

**NRS STRATEGIC BOARD MEETING**

25 November 2021

Held via MS Teams

**Present:**

Paul Lowe	Chief Executive (Chair)
Mandy Gallacher	Non-Executive Director
Colin Ledlie	Non-Executive Director
Laura Lucas	Director of IT Services
Bill Matthews	Non-Executive Director
Carla McHendry	Delivery Director
Gordon Shipley	Non-Executive Director
Linda Sinclair	Director of Corporate Services and Accountable Officer
Anne Slater	Deputy SRO Census Programme and NRS Director Operations
Lesley Smillie	Census Director (Item 4)
Peter Whitehouse	Director of Statistical Services
Shirley Cameron	Head of Business Management Unit, Secretariat
Donna Wotherspoon	BMU Secretariat

**Apologies:**

Claire Gillespie	Chief Finance Officer
Catherine McFie	Non-Executive Director
Laura Mitchell	Deputy Keeper & Director of Information and Records Services

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 Paul Lowe welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted as listed.

**2. Minutes of meeting held on 24 August 2021**

- 2.1 The minutes were approved and would be published on the NRS website.
- 2.2 There were no actions for discussion.
- 2.3 Declarations of Interest – Mandy Gallacher advised that she had started a new contract with the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

**3. Corporate Overview – Linda Sinclair**

- 3.1 Linda Sinclair introduced the paper. The report included updates covering:
  - Census 2022.
  - Major programmes and business change.

- Customer facing services.
- Records and archives.
- Finance and assurance.
- Corporate strategy and process
- People.
- Governance.

3.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- The Board noted their congratulations to NRS on achieving Digital Economy Act accreditation.
- The Board discussed the Section 22 report and next steps.
- There was discussion in relation to the covid pandemic. The Board received updates on service restoration and ongoing work to explore future ways of working.

**4. Census 2022 Update – Lesley Smillie**

4.1 Lesley Smillie introduced the paper, which covered:

- Programme Overview.
- Progress against Plan.
- Assurance.
- Strategic Risks and Issues.

4.2 It was noted that overall the programme remained at Amber status, with all constituent projects and work-streams at either Green, or Amber, with none at Red. Plans to move amber projects to green were in place and being managed. It was noted that a Scottish Government Technical Assurance Framework (TAF) would be undertaken during late November / early December in respect of go live readiness for the Census collection.

**5. Statistics Overview – Pete Whitehouse**

5.1 The paper provided an update on the strategic approach being taken in Statistics directorate to build a culture focussed on public value and benefit. It was noted that current priorities included Census and COVID-19 response. Wider work continued across the Directorate in respect of a range of statistical products.

5.2 In discussion the following points were noted:

- The need for controls and assurances around the presentation of data.
- That work continued to improve the accessibility and availability of data.
- That considerable work on the future options for the census was being commissioned, working with a range of partners.

5.3 The Board thanked Pete Whitehouse for the helpful update and it was agreed that a further session should take place on this during 2022.

**Action SB33: NRS Statistics Overview – Secretariat to work with Pete Whitehouse to identify a future agenda slot for an update on this work. Owner: Secretariat**

## **6. NRS Ways of Working – Linda Sinclair**

6.1 Linda Sinclair discussed the presentation, outlining the background to this work and insights gathered through a covid staff survey. The clear linkages to covid response, estates plans, people plans and strategy were recognised.

6.2 The current focus would continue to be service restart. Some services required to be building based, at least on a part time basis and others in a hybrid model, both supported by appropriate health and safety controls and guidance.

6.3 The work continued to provide support and communications around the wellbeing of teams and individuals.

6.4 The following observations were made:

- These were complex business challenges facing many organisations.
- From experiences of other organisations, NRS was progressive in thinking around this issue.
- Framing engagement with staff would continue to be key, as would cultural alignment.

6.5 Further input from Non-Executive Directors was welcomed as this work progressed.

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

7.1 Colin Ledlie provided an oral update from the 16 September 2021 Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Key items at that meeting were the sign off of the Annual Report and Accounts, receipt of a substantial assurance opinion from Internal Audit, the Auditor General's planned Section 22 report on census, IT disaster recovery and an update on Census.

## **8. AOB**

8.1 Pete Whitehouse noted that the Registrar General's Annual Report (RGAR) had been shortlisted in the communication category at the Analysis in Government awards.

8.2 Paul Lowe thanked the Board for their support, advice and challenge through 2021.

**9. Date of Next meeting**

9.1 The next planned meeting of the NRS Strategic Board was noted as 1 February 2022.

**End**