

Meeting	Advisory Board
Date	24/07/2025
Time	13:30 - 16:30

Minute

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

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that she had been appointed as Chair in the interim. Apologies were noted from Gill Ritchie and Patricia Watson.

1.2 The Chair noted that this would be Lyndsay McRoberts last meeting as Non-Executive Board Member, and thanked her for her work with ES, wishing her well in her new job.

2. Previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meetings of both Audit and Risk Committee and Advisory Board were approved.

2.2 Action logs from both Audit and Risk Committee and Advisory Board were reviewed and it was agreed that these would not be merged given the interim arrangements of the current committee.

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 an update on the progress of reform and the ongoing transition work, noting we were waiting on approval by Scottish government before starting the mapping and matching process. Members were made aware of the possibility that transition work may continue past the stand up date for the Office of the Chief Inspector.

4.2 The Chief Executive gave thanks to staff for their ongoing work on transition planning and that much of this work now sat with Education Scotland rather than Scottish Government. It was recognised that this was taking place as well as business as usual work.

4.3 An update was provided on the ongoing planning for Education Scotland for the year ahead as well as ongoing work with teachers and practitioners around the curriculum improvement cycle.

4.4 The Chair then invited Ollie Bray to give an update on the future of Glow and Curriculum Improvement Cycle. Ollie Bray confirmed that the next year would be important in terms of the development and co-creation of the new curriculum and shared the Scottish Governments timeline for change document with members.

4.5 Ollie Bray further advised that a detailed business plan was underway for the future of Glow and that this would be shared with members at the next meeting where there would be a deep dive on digital and the future of Glow. It was also noted that this would be covered in more detail in the audit report tabled at item 6.

4.6 Committee members shared concerns around the impending deadline for the removal of Glow and asked for reassurance that work was moving at speed. Ollie Bray advised that DG had been made aware of this work.

4.7 Rob Strachan gave an update on the transition risk and highlighted progress on the governance capability risk and that support for this had been secured. It was noted that we have thus far been unable to secure capability for Information Governance work but we were continuing to assess how to address this gap.

5. Update from HM Chief Inspector of Education

5.1 HM Chief inspector of Education gave an update on the annual inspection plan including focussed thematic work and outlined some changes around the fieldwork for these. An update was also provided on staffing, confirming that six new Associate Assessors would be joining HMIE on a permanent basis.

5.2 An update was given on the shared inspection framework and the intention to begin using this from September 2025. There was also discussion about the changes that had been made to the Education Scotland bill and what these mean for transition planning for day one readiness.

5.3 It was noted that HMle had secured funding for use of intelligent automation and artificial intelligence and that this would be done in partnership with Scottish Government's Intelligent Automation Centre for Excellence.

5.4 Board members asked for assurance around the use of AI and the Chief Inspector of Education advised that SG have shared guidance around the use of AI.

5.5 The Chair noted that a new Chief Executive of SQA has been appointed and asked whether a meeting has taken place around the relationship between Education Scotland HMle and SQA. The chair asked if there would be an update on Board membership ahead of the next meeting of Advisory Board.

5.6 The Chief Executive advised that a meeting is in the diary with the Chief Executive of SQA and that an update would be provided by email regarding recruitment.

Action – GH to provide an update on co-opted board members.

6. Internal Audit

6.1 The Internal Auditors gave an overview of their progress report, highlighting the two tabled assurance reports had been given a reasonable opinion. A draft report was also tabled on Cyber resilience however this opinion was not yet finalised. It was also noted that the annual assurance report had been shared and provided a substantial assurance.

6.2 Internal Auditors confirmed that fieldwork had begun for both organisational stand up and capacity and capability reviews.

6.3 It was also noted that a digital assurance framework health check had been carried out for the future of Glow and that this had highlighted a red delivery confidence level due to delays out with programme control. Ollie Bray confirmed this was not a surprise to the team as it aligned with their own concerns.

6.4 Internal Auditors gave an overview of the Digital Capacity and Governance final report and shared that this had achieved a reasonable assurance with four medium and one low level recommendation and that the underlying themes from the report were around capacity and capability already highlighted by members earlier in the meeting.

6.5 An overview was also given of the Organisational Performance audit. This report had received a reasonable assurance opinion with four medium recommendations. It was noted that this covered the trialling of the new performance framework and allowed the opportunity to identify any potential issues. Auditors commended positive staff engagement in this review.

6.6 Internal Auditors then presented the substantial Annual Assurance Opinion for 2024-25. Auditors noted that this opinion represents an open and honest view of the management control and governance arrangements within the agency and the positive way the Agency actively engage with Internal Audit.

6.7 The Chief Executive thanked staff for their work on this audit and the engagement of staff with Internal Audit.

7. External Audit

7.1 External Audit gave an overview of the Annual Audit report and advised that the annual report and accounts were free from misstatement. They highlighted that there had been a planned delay due to the implementation of Oracle. It was recognised that throughout the audit process, Leadership Team and the Finance team had provided a good level of support which allowed the auditors to progress and complete on time.

7.2 It was noted that a historical error from the previous finance system had now been resolved following the implementation of Oracle.

7.3 The audit report contained a number of recommendations around staffing costs and the increase in costs within the climate of a flat cash budget as well as capacity and resilience throughout the Leadership Team due to temporary posts.

7.4 Members raised concerns around the lack of budget and highlighted the reduction of support for CRM, noting that financial reductions would impact this further. Ollie Bray confirmed that work was ongoing for CRM next steps and that an update will be provided at the next meeting under the digital item.

7.5 The Chair reflected on the lack of permanency across the Leadership Team and that this has been raised with DG previously as well as this being flagged as a risk by both Internal Audit and External Audit. The chair took an action to write to Scottish Government to highlight this again.

Action – The Chair to write to SG regarding the risk around Leadership Team appointments.

8. Governance Statement

8.1 The Head of Governance and Finance gave an overview of the Governance Statement, outlining its purpose and advising that this stays live and subject to update until the annual report and accounts are signed.

9. Committee Assurance Report to the Accountable Officer

9.1 The Chair gave a brief overview of the paper, with members approving the report as an accurate reflection of the work of the ARC over the reporting year.

10. Annual Report and Accounts

10.1 The Head of Finance gave an overview of the paper and Members confirmed their recommendation that the Annual Report and Accounts be signed.

11. Finance update

11.1 The Head of Finance gave an overview of the report and advised that this is covered in the overall accounts.

12. Risk Update

12.1 An overview was given of the risk papers and recent changes to the risk register were highlighted. A discussion was had around deep dives for risks that were identified as having insufficient controls. The Chair agreed to join a meeting to discuss these further.

13. Audit, Risk and Advisory Committee draft TOR

13.1 Members approved the TOR, noting the intention to separate these boards back out when membership allows.

14. Health, safety and wellbeing committee minutes

14.1 Members noted the minute.

15. Information Security Update

15.1 Members highlighted the spate of high profile cyber attacks across the UK and gave comments to feedback to the Information Security team.

16. Audit Recommendation Tracker

16.1 Members noted the tracker.

17. AOB

17.1 Members asked for thanks to be shared with staff both for their work on this years Audits and the ongoing reform work on top of day to day work. Thanks were given again to Lyndsay McRoberts for her work on the Board and members wished her well in her new role.

Date of next meeting:

The date of the next meeting was set as 02 October 2025.

Name	Erin Middlemass
Role	Secretariat
Date	28 July 2025