

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

PC24/3 i

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2024 For approval

Minutes of the twenty-third meeting of the Performance Committee held on Wednesday 21 August 2024 at 11am by Microsoft Teams.

Members

- * Ms A Davis (Convenor)
- * Ms M Wailes

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
[REDACTED]
- * Mr J Booth
- * Mr M Campbell
- * Mr A Dickson (until PC23/5)
Mrs D Mahmoud
- * Mr J McMorris
Ms Y Raven
- * Ms F Robertson
- * Dr G Stewart
- * Mr M Ware

In attendance

- * Ms S Coyle, SQA (PC23/8 only)
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA (PC23/7 only)
- * Mr G Smith, SQA Board member

* indicates present

23/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the twenty-third meeting, including Mr Grahame Smith, who as a non-executive member of the SQA Board, would stand-in as a member of the Committee to enable the necessary quorum for the meeting, as per the Standing Orders. It was noted that following the current recruitment for new Board members by the Scottish Government, the SQA Chair would be reviewing membership across all Committees.

Apologies for absence had been received from the SQA Chair, [REDACTED], Mrs Mahmoud and Ms Raven.

23/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

23/3 PREVIOUS MEETING

i Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the twenty-second meeting held on 27 May 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

ii Action Grid

The Committee endorsed the closure of the only three actions.

iii Workplan

It was explained that due to timings, the combined paper covering the Centre Survey and the Key Audience Research Findings had been deferred to the next meeting.

After reviewing the workplan, and to ensure adequate discussion at the next meeting, it was proposed to move the International Update to the first meeting in 2025, with both the annual reports for Health & Safety and Sustainability remaining as papers for noting. The Committee endorsed the proposal.

The Committee noted the contents of the workplan.

23/4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

23/5 STRATEGIC BEST VALUE AND FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Mr Dickson provided an overview of the programme of work and the developments to date within the programme, highlighting that at present resources were being stretched in terms of progressing Best Value over the last quarter. Reassurance was provided to the Committee that good progress had been made and had only slowed due the priority of the Reform Programme. SQA would be able to demonstrate compliance with its duty of best value in line with the characteristics set out in the Scottish Public Finance Manual. It was highlighted that had there was also an open external audit action from Audit Scotland's 2022-23 Annual Audit Report that was monitored by the Audit Committee. The next steps would involve re-establishing direction and the organisational wide team responsible for progressing Best Value.

Mr Dickson left the meeting.

23/6 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW (QPR) – Q1

The Convenor took the opportunity to thank the Strategic Planning and Governance team on the success of the workshop for Committee members to discuss updating the QPR to reflect the 2024-27 Corporate Plan.

██████████ provided an overview of the QPR that covered the period April to June 2024, advising that the deliverables had been updated with a new Performance Framework and that reporting structure remained largely the same. He went on to advise that all Corporate Outcomes were assessed at amber and highlighted the

deliverables that had changed in RAG status and the context about what had changed was provided. During the ensuing discussion, the Committee:

- Enquired around the change in RAG status from green to red for the deliverable 'Secure and deliver contracts in line with Service Level Agreements'.

In response it was noted that it was due to a new IT system preventing the processing of some application types. It was clarified that it was not the functionality of the database that had caused the issue, rather data migration and that a root cause analysis was being undertaken. Full integrity checks would be undertaken until a solution was implemented.

Reassurance was provided that an Incident Management Team had been convened to manage the situation and ensure minimal risk.

Legal advice had been sought and it was advised that it was not a reportable incident to the Information Commissioner's Office.

- Noted that in response to a query around the deliverable 'National Qualifications Delivery to plan' RAG status at amber, despite trending green, it was highlighted that despite indication that the EIS Further Education Lecturers Association (FELA) action short of strike/industrial strike action would be called off there were a significant number of candidates results outstanding for HN provision. This would continue to be closely monitored.
- Welcomed that the ongoing Ofqual case regarding a number of historic malpractice cases would be resolved soon. As part of the action plan an independent audit would be conducted by SQA's internal auditors, Grant Thornton, and be presented to the November meeting of the Audit Committee. The audit report, along with a Statement of Facts about the case details would be published by Ofqual. The Committee were mindful of SQA's working environment and acknowledged that there could be some reputational implications.
- Noted the ongoing uncertainty on the financial resources available to SQA in 2024-25 without a confirmed budget from the Scottish Government, and that the SQA Board would be discussing the financial position at its next meeting.

Acknowledged the significant impact of the £2.4m budget reduction on the organisation and that work was ongoing in attempting to achieve this through a series of initiatives.

- Welcomed that SQA would be using the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework to better understand, manage, and reduce its cybersecurity risk and SQA would be focussing on its cyber resilience plan, especially disaster recovery.
- Discussed the transformation of our business model to deliver digital services that support learners and educators of the future. A business case had been submitted to the Scottish Government and SQA awaited a response. In the meantime, progress is paused.

- Noted that the recruitment freeze would have an impact, especially with some critical roles currently vacant and it was acknowledged that this was a risk.

In closing, the Committee noted that to enable a more streamlined approach to the QPR, a workplan against performance measures and targets was under development, along with expected frequency of submissions. It was anticipated that these changes would be provided from the next quarter.

23/7 COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Welcomed to the meeting was [REDACTED] who delivered presentation that updated the Committee on the outcome of the May 2024 Colleague Engagement Survey. She highlighted that 72% of colleagues completed the survey that resulted in a 64% overall engagement score for SQA. It was highlighted that this matched the benchmark of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Index.

The survey data had been analysed by colleagues in the Research and Evaluation team, and Directorate thematic reports had been developed to enable a deeper dive into the common themes and trends identified in the free text feedback. All results had been shared across the organisation to ensure transparency.

A series of in-depth focus groups are underway with people at all levels of the organisation exploring the specific organisation-wide themes identified in the survey results. These included clarify on reform, communication and leadership. Each session would be attended by members of the Executive Management Team (EMT) to participate in the conversations and answer any questions about the survey results. The outputs would be used alongside the overall results to create measurable actions.

The Committee noted that an overview of the results would be provided to the September meeting of the SQA Board and that the next survey would take place towards the end of 2024.

[REDACTED] left the meeting.

23/8 EXIT DATA OVERVIEW

Welcomed to the meeting was Ms Sharon Coyle, Head of HR, who presented the report that provided the Committee with an analysis of leavers data covering the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. During discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that there was relatively consistent number of leavers over the last two years and that there were no key themes identified to account for the small spike in July and August of 2023. It was explained that a more significant spike occurred in June 2024 due to a number of fixed term posts ending.
- Was encouraged that turnover had decreased and in the last twelve months fewer permanent staff had left compared to the previous period. Additionally, the percentage of people leaving with less than two years' service had reduced.

- Encouraged management to review the process and consider alternative routes to increase the completion rate of leaver questionnaires.
- Welcomed that further review would be taken to understand why there was a general concern around leadership and communications, particularly as this was consistent with the results from the Colleague Engagement Survey.

Ms Coyle left the meeting.

23/9 **FOCUS FOR NEXT MEETING**

As previously discussed, the items for the next meeting had been agreed following endorsed amends to the workplan (PC23/3 iii refers).

23/10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no further business raised.

23/11 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday 3 December 2024 and would be held by MS Teams.

Later: Meeting rescheduled to Thursday 5 December 2024.