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From: Roger.Halliday [REDACTED]
To: Ed Humpherson/LONDON/ONS@ONS,
Cc: [REDACTED]/LONDON/ONS@ONS, [REDACTED]
Date: 13/06/2014 13:15
Subject: [REDACTED]

Ed

[REDACTED]

I also wanted to come back to you, reflecting upon our conversation on recorded crime last week. I was upset about the feedback from some assessment committee members who suggested my decision was politically motivated. As I said last week, I completely refute this and wanted to lay out my thought process and how/when I involved others in this decision. I wanted there to be no doubt about what happened here.

The first I heard about the risks here was in an annual review I hold with each senior statistician each January. At the meeting with [REDACTED], he mentioned as his first risk the potential for the move to a single police force to cause difficulties. He followed up in writing about risks... *"Ensuring the new data collection process within the police service do not interrupt the timeline for published recorded crime – this is the main high value risk at present and subject to a lot of attention"* [note from [REDACTED] to me on 04 Feb]. I asked him to keep me in touch with this.

My initial understanding of the focus of your interest in recorded crime stats in Scotland was to seek assurance that the issues seen in England/Wales were not replicated here. Given the risks [REDACTED] had previously mentioned, he kept me in touch with progress and the risk persisted. As the assessment exercise has been significantly more involved since April, this has diverted some attention away from the delivery of the 2013-14 data and its publication.

At the meeting we had in late April, you and [REDACTED] expressed concerns about code compliance, particularly around the way the figures were being communicated to users. My responsibility as a HoP is to ensure statistics I'm responsible for are of high quality and communicated in a way that they can be interpreted accurately by users. Whoever expresses concerns about the nature of statistics we produce, I have a role in investigating and ensuring there is a plan for delivering statistics in a high quality way.

As such, I followed up our conversation with [REDACTED] and asked what his team still needed to achieve to deliver a quality product and how long that would take. I was clear to [REDACTED] that I wanted him and his team to be conservative in estimating the delay because I didn't want the date moved twice (as this would undermine our credibility around statistics planning. We also explored possibilities of boosting the resource within [REDACTED] team and I gave a member of my team with the most relevant experience to

help. While at this stage we still needed to do more to understand your concerns, using our assessment of what was needed it was clear that we couldn't deliver the statistics to their original (June) timetable. Moreover, we had an additional problem in that the pre-referendum period is mid-August to mid-September. Our guidance to all statisticians here has been to pre-announce the intention to publish in this period a long time in advance and not to switch statistics into or out of this period wherever possible. As I couldn't be assured that the justice team could deliver a quality assured dataset and publication ahead of mid-August, I had to decide on an October publication date.

I alerted you to my thinking and decision to delay soon after (7th May e-mail). I noted your support for statistical reasons underpinning this change and concern about how this may be perceived. My difficulty was that I couldn't see a way of guaranteeing the statistics would be produced to the necessary level of quality and explained to users ahead of mid-August.

Justice statistics colleagues here informed senior managers and Ministers about the change of date a few days ahead of our public announcement: submission on 19th May, public announcement on 22nd. Other relevant bodies were informed about the change of date the day ahead of the announcement.

I hope this is clear about how I handled this situation and that I was acting for statistical reasons alone, in accordance with my role as a head of profession.

Roger

Roger Halliday

Chief Statistician & Head of Performance, Scottish Government, [REDACTED]

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Hashtags
