

Meeting:	Advisory Board
Date:	16/07/2024
Time:	10:00:12:00
Details:	MS Teams/Optima

Minute

Members	In attendance
Gillian Hamilton (Chair)	[Redacted] (item 6)
Ollie Bray	[Redacted] (item 7)
David Gregory	[Redacted] (item 8)
Janie McManus	[Redacted] (item 10)
Rob Strachan	
Patricia Watson	[Redacted] (Transport Scotland) Observer
John Fyffe	
David Gemmell	Governance
Aileen Ponton	[Redacted] (secretariat)
	[Redacted]
Apologies	
Gill Ritchie	
Kevin Kelman	
Lyndsay McRoberts	

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Gill Ritchie, Kevin Kelman and Lyndsay McRoberts.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed and introduced Rob Strachan as the new Strategic Director for Corporate Services and Governance. Rob provided some background on his previous employment and experience before reflecting on his first few weeks in Education Scotland.
- 1.4 The Chair also extended a warm welcome to [Redacted] from Transport Scotland who was there to observe the meeting.

2. Previous meeting

- 2.1 The Board agreed the minutes from the meetings of 28 March 2024 and the strategic discussion of 30 May 2024.
- 2.2 The following action log updates were also noted:
 - AB 19 - The Board agreed to close.
 - AB 26 - The Board agreed to remain open.
 - AB 27 - The Board agreed to close.
 - AB 28 - The Board agreed to close.
 - AB 29 - The Board agreed to close.

3. Declarations of interest

3.1 No declarations to report.

4. Update from the Chief Executive

4.1 The Chair conformed that members had already received a substantive update on the Reform announcement and the introduction of the Education Bill so she focussed her update on more recent progress, confirming that the first meeting of the Body Implementation Project (BIP) had taken place.

4.2 The Chair also updated members on the recent Reform update session held for staff, where the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills had joined the meeting briefly alongside Neil Rennick, DG Education and Justice and Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, the latter two also participating in a Q&A session. It was noted that some staff had been disappointed with the lack of information and lack of progress that had been made in some areas of reform.

4.3 The Chair advised that the Permanent Secretary, JP Marks had also visited Optima on 12 June to meet with some of the Leadership Team and other ES colleagues. It had been a productive morning with discussions around Inspection, the Attainment Challenge, the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, direction of travel of the education system, budgets and resourcing challenges. The Permanent Secretary had reflected positively on his visit at the subsequent Directors call.

4.6 It was highlighted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 had commenced on the day of the meeting, on 16 July 2024 and that a specific web section had been recreated to provide useful resources to the system.

4.7 A CLD conference had taken place with colleagues from both ES and the CLD Standards Council attending.

4.8 CYPIC Improvement Advisors, on placement in ES, were leading a two day course on quality improvement in education.

4.9 Finally, the Chair highlighted recent newspaper coverage around a Microsoft licensing issue.

5. Update from the HM Chief Inspector of Education

5.1 The Chief Inspector confirmed that the inspection programme for the last academic year had been completed, meeting all their public and ministerial commitments. The Annual Programme of Inspections for the coming academic year had also been published.

5.2 The Chief Inspector then updated members on changes being made to the Inspectorate, including the recent announcement about the review of the school inspection framework, including models and methodology.

5.3 The Chief Inspector also updated members on progress with the development of a shared inspection framework with the Care Inspectorate, around Early Learning and

Childcare. She advised there was a slight delay due to some concerns around methodology, with the concerns to be addressed with stakeholders.

- 5.4 It was also highlighted that work on an inspection framework for local authorities would commence, with a letter issuing to the Directors of Education to inform them of this.
- 5.6 Further work was also underway around the Curriculum Improvement Cycle. It was noted that funding had been secured from SG for this additional work.

6. Equalities Mainstreaming report

- 6.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting and confirmed that the tabled Mainstreaming Report was required to report on ES progress with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The report documented activity from March 2023 up to February 2024 and looked at both internally and externally focussed outcomes.
- 6.3 [Redacted] confirmed that the Leadership Team had already seen and commented on the report and that the report would now be finalised following Advisory Board feedback.
- 6.4 It was also confirmed that work was underway with the new Data, Performance and Research team and the Equalities staff network to refresh the outcomes within the Equality Strategy for 2024/25 and the transition into the new agency.
- 6.6 Members commented that the report was excellent and well written, noting the wide range of activities that had been undertaken over the last couple of years. The need to update the wording in page 5 to reflect a “refocused ES” rather than references to the “new” agency was agreed.

ACTION POINT: [Redacted] to update page 5 to reflect that ES will now be refocussed rather than a new agency created.

- 6.9 [Redacted] left the meeting.

7. Annual Inspection Plan for 2024/25

- 7.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting and provided an overview of the Annual Programme of Inspection for 2024/25. She advised that the HM Chief Inspector determines the scale and priorities of the inspection programme and it is then agreed with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills before being published on the ES website.
- 7.2 It was noted that the commitment is to carry out 250 school inspections and 150 early years inspections annually.
- 7.3 There was some discussion around the number of follow up inspections and noted that there had been an increase in these. The Chief Inspector confirmed that the Inspectorate was considering how best to support schools to make the required improvements, following an inspection.

7.4 The inspections for Modern Apprenticeships was also discussed and noted that the amount of these to be undertaken had not yet been finalised.

7.5 [Redacted] left the meeting.

8. Finance

8.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting and noted that most members had had sight of the tabled papers at the Audit and Risk Committee on 27 June 2024. She also noted that the Finance Strategy intended for this meeting would now be tabled at the next Advisory Board, as it still required final sign off from the Leadership Team.

8.4 There was a discussion about the budget pressures facing the Agency and [Redacted] advised that the first budget monitoring report of the financial year is produced in July. Once shared with the Leadership Team it would be tabled at the Agency's Governance Boards.

8.5 [Redacted] left the meeting.

9. Risk

9.1 Members reviewed the ES risk register and agreed that it captured the key risks facing the Agency at the present time.

9.2 [Redacted] advised that the risk papers had also been shared and fully reviewed at the Audit and Risk Committee on 27 June 2024 where it had been agreed that the Assurance Manager would meet with John Fyffe and Rob Strachan to look at the Agency's Risk Strategy, to consider if there were any further improvements that could usefully be implemented.

10. Management Information Quarter 4 report, 2023-24

10.1 [Redacted] joined the meeting to present the Management Information Report for Quarter 4, 2023-24.

10.2 [Redacted] explained that the team are always looking to make improvements within the report and are working with colleagues from across the organisation to identify ways to best capture information on impact and to better align KPI and performance information with the Annual Report and Accounts.

10.3 Members commented that the report was very comprehensive and helpful. It was noted as a concern that there was an increase in sickness absence due to stress and members queried whether this was due to uncertainty around the future of ES. It was confirmed that the majority of stress sickness was recorded as non-work related.

10.4 It was also noted there was an increase in some external communication channels while others had dropped e.g. You Tube average watch time. Members recommended that further thought be given to how ES can most effectively use social media and indeed consider if the Agency was over reliant on social media as the key means of communication.

10.5 The Chair thanked the team for their work on this report and [Redacted] left the meeting.

11. Audit and Risk Committee

11.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) provided an update on discussions at the last ARC meeting, noting in particular that the programme of audit work for 2023/24 was completed to a high standard. ARC members were fully satisfied with the quality of reports it had received over the year and welcomed the substantial opinion received from Internal Audit.

12. Annual report and accounts and ARC committee assurance report

12.1 [Redacted] provided an update on the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) process, highlighting the Advisory Board's prior agreement to delegate approval of the ARA to the Audit and Risk Committee. She confirmed that the ARC had reviewed the ARA and had also reviewed a wide range of assurances, all of which informed their recommendation to the Accountable Officer to sign the ARA.

12.2 The Chair confirmed the ARA had now been sent to the Cabinet Secretary with the intention to lay in front of parliament. She thanked [Redacted] and her team and members for the vast amount of work undertaken to produce this report.

13. AOB

13.1 Ollie Bray informed members that there was another Scottish Government consultation underway - the Post School Education and Skills Reform legislation consultation.

13.2 Rob Strachan asked members to consider how the Advisory Board schedule the strategic discussion sessions over the course of the year, suggesting that one session could be used to plan for the coming financial year and one could be a deep-dive on key priorities. Members agreed to pick this up at a later date once the Agency's planning approach is finalised.

ACTION POINT: Rob Stachan to revisit in advance of the next strategic session.

13.3 The Chair thanked members for their input and contributions and thanked [Redacted] for his attendance at the meeting.

14. Date of next meeting

14.1 The meeting scheduled for 26 September 2024 had to be cancelled due to diary commitments. The next Advisory Board would now be held on the 24 October 2024.

Name [Redacted]

Date 18/07/2024