



Minutes of Board Meeting held on 4 February 2021

Location	Present	In Attendance
By video conference	Alan Kershaw (Chair) Mark Bottomley Professor Stephen Brookhouse Emeritus Professor ADH Crook Will Freeman Professor Elena Marco Stephen McCusker Liz Male Derek Bray	Hugh Simpson (CEO and Registrar) Marc Stoner Emma Matthews Simon Howard Brian James Rebecca Roberts-Hughes Luke Melia (Minute taker) Irene Moisis (MHCLG observer)

Note

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from John Beckerleg.

2. **Members' Interests**

There were no declarations relevant to the open session agenda items.

3. **Update from the Chair**

The Chair informed the Board that he was taking part in a Cabinet Office mentoring scheme to assist members from under-represented groups to achieve Board positions. His mentee would be attending a future Board meeting. It would also be arranged for the mentee to speak to some individual Board members.

The Chair explained that some scheduled Board meetings were currently marked as regular meetings, some as development days; but the anticipated meeting pattern may change as business dictated. There would be the occasional external speaker invited to attend meetings, and further efforts made to have a meeting in person as soon as it was safely possible to do so.

The Chair thanked Board members for the feedback on the recent workshop sessions. Views on the nature of Board discussions and timings was particularly noted.

The Chair informed the Board that the annual review process had now concluded with his own review carried out by an independent reviewer. Members would receive a summary of the

process in due course. It was noted that any future review process for the Chair may involve the newly appointed Senior Independent Board Member.

Two new Board members would be in post from 1 March 2021. A press release was being prepared with more details to follow once the timeframe had been confirmed by the Ministry.

4. **Minutes**

While the minutes for the meeting of 17 December 2020 were unanimously agreed there was comment with regard to the term: ‘...fruitful relationship with RIBA.’ This seemed to be contradicted by a recent media report discussing Continuing Professional Development for architects and RIBA claiming ownership of any such scheme.

The Executive confirmed its awareness of the article and had provided a neutral quote to reduce the sense of conflict trying to be depicted between ARB and RIBA.

The Board unanimously approved the open session minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020.

5. **Matters Arising Report**

The Board noted matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

The Professional Conduct Committee continued to operate by video software, a format that would be used in future as a more standard approach to hearings where appropriate. It was confirmed that, to date, there had been no pattern or increase in the number of complaints during the coronavirus crisis.

6. **Banking Arrangements**

ARB’s HSBC bank account was no longer fit for purpose and was holding a small closing balance. A Nationwide account was held that provided enough diversification within ARB’s banking for risk to be spread amongst accounts.

The Board unanimously agreed to close its HSBC bank account.

7 & 8 Competence Guidance to Institutions Consultation: Fire & Life Safety and Sustainability

Items 7 and 8 were taken together, on the basis that the two work areas were being carried out in tandem.

The Board was ready to approve the guidance documents for both Fire and Life Safety and Sustainability for launch, but agreed to a proposal by the Executive to hold a short, further consultation with three aims:

1. The need to solicit feedback in an open and transparent way
2. An opportunity to promote the guidance documents and raise awareness of them
3. To ensure ARB conformed to good practice in consultation

The formulation of a communications plan at an early stage was positive, and the plan included potential collaborators and partners for the launch, some from Working Group 7.

Further to a review of comments from the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA), a two-stage consultation period was considered the most appropriate way forward, as it would provide the opportunity to continue positive engagement with the sector.

It was noted that the new President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) had made sustainability a central element of her plan. It was further noted that there was an opportunity to have something in place in time for the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November.

Schools and Institutions of Architecture would need a timeline for implementation, and an understanding of what the implications would be for prescription.

For the guidance on Life and Fire Safety the Board discussed timelines for implementation and engagement with stakeholders, including those in Working Group 7; and the relative interest levels of the general public in relation to Fire and Life Safety and Sustainability.

The development of draft guidance for Sustainability had proved challenging when compared with Fire and Life Safety, with a greater diversity of view and a recognition that knowledge and policy in the area will develop over time. This had made for a more difficult landscape to manage and navigate, though the guidance to be consulted on indicated a clear direction of travel. Consultation would provide further transparency and awareness.

A Board member commented that student consultation responses would be key and could be expected to highlight the importance of immediate action.

It was important to prepare communication lines which accurately captured the status and purpose of the guidelines. The guidance documents were intended to clarify ARB's position in relation to these specific aspects of the prescription Criteria so that a greater level of consistency was achieved across all institutions offering ARB-prescribed qualifications.

The Board unanimously agreed to consult on the on the draft Guidance to Institutions on Fire & Life Safety and on Sustainability.

Matters to note

9. **Chief Executive's Report**

The Executive was busy preparing and planning for the Competence Review, with the research report from SQW due imminently. The first meeting of the Steering Group was to be held shortly, and further information and plans may be brought back to the Board at its March meeting.

In relation to the update on the development of key performance questions, Board members suggested that the Executive could consider exploring the use of several software packages which they had come across through their other roles.

In response to a question on re-joining the register, there were no clear patterns emerging following non-payment of the annual retention fee. There was a small number of both established and new architects that had seemingly forgotten or had failed to pay.

The Registrar provided an update on IT in the area of fee collection and that significant progress had been made through improved communications. However, more fundamental changes would be needed to both messaging, about the renewals being linked to a statement of professionalism, and IT infrastructure if further efficiencies were to be realized.

A question was raised as to whether ARB made any provision for architects who were struggling financially. It was confirmed that there were several barriers to offering a monthly payment

option or introducing incremental fee amounts, including the low fee size compared to other regulators. There were also usually hidden costs with such concessions and setting up such a scheme would have significant administrative and cost implications which outweighed its likely value.

The Architects Benevolent Society (ABS) supported architects struggling to pay their annual fee with ARB, and ARB provided signposting to the ABS for those experiencing financial difficulties.

It was noted that the annual fee was always a challenge for regulators and any IT review would need to consider flexibility while also maintaining cash flow.

10. Financial Update

- (i) Management Accounts for 2021
- (ii) 2020 Year End Update

The Board noted both items. The finances were in line with previous forecasts.

The End of Year Update included details covering Board expenses as well as those regarding the additional meetings that had been required in 2020 as a result of the pandemic and other organisational changes. It was anticipated that costs would not be the same in 2021.

11. Any other business

No other business was raised.

12. Dates of Future Board Meetings:

- 31 March 2021 – Development Day
- 19 May 2021
- 13 July 2021 – Development Day
- 14 July 2021
- 8 September 2021
- 27 October 2021
- 1 December 2021