

NRS STRATEGIC BOARD MEETING

3 October 2019

Lord Clerk Register Room,
General Register House, Edinburgh

Present:

Paul Lowe	Chief Executive (Chair)
Laura Mitchell	Deputy Keeper & Director of Information and Records Services
Amy Wilson	Director of Statistical Services
Pete Whitehouse	Director of Statistical Services
Claudette Jones	Chief IT Operations Officer
Steven Hanlon	Chief Finance Officer
Esta Clark	Head of Statistical Design, Processing & Outputs (Item 6.3)
Catherine McFie	Non-Executive Director
Mandy Gallacher	Non-Executive Director
Colin Ledlie	Non-Executive Director
Bill Matthews	Non-Executive Director
Gordon Shipley	Non-Executive Director
Shirley Cameron	Secretariat

Apologies:

Anne Slater	Director of Operations and Customer Services
Linda Sinclair	Accountable Officer, Director of Strategy and Business Services
Laura Lucas	Interim Director of IT Services

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Paul Lowe (PL) welcomed Pete Whitehouse Director of Statistical Services.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Anne Slater, Linda Sinclair, Laura Lucas.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 31 January 2019

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

2.2 Action Log Review:

SB2-A4: Census 2021 governance: revision of governance arrangements had concluded. The NRS Executive Management Board retained oversight of the programme. Action: Completed

SB4 –A18: Non- Executive Director recruitment for Audit and Risk Committee had concluded with a successful candidate identified and due to commence from 1 November 2019. Action: Completed.

SB5-A19: NHSCR governance – meeting now arranged to discuss. Action: Completed.

Other secretarial actions SB5-A20 and SB5-A21 were completed. The action log would be updated accordingly.

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

3. Corporate Overview – Paul Lowe

3.1 The paper provided a summary corporate view of the health of the organisation. Paul Lowe (PL) thanked all directors for their input.

3.2 The Board scrutinised the report as follows:

- Census Rehearsal – The outcome of a Scottish Government Technical Assurance Framework (TAF) review was expected on 4 October 2019. Strategic Board members would be advised of the outcome by the CEO.
- 1921 Census release – A business case was being developed for the Digital and Strategy Board scrutiny and approval.
- Spending Review requirements for capital expenditure – were discussed. The Board was advised that a submission for capital works beyond 2021 had still to be commissioned from the SG. NRS continued to review the capital expenditure position for 2019/2020 with a centrally managed approach and reports to EMB.

4. Finance Report – Steven Hanlon (SH)

4.1 The paper set out the financial position to end of period 5 (August 2019) and the forecast for 2019-2020 based on that position.

4.2 The Board heard that an over commitment of revenue at the start of 2019-2020 financial year had decreased, with plans to commit additional revenue being developed for the NRS Executive Management Board's (EMB) consideration.

4.3 The Board also heard that EMB would consider plans for capital expenditure which were being managed centrally for 2019-2020.

4.4 Expenditure for the Census 2021 Programme was currently broadly tracking to plans. The Board heard that challenges relating to future procurements may change the budget profile and potentially increase cost pressures. Opportunities for cost effective procurement would continue to be explored.

5. Key Performance Indicators – Paul Lowe

5.1 PL tabled a paper which described the latest position on the development of key performance indicators for NRS.

5.2 The Board discussed the challenges in establishing a benchmark position and agreeing the parameters for evidence. The Board also considered there may be opportunities in comparisons with other organisations providing similar services and

heard that the NRS Customer and Operations Board would be managing the approach and monitoring.

Action SB6-A22: Key Performance Indicators – NRS Board members are invited to provide comments to the Business Management Unit. Owner: All members.

6. Census 2021 Programme

6.1 Census Rehearsal – Paul Lowe

6.1.1 PL provided an update on activity and plans for the Census Rehearsal which was due to become operational between 7 October 2019 and 7 November 2019.

6.1.2 Topics covered included:

- An indication that activities required for the operation had mostly completed.
- Final testing of systems and remediation activity was expected to complete by 4 October 2019.
- The outcome of a Scottish Government technology assurance framework (TAF) review was expected to be known by 4 October 2019 and would indicate approval to proceed or not with the operation.
- Communication plans were in place to advise stakeholders of the outcome.
- A contact centre to support the public would be operational from Monday 7 October and following the TAF approval to proceed.
- The reference date for completion had been identified as 13 October, with 70k households in areas covering Dumfries and Galloway, Na h-Eileanan Siar and Central Glasgow being invited to participate. Testing a combination of rural, island and urban operations and responses.
- The online approach for completion was being tested, however opportunities for paper completion would be available via the Census Contact Centre also.

6.2 Census 2021 Benefit Themes – Pete Whitehouse (PW)

6.2.1 The presentation set out the benefits of the Census as contributing in two key areas:

- Public Value - providing the people of Scotland with evidence about the nation; and
- Public Good - which includes the impact census data has on local and central Government policy as well as use by the third sector.

6.2.2 The Board discussed the presentation and were invited to provide input on the broader benefits the Census brings to Scotland. Other topics discussed included:

- The on-going contribution of Census data to the historic representation of Scotland and the blend of changes over time. E.g. changing cities, migration, population changes over time.
- Uniqueness of Census data.

- Impact of census data used for Barnett Formula calculations funding for Scotland.
- Granularity of Census data at small and local area levels not readily provided elsewhere by administrative data.
- Benefits provided by the actual programme.
- Reputational benefits and opportunities to communicate the other work and events planned by NRS.

6.3 International Census Forum – Esta Clark

6.3.1 The Board received a presentation on a recent International Census Forum where the community of international census taking countries had an opportunity to share learning and experiences relating to census management, methods and operations.

6.3.2 The Board heard about:

- The main purpose of the forum and an overview of the benefits.
- The learning points and what was covered at the event.
- Key lessons from specific censuses with recommendations for others.
- Lessons in relation to public engagement, social media experience and messaging.

6.3.3 The Board discussed the learning opportunities the forum provided NRS and considered there may be an opportunity to map out the lessons learned from other countries against the plans in hand for delivery of the Census in 2021. This would help to ensure that learning is captured, gap analysis compared is completed and that mitigating action is identified and planned.

Action SB6-A23: International Census Forum learning – To capture learning from the forum, consider gap analysis against census plans with mitigating action and plans identified. Owner: Pete Whitehouse

6.4 Census Programme Governance Framework

6.4.1 The Board was invited to note the contents of the framework which was approved by the Census 2021 Programme Board on 13 August 2019.

6.4.2 The framework provided a diagrammatic overview of the governance structure together with the terms of reference for each board operating within the framework.

6.4.3 Paul Lowe explained that the arrangements were designed to strengthen programme assurance, challenge and governance. The Board noted that NRS Non-Executive Director members were included as members of the Census Programme Board. Board members were invited to comment on the framework, with opportunities to strengthen the approach to be provided to the NRS Business Management Unit.

Action SB6-A24: Census 2021 Governance Framework – NRS Board members to provide comment to the NRS Business Management Unit. Owner - All

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

7.1 Colin Ledlie (CL) introduced the update from 5 September 2019 Audit and Risk RC meeting. Minutes of that meeting and the NRS Governance report were accepted as the update and were taken as read.

7.2 The Board heard that ARC had reviewed NRS Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019, and after seeking assurance from external auditors, had approved the signing of the accounts. The accounts were now also laid with the Scottish Parliament and published on the NRS website.

8. Date of Next meeting

8.1 The date of next meeting of the NRS Strategic Board was noted as 26 January 2020.

End