

NRS STRATEGIC BOARD MEETING

13 May 2020

Held remotely via conference call

Present:

Paul Lowe	Chief Executive (Chair)
Laura Mitchell	Deputy Keeper & Director of Information and Records Services
Anne Slater	Director of Operations and Customer Services
Linda Sinclair	Accountable Officer, Director of Strategy and Business Services
Laura Lucas	Director of IT Services
Carla McHendry	Delivery Director
Peter Whitehouse	Director of Statistical Services
Colin Ledlie	Non-Executive Director
Catherine McFie	Non-Executive Director
Mandy Gallacher	Non-Executive Director
Bill Matthews	Non-Executive Director
Gordon Shipley	Non-Executive Director
Shirley Cameron	Secretariat

Apologies:

Steven Hanlon	Chief Finance Officer
---------------	-----------------------

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Paul Lowe (PL) welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was held via conference call due to the Covid-19 situation.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Steven Hanlon.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 30 January 2020

2.1 The minutes were accepted and would be published on the NRS website.

2.2 All actions were noted as completed. The action log would be updated accordingly.

2.3 Declarations of Interest - no new declarations of interest were noted.

3. Corporate Overview – Linda Sinclair

3.1 The paper provided a summary corporate view of the health of the organisation. Paul Lowe (PL) thanked all NRS Directors for their input.

3.2 The report included status updates covering:

- Census 2021
- Major programmes and business change.
- Customer facing services.
- Records and archives.
- Finance and assurance.
- Corporate strategy and process
- People
- Governance

3.3 The points highlighted to the Board and were discussed as follows:

- The report had been heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic impact.
- Priorities had been Census, delivering critical services while in transition to lockdown. A number of services and programmes had been impacted, either stopping or slowing delivery.
- The vast majority of staff had been able to transition to home working and this had happened rapidly. Governance of NRS had continued, with the focus on invoking the NRS business continuity approach and initiation of the Incident Management Team (IMT)

4. Covid-19 – NRS Response – Paul Lowe

4.1 The paper provided the Board with an overview of the key communication action and activity with Scottish Ministers since early March 2020 and the commencement of covid-19 impact to NRS services and staff.

4.2 The key points highlighted to the Board were:

- The priorities for NRS during this period had been to safeguard staff and the public by limiting risk of exposure to covid-19.
- To transact business critical services as much as possible through technology and home working.
- To support wider government responses to the pandemic. This had been through:
 - work with the Local Authority Registration service to reconfigure services to prioritise death registration and to implement remote working
 - the development of high quality statistics to help inform the public and decision makers about the progress of covid-19 and its impacts.
 - To support the operation of the NHS Central Register
- Ministerial briefings had been issued to Ms Hyslop, Minister for Economy, Fair Work and Culture. On 27 March 2020 a briefing highlighted Covid-19 related considerations in relation to Scotland's Census 2021 Programme. A further briefing on 9 April provided an update on the NRS organisational response to Covid-19, including service delivery, management of the estate and arrangements to support our staff. Further briefing was provided to the Cabinet Secretary in relation to the Census programme on 04 May.

- It was noted that Covid-19 was impacting on the pace of delivery of the Census programme. An impact assessment and options appraisal exercise was completed during April, which had been considered by the NRS Executive Team and the Census Programme Board. The report findings and options to mitigate risks were being considered by Ministers. Active engagement was continuing across all UK Census delivery bodies, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) also evaluating the impact of the pandemic on their programmes.

4.3 The Board discussed the report as follows:

- Mandy Gallacher noted that the statistical publications were of a high standard, providing clarity and had been widely referenced in the media.
- A suggestion to track positive changes to working practices and services was noted and would be considered at the NRS Executive Management Board. Plans to emerge from lockdown were being developed. NRS had developed a triggers approach to invoking business continuity arrangements. It had also developed a priority list of critical services. These two documents would be used to inform the priorities for restoring services once lock down was relaxed. It was noted that there had been a number of positive changes that had been implemented. The NRS IMT would oversee this work, which would be taken forward by the Customer and Operations Board.
- IT Services had been tracking all the changes that had been made to services.
- The work to develop a new statistical product in challenging and pressurised conditions was noted and commended. It was also noted that the weekly publication continued to drive further interest and requests for enhancements and analysis, resulting from media and other user enquiries.
- The Board heard that arrangements had been put in place to ensure the sealing of acts of Parliament, required to bring an act into force, continued during lockdown. This include the Covid-19 emergency legislation.
- Regular checks of archival storage were in place in accordance with a new buildings access protocol.
- Catherine McFie provided an update on NHSCR – it was noted that the office had closed initially and arrangements were put in place for home working to be enabled with NHS Dumfries and Galloway. Certain key services could not be undertaken without office access. Procedures had been put in place to permit this, following engagement with staff and Trade Unions. These were working well but continued to be kept under review in consultation with staff and with the support of the NRS Estates team and professional advisors. The work of the team at Dumfries and the actions taken by NRS IT Services and NRS Estates teams to provide solutions were commended. The professionalism and flexibility of the NHSCR team to overcome issues was also commended.
- The emergency powers invoked under covid-19 legislation for remote registration of death were time restricted. Lessons learned would inform opportunities for service improvements in the future. Planning for the restoration of registration services, once lock down was eased were being considered, in discussions with Scottish Government and Local Authorities.

4.4 The Board reflected that there had been a huge amount of collaboration across NRS and this was commended. Linda Sinclair advised that the buildings access protocol developed through joint working between Estates, HR and IMT had also been used by the Scottish Government as a basis for their own protocols.

5. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) – Colin Ledlie

5.1 Colin Ledlie provided an update from 5 March 2020 Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Minutes of that meeting and the NRS Governance report were accepted as the update and were taken as read.

6. AOB

6.1 There were no items of AOB raised.

7. Date of Next meeting

7.1 The date of next meeting of the NRS Strategic Board was noted as 23 July 2020.

End