

Board Paper

Date

17 November 2023

Title

Proposal for Board meeting dates 2024 - 2025

Report Author

REDACTED, Board Secretary and Private Office Manager

Responsible Executive Director

Richard Greenhous, Chief of Staff

Paper for decision.

Open

Issue

1. There are currently no Board meetings scheduled after 2 May 2024.

Recommendation

2. We recommend that the Board:
 - a. agrees the schedule of meetings set out in this paper.
 - b. agrees to alternate between remote and face-to-face meetings.
 - c. agrees to one meeting in Northern Ireland in 2024.

Background

3. At its meeting on 27 October 2022 the Board agreed a schedule of meetings up to 2 May 2024. This included regular scheduled extraordinary meetings at incremental points between ordinary meetings, to mitigate the administrative burden of scheduling these at short notice.
4. Despite the scheduling change, there have still been five occasions on which we have had to schedule extraordinary Board meetings. Besides one meeting, to sign off the Annual Report

and Accounts, these have primarily been to make decisions on live investigations. The timeline of the investigations is not always predictable and can require the Board to take decisions at specific times.

5. The Board and ARAC meeting schedules were previously misaligned, which impacted negatively on the timeliness of the ARAC's reporting to the Board. The 2023-24 meeting schedule sought to mitigate this, but the availability of ARAC members (and additional attendees), changes in the finance team and the timeliness of financial reporting meant the benefit of the new schedule was not realised. The forward plan seeks to provide a more regular ARAC schedule so that the Board can receive timely updates of the quarterly financial positions. This will need to be confirmed with the ARAC.

Analysis

6. We propose to keep the existing schedule of one ordinary Board meeting every six weeks. We judge this is still the appropriate frequency for the Board to consider its normal business in a timely way.
7. Of these meetings, we propose that every other should be held-in person. This reflects the preference stated by the Board in July 2021. This has largely been applied through 2023-24 and has worked well. We judge that discussion and decisions have been just as effective remotely as in person when seeking the Board's input.
8. In addition to these ordinary Board meetings, we have held a two-hour slot mid-way between the ordinary meetings. While this did not eliminate the need for last minute extraordinary meetings this year, it did significantly reduce it. We have therefore maintained this for the upcoming year, with the caveat that emergency meetings may still be needed outside this schedule.
9. In addition to the ordinary meetings, and the placeholders for extraordinary meetings, there will be three two day-long Board strategy days, in line with the agreed Board Effectiveness Review action plan. The first will take place in May 2024 in Worcester, the second in November 2024 in Northern Ireland and the third in March 2025. The Northern Ireland meeting has three days reserved for it to allow travel.
10. We propose to keep the existing schedule of one in person Board meeting per year in Northern Ireland. This reflects our commitment to having a presence in Northern Ireland. The Board's trip to Belfast in May 2023 was valuable. The plan for the 2024 trip is to travel further afield in Northern Ireland.
11. We propose that ARAC meetings are scheduled quarterly, ahead of an ordinary Board meeting, so that it can routinely and promptly report to the Board on its business. This will be timed to coincide with routine quarterly financial and risk reporting to the Board, so that appropriate scrutiny can be undertaken by ARAC in advance. The ARAC schedule may need to be augmented by further extraordinary meetings when detailed planning for the 2023/24 audit has been completed.
12. The proposed schedule is below. Strategy sessions are highlighted in blue. At this stage, we have identified target dates. If Board members are unable to accommodate any of these dates, we will seek the closest alternative date through polling of members.

OFFICIAL

13. It is suggested that the Board strategy days include a Board dinner, attended by Executive Directors also.

14. In person meetings are in Worcester unless otherwise specified.

| Ordinary Board meeting | Remote/In person | Extraordinary meeting (presumed 9am start) | ARAC |
|------------------------|------------------|--|--------------------|
| | | | Early May 2024 |
| 29/30 May 2024 | In person | | |
| | | 12 June 2024 (two hours) | |
| 3 July 2024 | Remote | | |
| | | 24 July 2024 (two hours) | |
| | | | Early August 2024 |
| 14 August 2024 | In person | | |
| | | 4 September 2024 (two hours) | |
| 25 September 2024 | Remote | | |
| | | | Early October 2024 |
| | | 16 October 2024 (two hours) | |
| 5/6/7 November 2024 | Northern Ireland | | |
| | | 27 November 2024 (two hours) | |
| 11 December 2024 | In person | | |
| | | 15 January 2025 (two hours) | |
| 29 January 2025 | Remote | | |
| | | | Early Feb 2025 |
| | | 19 February 2025 (two hours) | |
| 11/12 March 2025 | In person | | |
| | | 2 April 2025 (two hours) | |
| 23 April 2025 | In person | | |
| | | | Early May 2025 |
| | | 14 May 2025 (two hours) | |
| 3/4/5 June 2025 | Northern Ireland | | |

Northern Ireland

15. At least one Board meeting will be held in Northern Ireland in 2024-2025.

Finance and Resource

16. There is a cost involved with an in-person meeting. Previous meetings in England have cost around £3,000 and in Belfast £5,000.

17. This year we have an office premises capable of hosting in person Board meetings, which will significantly reduce their cost. Particularly where there is no Board dinner, we would anticipate the cost to be limited to only the cost of catering and Board member travel expenses.

18. This proposal is designed to further reduce the administrative burden of organising meetings, following the relative success of this year's meeting schedule.

Impact Assessments

Risk Assessment

19. There is a risk that by having a more rigid meeting timetable that some pieces of work may not align perfectly with business needs. We will mitigate this risk by communicating the timeline with staff as early as possible so they're able to work around the dates. Decisions can also be taken by electronic business.

20. There is a risk of additional extraordinary meetings if the existing schedule cannot accommodate live investigations, or last-minute changes that need a swift decision,

Equality Analysis

21. While there are many benefits to in-person Board meetings, all Board meetings will have a hybrid option which provides flexibility for any member where travel is difficult for mobility or other health related reasons.

Environmental Analysis

22. No specific considerations under our obligations under environmental law have been identified.

Implementation Timescale

23. Immediate.

24. The only action needed from Board members for implementation will be to let us know their availability.

Communications

25. Once the Board meetings are in place, the dates and timelines will be communicated with the wider organisation. This will mean that teams can plan their work accordingly around the Board meetings so that the Board is sighted.

External Stakeholders

26. No need for stakeholder engagement.

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| Paper to be published | YES |
| Publication date (if relevant) | With meeting minutes |
| If it is proposed not to publish the paper or to not publish in full please outline the reasons why with reference to the exemptions available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). Please include references to specific paragraphs in your paper | |