FINAL

End of Term Review

of

Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd

10 November 2025

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The Independent Remuneration Board ("the Board") is an independent, statutory body responsible for ensuring Members of the Senedd ("Members") have the appropriate remuneration and resources available to them to undertake their role. This includes setting the salaries of Members and the amounts they can claim for staffing and office costs, ensuring value for money for the people of Wales. The National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 ("the Measure") provides the statutory framework for the Board's work.

1.2 The Board publishes a Determination which sets out the salaries of Members and Support Staff and other office expenses. The Determination for the next Senedd is published in the year before a Senedd election. Whilst Members' salaries are set in advance and cannot be reviewed unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Board reviews the Determination annually.

1.3 The Senedd Commission provides the Board with secretariat support to enable it to operate effectively. The budget for the Board's administrative support and the budget to meet all costs arising from the Determination is allocated by the Senedd Commission and approved by the Senedd annually. The Senedd Commission is responsible for administering the Determination, processing Members' claims and providing guidance and support for Members and their staff on matters related to the implementation of the Determination. Whilst there is a legislative expectation for the Board to maintain its independence, the legislation also requires the Board to keep under review the experience gained from the operation of the Determination and whether it aligns to its policy intentions and objectives. Therefore, it is important that the Board and Commission work interdependently to some degree to ensure the Board's objectives are achieved successfully.

1.4 The Board is undergoing a transition during 2025-26 with the appointment of three new Board members and the commencement of the fourth term of the Board. Despite this transition we conclude that this is a high functioning and effective Board, particularly in the context of its size and limited resources. Assessed against the principles of public life, and other good practice codes, the governance framework is proportionate, fit for purpose, and facilitates good quality decision making. With these sturdy foundations in place, our observations for development focus on four themes.

1.5 Firstly, continuing to refine its approach to policy making to enhance clarity and transparency as it begins its deliberations for the next Board term. For example, by clarifying where the Determination is positioned on the continuum between being rules and principles based, developing a broader range of indicators by which to measure its strategic outcomes, and agreeing the key risks to delivery of its purpose alongside associated mitigations.

1.6 Secondly, given that the Board and Commission need to work together constructively and sensitively, it is wholly appropriate that greater collaboration is sought between the two bodies to ensure operational decisions made by the Commission support the Board's strategic objectives.

1.7 Thirdly, considering the important role key stakeholders play in supporting the Board to achieve its objectives, it is vital to continue focus on enhancing its stakeholder engagement strategy as part of the coming planning cycle.

1.8 Finally, there are some areas of routine governance that would benefit from greater formalisation to meet external good practice. For example, appointing a Vice Chair/ senior Board member role to provide a formal alternate in the Chair's absence and act as an intermediary as required. Similarly, whilst we observed a few informal processes that appear to work well there are benefits to documenting aspects such as Continuous Professional Development (CPD) planning and scheduling routine governance matters into the Board's meeting agendas.

1.9 We are confident that implementing our recommendations focussed on continuous improvement will assist the Board in further enhancing its effectiveness in the years ahead.

2 Introduction

2.1 FinWell Coaching & Consulting Ltd was asked to provide the Board with assurance around its effectiveness following the mid-term effectiveness review which reported in January 2023. As the Seventh Senedd approaches, the Board is in a period of transition with new members joining the Board during 2025; two new members in May and another in September. With this context in mind, the scope of the review was to identify any lessons for the new Board in terms of its ways of working, managing Board business and developing and maintaining board dynamics. The review process comprised:

- Review of relevant Board policies and three Board meetings packs;
- Individual questionnaire responses from Board members, the Secretariat, the Senedd Commission, and individuals from the Member and Member Support Staff Representative groups;
- A range of interviews with Board members, the Secretariat, the Senedd Commission, as well as individuals from the Member and Member Support Staff Representative groups; and
- Observation of the July 2025 Board meeting, including the Board-only pre and post meetings that took place on the same day.

2.2 Our review utilised the following codes of practice and principles as the benchmark for the assessment:

- The UK Corporate Governance Code alongside the Financial Reporting Council's guidance on Board Effectiveness (2024)
- Cabinet Office's guidance on Board effectiveness reviews: principles and resources for arm's-length bodies (last updated April 2022)
- The Cabinet Office's 12 Principles of Governance for Public Body Non-Executive Directors (2021)
- The Code of conduct for board members of public bodies, including the Nolan Principles (last updated 2019)

2.3 In addition, our consultants brought their knowledge and experience from good practice observed in a range of other organisations, including Statutory Boards.

2.4 We approached our work in the context of the Board's size, statutory remit, and strategic plans to ensure that our recommendations are proportionate and take account of future goals. Importantly, the review did not assess the underlying legislative framework for the Board's governance. Therefore, whilst we have commented on some of the constraints that the legislation imposes on the Board, our recommendations are focussed on changes that are deliverable within the existing legislative framework.

3 Conclusions

This report is divided into conclusions across seven key areas of Board effectiveness:

- Board composition;
- Strategy, risk, and purpose;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Leadership from the Chair;
- Board dynamics, culture and conduct; and
- Board processes.

It may be the case that our conclusions stimulate thoughts around alternative ways in which good governance outcomes can be achieved. It is for the Board to decide whether to accept, disregard, or determine an alternative approach to the matters raised in this report. A list of all the recommendations is contained in Appendix I.

3.1 Board composition

3.1.1 The Measure requires the Board to comprise five individuals including the Chair. The Board has entered a period of transition with new members joining it during 2025; two joined the Board in May (following the resignation of two Board members due to the appointment of one to Ministerial office and one following a period of illness) and another will commence in September, when a current Board member's second and final term comes to an end. The Chair and one Board member have been re-appointed for a second five-year term from September 2025.

3.1.2 The Board comprises competent and capable individuals, which is unsurprising given the formality, rigor and transparency of the appointments process that is led on behalf of the Senedd by the Commission. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that statutory restrictions around its size places some limitations on the Board's diversity in terms of skills, experience, background, and protected characteristics. Further, there is an inherently greater risk of the Board falling into group think (albeit not something we noted in practice during our meeting observation). It is also less resilient than might be considered optimal, for example, absence arising from unforeseen personal circumstances, dependence on an individual's specific skillset, and the length of time it takes to appoint new members. The Board has sought to mitigate these risks by utilising relevant external specialists and giving appropriate input to the Commission around the skills the Board seeks during the recruitment process for new members. We noted the benefits to the Board of one of its members having previously been an elected parliamentarian.

3.1.3 We noted that there is no Vice-Chair/ senior Board member. This role is especially important in maintaining an appropriate balance of power within the Board and ensuring the effectiveness of Board leadership. It was reported to us that such a role has been allocated informally in the past as the need arose, for example to act in the Chair's capacity in the event of their absence. However, **we recommend that the Board formally appoints a Vice-Chair/ senior Board member to act as a deputy, provide a sounding board for the Chair, and**

serve as an intermediary for the other Board members and key stakeholders. [Priority: MEDIUM]. This is particularly important in the context of a relatively small Board and the key role played by the Chair in liaising with stakeholders.

3.2 Strategy, risk, and purpose

3.2.1 The Board's purpose is set out in the Measure. Within this framework the Board agreed its goals and objectives for the Sixth Senedd, which are described in its strategy for the period 2021-26[1]. The Board's policy making has centred around four strategic themes[2] and has adopted three guiding principles[3].

3.2.2 Underpinning the Board's strategic objectives is its approach to policy making. A key aspect of this is where the Determination should sit on the continuum between being rules based versus principles based. We understand that this philosophy was agreed in the early stages of the Board's deliberations regarding the simpler Determination theme at the start of the Sixth Senedd. In our opinion this aspect of the approach to policy making is a fundamental building block of the Board's work. Therefore, **we recommend that where the Determination should sit on the continuum between being rules and principles based is revisited and refined as a key input to formulating the strategy for the Seventh Senedd. [Priority: MEDIUM].** This calibration ensures practical, proportionate responses and in an ideal world we would suggest that this exercise is undertaken in collaboration with the Commission and perhaps other key stakeholders. It could be brought to life by adding a heading to the Board reporting template that prompts the author to outline how proposed decisions align to the agreed philosophy. The output could be used as a mechanism to enhance stakeholder understanding of how the Board discharges its responsibilities.

3.2.3 The Board publishes its annual report which references a range of deliverables and qualitative information against its four strategic objectives. The Board considers that it is making good progress towards delivering simplification, however, at the time of writing, the final Determination had not yet been finalised, and therefore the outcomes of the simplification agenda were yet to be confirmed. Some objectives, most notably 'sustainability' and 'promoting trust and engagement' are not wholly in the Board's powers to deliver as they are partly reliant on collective commitment and action with Members. Section 3.3 (Stakeholder Engagement) below describes our view of the Board's progress against the 'responsive' strategic objective.

3.2.4 The Board has some visibility around whether the Determination is meeting its overall purpose and strategic objectives on an ongoing basis. This includes quantitative information,

[1] https://remunerationboard.wales/media/yaolfbsp/board-strategy.pdf
[2] A responsive Determination, a simpler Determination, a sustainable Determination, and promoting trust and engagement.
[3] "Our decisions should be appropriate within the context of Welsh earnings and the wider financial circumstances of Wales. Our decisions should support the strategic purpose of the Senedd and facilitate the work of its Members. Our decisions should be robust, clear, transparent, sustainable, inclusive, and represent value for money for the taxpayer."

such as the level of claims/ take up by Members against different categories of costs, and qualitative feedback gathered from stakeholders. Nevertheless, **we recommend the Board considers a broader range of indicators to measure against its strategic objectives. These should be collected systematically and reviewed on a regular basis to identify areas where the Determination may need to be refined or updated to ensure alignment with its legislative purpose. [Priority: MEDIUM]**. When making each Board decision it is good practice to define success measures up front. The Board should consider how it will assess the effectiveness of the decision, with the Commission systematically reporting back on relevant data points on a periodic basis. This creates a consistent feedback loop, enabling the Board to monitor outcomes, adjust course where needed, and ensure alignment with strategic objectives.

3.2.5 Whilst we observed implicit consideration of a variety of risks that might arise from individual decisions, the Board does not have an agreed view of the key risks it faces in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. In the absence of this, the possibility of inconsistent or incoherent decision making increases. **We recommend that the Board agrees the principal and emerging risks to delivery of its purpose alongside any associated mitigations, and that this is reviewed on at least an annual basis. [Priority: MEDIUM].** Whilst creating a formal risk register may appear to be adding bureaucracy rather than value, there are benefits as it can assist the Board in being less reactive, allocate its limited resources to the areas of greatest risk, agree what (if any) mitigating actions are appropriate, what risks the Board may be willing to accept, or may not be within their control at all. Many Boards (including those in the public and not for profit sectors), then use the output from this analysis to define their appetite for risk and create guardrails to provide assurance that the execution supports the Board's overall strategic objectives. Defining a clear risk appetite will help ensure the Board remains focused on the most important issues, by distinguishing between acceptable levels of risk and areas requiring escalation or deeper scrutiny.

3.2.6 Linked to this, we noted that there is potential for the Board's strategic risk appetite to differ from the Commission's risk appetite at the point of execution. Whilst this might appear consistent with the legislative expectation for the Board to maintain its independence, section 3(3) of the Measure states:

"The Board must keep under review the extent to which, having regard to—
(a)experience gained from the operation of the Board's determinations,
(b)changes in the functions of Members of the Senedd, and
(c)any other relevant changes in circumstances,
those determinations appear to be achieving the objectives set out in subsection (2) [which sets out the Board's objectives]".

In our opinion it is important to recognise that the Board and Commission must work interdependently to some degree; their ability to work together constructively and sensitively is necessary if the Board's objectives are to be achieved successfully. Therefore, **we recommend that the Board and the Commission agree how the Board can assure itself that operational decisions made by the Commission support the Board's legislative objectives, whilst simultaneously preserving the Board's independence. [Priority: MEDIUM]**

3.2.7 From within the Board there was broad agreement that the most important issues over the coming 12-18 months are:

- Monitoring and reviewing the impact of the Board's most recent Determination during the Seventh Senedd;
- Agreeing the Board's strategic priorities for the Seventh Senedd; and
- Maintaining and enhancing effective relations with Members and their staff (current and new) as well as the Commission.

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

3.3.1 For any Statutory Body the effective engagement and management of key stakeholders is vital to its strategic success. We observed high levels of transparency with well signposted information across the Board's website such as corporate information (including the current strategy, annual reports, mid-term effectiveness review, minutes of Board meetings, and Board Charter). The Board also publishes key documents from its policy work programme (consultations, research informing its decisions, the Determination and a summary of each chapter).

3.3.2 The Board receives input from key stakeholders in a variety of ways including drop-in meetings with the Member and Member Support Staff Representative groups. The Representative groups act as a sounding board for the Board's emerging findings and assist the Board in developing workable recommendations. The Representative groups also provide an opportunity for feedback to the Board on their views around the practicalities of working within the Determination.

3.3.3 Other stakeholder engagement includes regular meetings between the Chair and the Chief Executive and Clerk, plus ad hoc discussions with the Senedd Standards Committee and the Senedd Pension Board. There is also a Board-Commission Dialogue, and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission, the Board and the Senedd Pension Board. Whilst there is a desire for greater engagement with the public to promote trust, there was an acknowledgement that this is difficult in practice without incurring significant cost.

3.3.4 In general, it was reported to us that relationships with key stakeholders are positive and constructive. However, both the Member and Member Support Staff Representative groups noted that the willingness of their peers to engage with the Board's agenda had been hampered by a lack of trust following some of the decisions made during Covid. It was also clear that there are differing views around the extent to which the Board should take an interest in how the Commission implements the Determination. Whilst there was an understanding that the Board is independent from the Commission's role, several stakeholders were of the view that the Board has responsibility for ensuring the Commission's practical implementation supports the Board's own policy intentions. We have sympathy with the view that the Board should receive some kind of feedback to ensure alignment with the Determination's policy intention, not least because of section 3(3) of the Measure (see paragraph 3.2.6 above). One suggestion

offered to us was that the Board could be consulted on draft Commission guidance in relation to the Determination to ensure there is overall policy alignment.

3.3.5 The Board's decision making is informed and underpinned by analysis, research, consultation, and broad stakeholder engagement. Much of its work is published in full, with a degree of transparency well beyond that observed in many other parts of the public sector. Indeed, we heard several positive examples from stakeholders where the Board had been responsive to their feedback. Consultation responses were generally regarded as providing the necessary clarity around why a particular decision had been reached. All parties acknowledged that this form of engagement does rely on stakeholders having the willingness and capacity to engage with this material. Nevertheless, there was still a sense amongst some stakeholders that the Board could provide more direct feedback via the Member and Member Support Staff Representative groups where it has decided, on balance, to take a different view to that put forward by some stakeholders. There were views expressed amongst the Representative groups that the Board's decisions did not always align with their own experience. It was these decisions where they would value a more detailed written explanation that they could share with their members and perhaps foster greater constructive dialogue. There was also a view amongst the Member Support Staff Representative group that the views of Members were regarded as more important compared to theirs when it came to the Board's deliberations. One area that may also need to change is the location of the Member and Member Support Staff Representative group drop-ins to make them more accessible.

3.3.6 It was suggested to us that an important driver of the success of the Determination for the Seventh Senedd is ensuring new and existing Members and their staff understand what the Determination means for them and their roles. One suggestion was for the Board and Commission to deliver this training collectively such that there is a consistent message whilst recognising their separate roles.

3.3.7 The current legislative framework means that much of the consultation and decision making can only be done in a relatively compressed period of time. Indeed, the Board normally meets around five or six times per year but has been meeting more frequently in the past 12-18 months in finalising its proposals for the Seventh Senedd. Whilst this has been well managed within those time constraints, not least through the dedicated efforts of the Board's team of support staff, it has proved challenging for all stakeholders to engage effectively throughout.

3.3.8 We understand that the Board's stakeholder engagement strategy was agreed at the beginning of the Sixth Senedd. Given the importance of effective engagement with key stakeholders to achieving the Board's purpose, **we recommend revisiting the stakeholder engagement aspect of the Board's strategy as part of the next planning cycle. [Priority: MEDIUM]**

3.4 Leadership from the Chair

3.4.1 The Chair is well respected, diligent, responsive, and has built constructive relationships with key stakeholders. She has deep knowledge of both Welsh and English parliaments, and her wide skillset means she is very comfortable across all aspects of the Board's agenda. She manages Board meetings with efficiency and professionalism, striking a good balance between exception only and broader discussion on key topics. She draws out people's views which enables healthy debate and ensures that everyone can contribute freely. Whilst not within the Board's control directly, in our opinion there should be early consideration of succession planning for the Chair role to ensure continuity and sustained Board effectiveness beyond the Seventh Senedd.

3.5 Board dynamics, culture and conduct

3.5.1 Prior to two new members joining the Board in May, interpersonal dynamics were reported as being supportive, open, and collegiate. At the July Board meeting, we also noted a culture of mutual respect that drives thoughtful challenge and support. We observed first hand numerous examples of strategic and diverse perspectives being brought to discussions with alternative viewpoints openly welcomed and thoughtfully considered. Board dynamics also benefit from constructive pre-Board discussions to provide context for forthcoming decisions and to revisit the historical considerations that have shaped the current position. This practice supports continuity of governance and serves as a valuable mechanism for onboarding new members, enabling them to engage with greater insight and confidence from the outset. Nevertheless, with a further member leaving and another joining in the autumn **we recommend the Board agrees how it can continue to build positive interpersonal relations and deliver this moving forward. [Priority: LOW]**

3.5.2 Hybrid and online meetings were acknowledged to be slightly more challenging to navigate in terms of interpersonal dynamics, so it remains important to manage these with care, for example regarding the number of attendees and on-screen visibility.

3.5.3 The Measure states that the Board's policy decisions are binding, and therefore not subject to appeal. Further, we noted that the Board is "committed to upholding the Senedd's Dignity and Respect policy" and this provides an appropriate framework for considering any questions that might arise around individual behaviour and conduct. Finally, we reviewed the Register of Interests that is maintained for all Board members and observed a culture whereby potential conflicts of interest are recognised and managed appropriately.

3.6 Board Processes

3.6.1 We observed a high quality of support to the Board from its secretariat and members of the Commission. This is widely acknowledged by Board members and key stakeholders alike to be central to enabling the Board's effectiveness. In our opinion this strength also presents potential risk, and **we recommend the Board discusses appropriate short and medium term**

succession plans for key supporting staff to mitigate key person risk. [Priority: MEDIUM]

3.6.2 The Board is not a corporate body yet it is publicly funded and therefore needs to operate according to recognised good governance principles. These are set out in the Board Charter[4] which articulates how the Board discharges its statutory functions in a manner that is independent, open, and inclusive. In the light of stakeholder feedback and our own observations, **we recommend updating the Board Charter to incorporate relevant matters identified during this end of term review. [Priority: LOW]**

3.6.3 Overall, the Board papers are clear and comprehensive, particularly those at the decision making stage where it is important to maintain a robust audit trail. At the early stages of policy making Board members have welcomed the use of powerpoint slides to stimulate debate around a wide variety of options.

3.6.4 It was particularly notable just how much consideration is given to Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion (ED&I) aspects within the Equality Impact Assessments prepared alongside each consultation. When we challenged whether the Board has sufficient ED&I data to assess the extent to which the Determination is meeting its objectives (of which the current strategy makes diversity a key aspect) we heard several different comments. These included:

a) The challenges of collecting this data e.g. the suitable legal basis under GDPR, the additional work for the Commission;
b) The reasonableness of utilising broader ONS data given current Members and their staff are not necessarily reflective of those who might be undertaking these roles in the future; and
c) That it is Members who employ their staff, not the Board or the Commission.

On balance, **we recommend that the Board explores how it can collect current Member and staff ED&I data given it is an important input to decisions such that they align with the agreed policy outcome around anyone being able to put themselves forward. [Priority: LOW]**

3.6.5 Board members undertake an annual appraisal meeting with the Chair. Whilst we understand that the Chair receives feedback via informal bilateral conversations from time to time, there is no equivalent appraisal process for them, which would be considered good practice. **We recommend that a senior Board member is allocated responsibility for undertaking the Chair's annual appraisal (see also paragraph 3.1.3). [Priority: LOW]**

3.6.6 The Board has an agreed programme of policy work to deliver the Determination. However, there is no agreed workplan for the delivery of more routine governance matters throughout the year such as the consideration of key risks, the skills matrix and associated CPD. Whilst we saw evidence of most routine governance matters being considered during the annual

[4] https://remunerationboard.wales/media/qzkf5ui5/board-charter-2023-eng.pdf

cycle, **we recommend that all routine governance matters are planned into the schedule of Board meetings to ensure nothing is missed. [Priority: LOW]**

3.6.7 It is good practice to undertake an annual self-evaluation of Board effectiveness (e.g. via a questionnaire). However, given this Board already uses a post-meeting debrief and a mid-term external review, a more proportionate approach might simply be to schedule an annual agenda item for the Board to discuss ways of working, perhaps utilising the key headings within this report as prompts. This could also be informed by the post meeting debriefs and any relevant points from annual appraisals.

3.6.8 There is an effective induction plan in place for new Board members, which is particularly important in the context of the Board's constitutional set up and relatively small size. Board members take responsibility for their own learning and development, receive briefings on relevant issues such as constitutional reform, economic and pay data. We also observed the pre-Board discussion being utilised to recap on how the Board's thinking had evolved over time as well as explaining some of the more technical aspects for the benefit of the newer Board members. Nevertheless, **we recommend developing a forward-looking annual Board CPD programme featuring internal and external input in a variety of formats to ensure that all Board members are equipped to deal with the demands of their role on an ongoing basis. [Priority: LOW]**

In summary, this is a high functioning and effective Board, particularly in the context of its size and limited resources. Assessed against the principles of public life, and other good practice codes, the governance framework is proportionate, fit for purpose, and facilitates good quality decision making. With these sturdy foundations in place, we are confident that implementing our recommendations for continuous improvement will assist the Board in enhancing its effectiveness in the years ahead.

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4 Appendix I – List of recommendations

Below is a list of all the recommendation from the report, together with columns for the Board response, Current status, and Owner. We have annotated recommendations with either a High, Medium, or Low importance/urgency (where High = take steps to address the issue as soon as possible, Medium = take steps within the next 6 to 12 months, and Low = not urgent).

It may also be the case that our recommendations stimulate thoughts around alternative ways in which the same outcomes can be achieved. It is for the Board to decide whether to accept, discard, or determine an alternative approach to each recommendation.

Recommendation	Board response	Status	Owner
1. The Board formally appoints a Vice-Chair/ senior Board member to act as a deputy, provide a sounding board for the Chair, and serve as an intermediary for the other Board members and key stakeholders. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
2. Where the Determination should sit on the continuum between being rules and principles based is revisited and refined as a key input to formulating the strategy for the Seventh Senedd. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
3. The Board considers a broader range of indicators to measure against its strategic objectives. These should be collected systematically and reviewed on a regular basis to identify areas where the Determination may need to be refined or updated to ensure alignment with its legislative purpose. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
4. The Board agrees the principal and emerging risks to delivery of its purpose alongside any associated mitigations, and that this is reviewed on at least an annual basis. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
5. The Board and the Commission agree how the Board can assure itself that operational decisions made by the Commission support the Board's legislative objectives, whilst			

simultaneously preserving the Board's independence. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
6. Revisiting the stakeholder engagement aspect of the Board's strategy as part of the next planning cycle. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
7. The Board agrees how it can continue to build positive interpersonal relations and deliver this moving forward. [Priority: LOW]			
8. The Board discusses appropriate short and medium term succession plans for key supporting staff to mitigate key person risk. [Priority: MEDIUM]			
9. Updating the Board Charter to incorporate relevant matters identified during this end of term review. [Priority: LOW]			
10. The Board explores how it can collect current Member and staff ED&I data given it is an important input to decisions such that they align with the agreed policy outcome around anyone being able to put themselves forward. [Priority: LOW]			
11. A senior Board member is allocated responsibility for undertaking the Chair's annual appraisal. [Priority: LOW]			
12. All routine governance matters are planned into the schedule of Board meetings to ensure nothing is missed. [Priority: LOW]			
13. Developing a forward-looking annual Board CPD programme featuring internal and external input in a variety of formats to ensure that all Board members are equipped to deal with the demands of their role on an ongoing basis. [Priority: LOW]			