

Meeting:	Advisory Board
Date:	24/10/2024
Time:	13:30:16:30
Details:	MS Teams/Optima

## Minute

<b>Members</b>	<b>In attendance</b>
Gillian Hamilton (Chair)	[Redacted] (item 6)
Ollie Bray	[Redacted] (item 8)
David Gregory	[Redacted] (item 10)
Gill Ritchie	
Rob Strachan	
John Fyffe	
David Gemmell	
Kevin Kelman	<b>Governance</b>
Lyndsay McRoberts	[Redacted] (secretariat)
Aileen Ponton	
<b>Apologies</b>	
Janie McManus	
Patricia Watson	
[Redacted]	

### 1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Janie McManus, Patricia Watson and [Redacted].

### 2. Previous meeting

- 2.1 The Board agreed the minutes from the meeting of 16 July 2024.
- 2.2 The following action log updates were also noted:

AB 26	ES Key Priorities – update on activity. Curriculum Improvement Cycle would be tabled at a future meeting.	The Board agreed action to remain open.
AB 30	Equalities Mainstreaming report – updated to reflect that ES would now be refocussed rather than a new agency.	The Board agreed to close.
AB 31	How best to utilise Strategic Discussion sessions going forward – discussed at agenda item 7.	The Board agreed action to remain open.

### 3. Declarations of interest

- 3.1 No declarations to report.

#### **4. Update from the Chief Executive**

4.1 The Chair provided members with an in depth update on reform that included the following.

- The Chief Inspector and Chief Executive posts would both be re-advertised.
- The Chair referred to the Body Implementation Projects (BIPs) and indicated that the BIPs for a refocused ES and an independent Inspectorate would merge to ensure a coherent approach.
- It was noted that colleagues were also working towards development of a combined transition plan, recognising the inter-dependency of the work and capacity requirements.
- It was reported that Rob Strachan had met with trade union colleagues to provide them with an update on reform.
- The Education, Children and Young People Committee had held a number of meetings to gather evidence on the Education (Scotland) Bill from stakeholders, including Gillian Hamilton, Janie McManus and Fiona Robertson of SQA. The committee also heard from education and public service unions and professional associations.
- The Chair highlighted the work already underway with the Curriculum review and noted that there was over 1000 expressions of interest for the practitioner groups.
- The Scottish Government had now confirmed that the First Minister has authorised a budget to create identities for the two new public bodies - Qualifications Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. There wouldn't be a new identity for Education Scotland as this would be a refocused agency, and not a new public body.

4.2 The Board thanked the Chair for the comprehensive update on reform which led to discussions around responsibility for CLD, the functions of a refocussed ES and also the change of the work of the Attainment Advisors.

4.3 It was also noted that the budget constraints continue with the Chair advising that an email had been issued to all staff, highlighting the significant budget pressures faced by the Scottish Government and how this would impact ES over the coming months.

4.4 It was reported that the ES Associates programme was expanding to provide additional support for ELC, the Curriculum Improvement Cycle and secondary subject curriculum areas.

4.5 The 35 hour working week had now been implemented. The Chair flagged that a number of staff had raised concerns about managing workloads within the shorter working hours and having to work outside normal working hours. She advised this would be monitored carefully.

4.7 It was also noted that Oracle Cloud was now live, with a range of resources and support available to help with the transition. The Scottish Government were working hard to address identified and known issues.

4.8 The Chair highlighted that the People Survey had closed on 8 October, ES had a 70% return rate and a further update would be provided in December.

4.9 Our Procurement team had recently undertaken a Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) assessment which had resulted in a really positive result and report. This was noted to be a great achievement.

## **5. HM Chief Inspector of Education's update**

5.1 Gill Ritchie provided the update in Janie McManus' absence and confirmed the inspection programme had commenced for the academic year.

5.2 It was noted that an Inspection specific strategic plan had been produced which sits within ES's Annual Action Plan. It was noted this includes safeguarding activity.

5.3 Gill Ritchie advised that work continues around 'investing in our staff', reviewing approaches to people development and support. She also advised they were also focussing on how best to work with stakeholders and how best to embed stakeholder engagement.

5.4 It was reported that the National thematic inspection on local authority approaches to supporting improvement was almost complete. It was also noted that inspection would play a key role in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle.

5.5 Gill Ritchie advised that the first national thematic report, to support curriculum improvement, had focussed on the quality of Learning and Teaching in Mathematics and was due for publication. Work would commence soon on Literacy and English.

5.6 It was highlighted that one area of progress was the ongoing development of a shared Early, Learning and Childcare (ELC) quality improvement framework.

5.7 It was confirmed that 15 HM Inspectors had joined the organisation, with further recruitment planned.

5.8 The Chair invited questions from the board. There was some discussion around inspection of ELC, local authority inspections and the difficulty in recruiting lay members.

## **6. Horizon Scan**

6.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting to present the horizon scan and outlined its purpose. She advised they had developed two types of scan, one being a monthly scan that would pull together information, publications and research from the previous month, the other being thematic scans on specific reports or issues.

6.2 [Redacted] focussed on the Programme for Government (thematic scan) and advised that the Government would focus efforts and resources on four key priorities: eradicating child poverty; growing the economy; tackling the climate emergency; and ensuring high quality and sustainable public services. She advised that staff needed to be aware of these to ensure their work aligns.

6.3 [Redacted] concluded by setting out some key messages and asking members to consider how ES can best use the scans to inform practice and decision making. She

also asked for feedback on the frequency of the scans and whether members would want to see monthly scans or prefer to be provided with the quarterly scan.

- 6.4 The Board thanked [Redacted] for the update, noting they found the papers useful and interesting. There was some discussion about challenges and members requested a summary of what had been actioned as a result of the horizon scanning, going forward.

**ACTION: To provide a summary of what has been actioned – [Redacted].**

**ACTION: To share the SureStart research that has been published with Lindsay McRoberts – [Redacted].**

## **7. ES Strategic Planning Framework**

- 7.1 Rob Strachan presented the Annual Action Plan for 2024-25 (AAP2425) and advised he was looking to publish this alongside the 2024-25 Education Scotland Financial Strategy. He provided some background information and explained the underpinning planning, monitoring and reporting arrangements that included prioritisation, strategic insight and ongoing opportunities for integration and alignment. Rob signaled some considerations around longer term corporate planning and set out what this would mean for governance, including the Leadership Team, Advisory Board and other governance boards.
- 7.2 It was confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary had agreed quarterly reporting and Board members noted it would be good for Advisory Board to also have regular updates on key priorities. There was also some discussion around extending the planning cycle from three years to five years.
- 7.3 It was noted that it still wasn't clear what the governance arrangements would be for the refocussed ES or new Inspectorate. John Fyffe asked what assurance could be given to the accountable officer in the next year whilst work was being undertaken to separate functions. Rob Strachan confirmed that the accountable officer could rely on comprehensive evidence across delivery, risk and finance.
- 7.4 The Chair advised that the governance arrangements and timescales should be set out in the transition plan.
- 7.6 Kevin Kelman found the information really helpful and noted the positive progress. He informed the board that they had introduced an approach called 'Corporate Radar' that was a decision making process and he was content to share this with the board.

**ACTION: To share the 'Corporate Radar' decision making process with the board – Kevin Kelman**

## **8. Finance**

- 8.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting to provide an update on the financial monitoring report as at 31 August 2024. She noted the forecast was for an overspend beyond the pressure of £4.9m of £1.957m. She also advised the Leadership Team had decided that the full forecast overspend of £1.957m should be reported to the Scottish

Government. [Redacted] confirmed that since then the overspend had reduced and was now closer to £1.5m, with a paper going to the Leadership Team to reflect this.

- 8.2 The Chair advised that at the recent Director General meeting, Neil Rennick said he hoped Education Scotland and others agencies would not start the next financial year with an operating pressure but start with an agreed annual budget.
- 8.3 [Redacted] also presented the refreshed Corporate Finance Strategy which the board approved for publication. There was some discussion around the timescales for budget plans and budget allocations that [Redacted] addressed.
- 8.4 [Redacted] left the meeting.

## **9. Inspectorate Report on Activity and Staffing levels**

- 9.1 Gill Ritchie provided an overview of the Inspectorate Activity and Staffing levels in quarter 1 (April to June 2024). She confirmed that they had met all their commitments, although it was noted there was a slight variation in the numbers due to contingency.
- 9.2 It was noted that there was a slight change in the approach for Early, Learning and Childcare (ELC) due to the number of different types of settings for ELC. Gill also advised that school consultations had increased but noted that there was capacity to cope with this.
- 9.3 Gill highlighted that their biggest challenge was around capacity and resourcing and the continued need to recruit.
- 9.4 There was some discussion around the reviews of the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) provision and Gill confirmed the reviews are across individual providers. The board commented it was a great report and acknowledged the level of work that had been undertaken.

## **10. Management Information Quarter 1 report, 2024-25**

- 10.1 [Redacted] presented the Management Information Report, Quarter 1, 2024-25, noting in particular the decrease in head count and the high level of annual leave balances. She advised that 84.9% of the workforce currently had a high annual leave balance and there may be a need to consider staff wellbeing.
- 10.2 [Redacted] also highlighted the increase in the volume of enquiries, noting the need to look into this further and consider if we have the resource to deal with the increase if it continues.

**ACTION: To explore the nature of the enquiries and try to identify why they have increased – [Redacted]/Governance.**

- 10.3 There was some discussion around how the Management Information (MI) would be captured going forward between the Inspectorate and the refocused ES. [Redacted] advised this had been discussed and there were plans to condense the MI and consider building that into the quarterly AAP reporting.

10.4 There was also a discussion around social media engagement with Rob Strachan advising there are a range of channels and support arrangements currently in place but confirmed the need to review our arrangements going forward. He also advised there was a report going to LT to discuss our internal/external communications approach.

**ACTION: To provide an update at the next meeting, on social media engagements following discussions with LT – Rob Strachan.**

10.5 The Chair thanked [Redacted] for the update and she left the meeting.

## **11. Audit and Risk Committee**

11.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) provided an update on discussions from the last ARC meeting on 12 September 2024. He advised a representative from Transport Scotland had attended to observe. He noted the work underway to develop the Agency's risk reporting arrangements through the use of Power BI, advising that further information about this would be tabled at the next ARC meeting.

## **12. Support and Improvement and Inspectorate Boards**

12.1 The latest minutes from both the Inspectorate Board and the Support and Improvement Board were noted for information.

## **13. AOB**

13.1 There was no other business to note.

## **14. Date of next meeting**

14.1 The next Advisory Board was scheduled for 5 December 2024.

**Name** [Redacted]

**Date** 05/11/2024