SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY   PC23/3 i

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 21 AUGUST 2024   For approval

Minutes of the twenty-second meeting of the Performance Committee held on Monday 27 May 2024 at 10.30am by Microsoft Teams.

Members

* Ms A Davis (Convenor)
* Mrs J Handley
* Ms M Wailes

Officers

* Ms J Blair
  redacted name
* ██████████
* Mr M Campbell
* Mr A Dickson
* Mrs D Mahmoud
* Mr J McMorris
* Ms Y Raven Ms
  F Robertson
* Dr G Stewart
* Mr M Ware

In attendance

* ██████████ , SQA
* ██████████ , SQA
* ██████████ , SQA (PC22/6 only)
* Ms S Roger, SQA Chair

* indicates present

22/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the twenty-second meeting, including the SQA Chair. She went on to advise that following a realignment of functions and areas of responsibility the Corporate Planning and Information Governance teams moved into the Business Development Directorate, which was renamed Corporate Strategy and Business Development to reflect this. As a result, Mr McMorris would now be lead Director of this Committee.

Apologies for absence had been received from the Chief Executive, Mr McMorris and ██████████ .

22/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

22/3 PREVIOUS MEETING

i   **Minutes from previous meeting**

The minutes of the thirteenth meeting held on 5 February 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

ii   **Action Grid**

There were no open actions.

iii   **Workplan**

It was highlighted to the Committee that a combined paper covering the Centre Survey and the Key Audience Research Findings would be presented to the next meeting.

Committee noted the contents of the workplan.

22/4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

22/5 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW (QPR) – Q3

The Convenor took the opportunity to highlight that on 16 July, the Strategic Planning and Governance team would lead on a workshop for Committee members to assist in updating the QPR to reflect the new corporate plan. This would then provide a more effective link between the performance framework and the SQA Board.

Ms Raven provided an overview of the QPR that covered the period January to March 2024, reporting that the Corporate Outcomes had changed from three assessed at green and two ambers to four assessed at green and one amber. She went on to highlight the deliverables that had changed in RAG status and context about what had changed was provided.

During the discussion, the Committee:

▪   Noted that the deliverable for 'National Qualifications Delivery to plan' had changed RAG status from green to amber due to the continued close monitoring of appointee recruitment for some subjects that remained challenging, and college pay disputes. Reassurance was provided that SQA were working closely with Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Government to ensure that colleges communicate effectively with learners, and where possible, extend deadlines and provide support to learners.

Welcomed that the outside interface bandwidth issue had been successfully upgraded at Lowden through BP1076 Internet Resilience.

Reassurance was provided on the 2024 Awarding Programme and that there were no issues or concerns as the position was as expected for this point in the year due to the rhythm of project delivery.

Work on remodelling the dates published in March 2024 for the exam timetable in 2025 continued following the feedback from stakeholders. It was highlighted that compression of the timetable could have implications for learner workload during the diet and assessment arrangements.

Noted that the draft response to the amended draft case narrative was being finalised and would be submitted to Ofqual by the deadline date.

▪ Acknowledged the ongoing uncertainty on the financial resources available to SQA in 2024-25 without a confirmed budget from the Scottish Government.

▪ ███████████

Redacted – section 30(b)(i) the free and frank provision of advice

▪ The Committee were assured that the Executive Management Team's (EMT's) were making every effort to reduce costs as much as possible in the funding gap of £2.4m in the 2024-25 budget whilst acknowledging the significant impact of the budget reduction on the organisation.

▪ Noted the estate occupancy with a large capacity of desk space not being utilised. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for EMT to discuss options to reduce the space due to the tightness on funding.

It was highlighted that procedural events had been moved in-house to Optima and this had resulted in a cost saving.

▪ Enquired why only two Reform milestones were listed and it was agreed that this would be investigated and reported on in due course.

▪ ███████████

Redacted – section 30(b)(i) the free and frank provision of advice

▪ The Committee acknowledged that this area was a known risk and was an uncomfortable position to be in. It was highlighted that a cyber resilience strategy had been developed that would focus on the technology and people including details of how SQA would respond, and recover should there be an incident. Work was ongoing to maximise cyber security and with a focus on vulnerability scans to understand legacy issues.

▪ Future reporting would also be improved to provide the Committee with the correct level of information.

- Enquired what were the seven outstanding policies as part of the policy review process. It was agreed that this would be investigated and reported to the Committee in due course.

- Discussed the research on artificial intelligence and the importance of this moving forward. It was noted that analysis had been delivered to the Qualifications Committee in this area.

It was highlighted that although the workshop would have taken place the current format of the QPR would continue to be used until the start of Q1 and that improvements would be made continuously, on the basis of the workshop, as had been the case historically.

The Chair took the opportunity to reflect on the updates provided and how the wider issues could be pulled out in terms of reform, particularly around the financials. This would be helpful to discuss at the Transition Board, that was jointly co-Chaired with the Scottish Government, and would highlight the importance of recognising that in order to progress the transformation agenda quickly SQA would require the necessary resources.

22/6 STRATEGIC BEST VALUE AND FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

████████████ was welcomed to the meeting. He provided a comprehensive overview of the detailed report on the progress made within the different workstreams within the Best Value Programme. He highlighted that the first gap analysis had been conducted to identify programme deliverables and areas for improvement against Audit Scotland's best value characteristics and success criteria. Advice from Audit Scotland had been sought on baselining, and once received SQA would be able to confirm its maturity baseline. It was suggested that, in order not to delay progress, SQA consider the best value deliverables that were meaningful for SQA.

The Committee noted the update.

████████████ left the meeting.

22/7 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS: DRAFT PART A PERFORMANCE REPORT

Ms Raven highlighted to the Committee that there were several areas in the report that were still to be finalised and that Section B (Accountability Report) and Section C (the unaudited Annual Accounts 2021-22) would be presented to the Audit Committee for review at its meeting in August, and the SQA Board would approve the final version at its meeting in November.

Although the report was a balance of SQA's delivery of core functions and the reform programme, the Committee recognised the importance to highlight the positives and celebrate examples of success. It was suggested that some visually appealing graphics be incorporated and other specific suggestions were made.

22/9   FOCUS FOR NEXT MEETING

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

22/10   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

SQA People Survey

Mrs Mahmoud advised that there had been over 70% participation and early indications were showing around a 64% index score. Regular updates would be scheduled into the workplan.

22/11   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 21 August 2024 and would be held by MS Teams.