2024 Business Plan

for Open session

Subject:

To approve the proposed 2024 Business Plan.

Purpose

The Board is asked to approve the proposed Business Plan for 2024.

Recommendations

To approve the proposed Business Plan for 2024.

To delegate to the Chief Executive responsibility for making any necessary changes as a result of feedback from the Board.

Annexes

Annexe A- Business Plan 2024

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1. Open Session

1.1. This paper will be held in the open session of the meeting.

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2. Background and Key points

2.1. At its meeting on 9 September 2021, the Board approved a new and ambitious five-year Corporate Strategy for 2022-2026. This strategy set out ARB's purpose, our vision and five overarching priorities to:
- Modernise initial education and training of architects
- Develop and deliver a new model of CPD
- Transform our systems, processes and technology
- Invest in our people and build a high-performance culture
- Deliver continuous improvement in our regulatory services

2.2. **Annexe A** sets out the draft Business Plan for 2024 and states the priority actions we will aim to deliver throughout the year. These priority actions will ensure ARB maintains momentum as we continue to improve our operations and delivery changes to the regulation of architects.

2.3. To enable the Board to make an informed decision about the budget and fees strategy for 2024, an outline of the business plan was presented to the Board at its workshop discussion in September 2023.

2.4. We have taken feedback from that workshop discussion and prepared a draft ARB Business Plan 2024 for publication which is set out in **Annexe A**.

2.5. There is significantly more detail within operational business plans but what is presented in the annexe is intended to provide clarity to the Board and in particular to external stakeholders about the key areas of work for 2024. In addition, to provide some visibility on future trajectory, a summary of expected areas for delivery in 2025-26 are also included.

2.6. At its September 2023 Workshop discussion, the Board were also presented with a Corporate Strategy evaluation. It was agreed that the Board will undertake a more comprehensive review of the Corporate Strategy at its March 2024 workshop discussion. It is important to note that depending on the outcome of that workshop discussion, the future trajectory detail for 2025-2026 is subject to change.

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3. Resource Implications

3.1. Resource requirements for the delivery of the business plan commitments, including activities scheduled for 2024, were considered as part of the Board discussion and decision on the budget for 2024.

3.2. It was noted that two areas of work for 2024 would be met from judicious use of reserves as they constitution important, one-off, initiatives which could support improvements and efficiencies within ARBs functions in future. They are the running of Commission to review pre-registration professional practical experience requirements as well as research to look at evaluation of our reforms and impact on access to the profession.

4. Risk Implications

4.1. There are a number of potential risks to the delivery of the Business Plan 2024 and these are considered as part of the Corporate Risk Register. However there are a number which are worth emphasising.

4.2. Any IT Transformation Programme comes with risks. Currently these are being actively managed but there is a risk of resources (both cash and people) being diverted to deliver this programme of work. If this were the case it would be reported back to the Board for consideration.

4.3. We are also aware that the Grenfell Tower Inquiry is likely to report in 2024. We will need to respond and consider any recommendations but we may need to review Business Plan as a result.

4.4. We expect a General Election in 2024. This is likely to have an impact on timing of some work as purdah may limit our opportunities for engagement.

5. Communication

5.1. Once the Business Plan 2024 has been approved by the Board, and any drafting amendments required are made, we will publish the Business Plan 2024 on our website.

6. Equality and Diversity implications

6.1. There are a number of specific EDI initiatives within the Business Plan. Establishment of new workstreams to support EDI within our staff as well as looking at our regulatory work.

6.2. In addition the Commission on PPE and the Research work on access are directly aimed at access to the profession.

7. Recommendations

7.1. To approve the proposed Business Plan for 2024.

7.2. To delegate to the Chief Executive responsibility for making any necessary changes as a results of feedback from the Board.

Business Plan 2024

Contents

Our five-year Corporate Strategy states that we want a world in which the built environment inspires those who live and work in it, reflects the needs of society so that people are safe and can live well, and helps to tackle the fundamental challenges our planet faces. The contribution that regulation can make to this overarching purpose may be small, but we recognise that architects and other professionals in the built environment can achieve their own goals, potential and outcomes only if we are delivering effective regulation.

Our vision

We have an ambitious vision for ARB. Our goal is to deliver improvements and tangible outcomes in each of our core statutory functions and deliver meaningful and positive change in our strategic priorities.

Our 2023 Business Plan set out our commitments, all contributing to delivering our strategy and the five key strategic priorities. The majority of those commitments have been delivered, with a small number rolling over to 2024.

In 2023 we delivered on the vast majority of our Business Plan commitments including:
- Delivering phase 1 of our new registration applications system and commenced phase 2 with the development of a new case management system and integration of wider IT systems including finance and HR.
- Signed Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with the USA, Australia and New Zealand and introduced a new UK Adaptation Assessment for those taking advantage of MRAs
- Published the analysis of the makeup of the architect's profession as of 2022 and announced the actions we'll take to improve the extent to which it reflects the makeup of society
- Consulted on and approved a new education model; competence outcomes; standards for learning providers; the establishment and operation of a new Accreditation Committee; and arrangements for transitioning to the new model
- Established a project group and commenced work of overhauling the range of international routes to registration including ARB's Prescribed Examination
- Published the consultation report, developed policy guidance and run a pilot exercise to allow for a successful launch of the new CPD scheme
- Embedded our new staff performance management system which included a training programmes for managers

- Carried out a full review of ARB's future property requirements and commenced lease negotiations for 2024 onwards
- Carried out a fundamental review of our pension scheme to establish a new provider
- Launched a six-month trial of a new flexible bank holiday policy, demonstrating changes to improve equality, diversity and inclusion
- Improved culture in the way of working and technology by rolling out new IT equipment with enhanced remote working and collaboration tools.

In the Corporate Strategy 2022-2026 we set out a range of commitments which will help us to deliver our vision and commitment, which will continue to shape our Business Plan in 2024:

- demonstrate leadership for the sector in responding to key challenges including fire and life safety and climate change.

- foster a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in our own organisation and take action to ensure change occurs in architecture.

- work with the profession (including employers, educators, students and others) to modernise initial education and training.

- build on the professionalism of architects by implementing a new model of continuing professional development which supports good practice and lifelong learning.

- embed a culture of continuous improvement within ARB so that our regulatory services are accessible, effective and designed around the needs of our stakeholders.

In this annual business plan we refer back to our strategic vision for 2026, and set out the activities we will carry out in 2024 towards this vision. We also show a summary of expected areas of activity in 2025-26, while recognising that plans will develop over time as we receive feedback from stakeholders on proposals.

2. Continuous improvement in our regulatory services

Our vision for 2026

If architects and the public are to benefit from regulation, we must continue to modernise and transform the way in which ARB operates. We will deliver improvements which we want to be tangible and measurable across each of our statutory functions.

In 2024 we will:

Registration:

- Carry out a review of the implementation of the self-service database for architects

- Manage the implementation of the process for a new statutory CPD scheme, in time for the first audit of selected architects in 2025

- Continue the overhaul to improve international routes to registration and manage the transition phase for the replacement of the current Prescribed Examination and UK Adaptation Assessment

Accreditation:

- Deliver a smooth transition to the new Accreditation Committee

- Carry out technical visits of institutions, led by a Visits Manager, as part of the new standards for learning providers

- Visits institutions to explain the role of ARB and help students understand their responsibilities once they join the register

- Establish a Transition Reference Group for the new Accreditation Model

- Develop Key Performance Indicators using new CRM Technology

In 2025-26 we will continue to develop improvements in efficiency and customer service, and work to operationalise key elements in the corporate strategy as they are approved. These include any amendments and improvements to the new CPD framework and monitoring process as well as implementing the ongoing transition to the new accreditation methodology. We will also consider insights from the Commission on professional practical experience and further improvements to our accreditation framework.

Governance and International:

- Continue to develop new MRAs/MOUs and implement these in line with ARB's international strategy, along with embedding our MRA monitoring and visiting system

- Communicate the opportunities created by the MRAs to architects, the sector and related stakeholders

- Complete the review and manage the introduction of the new Annual Review Process for Board, Committee and Associates members, along with developing a feedback mechanism

- Overhaul the General Rules with a view to developing separate sets of Rules for each relevant area of business

- Manage the delivery of the recommendations which result from the Board Effectiveness Review

In 2025-2026 we will complete a review of the UK Adaptation Assessment and the ARB Prescribed Examination as part of the established project to overhaul the routes to registrations. This will include evidence gathering and stakeholder involvement, taking into account the equality, diversity and inclusion impact. We will continue to visit international counterparts as part of our MRA monitoring processes and to check on-going compliance with our standards. We will publish the programme for this annually. We will begin to implement any new sets of General Rules as and when they are developed for each area of the organisation.

Standards:

- Publish original research into what the public expects of the architects profession

- Engage architects and others in the sector to inform the development of a new Architects Code of Conduct and Practice, and consult on it

- Evaluate the impact of ARB education reforms and in particular access to the profession from groups traditionally underrepresented

- Engage with others in the built environment to improve competence across the sector

- Use new CRM technology to establish a new case management system to support improvements in efficiency and effectiveness

- Develop improved reporting of management information, performance data and insights into disciplinary cases

Equality, diversity and inclusion:

- Early in 2024 we will develop an updated EDI strategy and establish new EDI workstreams to build on work completed in 2023.

- We will continue to track trends and issues within the profession, and we will analyse data emerging from our new process of accreditation of learning providers

- We will undertake further work to embed principles of EDI and ensure good practice within our internal systems, particularly around recruitment and people management

- We demonstrate sector leadership, including partnering with organisations within the profession with a particular focus on inclusion

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In 2025-26 we will deliver improvements in our standards and guidance work. We will take feedback, learning and insight from our consultation activities to identify practical changes we can make, both within ARB and within key policy areas so that we make a difference to the professionalism of architects and equality, diversity and inclusion within the sector.

We will publish a new Code of Conduct and Practice and review the suite of guidance which sits alongside it to support architects to practise in adherence to the Code at all times.

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3. Modernising initial education and training of architects

Our vision for 2026

Initial education and training of architects will better reflect the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours they need in areas such as climate change, safety, ethics and emerging technologies. The structure of education and training will encourage diversity and wider access to the profession, whilst providing assurance that only competent individuals will be admitted to the Register of Architects.

In 2024 we will:

- Develop a suite of guidance for learning providers to support the delivery of the Competence Outcomes and Standards for Providers

- Work with learning providers to establish accredited qualifications in architecture under the new educational framework

- Manage the Commission established to review ARB's practical professional experience requirements and develop new recommendations

- Engage with stakeholders to embed the new framework and help ensure a smooth transition to the new model of initial education and training

- Commission research to assess the impact of our new regulatory framework and in particular explore issues around access

> **In 2025-26** we will transition to a new model of architectural education by accrediting qualifications that will produce the new competence outcomes, delivered by learning providers judged against a new set of standards. We will embed a proportionate and effective accreditation model taking into account feedback as well as data from learning providers. We will provide leadership on the challenges architectural education faces in respect of professional practical experience, responding to recommendations made by the Commission.

4. Delivering a new system of continuing professional development for architects

Our vision for 2026

Architects will be utilising a continuing professional development (CPD) model they see as a positive contribution to their practice and professional development. There will be evidence that the model has made an impact on the competence of architects with learning shared across the profession.

In 2024 we will:

- Launch the new CPD scheme and carry out an interim review of the new system, and make any necessary changes to improve the effectiveness of the model

- Promote and explain the scheme to architects so they understand and meet the new requirements, along with communicating the benefits with the sector

- Recruit, induct and train a new team of CPD reviewers and support staff

- Develop and test a quality assurance system capable of consistently reviewing the CPD records of selected architects

- Develop a CPD information hub, signposting architects to relevant CPD resources

In 2025-26 We will continue to monitor the new system and implement any improvements to the scheme, following the commence of mandatory reviewing from 2025. In particular we will be looking at aggregated data from the sector and survey feedback to consider how we might better support the profession through guidance or work with others, including professional leadership bodies, to improve competence in specific areas.

5. Transforming our systems, processes and information technology

Our vision for 2026

ARB's systems and processes will enable architects to manage their own data and information, improving their experiences and delivering efficiencies. The public will have improved transparency about qualified and registered architects. The IT infrastructure will not only ensure secure data but will enable ARB to gather improved insight into the profession, including areas where regulatory attention is needed such as equality and diversity, new guidance or changes to education and training.

In 2024 we will:

- Report on efficiencies and improvements within registration delivered as part of phase 1 of our new CRM applications system.

- Deliver phase 2 of our CRM project to introduce a new case management system, as well as integrating our HR, Finance and Governance systems, and launching our CPD system

- Complete the full transfer of 'on premise' storage to 'the cloud'

- Improve cyber security, both through improved network integrity but also Managed Detection & Response

- Continue to develop ways of working and improve the use of technology and software, to support hybrid working and improved team and cross functional collaboration

In 2025-26 we will focus on embedding the system improvements for both staff and architects as we expand registrant services and 'self-serve' access. We will develop enhanced data analytics so that we are providing insight on key trends to the profession and the wider built environment, considering both the risk and opportunities from emerging Artificial Intelligence.

6. Investing in our people and building a positive and inclusive culture based on shared values and behaviours

Our vision for 2026

ARB is an organisation where all our staff and our associates understand and are highly motivated to deliver our purpose and vision, where staff are well led and well managed, have the right skills and competencies, and are working to a shared set of values and behaviours. If we achieve this, we will deliver high quality regulation.

In 2024 we will:

- Complete a relocation of ARB's office or refurbishment of current premises on a new lease.
- Refresh our People Strategy to maintain our aspiration for ARB to be a great place to work and that we have a high performance workforce who are highly motivated, fairly rewarded and are supported through effective training and development
- Align staff values and behaviours with new co-created Board and Associate Values and Behaviours framework
- We will introduce a new updated Annual Review Process with more effective 360 degree feedback mechanisms
- Carry out a benchmarking review of our pay and reward approach to establish significant changes needed for staff, Board or Associates
- Carry out a fundamental review of the staff handbook, ensuring all policies are up to date
- Deliver an effective onboarding process of the new external auditors

In 2025-26 we will continue our journey to be a high-performing organisation. We will use research and engagement methods to ensure we gather feedback from staff, associates and stakeholders about our operational performance. We will review the skills and competencies required of our workforce, and encourage staff development, as continue to develop a new IT system.

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We'll consider your request and get back to you within 14 days.

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