

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

SCOTSTAT Board meeting update (7th meeting 19 January 2004)

Introduction

1. This note reports back to PAMS members on the business of the seventh SCOTSTAT Board meeting.
2. Papers from the meeting are available on the SCOTSTAT website at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board/papers.asp>
 and the minutes at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board/minutes.asp>

Meeting report

3. The seventh meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Wednesday 19th January 2005 at St Andrew's House. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Executive. Sandy Stewart has taken over as Secretary to the Board.
4. There was a poorer attendance at this seventh meeting than at some previous meetings. Once again, the representation from the Theme Groups was largely from local authorities and local authority reps seem to have a better attendance record than others.
5. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:
 - Update on Key Statistical developments (Paper SCOTSTAT 1/05)
 - Oral reports on:
 - (a) National Statistics issues
 - (b) SCOTSTAT website
 - (c) Freedom of Information
 - (d) Review of Board priorities
 - Measurement of Public Sector output/productivity - presentation by Sandy Stewart
 - Demography in Scotland – presentation by Peter Scrimgeour
 - Targets and Statistical Guidance on target setting – oral report
 - Development in Accessibility (Paper SCOTSTAT 2/05)
 - Initial proposals for restructuring Social and Welfare and Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics Groups (Paper SCOTSTAT 3/05)
6. There were no reports on the work of individual committees, but the Executive undertook to review all workplans and report back on performance before the next Board meeting. A draft list of committees was circulated – but contained several errors.
7. Paper 1/05 Update on Key Statistical Developments
 This paper set out in tabular form some recent developments in statistics in Scotland covering:
 - (a) Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.
 - (b) Key statistics and performance information – a high level set of summary statistics for Scotland is to be produced.
 - (c) Internet and other dissemination – further improvements being looked at. Stats is one of the most frequently accessed part of the Executive website.
 - (d) Scottish Executive Statistics Plan and Annual Report – 2004 Plan and Annual Report held up by ministers. However, will form the basis of 2005/06 plan.
 - (e) Statistics Commission – new Devolution and Regional Statistics Committee set up by the Commission.

- (f) Equality/diversity statistics – work progressing on ethnicity classifications in time for Census test in 2006. Hope to carry out some form of consultation.
- (g) Statistical methodology.
- (h) Population and household survey harmonisation and co-ordination – ONS to decide in spring 2007 if the Continuous Population Survey is to go ahead. The Executive is developing a long term strategy for survey development in Scotland.
- (i) Census futures.
- (j) Statistical geography – intermediate geography development ongoing – due for release February 2005.
- (k) Data protection, data sharing and use of administrative data – new software is being evaluated to ensure data published is not disclosive.
- (l) National Statistics Code of Practice.
- (m) Freedom of information – internal guidance on statistics is on the SCOTSTAT website.

In practice, some of these updates covered other items later on the agenda.

8. Board priorities were discussed briefly and will be discussed further at the next meeting in conjunction with the views of Committees.
9. Sandy Stewart gave a short presentation on the Atkinson Review which is looking at the productivity of the public services within the national accounts. This is a complex issue which was interesting but not immediately relevant to the PAMS Committee. The final report was due on 31st January 2005.
10. Peter Scrimgeour gave a presentation on Scottish demography. This should be familiar to PAMS members. Points made included the following:
 - Characteristics of the Scottish population (declining, changing age structure, etc.)
 - The £300k worth of academic demographic research (possibly six projects over 18 months) were expected to be announced shortly.
 - GROS has taken on household statistics, more integration of population and households, more staff looking at this.
 - Census alternatives being considered.
 - GROS confirmed that they will be exploring going further than projections and looking at some scenario planning. Work should take place through 2005. LA reps on SCOTSTAT suggested a workshop with Scottish Executive/GROS in due course as they have a lot of practical experience of using national projections.
 - There is a cross Executive Demography Analysis Group chaired by Julie Wilson which is looking at the impact of demographic change on services and identifying gaps in analysis.
11. Target setting and guidance on target setting. This has made little progress and the Executive is awaiting the identification of some new targets before taking the matter forward.
12. Paper 2/05 Accessibility
This paper was presented by David Connolly, the Transport Statistics Committee representative on the Board. It outlined some work from England on accessibility assessments and how these were done; work on accessibility using the Scottish Household Survey; and accessibility indicators and neighbourhood statistics.
13. Paper 3/05 Proposals for restructuring the Social and Welfare and Neighbourhood Statistics Committees
These committees have not been operating effectively, if at all. It was felt that the original remit of the Social and Welfare Committee was too wide, but that work had been progressing in these areas which needed better management. The proposal was to create a new Corporate Committee which would cover Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, social justice and income (with links to SIMD/Deprivation). The other earlier components of the two Committee's remits are being covered elsewhere e.g. equality, rurality, Scottish Household Survey.

These proposals were generally supported and the Executive were looking for further comments including from those who had been previously involved in the two committees. It was suggested that a more appropriate name for the new committee should be sought.

14 Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place in June, date to be arranged.

Conclusion

15. This paper summarises the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at its meeting in January 2005. I should be happy to provide further information if required.