Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Meeting	Advisory Board
Date	02/10/2025
Time	10:00 - 12:30

Minute

Members	
Sam Anson	Non-Executive Board Member
George Docherty	Non-Executive Board Member
David Gemmell	Non-Executive Board Member
Gary Gibb	Internal Audit, SG
David Gregory	Strategic director for Lifelong Learning
Marta Kuzma	Audit Scotland
Graeme Logan	Interim Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
Janie McManus	HM Chief Inspector
Aileen Ponton	Non-Executive Board Member (Chair)
Gill Ritchie	Strategic Director, Inspection
Dougie Shepherd	Internal Audit, SG
Rob Strachan	Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance
David Wallace	Non-Executive Board Member
Tommy Yule	Audit Scotland
Attendees	
Patricia Dougan	Head of Digital Services, ES
Andrew Duncan	Accountant, ES
Avril Hamilton	Assurance Manager, ES
Gillian Howells	Head of Finance, ES
Roz McCracken	Head of Governance and Financial Management, ES
Erin Middlemass	Secretariat, ES
Apologies	
Ollie Bray	Strategic Director
Patricia Watson	Strategic Director, Inspection
James Wallace	Independent Audit and Risk Committee Member

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, giving an added welcome to the new Board members; Sam Anson, George Docherty and David Wallace, as well as Graeme Logan who was joining the meeting for the first time in his role as Interim Chief Executive and Accountable Officer.

1.2 The Chair noted that this was Gillian Howells last meeting as ES Head of Finance, thanking her for her work over the years and wishing her well for retirement. Andrew Duncan shadowed the meeting ahead of picking up some of this work going forward.

1.3 Apologies were noted from Ollie Bray, Patricia Watson and James Wallace. Patricia Dougan joined the meeting in place of Ollie Bray.

1.4 The Chair made members aware that Graeme Logan, Janie McManus and Rob Strachan would have to leave the meeting temporarily to deliver a staff message.

1.5 For the benefit of the new members, the context around the need to temporarily operate as a joint Board and Audit and Risk Committee was provided. Members were advised that the future plans for separating the board were being considered.

2. Previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 July 2025 were approved with minor amendments.

2.2 Action logs from both Audit and Risk Committee and Advisory Board were reviewed and updated as follows.

Advisory Board

- Action 35 – Closed
- Action 44 – Closed
- Action 45 – To be updated to reflect that letter has been sent but response not received

AB ACTION 46 – Roz McCracken to share, with the new members, the letter sent from members to the DG.

Audit and Risk Committee

- Action 3 – To close as included within the finance agenda item.
- Action 12 – To be updated to propose a meeting with ES transition team.

3. Declarations or conflicts of interest

3.1 No declarations or conflicts of interest were recorded.

4. Update from Chief Executive

4.1 The Chief Executive gave thanks for the support provided since he joined the organisation as well as welcoming new Board Members. A brief overview was given on the ongoing development of new structures for reform as well as outlining the next steps in terms of deliverables. The Chief Executive shared that his key aims were to ensure the new Education Scotland had a clear mission and vision going forward as well as the development of a robust people plan with involvement from trade unions.

4.2 The Chief Executive invited the Head of Digital to give an update on the future of Glow as well as inviting any questions from members.

4.3 An update was provided on the future of Glow sharing that work has begun on guiding principles and timeline for the Future of Glow Advisory Group. It was noted that work is being undertaken with local authorities to ensure that work is being done to minimise disruption. It was noted that the future of Glow would be discussed in greater depth at the next strategic Board meeting.

4.4 The Chief Executive advised that due to UK government ratifying legislation, HMIe would continue to sit within Education Scotland with a phased approach to reform. It was advised that this would not stop or delay the ongoing work to prepare for the stand up of the new organisations.

5. Update from HM Chief Inspector of Education

5.1 HM Chief inspector of Education gave an update on inspection within the landscape of reform, highlighting the requirement to continue meeting ministerial and public commitments.

5.2 The Chief Inspector noted the Early Learning and Childcare Inspection Framework in partnership with Care Inspectorate was now in use and being well received. It was shared that a public consultation had launched in September 2025, about the School Inspection framework. This would run until November 2025.

5.3 It was reported that ongoing capacity pressures were affecting publication times with Inspection colleagues looking at new ways to take work forward.

6. Reform update

6.1 The Strategic Director for Corporate Services gave an overview of the timeline for reform. It was noted that the high-level functional designs had been shared with unions and the intention was to move to consultation with staff the following week, setting out proposals for staff within scope for this work and following up with teams to engage further on the design plans.

6.2 Members gave thanks for this update, noting that how the staff engagement goes would be key. The Strategic Director for Corporate Services agreed that supporting staff through this would be critical.

7. Internal Audit

7.1 The Internal Auditors gave an overview of their progress report as well as a number of strategic updates and invited questions on this.

7.2 There was specific discussion about the cyber resilience review which had resulted in a limited assurance, with six medium recommendations and three low recommendations.

7.3 Members noted that it is rare to see a limited assurance in Education Scotland so this caused some concerns, However, due to the timing of receiving the paper, members had not had sufficient time to consider comments but would be keen to feedback during the strategic meeting taking place on 30 October 2025.

7.4 Members asked for management reflection around the outcome. Members discussed the need to focus on user error vulnerabilities and noted plans to further upskill staff on cyber security. The need to invest and focus on internal phishing exercises and mandatory password changes on systems as flagged.

7.5 The Head of Digital also spoke to the work ongoing within the public sector cyber group and shared that a maturity assessment was due to begin imminently. Members asked about the process for internally tracking audit recommendations, with Internal Audit confirming they follow up on recommendations one year after audit. The Chair further advised that the Governance team then continue to monitor progress with all audit recommendations, reporting progress towards completion to the ARC.

ARC Action 1 – Secretary to include the Cyber Security Audit Report on the agenda for next meeting.

8. External Audit

8.1 External Audit gave an overview of the Audit progress report highlighting that all work from 2024/25 had concluded as well as noting that the 2025/25 audit will be more complicated due to reform.

8.2 An overview was also given about the recently published Audit Scotland national reports that might be of interest to the Board.

9. Finance update

9.1 The Head of Finance gave an overview of the tabled finance report, noting that movement from the previous year was due, in large part, to increased National insurance costs and pay increases for staff.

9.2 She also highlighted the work underway to agree the next years budget position, noting the continuing uncertainty arising from reform and the position of shared serviced.

9.3 The Strategic Director for Corporate Services also outlined challenges around budget transfers and the delivery of work alignment, noting that work was underway to develop a process to manage this.

9.4 Members shared a level of discomfort with the current spend status and asked about the level of internal controls and the contingency planning in place to address the predicated overspend.

9.5 The Chief Executive advised that he shared Members concerns and has therefore prioritised deep dives with Finance to look at this further. This would include conversations with senior staff around reducing spending. It was noted that an update would be provided to the Board in due course.

10. Risk Update

10.1 An overview was given for the new Board Members of the risk papers and the accompanying processes. Recent changes to the risk register were highlighted and it was noted that a new ES specific risk register is now in place for transformation.

Members asked how well embedded risk was within the organisation and whether the Leadership Team recognised the priority risks. It was agreed that risk processes and risk discussions were well embedded across the Agency.

10.2 A conversation took place around the risks around budget for digital infrastructure and the ongoing work to reduce this risk going forward.

AB ACTION 47/ ARC ACTION 2 – Secretary to share the transformation risk register and add to regular risk papers going forward.

11. Quarterly Organisational report

11.1 Members were given an overview of the newly implemented reporting progress and how this will be recorded and managed going forward.

12. Annual Procurement Report

12.1 An overview was given of the report and questions invited from members.

12.2 Internal Audit sought assurance that ES seeks validation from suppliers about reported community benefits.

ARC ACTION 3 – RM to get clarification from Procurement on the process for validating community benefits.

13. Health, Safety and Wellbeing committee minutes

13.1 Members noted the minute.

14. Information Security Update

14.1 Members noted the paper.

15. Audit Recommendation Tracker

15.1 Members noted the tracker.

16. AOB

16.1 Members asked for thanks to be shared with staff for their ongoing work in preparing the information shared at the meeting. They also asked for a message about the importance of cyber security to be shared with staff.

Date of next meeting:

17. The date of the next meeting was set as 30 October 2025 for a strategic meeting of the Advisory Board.

Name Erin Middlemass
Role Secretariat
Date 7 October 2025