



**Subject** Update from the Chief Executive  
**Purpose** For Note  
**From** Chief Executive

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### 1. Summary

To provide an update from the Chief Executive on the operational activities of the Executive team.

### 2. Open Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential session.

### 3. 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, and
- Support architects through Regulation

ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

### 4. Update on Core Projects

#### i. Competence Review

SQW is finalising the final stages of its research, and the final report remains on target for delivery in early February. Preparations continue to commence the review proper once the results of the evidence-gathering stage of the project is complete.

#### ii. EU Exit

We have successfully put interim arrangements for the recognition of European qualifications in place further to the end of the UK/EU Implementation Period, including a memorandum of understanding with the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. We have issued a series of communications ourselves, as well as in partnership with UK-wide professional bodies, and information regarding the interim arrangements is available on our website. We are monitoring the feedback we receive and will make adjustments to the material on our website as appropriate in order to ensure that our audiences have the information they need to register both

in the UK and in another European country.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) consultation in relation to the future ways in which international qualifications could be recognised has now closed. The Department is now analysing the consultation responses and a Government response will follow. Guidance may then be developed and published setting out the way forward in this area. We will continue to work closely with MHCLG, providing advice and support as needed.

**iii. Prescription**

The work to develop prescription processes is proceeding, with a useful discussion at the Prescription Committee in January, of the proposal to develop visiting and inspection as part of the approval and review of qualifications. This discussion followed a similar discussion and agreement to develop the concept, at the Policy Committee.

A number of useful areas to develop were highlighted, including the clarity around definitions of visits and the information required, as well as careful consideration of the impact on institutions. Timetabling and advance notice of visits would need to be scheduled carefully, and a trial or pilot of the approach would assist in this development. Resources within ARB, including the skills, support and development within the team, would also be crucial to this new approach.

We are continuing to develop new systems and processes, leading to the requirements for the IT systems to support storing, and safe and convenient transmission, of prescription application data and analysis. We have commenced the development of a "minimum data set" for prescription, that will direct conversation with institutions about the trends in key measures that affect their delivery of approved courses. Furthermore, the Executive are discussing and analysing how the development of such modular IT systems will fit together over the coming months and years, to support better management of activity and reporting of outcomes.

At the Board Development Day in January, we agreed that prescription would be a topic for presentation and discussion at the next development day.

**iv. Professional Conduct Review**

The delivery of the recommendations within the Review has begun, with solicitors instructed to begin a draft of new Investigations & Professional Conduct Committee Rules. The Professional Conduct Committee has, and will continue to be, consulted with on any proposed changes to procedures and guidance.

**v. Strategic Statements**

The strategic statements on Fire & Life Safety and Climate Change have been agreed, and the guidance on competence for both areas has been drafted and being considered at this meeting by the Board for consultation.

## 6. ARB Performance monitoring

We have been working on improvements to the way in which we capture, measure, monitor and analyse key performance metrics at ARB. Our intention is to develop a dashboard approach using new a new Key Performance Questions framework which has been considered by the Board in recent workshop discussions.

Our goal is to be able to provide a much more transparent presentation on performance in a strategic way, linking to the outcomes the Board wishes to see. It will also:

- i. Enable a blend of quantitative and qualitative data
- ii. Explore using trend data to support more effective projection information
- iii. Support operational teams by utilising data they need at an operational level

### **Professional standards**

ARB received 154 allegations against architects in 2020, which was 26% fewer compared to 2019; however due to an historic backlog of cases there was significant increase in the number of Professional Conduct Committee hearings (30 cases in comparison with 14 in 2019).

Performance against the KPIs was inevitably affected by the pandemic, with a period of unavailability for hearings and a number of extensions of times having to be offered to architects unable to access physical files during periods of lockdown.

The backlog of PCC cases has now been cleared, and with the additional resource we are putting into the department in 2021, we are anticipating that performance against the KPIs will be returning to the pre-2020 levels. There have been no upheld appeals or Judicial Reviews against any investigatory decisions made by ARB.

### **Retention fee collection**

The 2021 retention fee collection period has closed. This year, we did a number of things differently, to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on architects and ARB teams, and to improve the process. In addition to our statutory requirements to communicate with architects about their fee, we trialled a number of new approaches to direct communication with the aim of increasing understanding and engagement with the process, and to encourage more architects to pay their fee on time, maintaining continuous registration, and reducing unproductive work for the team. In turn, this would assist with other key priorities, such as supporting architects through the EU Transition Period ending.

Recognising the impact of covid-19 and the economic climate, we extended the payment deadline to 12 January 2021. More architects paid their fees than in previous years, and the register comprised just over 42,500 after the non-payers were removed. This was higher than our projections, and suggests that our communications approaches worked, and that architects recognise the value of maintaining their registration. It also mitigates the risks of financial projections considered as part of the corporate risk register, and is in line with our projections for resource and activity in 2021.

Only 880 architects were removed for non-payment, the lowest in more than 5 years. Of these, just over 300 were architects who had a non-UK route of entry. Resignations were in line with previous years, with 672 resignations, which includes those who had retired or left

the profession.

Historically, the rate of re-joining the register has been high in January. This year, we have seen a reduction in the rate, with only 132 architects applying (correct as of 28 January). This suggests that those who were removed, intended to leave the register.

We have conducted a lessons learned review of the changes to payment types, communication styles and preferences, and the activities required for an effective fee collection, and will update the Board in advance of the next fee discussion, of the proposals to build on this year's approach.

## 7. Key meetings

### **Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)**

We met with representatives of SCHOSA Council as part of our series of regular liaison meetings in late-January 2021. We provided SCHOSA Council members with updates on the development of our life/fire safety and sustainability guidance for institutions. Other key issues that were discussed included updates on the interim arrangements which ARB had put in place further to the end of the UK/EU Implementation Period and our revised Covid19 prescription guidance. SCHOSA representatives also provided valuable feedback on the challenges they were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. Our liaison meetings will continue throughout 2021 so that we maintain a constructive dialogue about the work that the ARB is undertaking and that will impact on schools of architecture. We also attended a full SCHOSA members' forum at the end of January and provided similar updates to the wider group of heads of schools.

### **Quality Assurance Agency**

We attended a round table meeting which included the Minister of State for Universities, Michelle Donelan, MP, in mid-January 2021. Discussions centred around the approaches that professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) were taking to the accreditation of professional qualifications as a result of the pandemic. The varying levels of flexibility being applied by PSRBs and the impacts of these on registration were also discussed. The Minister was keen to learn from the experiences of PSRBs and where possible, assist in finding solutions. The forum provided a valuable opportunity to learn more and share information about how other PSRBs were approaching the pandemic, as well as supporting institutions and future professionals.

### **MHCLG meetings**

We have had a number of formal and informal meetings with MHCLG since the last board meeting.

- The Chair, Chief Executive and Registrar and Director of Finance held an 'accountable officer' meeting with MHCLG on 4 January 2021
- The Senior Leadership Group met with MHCLG officials to discuss the Periodic Review of ARB in 2021.
- The Chief Executive and Registrar held an informal induction meeting with Damian Dacey, MHCLG deputy director

**8. Ongoing work to manage remote working**

The extended lockdown continues to provide challenges to ARB at an operational level as well as personal challenges for staff. We carried out a follow up audit and review of home office needs with additional equipment being provided to staff who needed (including suitable chairs, additional monitors etc). We have also promoting to staff the various forms of support provided by ARB as part of its benefits package. As part of the rapid review discussions around IT, we have also been considering options to enhance the 'home office' experience of staff including the feasibility of proving MS Teams to all staff.

**9. Resource Implications**

Only as identified in the paper.

**10. Risk Implications**

ARB's CEO's Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

Further detail of specific risks to the organisation and in relation to operations will be provided in the confidential CEO's report.

**11. Communication**

The update from the Chief Executive, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

**12. Equality and Diversity Implications**

None directly emerging as a result of updates in this paper.

**13. Further Actions**

These are referred to within the key points set out above.