

Minutes of the ninetieth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10 am on Wednesday 20 August 2014 in Arrol, Lowden, Dalkeith.

Members

- * Mr G Houston (Chairman)
- * Dr J Brown (Chief Executive)
- Mr J Edgar
- Mr K McKay
- * Mr R O'Hare
- * Mr R Stewart
- * Dr P Thomson
- * Mrs S Walsh
- * Ms C Wilkinson

Officers

- * Ms M Cahill
- * Mr S Davidson
- * Ms L Ellison
- Mr E Martinez
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Ms J Ross (until item 90/8 only)
- * Dr G Stewart

* indicates present

90/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Mr Edgar, Mr Martinez and Mr McKay. There was no representative in attendance from the Scottish Government.

90/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

90/3 PREVIOUS MEETING**i Minutes of meeting held on 18 June 2014**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record

ii Action Grid

It was noted that there were no actions outstanding.

iii Workplan

The Board noted the contents of workplan

90/4 MATTERS ARISING

Any matters arising would be covered in the course of the agenda.

90/5 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman advised that he had continued to meet with Board members for their annual appraisal meetings, and thanked members for accommodating the time in their diaries. The Chairman had also had attended the recent Qualifications Committee and Audit Committee meetings, as well as observing a Grade Boundary meeting.

In the time since the last Board meeting, he had had various update discussions with the Chief Executive and Scottish Government officials.

On behalf of the Board, the Chairman recorded members' appreciation of all SQA staff for their achievements in delivering a successful diet over a time of increasing work pressures and significant change.

90/6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Chief Executive echoed the sentiments of the Chairman, adding that the extra time and effort, and the hard work and commitment of staff and appointees had seen SQA successfully implement and deliver a complex operation. Members of the Executive Management Team were very aware that the success was due to the dedication, loyalty and team spirit of staff in SQA.

Ms Cahill advised that SQA would close the office a day early at Christmas in recognition of the exceptional nature of the demands on the organisation.

Dr Brown also presented consideration of the award of SQA's Honorary Fellowship, which recognised sustained outstanding work and commitment to education and training in Scotland. The Board discussed and endorsed the proposal to award the fellowship to Mr Colin Mair, Rector of The High School of Glasgow.

90/7 NQ CERTIFICATION

i NQ Certification

Members of the Executive Management Team delivered a presentation on the outputs of the year's certification, which included an update from Dr Stewart on uptake, entries and attainment, and comment on this year's media coverage from Mr McMorris. During the course of the presentation, it was discussed and noted that:

- Comparative data would be reported from 2014-15 onwards.
- The Qualifications Committee would receive an analysis of Post Results Services after the activity was completed at the end of September.
- A lessons learned exercise would take place, taking consideration of the all inherent processes across the piece, with the view of developing a detailed project plan, both for the short term and longer term to 2017. An overview of the findings of this work would be provided to the Board in December 2014.

ii Report from Certification Programme Group

Dr Stewart presented the Certification Programme Group report and was pleased to report that the Post Results Services project had moved from amber to green status. The Board noted the contents of the report.

90/8 **BUSINESS SYSTEMS STRATEGY**

Mr Davidson presented the Business Systems Strategy, which provided an overview of the achievements to date within the department along with the work underway to deliver the strategy.

The Board was encouraged by the progress made, and during discussion:

- Commented positively that a number of initiatives and process improvement plans were already in place.
- Noted the breadth of the work and that it was pleasing to finally have achieved a level of integration into the business.
- Cautioned that attention must be given to the resource needs of actually implementing the strategy and the associated impact on staff.
- Urged the Executive Management Team to be mindful of addressing skillset gaps.

The Board welcomed the update and looked forward to further updates.

90/9 **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

The Board noted the contents of the risk register, understanding that it received full discussion at Audit Committee meetings.

90/10 **FINANCE**

i **Annual Statement of Assurance to the Board**

In the absence of Mr Edgar, Convenor of the Audit Committee, Ms Wilkinson presented the annual statement of assurance, which was offered to the Board in support of its consideration of the Annual Accounts.

The statement demonstrated to the Board the close scrutiny and rigour of the auditing function, and detailed the various reports and assurances that had been considered by the Audit Committee during 2013-14.

The Board noted the favourable content of the statement and the recommendation to approve the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014.

ii **Draft Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014**

The Annual Report and Accounts had been scrutinised and formally approved by the Audit Committee, and there had been no areas of concern to report to the Board.

The Board formally endorsed the Annual Report and Financial Accounts for remit to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament.

iii **Q1 Forecast Update**

Ms Ellison presented the quarter 1 finance position as informed by the recent forecasting exercise, and also tabled the year to date financial performance for the period ending 31 July 2014.

The Board noted that SQA was striving to absorb a number of financial pressures in the financial year 2014-15, including a further reduction in Grant in Aid funding.

The Board was passed a copy of the letter received from Fiona Robertson, Director of Learning in Scottish Government, which recognised the forecast deficit position highlighted by SQA for the current financial year and committed to working with the organisation to manage its funding pressures.

The Board noted the financial position and welcomed the support provided by the letter of comfort from the Scottish Government.

90/11 **CFE UPDATE**

Dr Stewart presented the update on SQA's progress against CfE milestones, based on SQA's highlight reports for June and July 2014.

The Board noted the current position.

90/12 **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Mr McMorris provided the Board with a detailed update on the performance of business development in all key markets to end July 2014.

The Board noted the contents of the report and commented favourably on the additional income in the areas of awarding and contracting.

90/13 **SPEND APPROVALS**

i Printing and Dispatch of Question Paper Materials

Dr Stewart presented the Tender Evaluation Report, which provided the proposal for the award of new contracts due to commence on 1 September 2014 for a period of three years (with the option to extend for a further one year). In light of the potential total value of around £2.6m over four years, and in line with the Scheme of Delegation, the Board was invited to consider and approve the recommendation for the award of the contracts.

The Board approved the award of the contracts to Hobbs and Page Bros and for the proposal to be submitted to the Scottish Government for further authorisation.

ii Print Production Equipment

Ms Cahill presented the Tender Evaluation Report, which following due tender processes, proposed to award the contract to the existing supplier for a period of five years with effect from 1 December 2014.

The Board approved the award of the contract to Xerox. Given that the tender had been conducted via a Scottish Government Framework, no further authorisation was required from the Scottish Government.

90/14 **REVISED CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SQA BOARD MEMBERS**

The Code of Conduct had been revised in line with the Model Code, as approved by the Scottish Parliament, and was presented to the Board for consideration.

The Board commented positively on the clarity and presentation style of the report and approved the new Code of Conduct for Board members for remit to the Scottish Government Public Bodies Unit.

90/15 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

i **Qualifications Committee – 14 May 2014**

The Board noted the formal minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2014.

ii **Qualifications Committee – 2 July 2014**

Mrs Walsh provided an update of the business covered, which had included a very robust and useful review of the Monitoring Standards Over Time report.

iii **Audit Committee – 26 May 2014**

The Board noted the formal minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2014.

iv **Audit Committee – 4 August 2014**

Ms Wilkinson provided an overview of the business covered on 4 August, which had included a full discussion on the Annual Report and Accounts, an in-depth review of the QPR, and a number of internal audit reports.

v **Advisory Council – 2 June 2014**

The Board had received an update at its previous meeting.

vi **Accreditation Committee – 3 June 2014**

The Board noted the formal minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2014.

vii **Accreditation Committee – 12 August 2014**

The Accreditation Committee had led a strategic workshop, which had focussed on the skills landscape and a review of SVQs.

90/16 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no matters raised.

90/17 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 8 October 2014 in Esk/Forth, the optima building, Glasgow.