

Minutes of the sixteenth meeting of the Performance Committee held on Tuesday 8 November 2022 at 10 am by Microsoft Teams.

### Members

- \* Ms A Davis (Convenor)
- \* Mr H McKay
- \* Mrs J Handley

### Officers

- \* Mr M Baxter
- \* Ms J Blair
- \* Mr J Booth
- \* Mr M Campbell
- \* Mr A Dickson
- \* Ms M Farragher
- Mrs D Mahmoud
- \* Mr J McMorris
- \* Ms Y Raven
- \* Ms F Robertson (PC16/1 – 16/5 only)
- \* Dr G Stewart

### In attendance

- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* [REDACTED], SQA (PC16/1 – 16/5, 16/7 onwards)
- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* [REDACTED], SQA (PC16/1 – 16/5 only)
- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* Mr Alistair Shaw, SQA (PC16/8 only)

### Observer

- \* [REDACTED], Scottish Government

\* indicates present

### 16/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the sixteenth meeting including Mr Martin Campbell, Director of Business Systems, and Ms Margaret Farragher, Director of Policy, Analysis and Standards who were welcomed to their first meeting.

A welcome was also extended to [REDACTED], who was deputising for Mrs Mahmoud, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], from Scottish Government who was in attendance as an observer.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Mahmoud.

#### 16/2 **DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

#### 16/3 **PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### i **Minutes from previous meeting**

The minutes of the thirteenth meeting held on 16 August 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

##### ii **Action Grid**

The Committee noted the closure of the one action recorded.

##### iii **Workplan**

The Committee noted the contents of the workplan.

#### 16/4 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

#### 16/5 **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW – Q2**

██████████ provided a comprehensive overview of the report that covered the period July to September 2022. He highlighted that where possible standardised RAGs had been introduced for deliverables and that a RAG tracker had been included to track the changes from Q1 to Q2 and this was welcomed by the Committee.

He went on to report that, out of the five Outcomes, two had been assessed at green and three at amber. The following areas were covered during the discussion, and the Committee:

##### **Perform**

- Noted that, within this strand out of the nine deliverables six had been assessed at green, and three at amber.
- In response to an enquiry around the status of the Ofqual malpractice audit it was noted that SQA was still awaiting the report. The SQA Board would be notified once the report was received.
- Welcomed the trends in the People Dashboard, however the prior year annual totals and current year to date were not comparable. It was enquired if a 12-month rolling averages could be considered.

In response it was advised that the team had moved away from rolling averages at the request of the business, however a different format would be considered.

- Noted that although there had been upward trend of sickness absences, particularly around stress, this month had seen a slight reduction.

The Committee were assured that the Executive Management Team's (EMT's) priority continued to be the health and wellbeing of the staff, and this would continue to be closely monitored.

- Enquired if there should be concern with the increase in leavers across the organisation.

In response, it was acknowledged that SQA had limits and constraints on what could be offered to attract potential employees in the current buoyant market, particularly at junior and mid-management levels.

Where possible, recruitment was advertised internally and there had been a positive movement on internal promotions across the organisation.

The Committee was assured that this would continue to be closely monitored.

- Noted that the figures detailed in the financial balance remained consistent with the report presented to the SQA Board in October.
- Enquired if some quantitative KPIs on impact of communications could be included in the report.
- In response, it was noted that that a new communications / reputation dashboard had been developed and this was welcomed by the Committee.
- Enquired if there could be a measurement around how SQA could ensure that it had an engaged and diverse workforce which met the needs of the organisation.

## **Progress**

- Noted that out of the six deliverables within the strand, five had been assessed at green and one at amber.
- Noted that the business tool within the ISO Expansion Programme would facilitate and support the necessary requirements to meet the standards.
- Enquired if there should be concern over the number of outstanding policies to be reviewed.

It was noted that the review process was to ensure that existing and new policies were legally compliant and ensure compliance with SQA processes and values including the completion of a full Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). The Committee were assured that policies had been updated and required EQiA's completed, and that a workplan to review the rest remained ongoing in line with the Section 23 Agreement in place with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

## Transition

- Noted that the one deliverable within the strand had been assessed at amber.
- Welcomed that additional resource requirements to deliver the programme, whilst SQA were continuing to deliver its existing functions, had been approved by the Scottish Government.

It was highlighted that additional resource for the next stage would be required, and a proposal would be submitted to the Scottish Government.

- Acknowledged that SQA would encounter a lot of performance and capacity challenges until clarification was received from the Scottish Government. The Committee was assured that SQA would continue to operate to meet its statutory duties.
- Noted that SQA was undertaking lots of excellent work, which was are not necessarily getting communicated, including for example, it's focus on Metaskills.

On behalf of the Committee, the Convenor took the opportunity to advise that [REDACTED] would be leaving SQA and commended her for the positive development of the QPR, particularly around the level of detail now included.

## 16/6 STRATEGIC BEST VALUE AND FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Mr Dickson provided an overview of the programme of work and the developments to date within the Cost Allocation Module.

It was highlighted that Audit Scotland had identified that segmental reporting in the financial statements of SQA's Annual Report and Accounts was limited and the model had facilitated the closing of the audit finding, which had been reported to SQA's Audit Committee at its meeting in August 2022.

The Committee commented on the importance of having the information available for high-level product groups and markets given the environment that SQA operated in, and the ongoing funding requirement that was met through grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government. It was noted that information had been used to help inform discussions with the Scottish Government in areas such a NQ levy pricing and was anticipated to be used to assist business decisions when considering the impact of Education Reform. During discussion of the next steps, the Committee agreed that consideration would be required to further refine the model and ensure business processes were in place to keep the model relevant but that it would be a useful baseline for the new organisation.

In closing, the Committee noted that progress continued across all the workstreams within the Financial Improvements Programme.

## 16/7 2023-24 ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN - DRAFT

Ms Raven presented the draft 2023-24 Annual Business Plan, during the ensuing discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that sixteen deliverables had been identified, with the majority a continuation of priorities from 2022-23. One new deliverable had been added around the new Qualifications Body Delivery Board as part of the Scottish Government's Education Reform Programme.
- Welcomed that the business plan would be adaptable to respond to priority outcomes stemming from transition work on Education Reform, and the outcomes of the Hayward Review.
- Noted that any 'Progress' deliverables not completed in 2022-23 would roll over into the 2023-24 plan.

In closing it was noted that following the consultation period, a revised draft of the business plan would be presented to the SQA Board for approval in March 2023. The Committee was requested to send any suggested amendments directly to Ms Raven.

## 16/8 INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Mr Alistair Shaw, Head of International, was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr McMorris provided an overview of SQA's international engagement activities, explaining that during the global pandemic the teams primary focus shifted to supporting and retaining customers. As expected, growth in most countries slowed, however, candidate numbers increased in China with students entered for SQA's International Diploma to Degree programme.

He was pleased to report since the start of 2022 enquires for international contracts had increased. New opportunities were being identified, several new contracts were in the pipeline and key consultancy companies were interested in working with SQA again.

It was unclear what impact the SQA reform would have on international sales, despite the Muir Report that highlighted SQA's commercial activity was essential for the new organisation to generate income. The SQA brand was well established in some international markets, and feedback from partners and clients had been positive. Every effort was being made to mitigate against the impact of the reform on sales.

The Committee enquired if it would be appropriate for a further update on international in due course. It was agreed that this would be brought to a future meeting at an appropriate time.

In closing, the Committee expressed their support and acknowledged the work and dedication of International Team that continued to be undertaken during the pandemic.

Mr Shaw left the meeting.

## 16/9 FOCUS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Committee considered the items for the next meeting and agreed the agenda would be established from the workplan.

**16/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no further business raised.

**16/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday 7 February 2023 and would be held by MS Teams.

**PFN 1 Meeting Dates 2023**

The Committee noted the dates presented.

**Mr McKay**

The meeting was formally closed acknowledging that this was Mr McKay's last meeting before his tenure ended with the SQA Board in January 2023.