Secretary

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome to representatives of Department for the Economy.</b></p> <p>Mr McDonagh welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting in particular the representatives from the Department for the Economy (DfE).</p>	
2.	<p><b>DfE Presentation</b></p> <p>Mr Dukelow presented the Committee with an overview of the background and role of DfE highlighting their broad spectrum of responsibilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Ireland Industrial Strategy and its role in shaping the PfG</li> <li>• Preparation for EU Exit</li> <li>• Challenges associated with responding to RHI</li> </ul> <p>Mr Dukelow emphasised the importance of statistics at the core of developing DfE policy and reviewed the existing Research Agenda noting that a long term research agenda was currently being developed.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Open discussion</b></p> <p>Mr McDonagh thanked Mr Dukelow for his presentation and opened the discussion to SAC members.</p> <p>Ms McNicholl highlighted the importance of developing more regional data and engaging in more place based strategies.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh inquired if there were gaps in DfE's current knowledge.</p>	

	<p>Mr Murphy noted that short term cross border movement was currently very difficult to track and also highlighted the need for detailed cross border trade statistics, in particular that future use of HMRC data will be key.</p> <p>Mr Compton noted that talent development should be encouraged by DfE, highlighting that the private sector was taking steps to engage with young people.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>The draft minutes of the Committee meeting on 21 February were approved.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh noted that apologies were received from David Jones, Kieran Payne and Siobhan Carey.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh noted that the meeting was being held in the new NISRA headquarters and that a tour of the building would be arranged for SAC members.</p> <p>Mr McDonagh summarised the actions from the February meeting and updated the Committee on progress to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Marshall wrote to ONS asking for advance notice of any upcoming statutory surveys. Committee to request written response from ONS.</li> <li>• NISRA provided the committee with details of private sector transport statistics. Nicola Fisher provided further details of DfI's transport statistics to the committee, noting that Translink have agreed to become producers of Official Statistics</li> <li>• Mr McDonagh commented on Damian Buchanan's presentation on differences in HMRC/NISRA exports statistics. Committee to write letter to HMRC encouraging them to provide exports data under Digital Economy Bill provisions.</li> <li>• Statisticians from the Executive Office to be invited to the October meeting</li> </ul>	<p>Secretary to arrange tour of Colby House</p> <p>Committee wish NISRA to seek formal response to letter from ONS</p> <p>Committee to write to HMRC</p> <p>Secretary to invite TEO statisticians to Oct meeting</p>
5.	<p><b>Chair's Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr McDonagh, Mr Ramsey and Mr Compton attended the June 8 ONS presentation on the ESAS. Committee to write to ONS encouraging them to engage with NISRA on ESAS. Highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regional statistics</li> <li>○ Forthcoming Economic Forum</li> <li>○ EU Exit</li> <li>○ Household living standards</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Committee to write to ONS encouraging them to engage with NISRA on ESAS</p>
6.	<p><b>Update on Economic and Labour Market Statistics Statutory and Non-Statutory matters</b></p> <p>UK Servcom survey to be released in August 2017. This is a statutory survey with a NI sample of approximately 1,000 businesses. NISRA is not asking for a NI sample boost. The committee highlighted a few points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complexity for big businesses</li> <li>• May be more difficult for retail and leisure</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash sales may complicate returns</li> <li>• Increase on business burden with larger sample than STS</li> </ul> <p><u>Decision: Following discussion the committee determined that the NI sample of the UK SERVCOM survey is eligible to be issued under Article 5 of the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.</u></p> <p>Ms Keys and Ms Blair updated the committee on recent statistical releases by ELMS branch.</p> <p>Dr Gillan notified the committee that the UK Department for Education has commissioned a vacancy survey in 2017 which will include a NI element. This will not be a statutory survey.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Update on the assessment of burden on business by NI Statistical Surveys</b></p> <p>Dr Power updated the committee on the Assessment of Cost Burden to Business 2015-16 and the forthcoming Burden to Households and Individuals of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments, 2015/16.</p> <p>Dr Power highlighted several steps NISRA have taken to reduce business burden, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplifying forms</li> <li>• Introducing survey integration – IBSS</li> <li>• Reducing duplicated collection</li> </ul> <p>Mr Compton suggested ELMS look at developing guidance material designed to help businesses adapt their systems and tag key variables to make completing the ABI and other surveys easier.</p> <p>Committee noted this could be discussed with business representatives in a future SAC meeting.</p>	<p>Secretary to circulate Burden to Households and Individuals when published</p> <p>ELMS to research business guidance for ABI</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Official Statistics Update</b></p> <p>Dr Power updated the committee on the assessment of Official Statistics noting that the NIHE House Conditions Survey and the DoF Tourism Statistics have been designated National Statistics.</p> <p>Dr Power also noted that recent breaches have occurred as a result of technical issues related to the new NISRA website.</p> <p>Dr Power updated the committee on the progress of the stocktake of the Statistics Code of Practice. NISRA will be inviting the UKSA over to give a presentation. SAC members will be invited to these seminars.</p>	<p>Secretary to issue invite to SAC members when CoP seminars are arranged</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Programme for Government Update</b></p> <p>Dr Power updated the committee on progress towards finalising the PfG, noting that progress has stalled while there is no government.</p>	

	<p>Dr Power explained that NISRA was prepared for the demands of the PfG, although cautioned that not all statistics to be used are Official Statistics.</p> <p>Dr Marshall noted that NISRA has been allocated capital funding and the LFS will be doubled in size. NISRA to provide details of the LFS for October committee meeting.</p>	<p>NISRA to provide details of LFS increase for Oct</p>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>AOB / Dates and agenda items for October 2017 meeting</b></p> <p>Next meeting agreed for 2pm Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October</p> <p>Mr Compton proposed the committee move the next meeting with the business representatives forward to February or June 2018. To be decided at October meeting.</p>	<p>Secretary to email date of next meeting to committee</p> <p>Secretary to issue doodle poll for February meeting</p>

**Robin Griffith    Secretary    June 2017**