

Minutes of OTS Board meeting 13 July 2021

(held online)

Present

Kathryn Cearns (Chair)

Kathleen Russ

Paul Aplin

Cerys MacDonald (HMRC, for Ruth Stanier)

Bill Dodwell (Tax Director)

Judith Freedman

Beth Russell (HMT) (items 5-10)

Teresa Graham (Observer)

Apologies: John Cullinane

In attendance

James Robertson (HMT 2021 review)

David Halsey (OTS Head of Office), Bethan Kay (OTS), Julia Neate (OTS), Mark Pickard (OTS), Hannah Smith (OTS), Sue Youngman (OTS)

Matt Henty (HMT), Stuart Gregory (HMT), Caroline Eele (HMRC)

1. Minutes of previous meeting (24 March 2021)

These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

2. Register of interests and potential conflicts

The register of Board members' interests had been circulated. Kathryn Cearns reminded Board members to notify her, and David Halsey, of any changes.

There were no potential conflicts to declare.

3. Tax Director's Report

Bill Dodwell noted that there continued to be a wide range of external engagement, including with the OECD in relation to the Office's Capital Gains Tax report, the CBI tax committee and a series of discussions with members of the HMRC team working on the Tax Administration Framework Review.

Bill Dodwell and David Halsey reported on staff movements, and on the Office's plans for gradually easing into hybrid working over the next few months.

Bill Dodwell highlighted early thinking about the Office's next Evaluation and update report, which would cover both the Simplifying Everyday Tax for Smaller Businesses report and the Taxation and Life Events report. As the government had since published its Tax Administration Strategy and HMRC had followed this with consultations, the evaluation would in particular link to the Tax Admin Framework and to the Single Customer Account.

In discussion it was noted that the evaluation would include consideration of issues relating to the High Income Child Benefit Charge.

More widely, consideration would be given to offering shorter comments on specific points as well as through an overarching report, and the potential for following up the 2017 Stamp Duty report in a similar way.

The Board noted the plans for a Webinar on 15 September, covering recently issued OTS reports.

4. Third Party Data review

Bill Dodwell highlighted the publication of this review, which was being actively considered by HMRC.

It was noted that among the report's relatively limited coverage, some privacy or security concerns had been expressed, even though all the data in question was already being provided to HMRC.

The Board reflected generally on possible ways of improving communications around OTS reports, to enable greater understanding and connection.

5. Tax Year Date review

Bill Dodwell spoke to the early draft of the report which had been circulated.

Points made in the discussion that followed included

- the potential benefits of a change
- a range of potential practical or behavioural impacts
- the extent to which the report would offer recommendations or choices which could be made
- the scale and implications of private and public sector systems changes
- the timing of any change in relation to other anticipated or desired tax changes, including in relation to Making Tax Digital and the Tax Administration Framework

A further draft would be circulated to the Board over the summer.

6. 2021 review

James Robertson reported on progress with the Treasury's work on the review and discussed this with the Board. He gave an outline of the comments he'd received from stakeholders and the advisory panel, and offered initial reflections on the OTS's own published evidence to the review.

7. Annual Report

The Board noted, and were content with, the final draft of the Annual Report for 2020-21, which it was anticipated would be published shortly.

8. Future work

Bill Dodwell outlined the current position regarding discussions with the Treasury and HMRC about potential future work.

9. Administrative matters

The Board received a report on meetings recently held by the OTS. The Head of Office updated the Board on staffing and finances.

10. Any other business

The Board noted future meeting dates, which had now been arranged for 2022.