

Statistics Users Group (SUG) Minutes 18 September 2020

Attending:

Auberon Ashbrooke (interim chair)

Martin Delap

Graeme Marett

Maria Pelin

Dan Pullinger

Duncan Gibaut Sec

Apologies:

Moz Scott

Minutes

1. The SUG came to the view that the current Law Drafting Instructions (LDIs) did not represent a step forwards, and if anything were a slight step backwards. The draft LDIs did not progress the independence of Statistics Jersey (SJ) as directed by the Chief Minister (CM) in November 2018. The Chief Statistician (CS) was too constrained, and should be able to explain SJ statistics and methodology to States Members and other public bodies. SUG itself was slightly constrained. The LDIs did not have the appropriate consideration of UN principles and other international documents of best practice. The amendments have evolved over the last 18 months into something completely different from originally envisaged.
2. The view was that SJ ought to mirror organisations like the Gambling Commission or the Children's Commissioner and be grant funded.
3. In mainland UK the system is integrated, the CS (known in UK as the National Statistician) sits on the UK Statistics Authority as CEO, with the Chairman and the NEDs, and runs it on a day to day basis. The only major activity area UK CS doesn't have oversight of is the Office for Statistics Regulation, because this regulates the ONS, of which the CS is the head (as in Jersey). The CS writes letters in relation to explanation of statistics and answers PQs on issues of fact. If it is a controversial response then the Chairman of the UK Statistics Authority leads on the communication.
Afternote: AA and DG have had a discussion with the UKSA and OSR, and the UK model appears satisfactory and workable in Jersey.
4. The SUG believed that if we went ahead with a law change now in accordance with these LDIs, the full changes, as directed by the CM would be delayed for several years.
5. On points of detail, the SUG does not like the potential for muddle in the current draft over National versus Official Statistics. There should also be a link from the SUG to the States Assembly; this requires further consideration.

Agreed that SUG need to identify high level points:

Independence of SUG and CS

Liability

Guaranteed funding and resourcing

International Best Practice

6. The SUG, after considering a range of courses of action. decided that it was necessary to approach the CM.

Afternote: a letter was sent to the CM, and he has replied.