

Minutes of the 54th SCQF Partnership Board held on Wednesday 09 June 2021 at 09.00 hours via video conference on behalf of SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW

Confirmed for website

Present:

Rob Wallen (RW)	Chair SCQF Partnership
Stuart McKenna (SMcK)	STF
Alastair Delaney (AD)	QAA
Malcolm Foley (MF)	QC Chair
Jamie Davidson (JD) Auditor up to item 4	Henderson Loggie LLP
Gill Stewart (GS) on behalf of Fiona Robertson	SQA

In Attendance:

Aileen Ponton (AP)	SCQF Partnership
Sheila Dunn (SD)	SCQF Partnership
Julie Cavanagh (JC)	SCQF Partnership
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat)	SCQF Partnership
Laura Wilding (LW)	SCQF Partnership

Welcome and introductions

RW welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Jim Metcalfe (JM), Alastair Sim (AS), Fiona Robertson (FR) and Linda Pooley (LP) (as an observer). GS was welcomed as a substitute for FR. It was noted that Jim Metcalfe had reviewed the papers and passed his approval and comments on to AP and RW.

Register of Interests

RW reminded Directors of the Register of Interests form. Should any Director's interests have changed, that would have implications for work with the Board, the form should be completed and submitted to BW to record.

Noting of any conflict of interest

RW asked the Directors if they were aware of any issues presenting a conflict of interest and none were noted.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021

RW asked Directors if they were happy that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. BW commented that Linda Pooley's name had been omitted from the list of those present at the meeting and would amend the minutes accordingly. The Directors then confirmed they were satisfied.

RW then talked through the redacted minutes and the Board accepted the redacted version for the website.

2. Matters Arising

Referring to Item 7, AP informed Directors that the OU data had now be uploaded to the SCQF database along with an agreed statement explaining the difference in credit value. RW asked if it was possible for the punctuation in the statement to be reviewed and SD agreed to action this.

In relation to Item 11, the Partnership had now provided further advice to a potential new supplier around the requirements for credit rating a new model for Foundation Apprenticeships. A short discussion followed around the potential new model and the Board then noted the matters arising. At this point MF joined the meeting, noting connection issues.

3. Audit and Financial Report for 2020-21

RW firstly asked AP for any comments on the papers. She noted that there had been one recommendation in the audit report that had now been actioned and JD would expand on this further.

RW then invited JD to talk to the papers and JD began by discussing the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements. The main areas highlighted were:

- despite the challenges of the past year it was a good year with income up from £775k to £962k (Page 15);
- there were increased cost savings of £200k due to home working (Page 15);
- net income was sitting at £200k which in turn had increased the reserves to £523k (Page 15 & 16);
- reserves were sitting at 8 months' worth which was more than the normal requirement of 5-6 months which provided some level of comfort going forward (Page 16).

Moving on to discuss the Audit Findings Report the main areas to highlight were:

- the auditors had issued a clean unmodified audit and there were no areas of concern to highlight (Page 2);
- there had been no management override of controls (Page 4);
- there was one issue under Income Recognition where Veteran's funding had been treated as deferred income; however under Charities SORP this required to be carried forward as a restricted fund (Page 4);
- the Auditors were happy to recommend the business as a going concern for the next 12 months from date of sign off (Page 5);
- there was one issue under Systems and Controls and a recommendation was made to obtain the appropriate right to work documents from staff members retrospectively (Page 6);
- there was no issue around independence as the Auditors did not provide any other services to the Partnership (Page 10);
- there was one small unadjusted audit difference and 2 adjusted audit differences for the Veteran's Project and transfer between restricted and unrestricted funds (Page 14 & 15).

RW then asked Directors if they had any questions or points needing clarification and a short discussion then followed around 'right to work' requirements. SMcK then referred to the 'Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees' on Page 2 of the Trustees Report, asking whether it

needed to be modified as no reference was made to the organisations that the co-opted members belonged to. AP explained the reason for this, however it was then agreed that AP would add a statement in the section that referred to co-opted Trustees and how those positions were currently filled.

Referring back to the reserves position, LW highlighted that although as JD had indicated the year end position for 2020-21 was around 8 months' reserves, the 2021-22 deficit budget agreed by the Board would leave 6 month's running costs in reserve. A short discussion then followed around changes to year-on-year depreciation levels and also the change to the depreciation policy as detailed in the ARC minutes. The Board then approved the audit report and financial statements and authorised RW to sign both reports and the Letter of Representation.

4. Management Accounts 2021 – 22 Quarter 4

The accounts had already been formally signed off by the Board under the previous agenda item, however AP explained to the Directors that the paper presented to them provided more detail around income and expenditure and provided a clearer explanation for the positive outturn. AP talked through the key points on the paper and the Board then approved the Q4 Management Accounts. At this point JD then left the meeting.

5. Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

RW asked AP if there were any items in the paper that she wished to highlight. Firstly, in relation to identifying savings accounts with better interest rates, AP informed Directors that there were very few options available although there was one potential account that LW was looking into. If that option proved unsuitable then AP recommended that the £100k be moved in to the current savings account and be reviewed in a years' time to which the Board agreed.

Other highlights from ARC were the discussion around the refinement of the scoring of the Risk Strategy and the return to office plans as detailed in the ARC minutes.

The Board then noted the work to review the £100k savings option, noted the review of the depreciation policy (as discussed in Item 3), agreed the amended risk strategy and noted the other business conducted by ARC.

6. Report from the Quality Committee

MF talked to the paper, highlighting to Directors that a large part of the meeting had been focused on the Review of the Coherence and Sustainability of Tertiary Education report, with a member of SFC in attendance to discuss the next phase of work and the feedback received previously from SCQFP and the Quality Committee. A discussion then followed around the representation of the SCQF in the report and it was agreed that AP would reinforce the messages made by QC and endorsed by the Board that it was important that the role of the SCQF was explicit rather than implicit in the final report. AD then informed Directors that SFC would move into a transition year in 2022 to start implementing the recommendations from the review and suggested that the Partnership be involved in that process as much as possible.

Other highlights from the Quality Committee meeting were: the review of the work of the Quality Committee and survey feedback that would result in the creation of a new review training pack for members; the success of the blended approach to review work in 2020-21; and the planned review activities for 2021-22 and the proposal to move two CRB's Periodic Reviews to 2023 to help with future review workloads.

In relation to the work of the Quality Committee RW (as Chair of the SCQFP Board) had accepted an invite to talk at the next Quality Committee meeting, to provide an overview of the Board's work

and the linkage between it and the Quality Committee. The Board then noted the business of the Quality Committee.

7. CEO Report

AP began by providing some background on the new Development Officer who was about to take up their post before inviting JC to provide an update on School Ambassador (SA) activity. JC provided an update on current SA numbers (including those schools that had achieved gold, silver or bronze tiered status and the criteria needed to reach a tiered status), upcoming training sessions, planned videos, promotions and press releases. The consensus among those attending the meeting was that the response to the programme over the last 12 months was extremely positive if somewhat unexpected given the difficulties schools were facing.

SD then provided an update on micro-credentials, saying that weekly meetings were occurring with the 5 colleges and key agencies involved. The group was currently building on the EU funded part of work to produce a proof of concept. A suite of micro-credentials was in development between two of the colleges and was at the final stages of the credit rating process before it could be tested.. The Board then noted the updates provided.

8. Update on return to office plans

AP talked to the paper, providing Directors with an update on the current return to office plans. A draft of the new Homeworking Policy and application form was now available and Directors were asked if they would like a copy emailed to them for review or would they prefer to wait and review at the next Board meeting. AP pointed out that waiting until the September meeting to review would mean the application process would not be opened up to staff until after this point.

The Directors then sought clarification on matters relating to variation of contract, managing staff rotas, balancing the needs of both staff and the business and duty of care. It was agreed that AP would send out the Homeworking Policy and application form directly to the Directors for comment, providing them with the option to defer approval of the policy to September should they wish or to arrange an EGM with that one item.

9. Future Board self-evaluation

RW reminded Directors that following a suggestion in the Board self-evaluation survey, it was agreed that the self-evaluation process should be more firmly linked to the governance code. AP and RW had reviewed the self-evaluation form and a copy had been attached to the paper for the Directors approval.

JM had submitted a comment to RW, suggesting an additional element to the evaluation around what skills the Board members brought and how they engaged with and promoted the SCQFP to stakeholders. RW asked if AP could liaise with JM further to decide on suitable wording and make that change to the form which would then be used for the first time in 2022.

10. Any other business

There was no other business discussed.

11. Date of next meeting

Thursday 16 September 2021 from 09.00 – 11.00.