



## Minutes of Board Meeting held on 21 July 2021

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Location	Present	In Attendance
By video conference	Alan Kershaw (Chair) Mark Bottomley Emeritus Professor ADH Crook Will Freeman Professor Elena Marco Derek Bray Dr Teri Okoro Cindy Leslie (items 6-8 only)	Hugh Simpson (CEO and Registrar) Emma Matthews Simon Howard Brian James Rebecca Roberts-Hughes Helen Ransome (minute taker) James Farrar (ARB observer) Irene Moisis (MHCLG observer)

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### Note

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#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Stephen McCusker and Liz Male.

Cindy Leslie attended part of the meeting; she was present for all matters requiring decision.

#### 2 Members' Interests

The Chair declared that all Board members had an interest in agenda item 7, about the annual review process for non-Executive members. This would not preclude them from commenting.

#### 3 Update from the Chair

The Chair thanked Dru Jaeger for his assistance with the Board workshops the previous week. The content of the workshops had exceeded expectations and the Board had made excellent progress in developing strategy and identifying priorities. The whole event had been a good opportunity for Board members to get to know one another and a similar event was planned for September.

Several meetings had been scheduled with the professional associations where updates would be provided on progress with the Building Safety Bill and the development of new international routes to registration. He noted that a meeting had not yet been arranged with RIBA.

Following recent changes to government guidance in response to the pandemic, planning was under way for ARB staff to return to the office. The Board and the Executive would be monitoring developments over the coming weeks.

Planning was also under way for the pattern of future Board meetings, providing a mix of meetings online and in person. The Chair acknowledged that holding meetings in person affected Board member availability and so highlighted the importance of scheduling dates as early as possible. Feedback given by Board members in response to a recent survey would be taken into account when planning future meetings.

The Chair told the Board that the Executive Team had been working hard in advance of the Board meeting in September 2021 where business strategy and planning would continue to be discussed in more detail.

#### 4. **Minutes**

**The Board unanimously approved the open session minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2021.**

#### 5. **Matters Arising Report**

The Chair noted the 'Extension of appointment of Temporary Chair' remained on the matters arising report in error.

There were no other matters arising.

#### Matters for Decision

#### 6. **Guidance to Institutions**

The Director of Regulation (DR) informed the Board the guidance on Fire and Life Safety and Sustainability had been largely welcomed by the institutions and commented that, while the exact wording of the guidance was unlikely to gain unanimous agreement, the consensus was such that the guidance was now ready for implementation.

The main concerns from institutions related to the practical implementation of the guidance within their curriculums. In response, ARB would take a flexible approach, allowing institutions appropriate time to progress towards meeting the requirements. Monitoring compliance would be dealt with through the regular prescription processes.

Board members thanked those involved in the development of the guidance and were pleased to see it had been largely welcomed by institutions. Some Board members expressed surprise by the comparatively low number of institutions which had responded to the consultation and queried how ARB could obtain a higher response rate in the future.

The move towards testing educational outcomes was discussed and Board members commented that this could pose a challenge for institutions as they learn and adapt to this new approach. One Board member expressed reassurance at the DR's comment that ARB would take a flexible approach in this regard.

The scope of the equality impact assessment carried out when developing the guidance was questioned, in particular that certain demographic groups are more likely to reside in high-rise residential properties.

There was a discussion around the responses quoted within the consultation report, as a Board member asked whether the quotes adequately addressed the main themes raised by respondents. It was agreed that in the interests of transparency it was important a broad range of views were reflected in the report; however, Board members requested that quotes used should be representative of a theme and should be contextualised. The Director of Policy and Communications (DPC) told the Board ARB was considering a new consultation platform which would allow comments to be shared publicly, with the consent of each contributor. This would ensure full transparency in future consultations.

Finally, some minor suggestions were raised in relation to paragraphs 1.2 and 3.6 of the consultation report.

**The Board noted the consultation report and unanimously agreed to:**

- i) Approve the Guidance to Institutions on Sustainability and Fire and Life Safety Design with the changes identified following consultation;**
- ii) Make that Guidance effective from 1 September 2021;**
- iii) Monitor compliance with the Guidance through its existing prescription processes**

## 7. **Non-Executive annual review process**

The Director of Professional Education (DPE) referred Board members to a number of changes proposed to the non-executive annual review process. The proposals were designed to increase transparency and ensure appropriate independent and external input regarding the Chair's annual review.

**The Board unanimously agreed the changes to the review process as outlined in sections 5 (iv) and (vii) of the Board paper.**

## 8. **Development of international routes to registration**

The DPE invited the Board to approve the principles and criteria that would underpin the development of the international routes to registration. These would form the foundation of ARB's approach to the development of mutual recognition agreements and memoranda of understanding.

The DPE informed the Board the proposed principles and criteria followed previous Board presentations and the workshop session conducted the previous week. Some modifications had been made following the feedback from the workshop and the plan was to continue building on the routes. It was confirmed that the equivalence principle would allow access to the Register where equivalent outcomes were achieved, whatever the process for education.

**The Board unanimously:**

- i. reconfirmed its support for the principles that would underpin the development of the international routes to registration; and**
- ii. agreed the principles and criteria upon which ARB's approach to the development of mutual recognition agreements and memoranda of understanding would be based.**

## Items for note

### 9. **Chief Executive's Report**

The CEO and Registrar (CEO) updated the Board on the independent audit of the IT infrastructure. The audit reflected feedback the Board had received previously regarding the ARB's need for IT reform. The CEO summarised three key areas: infrastructure, technology, and software. IT reform was highlighted as a priority and the outcome of the audit would be reported to the Board with a plan for next steps.

The CEO updated the Board on the plans for staff returning to the office. General attitudes to flexible working had changed following the pandemic and so developing truly flexible working arrangements would be a priority for the Executive Team. The CEO told the Board he wanted to develop a culture of flexible working which acknowledged and embraced the individual needs of ARB staff, while also balancing ARB's operational demands. It was explained that ARB would be taking a cautious approach to returning to the office, consulting and working with staff to find the right model for the future.

One Board member queried whether formal guidelines would be developed regarding ARB's organisation-wide approach to flexible working. The CEO commented that, while he wanted to be clear and transparent with staff as to the expectations around flexible working, maintaining a degree of informality would also be beneficial for staff. This would allow for a truly flexible approach which could evolve as circumstances changed over time. He highlighted the need for consistency and transparency across the organisation.

One Board member suggested ARB disseminate its message around flexible working to the profession as this could encourage similar attitudes within practices around the UK. The CEO agreed ARB should do this once the changes had been fully implemented. It was noted that embracing more flexible working could help with future recruitment and staff retention, and could encourage people to move into regulation who may not otherwise have done so.

The DR told the Board that a paper would be put before the Policy Committee providing an update on progress with the Professional Conduct review recommendations. In particular, there would be an update on the proposed approach to quality assurance within the department and an update on the redrafted Investigations and Professional Conduct Committee Rules. The new Rules and associated key guidance documents would be presented to the Board in September, followed by a period of public consultation.

The Board would continue to be updated on engagement activities with key stakeholders. Board members agreed it was helpful to know about such activities and one Board member raised the benefit of forward planning when it came to engagement so that the Board could examine and contribute to the agenda. Another Board member highlighted that it was also important to identify areas where engagement activities appeared to be missing or further engagement might be required. The CEO encouraged the Board to raise any suggestions for meetings and engagement with key stakeholders where more could be done to foster a relationship.

The DPC reported that a mapping exercise was currently underway to identify and understand ARB's stakeholders and Board members should highlight any stakeholders they consider had not been adequately identified. Following the Board workshop an updated brand identity would be circulated; this would remain an iterative process and so further feedback would be welcome.

There was a discussion around ARB's involvement and engagement with Parliamentary Inquiries. The CEO reported that the recruitment of the Policy and Public Affairs Manager meant significant developments in this area as the role was responsible for mapping such opportunities for ARB.

#### **10. Remuneration & Appointments Committee Annual Report**

The Chair of the Remuneration and Appointments Committee thanked colleagues and the Executive Team for their work on the People Strategy and reported that work in this area was progressing.

One Board member queried the expected timescale for revisiting the Board's remuneration scheme. The Committee Chair told the Board that a timetable was being drawn up for the delivery of the People Strategy and that pay and reward reviews would form part of that timetable, including benchmarking activities. It was suggested that remuneration for non-Executive members could be included in the scope of that work. Some Board members felt the Board's remuneration scheme was not a current priority while the People Strategy was under development.

There was a discussion around an annual remuneration scheme for non-Executive members. This suggestion had previously been placed on hold as it was not considered the best fit for the Board at the time. The CEO confirmed that this proposal would be brought back to the Board when the time was right to give it priority.

## 11. **Management Accounts**

The Board noted the Management Accounts for the period to 30 May 2021.

There was a discussion around the figures reported for the work on the IT infrastructure. The CEO explained that the amounts documented reflected the historic picture but following the IT audit the Board would be presented with figures reflective of the current state of play and a look forward to the next three to five years. The CEO explained that, while there had been progress on IT developments, it was clear these were not going to deliver the full, required outcomes and so work had been placed on hold pending completion of the audit. A paper would be presented to the Board in September with up-to-date figures and information.

## 12. **Any other business**

No other business was raised.

## 13. **Dates of future Board meetings**

8 September

9 September

27 October

1 December

The Chair confirmed that meetings later in the year would take place in person, subject to any change in government guidance.

Dates for 2022 were soon to be arranged and it was expected that some of the meetings would take place in person and some via video conferencing. He highlighted again the importance of securing dates early to ensure best availability of Board members.