Research Data Scotland (the "Company")

Minutes of a general meeting of Research Data Scotland (RDS) on 14 March 2023

Company number: SC677016  
Charity number: SC051305

# **Attendees**

## Present:

Paul Boyle Chair

Roger Halliday Director / Trustee

Scott Heald Director / Trustee

Mark Parsons Director / Trustee

Jill Pell Director / Trustee

Julie Fitzpatrick Director / Trustee

Martin Sinclair Director / Trustee

Shannon Vallor Board advisor

Neil Rawlins Minute taker

## Apologies:

Gillian Docherty Board advisor

Andrew Morris Board advisor

Giselle Cory Board advisor

# Agenda

## 1. Introduction and welcomes

## The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and in particular Martin Sinclair as the new member to the Board. Apologies were received from Andrew Morris, Gillian Docherty, and Giselle Cory.

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 were approved by the Board without further amendment.

## 3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

## 4. Presentation to the Board by DARE UK

A presentation was made to the Board by DARE UK outlining the work they had undertaken so far and outlining their plans for the next three years. RDS is a partner in three of the current DARE-UK pilot projects.

## 5. Papers and Reports

### 5.1 Risk – standing agenda item – Top 10 risks

Concerns were raised around risks that went from ‘red’ to ‘green’, it was noted that the risk register is one lens on the business and that a ‘red’ risk that remains ‘red’ after mitigation requires a plan of action to reduce the score and set out clear timescales for this.

### 5.2 Feedback from Remuneration and Nomination Subcommittee

A verbal update from the Renumeration and Nomination subcommittee Chair included an update on decisions from the remuneration committee. Staff pay was increased in line with Scottish Government and updated in February. A staff benefit supplier is currently being investigated.

### 5.3 Feedback from Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee

A verbal update from the Finance, Audit and Risk sub-committee (FAR) Chair. The sub-committee at its last meeting discussed the Finance Report, budget, and Business Plan. FAR subcommittee Terms of Reference are to be updated by the sub-committee and brought back to the next Board meeting for approval. It was noted the risk appetite paper had six categories, but it is not traced as to how different scores for each category feed into the overall ‘moderate’ rating. The Risk Appetite Statement should be used to develop the organisation. Sub-committee Chair to discuss with CEO and Corporate Management Group (CMG).

### 5.4 Business Plan progress report 2022-23

The Business Plan progress report 2022-23 highlighted three areas of progress. The IG model has established a common governance approach, under the ADR-S programme, eight roles have been agreed and filled by RDS and the Scottish Data for Research Alliance has now been set up.

### 5.5 RDS Finance Reporting

The RDS Finance Report for the period April 2022 to January 2023 and RDS Management Accounts January 2023 were discussed. For 2024-25 there may be a budget shortfall with only £3.3 million available. Options for addressing include:

* Cut back on programme activities
* Secure further funding from Scottish Government (SG) or other sources

It was noted that the budget shortfall decision appeared in a conversation with SG last autumn. Furthermore, in the FAR subcommittee meeting, the Digital Directorate Finance representative from SG intimated it is looking for efficiency savings of 5-10 per cent in budgets for 2023-24 and beyond. Planning for contingencies should take place sooner rather than later. The RDS CMG are planning a half-day session to plan for contingencies. The Chair noted that a detailed update be bought to the next Board meeting and should be discussed at length.

### 5.6 Key Performance Indicators Report Q3 2022-23

A student will be employed in the summer to work on the impact KPI measures and a report will be supplied to the Board in September. It was asked what the definitions were of when data access requests could be fast tracked.

* It is dependent on the data owner and their view to risk: eg the National Records of Scotland vital events data was considered low risk and approval was faster, but census data is considered high risk and only a proportion of data could be made available for fast-track approvals
* It is also down to precedent – if data sets have been brought together before and approved by a panel then the approval process does not need to be undertaken again

It was noted that it would be extremely useful to get this information out into the data community. It was further noted that section two and three with fast tracked KPIs need to be reviewed to ensure they are working and, are they the right KPIs to demonstrate this, however, KPIs continue to evolve.

## 6. Business Planning and budget 2023-24

2022 was a year of formation for RDS whilst the year 2023/24 is one where RDS moves forward, particularly in four areas.

* In reducing time to access data and this includes the website update and introducing the new technology platform
* Moving into the operational data space, which broadens the range of funding
* To secure more formal agreements with partners
* To consider the future state of the organisation

At the June Board meeting a paper on future funding and pricing will be introduced.

Through the ADR work cross sectoral data would be made available and that a list of datasets planned to be introduced over the coming year would be circulated. The Board agreed it would like to see greater urgency in bringing forward the four objectives, asked the plan gives great clarity to the key priorities vs. nice to haves and that a sense of what the important objectives were. It would be useful to reflect on what objectives would be delivered upon during the year via a chart. A revised business plan document should be brought back to the Board.

The budget was approved.

## 7. Annual Review of Policies

Nine policies were due their annual review as agreed per the Board meeting of March 2022. The Intellectual Policy paper had been revised considering Board comments and was returned for approval or otherwise. The Chair noted that in discussion with the CEO they had agreed the principle that rather than the Board reviewing policies annually, only those which had substantive changes should be reviewed. Comments were invited.

It was noted that several policies were public facing, particularly data focused policies. From a Comms point of view, they need to be amended to ensure it is easier for the public to understand as they use acronyms without linking them to explanations or definitions. There is no mention of data being processed / owned / managed by RDS but the Board would like to see something saying that data is held by partners and an assurance that they are doing this. Regarding cyber security, if PHS were hit for example, how this would impact RDS. Policies that had been tested were not helpful, so have been re-written. There is a re-written Crisis Comms policy and RDS is working with the eDRIS team to ensure the same approach is taken. There are different categories of ‘security incident’, how did this feedback to the Risk Appetite Statement – cyber risk is high, and a ‘moderate’ approach does not fit. It was noted that the FAR sub-committee would include this within its review. PHS conversations are now around how to get the organisation back up and running after a cyber-attack and asked if this is covered in the RDS Business Continuity Plan. It was noted that RDS only holds operational data and that the risk lies between EPCC and eDRIS. The Information Security Policy has a list of items for review but does not articulate the model of how the Board is to be assured. The Chair noted that clarity should be sought.

## 8. Board feedback

A review of Board responses to a survey circulated in January 2023 which canvassed Board opinion as to the operation of the Board during its first year was discussed. Three anonymous responses were received, and three potential actions were identified. Comments were invited. It was noted that the subcommittees were now set up and running and were helpful with Board governance. The Chair welcomed views on having a Comms Board member, but in the meantime the approach would be to bring in colleagues from the Comms team as and when necessary.

## 9. AOB

It was agreed that a paper regarding RDS becoming an independent research organisation be discussed at a future meeting.

Date of next meeting Monday 12 June 2023.

There being no further business, the chairperson declared the meeting closed at 11.30.