

# Board Paper

for Open session

Subject: **Chief Executive's Report**

To note a report from the ARB's Chief Executive on matters relating to the running of the Board's business

Board meeting:

21 May 2025

Agenda item:

17

Action:

- For noting ☒
- For discussion ☐
- For decision ☐

## Purpose

To provide an update from the Chief Executive on matters relating to the Board's business including progress updates on the Board's five key strategic priorities as well as additional operational issues.

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## Recommendations

The Board is asked to note this paper.

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## Annexes

NA

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## Author/Key Contact

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## 1. Open Session

- 1.1. This item will be noted in the open session of the Board meeting.
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## 2. Background and Key points

### *Continuous Improvement*

- 2.1. We have continued to work with our IT providers to make incremental improvements to the CRM and online portal. We have deployed a number of these fixes relating to CPD and Registration in April. We have a further deployment planned in May, which will be the final changes to the system until the next set of development works under a new tendered supplier.
- 2.2. In anticipation of the 2026 retention fee cycle, we have been working with our online payment supplier, Worldpay, to review the provision, and ensure we learn from the lessons of the last fee cycle. The main area to focus on is the rejection rate of card payments, especially from those who are attempting to pay from outside of the UK.
- 2.3. This analysis shows that our existing version of the card payment software is out of date and needs to be updated. Working with our Finance team, we have identified the upgrade that will address these security and transaction rejection issues and improve financial reconciliation reporting.
- 2.4. We will work with IT suppliers over the summer, to integrate the new software, and run user acceptance testing, to ensure we are prepared for the new collection cycle. We will update the Board as this work progresses, but we feel that there is adequate time to make these changes well in advance of the launch of the fee in late October 2025.

### *Continuing Professional Development*

- 2.5. The first cycle of assessing the CPD submissions for 2024 CPD activity continues. The selected sample and assessment cycle runs from February to September to avoid the retention fee periods.
- 2.6. The Registration team have contacted those selected for review in February, March, April, May and June, working a month in advance to allow RIBA members who have recorded their activity outside of MyARB time to share their records. Response to the requests for upload has required some significant amounts of communication with architects, and direction to the published CPD Scheme and guidance.
- 2.7. Independent CPD Assessors are allocated the responses and review the submitted materials. They then decide whether the Scheme has been complied with, and decide if the CPD submission meets the requirements, needs further work, or is inadequate. As this is the initial trial year of the scheme no architects will be removed from the Register; instead, direct feedback is given to the architect by the Registration Team.
- 2.8. We will be analysing the feedback over the summer. Once we have a sufficiently large sample of responses we can carry out trend analysis and present the information to the Board.

- 2.9. We have formed a project group to manage the engagement with architects, based on the insights from the last retention fee cycle, to maximise engagement with CPD throughout 2025, and to assist with financial projections within 2025 budget, and the 2026 fee calculation.

### *People Update*

- 2.10. The People Strategy continues to be developed with an updated Learning and Development Strategy being implemented during Q3. This will see greater structure to how training needs for staff are captured, how decisions on training are approved in terms of value to the individual, their role and the organisation and the evaluation of that training. We have also carried out a re-forecast of the training budget at 2% of payroll costs.
- 2.11. The Staff Survey was run during February and March 2025 where a total of 53 responses were received giving an overall response rate of 88.3% which is slightly lower than 2024 at 94.9%. Overall, the results show similar levels of satisfaction with working life at ARB compared to previous years with notable improvements around the office environment and accessibility to technology and equipment.
- 2.12. The results were shared with staff at our all staff meeting on the 1st May and we will be looking further at the results and action planning around these.
- 2.13. The Board will have a further opportunity to consider the results in the confidential session.

### *International Updates*

- 2.14. The ARB/ROAC (Regulatory Organizations of Architecture in Canada) mutual recognition agreement (MRA) was signed on 23 April 2025 by both organisations as part of a networking event hosted by the UK Government in Toronto. A further information sharing event for those wishing to use the MRA once it opens was undertaken as part of the same visit. A small delegation from ARB participated in the events, as well as a series of other visits to practices and education providers in both Toronto and Montreal. We also took the opportunity to meet with all of the 11 Canadian regulatory bodies in Montreal, who were meeting there as part of a regular pattern of ROAC meetings. The MRA became fully operational on 14 May 2025. Further information has been provided via our website and social media channels. Initial interest in the agreement has been high. Our Canadian counterparts will be visiting the UK in June 2025, and we will use this as an opportunity to undertake additional learning and promotional activities.
- 2.15. Work has begun to review the MRA we hold with the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) and the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NCARB). The review is likely to run across most of 2025. Our aim is to explore

whether we can expand the scope of our MRAs so that we can mutually recognise a wider range of qualifications/pathways and support the registration of more appropriately qualified individuals. We are continuing to progress discussions with NCARB to similarly review our MRA. We anticipate that these discussions will gather momentum later this year run into mid 2026 given NCARB's governance structures and protocols.

- 2.16. In March 2025, a small number of the ARB Executive, along with Will Freeman from the Board, visited New York State to gather information about the State's position regarding the MRA we hold with NCARB, and to understand whether it may be possible for the State to join the MRA in the longer-term future. New York State is not currently a signatory to the MRA. It also provided an opportunity to gather feedback from US architects, including views on our International Routes and our UK Adaptation Assessment which we are in the process of reviewing. The visit to New York State was supported by grant funding received from the Department of Business and Trade.

### *Governance Updates*

- 2.17. Following recommendations from the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth, Alex Norris MP, the Privy Council has appointed Caroline Turnbull-Hall and Jonathan Prichard as Lay Members of the Board for a four-year period, with their terms having commenced on 1 April 2025.
- 2.18. Samantha Peters, who acted as a temporary Board member between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2025 has stepped down from the Board in line with the General Rules around temporary appointments.
- 2.19. The Board Handbook has been reviewed, brought up to date to reflect updated internal policies, and re-added to ARB's Diligent Portal for all Board members to access. No substantive adjustments have been made to the Handbook.
- 2.20. The most recent Board Workshop took place on 18 March 2025. Key points arising from the meeting included the following:
- A detailed set of the recommendations which would be contained in the PPE Commission's final report were presented to the Board. The Board broke into small groups to consider the implementation of the recommendations in more detail before providing their initial reactions to the recommendations. The recommendations and proposed actions would be formally considered by the Board in May 2025.
  - The Chair of the PPE Commission, Professor Chris Husbands, provided insights into the HEI landscape and the future of the HE sector.

- The Board was provided with an overview of the results from the International Routes Consultation, and the proposed next steps. The Board had the opportunity to provide feedback on the next steps and the risks and opportunities linked to the proposals. Formal consideration of the consultation outcomes and recommendations on the way forward, would be considered by the Board at its meeting in May 2025.
- The Board received an analysis of the full year financial reforecast for 2025, as well as the January 2025 financial performance across the organisation's departments.
- A brief update of the IT Transformation was provided to the Board.

#### *Corporate Strategy Review*

- 2.21. We continue to develop our new Corporate Strategy and intend to bring a draft to the Board in the September workshop, with a view to asking the Board to make a decision on the final strategy in time for a December 2025 publication.
- 2.22. Following the Board's workshop discussion in March, their feedback and a general outline for a new strategy were discussed with ARB staff at an all staff event. Feedback was recorded and will feed into the development of a draft strategy.
- 2.23. At the June workshop the Board will receive an update on the outline developed to date, and the timeline towards the draft in September. This will be done alongside work to develop our medium term financial strategy which will be considered by the Board in the summer

### 3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. There are no specific resource implications arising from the Chief Executive's report.

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### 4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. Risks relating to each of the initiatives set out in this paper have been considered separately, either as part of specific Board papers and discussions, or incorporated into project, programme or corporate risk registers.
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## 5. Equality and Diversity implications

- 5.1. There are no specific EDI implications arising out of this paper, however a number of key strategic priorities are either directly or indirectly designed to support and promote EDI. The work on the new Corporate Strategy will embed the Boards' EDI strategy work.
- 5.2. Our international work will directly have an impact on the diversity of the registrant population. The same applies to our education reform work, particularly looking at Professional Practical Experience.

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## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Board is asked to note this paper.