

NRS STRATEGIC BOARD MEETING

12 November 2020

Held remotely via conference call

Present:

Paul Lowe	Chief Executive (Chair)
Laura Mitchell	Deputy Keeper & Director of Information and Records Services
Anne Slater	Director of Operations and Customer Services
Linda Sinclair	Director of Corporate Services and Accountable Officer
Carla McHendry	Delivery Director
Peter Whitehouse	Director of Statistical Services
Laura Lucas	Director of IT Services
Steven Hanlon	Chief Finance Officer
Colin Ledlie	Non-Executive Director
Catherine McFie	Non-Executive Director
Mandy Gallacher	Non-Executive Director
Bill Matthews	Non-Executive Director
Gordon Shipley	Non-Executive Director
Lesley Smillie	NRS Census Director team (Item 5)
Shirley Cameron	Secretariat

Apologies:

No apologies noted

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Paul Lowe (PL) welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was held via conference call due to the Covid-19 situation.

1.2 No apologies were noted.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 29 July 2020

2.1 The minutes were approved and would be published on the NRS website.

2.2 A review of actions was undertaken and all actions were noted as completed.

2.3 Declarations of Interest - no new declarations of interest were noted.

3. Corporate Overview – Linda Sinclair

3.1 Linda Sinclair introduced the paper. The report included updates covering:

- Census 2022
- Major programmes and business change.
- Customer facing services.
- Records and archives.
- Finance and assurance.

- Corporate strategy and process
- People
- Governance
- Covid response and impact update

3.2 The Board welcomed the programme of planned business presentations. .

4. NRS COVID-19 Update – Linda Sinclair, Anne Slater and Carla McHendry

4.1 The Board were provided with an update on the activity undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 The NRS Incident Management Team continued to provide decision making governance for the NRS business continuity and management response to COVID-19. This included health and safety governance arrangements.

4.3 NRS continued to plan for a range of scenarios based on the Scottish Government's [Strategic Framework](#) protection levels approach, SG guidance and published advice. A COVID-19 risk register for NRS to manage and mitigate risks was in place. Regular reviews were undertaken.

4.4 The majority of NRS staff continued to work from home, in line with Scottish Government guidance. However a significant number of NRS staff continued to attend on site to deliver critical services. Wellbeing support and guidance was in place for all staff.

4.5 Online customer services had continued with limited critical in building customer facing services operating. Work was continuing to restore other critical services. The NRS service response had been communicated on the NRS website. Access to NRS Buildings had been limited to designated essential staff. The NRS Estates team had progressed plans to ensure safe workplaces for essential staff.

4.6 A service restart approach, in line with guidance, was being progressed. There were complexities in relation to the design of some of NRS's buildings in terms of space, access and ventilation, as well as and the location of services. Plans to address these issues were being developed. A planning assumption was that home working would continue until Phase 4 for most staff. Transition planning was underway for a return to working in Phase 4 and also in consideration of impacts required following tier changes under the Scottish Government protection levels framework.

5. Census 2022 Update – Lesley Smillie

5.1 Lesley Smillie introduced the Board paper, which provided background on the planning activity undertaken following the Ministerial decision to move the census date from March 2021 to March 2022.

5.2 Considerable progress had been made in relation to re-planning exercise. The revised plan would be taken to the Census Programme Board in December, seeking approval to baseline it.

5.3 Revisions to census legislation following the change of census date were being progressed. It was reported that the Census Order 2022, had been approved by the Scottish Parliament on 11 November 2020. The Order would be presented to the Privy Council with the intention of it coming into force in December. The Census Regulations would be laid shortly with the intention that they would come into force in the Spring.

5.4 Catherine McFie asked if the Business Case would be updated in light of the re-plan. Lesley Smillie confirmed that work had been undertaken to update the Business case earlier in the year and that further work to update the financial case would be taken forward.

6. NRS Statistics Overview – Pete Whitehouse

6.1 The report provided the Board with an overview of the breadth of work undertaken by the Statistical Directorate. Pete Whitehouse also explained that the dependencies and support across NRS Directorates was also vital to the success of their work.

6.2 The report noted the current priorities of the Statistics Directorate:

- Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships – numbers
- Mortality - causes
- Population, Migration and Household estimates (and projections)
- NHSCR – administrative data
- Publication and dissemination – stakeholder engagement
- Data linkage and data sharing
- Life Expectancy projections
- Baby names
- COVID-19 mortality
- Registrar General’s Annual Report of Demographic Trends
- Administrative data-based Population estimates research
- Academic collaborations (Scottish Longitudinal Study and Centre for Population Change)

6.3 The Board also heard of the team’s statistical involvement in the Census 2022 which was reported as:

- Questionnaire development and guidance
- Stakeholder engagement
- Parliamentary engagement and Legislation
- Ministerial engagement and support
- Census Statistical Methodology
- Established external methods panel
- Modelling to inform census operations and enumeration design

- Operational Management Information
- Designed and built automated coding and manual coding interface with suppliers
- Harmonisation of outputs and engagement with other UK and global census taking bodies

7. National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) Update – Pete Whitehouse

7.1 The Board was asked to note the paper which reported on recent developments with the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR). Key points were noted as:

- Impact of Covid and NHSCR service response saw a managed return to office working during April 2020 due to the requirement to continue the critical service provided to the NHS. For the first time solutions had been put in place to also allow some home working to take place for some aspects of the work of the team.
- An NHSCR Stakeholder Reference Group had been initiated and had met twice during 2020. Catherine McFie, NRS Non-Executive Director was a member of the group. The Terms of Reference of the group was noted, this had been approved in NRS governance by the NRS Executive Management Board. The purpose of the group was ‘to provide strategic oversight and advice to the Registrar General on the high-level operation, future developments and external relations of the NHSCR in support of its partners’.
- Other work being progressed included a review of existing stakeholder agreements.
- NHSCR and NHS CHI Programme communication links had been built on. NRS were now a member of the CHI project board.
- The future accommodation requirements for NHSCR would be considered. It was noted that the lease for the current accommodation was due to end in September 2022.

8. Key Performance Indicator Reporting – Anne Slater

8.1 The report provided an update on the key performance indicators (KPI) for quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2020-2021 reporting year. It was noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the delivery in some areas of NRS with reduced access to buildings, notably archive accession. It was also noted that there had been a marked increase in enquires and contacts.

8.2 Anne Slater confirmed that NRS would continue to develop and refine the KPI as required and would continue to report these to Strategic Board, as well to the NRS Executive Management Board.

9. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) – Colin Ledlie

9.1 Colin Ledlie provided an update from the 3 September 2020 Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Minutes of that meeting and the NRS Governance report were provided as part of the update.

9.2 The main focus at the meeting had been the approval of the NRS Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020. It was noted that despite covid challenges, the Annual Report had been completed to timetable and had received positive feedback from Audit Scotland. The audit opinion from Scottish Government Internal Audit had also been received, which had seen their opinion reported as 'reasonable assurance', indicating a more positive position from the previous year with noted improvements.

9.3 Paul Lowe extended his thanks to Colin Ledlie, as ARC Chair for his on-going support and challenge.

10. AOB

10.1 Paul Lowe thanked the Board for their interest and challenge. No other business was noted.

11. Date of Next meeting

11.1 The next planned meeting of the NRS Strategic Board was noted as 4 February 2021.

End