



Board Meeting 17 December  
2020  
Agenda Item 26

**Subject** Key Performance Questions  
**Purpose** To Note  
**From** Brian James, Director of Registration

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Brian James at [brianj@arb.org.uk](mailto:brianj@arb.org.uk) or on 020 7580 5861

---

## 1. Summary

This paper provides an update on progress towards developing a comprehensive performance reporting mechanism, that reflects a clear focus on the outcomes of ARB's work. It is intended to serve as a high level introduction to the activity planned for the January 2021 Board Development Day agenda item.

## 2. Recommendations

The Board is asked to note the proposed introductory approach to the development of a hierarchy of quantitative and qualitative information, and the concept of how key performance questions can focus outward facing communication of key ARB messages

## 3. Open Session

## 4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

- Protect the users and potential users of architects' services
- Support architects through regulation

## 5. Key Points

### Background

1. The Executive currently produce a range of key performance indicator (KPI) data. This data covers the range of ARB's operational activities, and has measures of compliance with existing standards. The data is produced twice each year, and composes a major section in the Annual Report.
2. Whilst KPI data production is common in organisations, it often focusses on the inputs and outputs of processes. Whilst useful for demonstrating trends in performance, in isolation, KPIs do not answer the questions associated with demonstrating outcomes or impact. Neither do they easily focus the conversation on continuous development or improvements, or how stakeholder feedback is sought or incorporated.

3. At the August 2020 Board meeting, a useful discussion around the Board's aspirations in performance reporting was held, recognising the need to combine quantitative data and risk, with qualitative data in a meaningful way.
4. The Executive were tasked with researching models that could then be explored in more detail, in time to develop the performance reporting framework for 2021, and timed to support the next iteration on the Annual report, due to start production in the first quarter of 2021.
5. This paper sets out the proposed approach, based on that research, and incorporates the useful input from discussions with Board members with lead responsibilities for communications, stakeholder engagement, audit, risk and performance reporting.
6. To ensure we fully explore and incorporate the Board's views into what is reported and how, a practical exercise has been scheduled for the Board Development Day in January, which will use facilitated techniques for agreeing the core measures. This paper is designed to give the Board time to reflect on the possibilities in advance of that session.

#### **Purpose of Key Performance Questions**

7. The Executive's research has concluded that the missing component of our performance reporting progress is the high level and unifying description of the intended outcomes of our work, under which all data and measures are fitted into and compared over time.
8. The concept of Key Performance Questions (KPQ) is one that is used across a range of public and private sector organisations, including the Metropolitan Police, universities, the NHS and other regulatory bodies.
9. As questions, they seek to frame the range of reporting into an easily understood concept or area. They are designed to be open to allow for a multitude of data to be "hung", and can often be thought of as headline areas of activity. The advantage of designing questions in this way automatically focuses the reporting on presenting the information in a way that aligns with a communication strategy.
10. There are usually four to six KPQs used across the whole organisation. This allows for a finite and manageable set of elements of a communication strategy, and does not require regular refreshing or changing. This means that communications impact can be measured over time, and evidence of achievement summarised under a small number of topics.
11. It is common for KPQs to be referenced directly in the strategic objectives and/or business plan of organisations, with specific activities or programmes referencing how they contribute to delivery. It is usual to retain KPQs across multiple business or

budget years, even if underlying measures are incrementally changed or even replaced.

### **Proposed KPQ areas**

12. In the first instance, we are proposing six KPQs. We think that they reflect a balance of consistent delivery of core statutory function, with demonstrating what ARB are doing to improve and modernise working practices and impact. The proposed KPQs are:

- How have we increased engagement with our stakeholders?
- What have we done to reduce duplication or improve efficiency?
- How have we improved the quality of what we do?
- How have we demonstrated impact on the sector?
- How do we provide confidence in how we meet our statutory functions?
- How we have increased wider understanding of ARB and its function?

### **Hierarchy and sources of information**

13. Each KPQ will have three levels of underpinning data, plus a narrative: KPIs, Core Management Information and Narrative response.

14. The KPIs will indicate the performance against a target, either in numbers, percentages or time taken. The KPIs are likely to be designed to provide assurance to the Board and other stakeholders, that the appropriate activities are being carried out. KPIs are usually the snapshot position over a defined period of time, such as a month, a quarter or the year to date.

15. Core Management Information will be selected to provide trend analysis over time. This will illustrate any changes in activity or events that may impact on delivery of core functions. For instance, if the number of complaints about ARB's service increases, this may indicate a quality control process, or if the number of investigations referred to the Conduct Committee changes significantly, budget or staff assumptions may need to be reviewed. Core Management Information will be risk rated by the Executive.

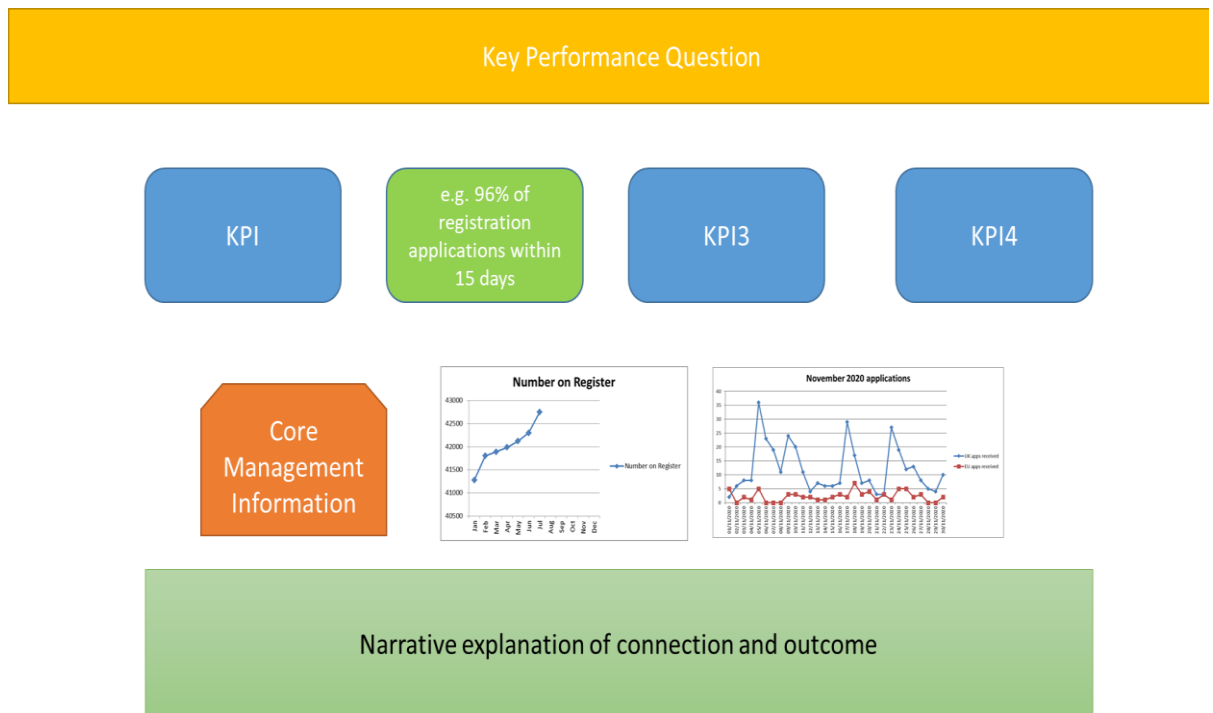
16. Some of the supporting evidence will also relate to activities that ARB have carried out to improve services, or evaluate changes. Examples include survey results and general feedback topics.

17. The narrative response will pull together the Executive's assessment of how ARB is joining all of the qualitative and quantitative data together, what impact this has made, and what further works are planned.

### **Performance dashboards**

18. The dashboard will be made of a number of elements, sandwiched between the KPQ

and the narrative of impact or ongoing activity. Graphically, it can be displayed as:-



### Examples of relationship between the various measures

19. To illustrate how this might look, if we consider the **KPQ**: How have we increased engagement with our stakeholders (in the reporting period)?
20. **KPIs** might be: 7 of the planned 10 focus groups with architects have been held (3 more are planned next month), along with 2 (of the planned 5) zoom sessions with members of the public. We have had the first report from our call for evidence on the competence of architects of the future. We have published our draft proposals on our website and twitter accounts.
21. **Core Management Information** could include: We had 75,000 unique visits to the website within 24 hours. Responses to our pulse survey of our assessment of findings (150 people) showed 10% agreed with our assessment, but 80% disagreed. We also had feedback that the website was difficult to navigate. We had 650 re-tweets of the work; all were positive.
22. **Narrative and actions**: Participation and feedback has been exceptional, but indicate the approach does not meet expectations. We followed up those who left negative feedback with a targeted survey, to understand what was missing. Four new topics were identified. We are extending the consultation for two weeks, and re-configuring the remaining focus groups and zoom sessions to get feedback on the new topics. We are building an ongoing consultation pool from those who offered feedback, to test future iterations of the work. We have redesigned the webpage to make a clearer

pathway to the updated information. Webpage visitors have commented that the improvements are welcome. We have an article planned with a trade publication next month, and a joint statement with two professional bodies.

23. The information above is fictional, and used to illustrate the concept. Some of the measures may lend themselves to graphics and tables rather than words, but this will vary from topic to topic. Some KPIs may be very operationally focused, such as time taken to process applications or cases.

### **Next stages**

In January, at the Board Development Day, a practical exercise is planned, to agree:-

- the content and construction of the KPIs
- the structure of the dashboards, summarising the relevant KPI and other information under each KPQ.
- the cycle of production and interrogation of the information
- the links to the Annual Report production process
- how the KPQ dashboard can support the external communication strategy

## **6. Resource Implications**

There are no resource implications associated with this work.

## **7. Risk Implications**

There are no risks .

## **8. Communication**

Each strategic project will have a communications and engagement element attached to it as well as a wider strategy on communications and engagement.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no specific implications attached to this report, however it will be considered as part of the development of our communications and engagement strategy.

## **10. Next Steps**

The Executive will take this forward in 2021 as part of its business planning.