

RPC meeting 15 January 2024 - minutes

Attendees

<p>The Committee Chair: Stephen Gibson Jonathan Cave Daniel Dalton (On-line) Stephen Gifford Hilary Jennings John Longworth</p> <p>Apologies Andrew Williams-Fry</p>	<p>Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE Minister of State for Regulatory Reform</p> <p>RPC Secretariat Stuart Sarson - Head of Secretariat</p> <p>Smarter Regulation Directorate Chris Carr - Director of SRD</p> <p>British Standards Institute Dr Scott Steedman - Director General Steve Brunige - Government & Industry Engagement Director</p>
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A. Minutes of committee meeting 13 November 2023 and matters arising

1. The **minutes of the 13 November meeting were agreed**. The minutes are available 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). Members were reminded of the importance of ensuring that, when making any public personal statements, they are clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the RPC.
3. **Gifts and hospitality register:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of their entries in the gifts and hospitality register (available on the RPC and DBT websites).

B. British Standards Institute (BSI)

4. Scott Steedman and Steve Brunige explained the role of BSI and how they see this fitting into the current policy direction of regulation and standards. Given the focus of alternative options to regulation in the revised Better Regulation Framework, Scott saw the worth of updating the committee on the approach and work of BSI. Specifically, how it can contribute to the committee’s assessment of alternative options as part of its scrutiny of departmental assessments.
5. Internationally, BSI sees itself as assisting in exerting a ‘soft power’ in international standards to provide better business practices.
6. BSI is endorsed by the Office of Product Safety and Standards within DBT and works across Whitehall on standards-based alternative options, providing a neutral process for departments to consider how they can be of use within policy development. In doing so, BSI can advise on the delivery of the policy through routes other than regulation. The restructuring of the Better Regulation Framework offers a timely opportunity to see how the BSI, along with UKAS, NPL, IPO, Innovate UK and Trading Standards can contribute to both the remit of the RPC as well as working with departments.

7. Going forwards, the RPC will seek to work with BSI and the other groups cited as part of its remit under the revised framework.

A. Smarter Regulation update

BRF update

8. Chris Carr (CC), Director of Smarter Regulation, provided an update on the Smarter Regulation Programme. He said that Lord Johnson - the new Minister for Regulatory Reform - is supportive of the RPC and is passionate about the Better Regulation Framework (BRF). He is keen to drive through all three pillars of the Smarter Regulation Programme, which is intended to reduce the stock of regulation, reduce the flow of regulation and to improve how regulators function as a 'service'.
9. SRD has had extensive conversations with departments about the revised framework. CC believes that the RPC will see new ways of working with departments and it won't be long before the RPC see options assessments (OAs) being submitted.

Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee (SLSC)

10. The chair informed the committee that he is to appear before the SLSC on 23 January to give evidence about the revised framework.

Post-implementation reviews (PIR)

11. The committee discussed potential benefits of bringing PIRs from the five-year cycle to three years. The five-year cycle was felt to possibly be too long in that officials working on the original proposals may have moved on. It is a fine balancing act and two to three years appeared to be about right for most regulation to have had sufficient impact to enable an evaluation to be made.
12. The committee emphasised that, if the Government want deregulation, one of the best ways of achieving it is through PIRs. If the related regulation has not achieved its objective, then the PIR should recommend amendment or revocation.

B. Engagement update

13. A list of engagements in which the Chair and committee members had participated had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chair informed the committee that he had had the following engagements:
- Lord Johnson, the Minister for Regulatory Reform, and the RPC sponsoring minister. The Chair said that the minister is supportive of the RPC and wishes to enhance its role and to do so quickly. The next step is for RPC and SRD to work together to identify a suite of things that delivers what the minister wants to achieve.
 - Bilateral meeting with John Geldart, the Director General of the Institute of Directors.
 - Presentations to the Forum of Indian Regulators (FOIR). He said it was an interesting organisation in that each of India's individual states - which can be larger than the UK - have their own regulatory approach and the FOIR has a coordinating and leading role in the way regulation is managed. We have much to learn from this body and other international bodies and so should work more closely with them.
14. Other committee members suggested engaging with the following:
- OECD
 - Consumer organisations - such as Which? - and voluntary sector organisations - such as NCVO, Citizens Advice etc - in view of the RPC's enhanced role considering household impacts.
15. The Chair asked for two volunteers to enable a programme of engagements with chief economists in government departments. Stephen Gifford and Hilary Jennings volunteered.

C. Methodology Sub-group (MSG)

16. Jonathan Cave (JC) summarised the November MSG meeting notes, which had been circulated to committee attendees on 8 December for any comment. The minutes were, therefore, taken as having been 'signed-off' by the committee.
17. The next MSG meeting is scheduled for Monday 26 February. The secretariat has made satisfactory progress on the actions from the last MSG meeting.
18. JC mentioned that he has been thinking about the Growth Duty and difficulties with taking it into account appropriately. He proposed circulating something before the next MSG meeting to see if it would be worthwhile including on the agenda.

D. Ministerial address

18. The Chair welcomed Lord Johnson, the Minister for Regulatory Reform and introduced each of the committee members to him. The minister thanked committee members, saying how much he appreciated their work. He said that, within his mandate, he had three priorities:
- First, to reduce the stock of regulation. This is about removing unnecessary or redundant regulation.
 - Secondly, to reduce the flow of regulation.
 - Thirdly, ensuring a well-functioning landscape of regulators. Smarter regulation is not just about how regulations are designed and legislated for, but also how they are administered by regulators and how the wider impacts of regulators affect businesses, citizens, and the economy as a whole.

19. Overall, the minister said that he wanted to look at regulation 'as a service', from the investor to the consumer, to help business grow.
20. The minister is supportive of the committee. He felt that the RPC should be an influential body integrated into the regulatory process.
21. The Chair welcomed the encouraging comments from the minister. The committee is of the same mind and would like to help reduce both the stock and flow of regulation. The European approach was noted - to evaluate first and look at the stock of existing regulation, identifying where existing regulation may be unnecessary, outdated or needs to be modified.
22. The committee agreed that it should be seen as a powerful watchdog of regulatory activity. The movement to OAs should help in drawing the attention of ministers, unlike the old BRF system of IAs being submitted at the final stage, which is too late to have much of an impact on policy development.
23. The minister concluded by saying that he is looking forward to working with the committee. He wants the RPC to be the 'leading light' and exemplar of best practice on regulation. The Chair thanked the minister for his support and looked forward to working with him.