

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 21 AUGUST 2019

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-fourth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10.00 am on Wednesday 19 June 2019, in Optima.

Members

- * Mr D Middleton (Chair)
- * Dr J Brown (Chief Executive)
- * Ms E Craig
- * Ms A Davis
- * Mr S Hagney
- * Mrs J Handley
- * Dr W Mayne
- * Mr H McKay
- * Mr G Smith
- * Mr R Stewart
- * Dr K Thomson

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- Ms M Cahill
- Mr L Downie
- * Ms L Ellison
- * Mr J McMorris
- Ms J Ross
- Dr G Stewart

Observers

- * Ms A Kerr, SQA
- * Mr M McVicar, Scottish Government

* indicates present

The meeting was prefaced with a short, closed introductory session between members of the Board, Executive Management Team and Ms Fiona Robertson, newly appointed Chief Executive of SQA, who would take up her duties on 22 July.

124/1 OPENING REMARKS**1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair extended a welcome to all members of the Board, including Mr Murray McVicar, from the Scottish Government.

Apologies had been received from Ms Cahill, Dr Stewart, Mr Downie and Ms Ross.

1.11 Declaration of Any Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

1.12 Minutes of meeting held on 8 May 2019

The Chair drew the Board's attention to the copy of the draft minutes that had been tabled at the meeting which contained his proposed amendments to the section covering the budget discussion.

The minutes, included the Chair's proposed amendments, were approved as an accurate record subject to the following additional amendments:

B123/3.2

Insert: Approved for onward submission to the Scottish Government.

1.13 **Matters Arising**

There were no other matters arising that would not be covered in the course of the agenda.

1.14 **Action Grid**

The contents of the action grid were noted.

A point of action was agreed for regular updating of the Board on the budget position.

1.15 **Workplan 2019**

The Board noted the contents of the workplan.

The Board noted that it would be useful to recirculate the approach to strategic planning for clarity on upcoming sessions.

The Chief Executive agreed to clarify timelines with Strategic Planning and Governance colleagues, noting that a Performance Committee was scheduled to take place before the next meeting of the Board and discussion at that meeting may clarify direction.

1.2 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair delivered a brief update on his recent engagements since the last meeting of the Board. The Chair reported that, as well as liaising with Dr Brown and Ms Robertson regarding the handover of the Chief Executive position, he had attended the Audit Committee and Advisory Council. He had also participated in a teleconference with the Chief Executive and Deputy First Minister to discuss industrial relations issues.

The Board noted the update.

1.3 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board, starting with an update on the current situation around engagement with the Unions. Mr McMorris reported that a positive meeting had taken place earlier in the week, with a focus of the ACAS agreement and the shared aim of avoiding industrial action. Discussions were continuing.

Ms Blair provided assurances to the Board that SQA had a robust contingency plan in place that will allow the management of any potential vulnerabilities.

The Board supported the ongoing action being taken to address the dispute and expressed comfort in the contingency planning activities being undertaken by SQA.

The Chief Executive went on to update the Board on the successful pilot of the digital upload service, currently running with languages. The pilot has been very well received with positive feedback suggesting that this will be a very beneficial service.

Redacted due to commercial sensitivity.

The Chief Executive drew the Board's attention to recent positive media engagement for SQA in support of Cyber Scotland week where SQA had an article, video and social media content, highlighting cyber security provision, how it is being delivered in centres and its impact on learners. In addition to this, Glasgow City Council have taken the decision to use SQA qualifications in their training programmes provided to taxi drivers around the city.

The Board noted the content of the Chief Executive's Report.

124/2 PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION

2.1 Financial Performance Report

The Chair referred the Board to the Financial Performance Report that had been tabled at the meeting.

Ms Ellison presented the report providing an update on the additional grant requirement position following discussions with Scottish Government. At the last meeting of the Board potential options had been proposed to reduce the grant funding requirement. However it was noted that two of these options would not now result in savings in the current financial year as expenditure had been committed. Scottish Government had been advised on the level of savings that could be achieved and received assurances that SQA would continue to seek any other opportunities to make additional savings throughout the financial year.

The Board discussed the importance of medium term financial planning in order to maximise efficiencies coming through from the Change Programme and other best value activities. The Board moved on to discuss the provision of support to the school system and the long term funding model for the qualifications system in Scotland. The Board also noted the challenges faced by the organisation in recruiting particular skills sets.

The Board agreed the need for a future, sustainable financial model for SQA as a front line, delivery organisation. They emphasised the criticality that any proposed saving activity be understood in the context of the education system as a whole and any implications.

The Board welcomed the helpful update, noting that the position would be returned to for discussion at future Board meetings.

124/3 PAPERS FOR APPROVAL

The Board noted that there were no papers for approval at this meeting.

124/4 PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Qualifications Delivery

4.11 NQ Certification Programme

The Board noted the contents of the National Qualifications Certification Programme Group report. Ms Blair highlighted the points in the report that had now moved from amber to green since the papers had gone to print.

4.12 HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme

The Board noted the contents of the HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme Group report, noting that systems issues remain vulnerable and are part of the issue being addressed as part of the change programme.

4.13 RNQ Programme Report

The Board noted the contents of the RNQ Programme report and that the programme was sitting at green.

The Chief Executive reported that the exam timetable for 2020 had been finalised but that prior to notification to centres, SQA were awaiting confirmation from the Scottish Government about the movement of a public holiday that will have an effect on the timetable. SQA anticipate that the timetable will be published following communications from the Scottish Government being released to stakeholders.

The Board discussed issues around the removal of Recognising positive achievement and the associated break in the hierarchy relationship between National 4 and National 5. SQA remain committed to working in partnership with the Scottish Government and other agencies to strengthen the credibility of National 4 to teachers, parents and learners.

4.2 Change Programme Highlight Report

The Board considered the report on progress against the various workstreams of the SQA Change Programme, noting that the one issue showing as red is related to resourcing and current staffing pressures.

4.3 Corporate Risk Register

The Chief Executive presented the current status of the Corporate Risk Register, highlighting those changes as a result of deliberations at the recent meeting of the Audit Committee.

The Committee discussed and noted the Corporate Risk Register.

4.4 Business Development Report

The Board noted the Business Development activity in all key markets.

4.5 **Cash Position**

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2019-20 Q0 accruals forecast, accepting it as an assurance on the current position.

4.6 **Committee Reports**

4.61 **Qualifications Committee – 1 May 2019**

Dr Thomson noted that the business of the meeting had previously been reported to the Board verbally and highlighted that the minutes of the meeting had now been included in the papers for Board review.

4.62 **Performance Committee – 20 May 2019**

Ms Craig provided the Board with a verbal update of the business of the Performance Committee at their recent meeting, noting that a copy of the full minute would be included in the papers of the following Board meeting.

4.63 **Advisory Council – 27 May 2019**

Ms Handley provided the Board with a verbal update of the business of the Advisory Council at their recent meeting and consequent advice to the SQA Board from the meeting. Ms Handley noted that a copy of the full minute would be included in the papers of the following Board meeting.

4.64 **Audit Committee – 3 June 2019**

Mr McKay provided the Board with a verbal update of the business of the Audit Committee at their recent meeting, noting that a copy of the full minute would be included in the papers of the following Board meeting.

124/5 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr McKay made a request for a presentation on GDPR to ensure clarity for Board members on good practice. It was agreed that this would be arranged with Strategic Planning and Governance colleagues.

The Chair took the opportunity to acknowledge that this was the Chief Executive's last meeting of the Board, noting that a more informal farewell would be organised at a later date. The Chair thanked Dr Brown for her years of committed service to SQA and all of the work that she had undertaken to improve the experiences and opportunities for the learners of Scotland. Her signature on the certificates of so many students in Scotland would be her lasting legacy. The Board strongly endorsed the appreciation of Janet's contribution.

There were no other matters raised under any other business.

124/6 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 21 August 2019 at 10am in Lowden. This will be a joint meeting with the Qualifications Committee.