

BOARD MINUTES

Meeting: Board meeting
Date: Tuesday 20 January 2009
Time: 11.00 – 3.30 p.m.
Location: Board Room, Griffin House, Lever Street, Manchester

Attendees: Dr Bob Chilton, Chair
Professor Judy Simons, Deputy Chair
Councillor Shirley Flint
Paul Gott
Elizabeth Hall
Mike Kendall
Councillor Mehboob Khan
Councillor Sir Ron Watson

Apologies: Lizzie Abderrahim

In attendance: Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive
Richard Scott, Head of Communications
Navin Gokool, Head of Governance and Client Services
Paul Hoey, Director of Strategy and Guidance
Freda Sharkey, Acting Head of Legal
Anne Rehill, Advice and Guidance Manager
Gary Hickey, Research and Monitoring Manager (Item 09/10)
Hannah Pearson, Policy Advisor (Item 09/10)
Observer: Charlene Blackman, EA to the Director of Strategy & Guidance

Apologies: Hazel Salisbury, Director of Casework

Minutes: Claire Chadwick, EA to the Board and Chief Executive

Item No.	Subject	Action
09/01	Apologies	
	Lizzie Abderrahim	
	Hazel Salisbury	

09/02 **Minutes of the November 2008 Meeting (open session)**

The minutes were approved, however it was noted the action column in the November (open) Board minutes requires populating before signing by the Chair. CC

09/03 **Matters Arising**

The Board noted that interviews for the Liberal Democrat Board appointment had taken place and an announcement from the Department of Communities and Local Government was expected shortly.

The Chair stated that the re-appointment process for the two Board members whose terms of appointment both end in February 2009 had been followed and that the matter was now with the Secretary of State.

It was noted that one Board vacancy was left unfilled. It was understood that the Department had not yet initiated an appointment process, and therefore current Board members' views in relation to Board competencies they felt would add value to the current structure should be forwarded in confidence to the Chair. All

09/04 **Declaration of Board member interests**

The Chair asked each Board member to declare any interests.

- Mike Kendall – 2 ACSeS branch meeting dates added to his diary. Also attending the ACSeS president's luncheon on Friday.

09/05 **Chair's report (oral)**

The Chair stated that the Department of Communities and Local Government had conducted a remuneration review of the Board and had confirmed a 2% pay increase for Board members.

The Chair declared a new position, as adviser on a new charity – 20/20 Commission. He had also been invited to speak at a forthcoming governance of housing associations event.

09/06 **Board members feedback**

Elizabeth Hall attended an LGC conference on Better Governance. She informed the Board that the focus of the day had been on delivery and that an interesting presentation had been given by the Audit Commission.

Elizabeth Hall also reported that she had sat on the judging panel for the Standards Board for England's standards award along with Professor John Tizard and Nick Raynsford MP and found it extremely interesting. She thanked the Board for the opportunity and expressed the view that there was a lot to be learned from shortlisted authorities in relation to good practice. The Chief Executive and Director of Communications were requested to take this forward. The Chair agreed and stated that the promotion of good news stories should be actively encouraged.

GS/RS

Mehboob Khan reported that he had attended the Local Government Labour Group and provided an update on what was happening in relation to Standards Committees. He was happy to report he had received no adverse comments.

Shirley Flint reported that the NALC roadshows were coming up shortly and looked very interesting. The Board noted that she would be speaking at the London event.

Mike Kendall reported that he had received positive feedback from a recent meeting of the Monitoring Officers South East Branch (Brighton and Hove). The Board were pleased to hear that they had been complimentary about the Standards Board for England's Monitoring Officer helpline.

09/07 **Chief Executive's report**

The Chief Executive introduced her report to the Board and presented the updated Corporate Scorecard, HR Dashboard and Risk graphic for review.

The Board considered the Corporate Scorecard and specifically the quadrant covering internal governance. The Board noted and agreed the need for a more dynamic strategic planning process.

GS

The Board also noted that the current scheme of delegation is in need of review, and accepted that this review should take place once organisation design is settled.

FS

The Board also noted good progress in other areas of internal governance: HR policies, IT and systems development control and data handling arrangements for example.

The Board considered the January Risk graphic. In relation to risk one – poor local case handling – the Board discussed long outstanding local cases. The Board noted that the Operations Group were now looking at options for action.

AR

The Board noted an emerging wider concern about the quality of local

case handling, in relation to the extent to which a proportionate and affordable (locally) approach is being adopted. There is some anecdotal evidence of a heavy-handed approach. The Board agreed that analysis was needed to clarify the position, and mitigation steps would be needed if the concerns are justified. AR

09/08 **Board Operations Report**

The Board noted that the format and content of the Operations Report is developing. This is the second iteration. The Board noted that the time profile of SBE misconduct investigations older than six months old was not sufficiently evident in the report and this information gap should be addressed in the next report, using graphical presentation where possible. The Board also requested comparative, year on year data for MP correspondence and Parliamentary Questions in future reports NG

The Board noted general good performance, but expressed disappointment that the organisation was not meeting the general correspondence KPI. It was agreed that teams would be reminded of the need for care and awareness of time taken in dealing with correspondence. NG

The Board discussed the number of complaints about standards committees. The chief executive confirmed that the Operations Group is charged with an analysis of the complaints being received. AR

The Board noted press reports and asked the Head of Communications if there was more pro-active work on positive stories that the communications team should consider. It was agreed that a positive/negative breakdown would be included in next report. RS

The Board discussed the level of engagement with authorities and agreed that this was good at officer level, but requested that the Chief Executive look at engagement at member level. GS

09/09 **External Relations: strategic overview**

The Board discussed the strategic context in which the organisation's external relations activity is being developed. Observations were made on how plans for early 2009 and the 2009-2010 business year were developing. RS

The Board discussed brand development. External advice on the organisation's brand and its capacity for development has been commissioned. It was agreed that the Board would revisit the topic when expert advice has been received. RS

09/10 **Annual returns update**

The Board noted the progress which had been made on developing the annual return form and made suggestions for minor changes. The Board considered the content of the proposed annual return form both proportionate and a good stimulus for best practice. The Board agreed the annual return subject to the minor changes proposed.

09/11 **March away day – discussion item**

The Board debated the outcomes required from the scheduled Board March Away day. It was agreed that discussion should centre on the organisation developing as it should as a strategic regulator.

PH

09/12 **Project Excellence**

The Board noted that Project Excellence aims to ensure that the Standards Board for England delivers an excellent investigations function and noted progress in the project.

09/13 **Corporate Plan 2009 – 2012**

The Board discussed and offered observations on the draft corporate plan. The Board agreed to a final iteration, to strengthen the commitment and plans for making a difference to one systemic issue (public/private partnerships), to emphasise the lead role to be taken by the organisation in some areas and to review the wording in relation to the organisation's developing expertise.

GS

The chair requested that if Board members had any further ideas or comments, they should e-mail the chief executive as soon as possible

09/14

-

The Board then went into closed session.

09/17

The next meeting will be held on Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 March 2009



Chair