# SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY B129/1.12

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 22 APRIL 2020**

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-eighth meeting of the Board of Management held at 10.00 am on Wednesday 5 February 2020, in Lowden.

**Members Officers**

\* Mr D Middleton (Chair) \* Ms J Blair

\* Ms F Robertson (Chief Executive) \* Mr M Baxter

\* Ms E Craig \* Mr L Downie

\* Ms A Davis \* Mr J McMorris

\* Mr S Hagney \* Ms J Ross

\* Mrs J Handley \* Dr G Stewart

\* Dr W Mayne Prof A Boyter

\* Mr H McKay

\* Mr G Smith **Observers**

\* Mr R StewartMs A Kerr, SQA

\* Dr K Thomson Mr G Logan, Scottish Government

Ms C Nelson-Shaw, Creative Scotland

\* indicates present

128/1 **OPENING REMARKS**

1.1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair extended a welcome to all members including Mr Mike Baxter, newly appointed Director of Finance and Corporate Services, to his first meeting of the Board.

The Chair also welcomed Mr Graeme Logan, Director of Learning from the Scottish Government and Ms Cate Nelson-Shaw, Board member of Creative Scotland, a mentee of the Chair; who both were attending as observers.

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 27 November 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 were approved subject to a small typographical error.

1.13 **Matters Arising**

The Chair confirmed the decision to reschedule the date of the August Board meeting from 19 August to 26 August to accommodate availability, as discussed at the meeting on 27 November 2019.

The Chair confirmed that an exceptional meeting of the Board would be called on 16 March 2020 preceding the Audit Committee in order to discuss budget setting and the SQA Corporate Plan ahead of the submission deadline. The meeting would be held in Lowden with the option for members to dial in to the discussion if more appropriate.

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

1.14 **Action Grid**

B126/3.4

The Board noted that, during the revision of Committee and Board of Management standing orders, formal delegation for the management of the Corporate Risk Register had been given to the Audit Committee and would be included in strategic discussion annually at the Board of Management.

It was noted that the Corporate Office would continue to work to resolve access issues with regards to the Board of Management Sharepoint site and facilitate the secure sharing of documents using this resource.

The contents of the action grid were noted.

1.15 **Workplan 2020**

The Board noted the contents of the workplan for 2020.

1.2 **CHAIR’S REPORT**

The Chair’s SQA engagements included various meetings during the first months of 2020 with the Chief Executive, Graeme Logan, Director of Learning in the Scottish Government and John Swinney, Deputy First Minister.

The Chair highlighted the Chief Executive’s second appearance at the Education and Skills Parliamentary Committee, supporting the further detailed communications that had been provided to the Committee by SQA in response to the points raised.

The Board noted this update.

1.3 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented a full update on her activities since the last meeting of the Board.

The Board noted the letter of 19 December 2019 from the Chief Executive to the Convenor of the Education and Skills Committee attached to the report, containing further detail and actions being taken forward.

The Chief Executive drew the Board’s attention to her ambitions for 2020 that had been included in her report, having been communicated to the business. The Chief Executive also highlighted the positive and inclusive scope of work covering a range of issues and engagement with staff that had helped to shape these ambitions and aspirations. She highlighted confidence in delivering these during 2020.

Finally, the Chief Executive detailed the planning work underway on the approach to the completion of Revisions to National Qualifications. This would include contribution to the forthcoming Scottish Government education review which will include consideration of the senior phase, a review of National 3 and National 4 and a clear workplan on the support SQA offer to the system in 2020/21. The Board noted the importance of support to the system being acknowledged, quantified and resourced; while remaining clear on the boundaries of the organisation’s responsibilities.

In discussing the People Survey, members highlighted the importance, when considering the survey, that the Board has sight of the action plan to address any issues. This is being discussed at the Perfomance Committee on 24 February.

The Board noted positively this update, highlighting in particular the forward-facing and progressive aspirations for the organisation in 2020.

128/2 **PAPERS FOR DISCUSSION**

2.1 **FINANCE**

2.11 **Financial Performance Report**

Mr Baxter presented the year to date and forecast outturn to end December and compared against the Q2 forecast.

Mr Baxter reported that the in-year position had stabilised, and funding levels agreed with the Scottish Government would allow a break-even position. Anticipated savings in the final quarter were reported to be on track and deliverable. Mr Baxter confirmed that higher risk savings proposals previously considered were no longer assumed to be delivered or required.

The Spring Budget Revision would be laid in the Scottish Parliament on 6 February following which an updated BAM letter would be issued confirming the remaining funding to be allocated, of which notification had already been received from the Scottish Government Sponsor Team.

Mr Baxter reported that the development of the 2020-21 budget would ensure clear and transparent expectations and a robust start point for the financial year.

The Board thanked Mr Baxter for the update, taking assurance from the positive headlines within the report with regards to the forecasted year end position. The Board discussed the capital funding position, noting that the additional capital funding had cleared the risk that had previously been associated with the Windows 10 upgrade.

2.12 **Spending Review Update**

Mr Baxter went on to provide a verbal update on the SQA Spending Review position.

Mr Baxter reported that finance colleagues are in the process of preparing detailed budgets in advance of the Board budget discussion meeting, scheduled for 16 March. Whilst the full funding requirement is not expected to be addressed in the Budget Bill, discussions continue with the Scottish Government on the level of funding required.

The Board noted the update.

2.2 **CHANGE PROGRAMME**

Mr Downie presented an update to the Board, reporting progress that had been made to date in the Change Programme and detailing planned next steps in the project.

At the midpoint within the first phase of the programme, key highlights include:

* Improved resilience, mission critical systems now backed up on a resilient, fully supported solution;
* Improved security, Recovery Time Objective reduced significantly;
* 75% reduction in carbon footprint;
* Improved agility;
* Key end of life hardware replaced; and
* Improved business reporting capability.

Mr Downie reported that progress was positive and encouraging in the first phase of the project with risk now being reduced and going in the right direction; one of the key objectives of the programme.

Next steps for each coming stage of the programme include:

***Enabling functions***

* Freeze scope of Enabling Functions Programme;
* Re-Baseline Programme Plan based on final ‘scope’; and
* Communicate Target End date for EF Programme.

***Governance***

* Update Governance Model based on feedback and learnings to date; and
* Merge EF & EC into single strategic change programme.

***Enabling Consumers***

* Define Business Case; and
* Prioritise Initiatives.

The Board noted the update and discussed the various issues therein.

In discussing staffing to support programme of work and projects, the Board noted that different channels of resourcing such as graduate apprenticeships were being explored.

The Board discussed the cyber-security aspect of the Change Programme, seeking comfort that SQA were addressing any areas of vulnerability. Mr Downie clarified that the principle SQA work to is a ‘when’ not an ‘if’ approach and assured that the issue of cyber-security would remain high on SQA’s agenda with a programme of engagement with staff in place to raise awareness of risks and issues in regard to potential cyber threats.

The Board thanked and commended Mr Downie and his team for the progress made to date in what had been a challenging year.

At this juncture, Mr Logan left the meeting.

2.3 **ACCREDITATION AND REGULATION: INCLUDING ANNUAL REVIEW**

Mr George Brown, Head of SQA Accreditation, was welcomed to the meeting.

Each year, SQA Accreditation produce an annual review outlining the activity that has been undertaken over the past year and the plan for the coming year.

Mr Brown presented to the Board the annual review for 2018/19 and lead on a presentation on the current and planned approach being taken in accreditation and regulation in Scotland. Planned activity for the coming year included:

* SVQ Research;
* Transition from the Modern Apprenticeship Group to the Apprenticeship Approvals Group (potential impact on SVQ development);
* Review of Regulatory Principles; and
* Improving relationships with Ofqual, Qualification Wales and CCEA Regulation.

The Board thanked Mr Brown for the comprehensive and thorough presentation and discussed the potential impacts of the SVQ research. The Board noted that there would be no anticipated impact on accreditation, but more so the design and construction of the qualifications.

Mr Brown left the meeting.

128/3 **PAPERS FOR INFORMATION**

3.1 **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT**

Mr Steve Borley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance, was welcomed to the meeting.

SQA operates a Complaints Handling Procedure as specified by the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman’s (SPSO) model procedure.

Mr Borley presented to the Board the Annual Complaints Handling Report, which adopts the complaints performance reporting format set by SPSO, with a focus on volumes of complaints received and resolved within the required timelines.

Mr Borley highlighted within the report an analysis of the outcome of those complaints received and concluded within the 12-month period and identified some of the themes raised by multiple complainants to SQA.

The Board noted and approved the information in the report in relation to

SQA’s complaints handling performance, discussing the benefits of including in the annual report the process through which SQA reflect on complaints and use this information to inform action plans for business areas.

128/4 **PAPERS FOR INFORMATION**

4.1 **INTERIM ON CORPORATE PLAN AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

Mr Borley delivered a presentation providing the Board with an update on the continued progress in the development of the 2020-23 Corporate Plan and the associated Performance Framework.

The presentation included:

* An update on the latest iteration of SQA’s purpose, mission and vision;
* The ongoing work to develop deliverables, including an overview of the workshop session and subsequent measurement review group;
* The latest position with SQA Accreditation’s relationship with the Performance Framework and Corporate Plan; and
* An overview of the work already occurring that will allow SQA to take the deliverables forward.

Mr Borley was pleased to report that the programme of work would be on track to publish alongside the 2020-21 Budget on 1 April 2020.

The Board noted the update.

Mr Borley left the meeting.

4.2 **QUALIFICATIONS DELIVERY**

4.11 **NQ Certification Programme**

The Board noted the contents of the National Qualifications Certification Programme Group report.

4.12 **HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme**

The Board noted the contents of the HN, Vocational and International Certification Programme Group report.

4.3 **CASH POSITION**

The Board noted the position for the year based on the 2019-20 Q2 accruals forecast, accepting it as an assurance on the current position.

4.4 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

4.41 **Advisory Council – 4 November 2019**

The Board 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.

4.42 **Performance Committee – 18 November 2019**

The Board 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.

4.43 **Qualifications Committee – 20 November 2019**

The Board 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.

Dr Thomson reported that the Committee had recommended that, where appropriate, information and research is shared with the teaching community in the interests of transparency and informing wider educational discussion and practices.

Dr Thomson also noted that he and Dr Stewart had been looking into additional co-opted membership to the Committee and this would be confirmed in due course.

128/5 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no other matters raised under any other business.

128/6 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 22 April 2020 in Lowden.