

RPC meeting 12 September 2022 - minutes (open session)

Attendees

<p>The Committee Chair: Stephen Gibson Jonathan Cave (remotely) Daniel Dalton (remotely) Stephen Gifford Hilary Jennings John Longworth Derek Ridyard Andrew Williams-Fry</p>	<p>RPC Secretariat Stuart Sarson – Head of Secretariat</p> <p>Better Regulation Executive Rhiannon Harries (RH) – Director</p> <p>Office for Statistics Regulation Ed Humpherson (EH) – Director General for Regulation</p>
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A. Minutes of committee meeting 4 July and matters arising

1. The **minutes** were agreed and have since been published on the RPC website.
2. **Register of interests:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of their entries in the RPC register of interests [available on the RPC website].
3. **Gifts and hospitality register:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of their entries in the gifts and hospitality register [available on the RPC and BEIS websites].

B. Better Regulation Executive update

4. The following updates were provided by BRE:
 - Jacob Rees-Mogg has been appointed as the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. Junior ministers are being appointed and portfolios have yet to be agreed. [Since the meeting, Dean Russel has been appointed as Minister for better regulation and Lord Callanan remains in BEIS with responsibility for Brexit opportunities].
 - RH thanked the RPC for publication of its annual corporate report.
 - Chris Hodge has been appointed as the new Chair of the RHC.
 - RH congratulated Professor Jonathan Cave for the extension to his term of office and thanked him for his ongoing contribution.

C. Engagement update

5. A list of engagements in which the chair and the committee members were involved had been circulated in advance. The committee welcomed these engagements as an effective way to understand the concerns of stakeholders and to raise the profile of the RPC.

External presentation – Office for Statistics Regulation

6. The Chair introduced Ed Humpherson (EH), Director General for Regulation at the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The Chair explained that both bodies had a similar “watchdog” role, and he was keen to hear about Ed’s experience and role in how best to influence and challenge departments, measure the value of the OSR’s work, and to manage sensitivities that come with challenging government.
7. EH explained that the OSR is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority and has a statutory role to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics. It does not produce statistics itself and is separate from the Office for National Statistics (and oversees its work as with other departments).
8. The OSR vision is that statistics serve the public good, and the focus is on ensuring that the statistics produced by government departments and agencies in the UK comply with their code of practice.
9. Data and analysis are not just about the numbers; how things are done matters as much as what is done. OSR focus on the three pillars to uphold:
 - Trustworthiness – ensure confidence in the people and organisations producing statistics and that the statistics they produce are objective and fair.
 - Quality – are data and methods that produce assured statistics robust?
 - Value – do the statistics satisfy society’s needs for information?
10. The OSR’s activity aims to:
 - uphold the trustworthiness, quality, and value of statistics and data used.
 - protect the role of statistics and public debate; and
 - develop better understanding of good statistics
11. OSR influences by requiring each department to comply with its code of practice. Each department has a head of statistics profession accountable for the department’s use of statistics and for making key decision about how to manage data. The OSR has a programme of rolling reviews of statistics produced and also investigate specific concerns that have been brought to its attention. If it finds anything untoward or misleading, it highlights this and seeks corrective action.
12. EH discussed the practical aspect of the OSR’s role in the real world. There is always a concern of being leant upon and concern about comments being misjudged or overly politicised.
13. In discussion it was commented that one significant difference between the work of the RPC and that of the OSR is that the RPC sees the analysis in impact assessments on a case-by-case basis whereas as OSR oversees the regular productions of statistics. There is potential for working together to take advantage of these differences.