

## Paper 10 - *The information authority* secretariat report

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### Background and introduction

- 1 This paper gives a status update on the work of *the information authority* secretariat. Decisions are required on five items; the remainder of the paper is for information.
- 2 This status report covers work by the secretariat since the board meeting on 10 June 2009 and that planned before the next meeting on 2 December 2009.

### Decisions to be taken / items to be noted by the board

- 3 The following decisions are required:

#### Data definitions - governance transfer to *the information authority*

- 4 The LSC had operated a Data Definitions group which advised *the information authority* of their requirements for data which is to be collected and agreed derived variables which were then published in the Data Service dictionary. As part of the Machinery of Government transition the existing group has been dissolved. It is proposed that *the information authority* secretariat chairs a re-constituted group and that the board acts as the ultimate governance for FE derived variables. **The board is asked to confirm it is content with this proposal.**

#### Memorandum of Understanding with the Schools' Star Chamber

- 5 Increasingly, there is a need for co-operation between *the information authority* and the DCSF Star Chamber Scrutiny Board on issues affecting 14-19 data e.g. the agreement of common measures for Framework for

Excellence. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was tabled at the last DCSF Star Chamber Scrutiny Board on 13 July 2009 and amendments have been made. **The board is asked to comment and confirm agreement to the MoU with the Schools Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (see Appendix A).**

#### **F05 hard close sub-group**

- 6 The board agreed the earlier reporting of achievement data in June 2009 with the hard close date for the final learner responsive data for 2008/09 confirmed as 15 January 2010, and the hard close date set for 2009/10 at 22 November 2010. As part of the decision on 2009/10 data, it was agreed to set up a sub-group which would monitor any issues in receiving achievement data in summer and autumn 2010. The proposed membership and terms of reference for this group are attached at Appendix B.

**The board is asked to confirm it is content with the proposed membership and terms of reference for the F05 sub-group.**

#### **Close date for 2010/11 learner achievement data**

- 7 The board had agreed the close date of 22 November for final learner responsive data for 2009/10. On the assumption that the process runs smoothly the board is asked to agree a close date of a similar timetable for 2010/11 data i.e. 28 November 2011. A sub-group will be reviewing the situation for 2009/10 and this group may make recommendations to revise this proposed close date.

**The board is asked to confirm a hard close date of 28 November 2011 for 2010/11 final learner responsive data.**

#### **Workplan for *the information authority***

- 8 The board is asked to review on an annual basis the proposed workplan for *the information authority*. This forms the supporting information for the budget submission to BIS for the following financial year. A summary of the workplan is attached at Appendix D.

**The board is asked to comment on and approve the workplan for *the information authority*.**

The following items are for noting by the board:

#### **DCSF's Common Application Process**

- 9 The board is asked to note that DCSF is proceeding with plans to introduce the Common Application Process in 87 'prospectus' areas for September 2010. The Association of Colleges has expressed some concerns about the implementation and the possible impact on providers including data processes.

## **The Data Service**

- 10 A separate paper is being presented at the meeting and for future boards, a summary will be provided.

## **Success Rates**

- 11 A college data quality group is being set up to address the data quality issues in FE colleges. The chairman of *the information authority* has been asked to chair this group which will report on progress to *the information authority* board. Terms of reference have yet to be agreed.

## **Connexions Dataset and Collections Timetable**

- 12 The secretariat is currently working with Connexions on agreeing a standard data set for their collections from FE providers to support the September guarantee. The secretariat will be presenting an agreed Connexions dataset and collection timetable to the board in December. In the meantime, the secretariat would like to make the board aware of progress being made and that involvement from stakeholders, in taking this piece forward is welcomed. The first step is to develop an agreed dataset. Following on from this, the secretariat will work with the Data Service to agree when they might take on the responsibility for collecting Connexions data including the costs associated with this collection.

## **Timetables for Provider Planning**

- 13 Work continues to progress on the feasibility of providing a comprehensive set of timetables to enable providers to complete their planning processes more efficiently and effectively. The Data Service has agreed to publish its collection timetable, and this is now available via *the information authority* website. However, there is further work to do with other LSC colleagues, specifically in the policy areas. The planned target date of October has not been achieved, however, it is hoped that agreement will be reached by the end of the year.

## **Annual Report**

- 14 The board is asked to note that *the information authority's* second annual report is scheduled for publication during the second week of October. A copy will be circulated to all board members during week commencing 12 October 2009.

## **Perception Survey**

- 15 The results of *the information authority* perception survey carried out in July have now been analysed and the headline results are summarised as follows:
  - Of the 200 respondents, 65% of respondents were from FE colleges or independent providers, with 9% and 13.5% being from local authorities and government departments/agencies, respectively. Software developers

represented 2.5% of respondents and 1.5% were from employers. The outstanding 7% originated from “others”.

- 90% of respondents answering the question, were aware of *the information authority*
- 94% of respondents answering the question felt they had some understanding of the role of *the information authority*. Of this, 62% felt they mostly understood the role of *the information authority*.
- Of the respondents answering the question, 86% felt *the information authority* had to some degree been successful in introducing change to the sector regarding the setting and regulating of data standards
- 69% of respondents (67% of FE colleges and independent training providers) answering the question felt *the information authority* had a beneficial impact on their organisation in relation to data issues.

### **Information authority spend**

16 The spend to date for the secretariat is summarised within *the information authority* dashboard, set out in Appendix E. Spend is within forecast with some underspend due to timing differences. A similar budget is to be requested for 2010/11.

### **The information authority - terms of reference / protocol**

17 The board confirmed by email the changes to the terms of reference and protocol following the discussion at the last board meeting. The secretariat is now working with individual board members to reconfirm their organisations' commitment to new wording. The LGA is expected to sign up to the protocol shortly.

## **Further information**

18 The appendices to this report include:

- Memorandum of Understanding for the DCSF Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (Appendix A)
- Proposed membership and governance for F05 Hard Close sub-group (Appendix B)
- Progress report and key activities for the period March 2009 – August 2009 (Appendix C)
- Workplan for *the information authority* (Appendix D)
- Performance dashboard 2009/10 (Appendix E)
- Performance criteria half yearly report (Appendix F)

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**Appendix A – Memorandum of Understanding with Schools’ Star Chamber – Separate attachment.**

**Appendix B – F05 Hard Close Sub-Group proposal – Separate attachment.**

**Appendix C**

**Progress report**

**Activities for last period (June – August 2009)**

**1. Stakeholder engagement**

**Events held:**

- *The information authority* was the joint sponsor of the AoC Nilta CIS conference on 25 June 2009.
- The LGA Conference took place on 30 June through to 2 July; *the information authority* exhibited at this event.
- Meetings with our existing advisory groups were held throughout June.
- The first meeting of our new advisory group for Local Authority colleagues took place on 25 July.
- The authority exhibited at the 14-19 Reform Conference, London on 2 July.
- We presented to the PICS (Providers' Integrated Claim System) Users' Group.
- The consultation exercise with data providers and users on proposed changes to the ILR for 2010/11, through advisory groups, emails and **feconnect**.

**Other meetings / contacts:**

- A draft MOU with the DCSF Star Chamber Scrutiny Board was presented on 18 August to that group and is currently being reviewed. It is hoped that final approval from the group will take place at the SCSB's next meeting.
- Various governance groups including the Information Standards Board and the Cross-Sector Information Services Governance Board

### **Perception and reporting**

- The perception survey exercise is now complete and results have been evaluated by the secretariat. A summary analysis is being made available at the board meeting on 30 September.
- *The information authority* annual report is currently being developed and the draft report will be sent to board members during October 2009.

### **Website and community portal**

- Use and functionality of both sites continues to improve. The attached dashboard provides the trend data on visitors to both feconnect and the corporate website, since January 2009.
- **Fecconnect** has recently hosted a 'hot seat' with Caroline Kempner as our third expert, answering queries from colleagues in the education sector.

## **2. Secretariat team**

- The final vacant post for the secretariat has been filled and Anita Holcroft started with *the information authority* as Data Specification Advisor on 21 July 2009.
- Contract resource for the ILR 2009/10 Data Quality Project is due to finish at the end of September, with the Data Quality and Improvement Manager (Adele Dixon) now leading on the quality work.
- *The information authority* secretariat away day took place on 10 July 2009. The outputs from this team day are currently being taken forward by the team and where appropriate, activities will be fed into the overall secretariat team plan.

## **3. Quality and standards**

- The ILR 2009/10 Data Quality Project is being closed at the end of September and business as usual data quality activities will continue to be led by the Data Quality Board with key deliverables being progressed by colleagues within *the information authority*, the LSC and the Data Service.
- The Data Quality Framework is under development and review with colleagues within the LSC and Data Service is currently underway.
- Standards advice and support continue to be provided to various FE initiatives including to LLUK on workforce data collection.
- Continued contribution to working groups of the Information Standards Board.
- The secretariat is currently working with Connexions on agreeing a standard data set for their collections and the secretariat will be presenting to the board in December 2009.
- The team has now completed the evaluation exercise of all ILR change requests submitted to the authority during the last four months.
- A data model for learner data is being developed to inform changes to data collection arrangement. It is being informed by, and will itself inform, similar work undertaken by the Information Standards Board to

develop a business data architecture for education skills and children's services.

#### 4. Governance and Planning

- The secretariat commenced a review of its workplan for the next 18 months and key work stream leads are prioritising their activities, identifying required resource and determining how any gaps in resource/skills can be managed. An overview is attached at Appendix D.

#### 5. Budget

- The budget and spend for this financial year (2009/10) is set out in *the information authority* dashboard as outlined in Appendix E. The revenue budget for 2009/10 is £1.2m and capital budget £80k. An additional £86k of staff budget (for three posts transferred from the LSC in October 2007) is also included in this forecast. This covers salary, training, travel and other associated costs.

### Activities planned for next period (September – December 2009)

#### 7. Stakeholder engagement

- Plans for *the information authority* to run a session at the next ICES (local authorities) meeting taking place on 20 November 2009.
- Advisory Group meetings:
  - Local Authorities group – next meeting 30 October 2009.
  - Data Users group – next meeting 12 November 2009.
  - College Information group – next meeting 16 October 2009.
  - Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) group – next meeting 10 December 2009.
  - Employer Responsive group – next meeting 8 October 2009.
  - Software Supplier group - next meeting 7 October 2009.
  - Own Software Writers group – next meeting 21 October 2009.
- Approval of the draft MoU with the DCSF School's Star Chamber Scrutiny Board to be agreed at its next meeting.
- Meeting for HOLEX members to take place on 19 October 2009.
- Exhibiting at the next national AoC Conference on 17-19 November 2009.
- Exhibiting at the FAB Conference on 4-5 November 2009.
- *The information authority* and Data Service conference is taking place on 3 December 2009.
- **feconnect** will be hosting a 'hot seat' with John Landeryou, BIS, in October/ November.

#### 8. Secretariat team

- A follow on team training day is being organised for 6 November 2009 to support team building following the recruitment of a number of new staff.

## 9. Quality and Standards

- The Data Quality Delivery Group has been set up to support implementation of Data Quality initiatives.
- *The information authority* will continue to lead on the development of ways of working for moving forward with Data Quality initiatives. This will consider how the secretariat, the Data Service, the YPLA and SFA will work together beyond April 2010, and the scope and terms of reference will be defined for approval by February 2010. A draft proposal will be presented to the board in December 2009 for comment.
- The Data Quality Framework will be circulated to the board for comment prior to the board in December.
- Standards advice and support will continue to be provided to various FE initiatives, including for harmonisation of success rates.
- Continued contribution to working groups of the Information Standards Board.
- The secretariat is currently working with Connexions on agreeing a standard data set for their collections.
- Work is currently underway to determine the feasibility of providing a comprehensive set of timetables to enable providers to complete their planning processes more efficiently and effectively. The secretariat is continuing with its engagement with the relevant departments to determine if and how this could be achieved. The planned target date for having an agreed timetable in place is December 2009.
- The team will follow up on the ILR Changes that have been agreed by the board, and changes will be published on the corporate website. Work will progress towards prioritisation of the specification. In addition, a *lessons learned* exercise will be undertaken with key stakeholders and to those who submitted change requests.
- Engagement with the Settlement System programme will continue with a view to presenting a paper to the board meeting on 2 December 2009.

## 10. Governance

- Work continues on embedding governance arrangements and working practices between *the information authority* and the Data Service.
- A follow on session with the LSC IM planning team and the Data Service to review priorities and working practices is due to take place during November.

## Appendix D

# **The *information authority* – plans**

## **1. Workplan**

The current workplan for *the information authority* can be summarised as follows:

### **1.1 Address data burden**

- Following the study into provider data burden by Oakleigh Consulting published in June 2008, work with organisations to address the issues raised. Specifically:
  - Scrutinise an update by the LSC on progress in particularly in addressing ad hoc data requests at the board meeting in September 2009
  - Review a plan by the LSC on addressing paper burden issues particularly around electronic records by the board meeting in September 2009, and set further review dates
  - Support the production of simpler funding guidance documentation by the SFA and YPLA for 2010/11
  - Support the work of the Information Standards Board in developing common standards for awarding data
  - By December 2009, agree governance arrangements, in conjunction with the Schools' Star Chamber, for collections by Connexions offices
  - Produce improved provider support manuals for the ILR by October 2009
  - Work with the Data Service on improvements to the credibility reports and Data Self Assessment Toolkit by September 2009
  - Support the Data Service in the production of CBT training for providers on ILR completion by October 2009
  - Review success of provider support arrangements for 2009/10 and plan further improvements for 2010/11
- Commission a further review of provider data burden in April 2010 to assess progress in reducing it, identify new areas of focus and provide a further measure for BIS's simplification agenda.

### **1.2 Set data standards and quality**

- Publish data standards for all sections of the ILR in the specification for 2010/11.
- Develop and promote the implementation of a data standards framework for further education and training.
- Develop and promote the implementation of a data quality standards framework for FE data.
- Deliver in conjunction with the Data Service and the LSC (and its successors) a programme of data quality improvements.
- Review the ILR collection dates, freezes and windows for all collections for 2010/11 and publish the calendar by November 2009.
- Support the governance and publication of derived variables for learner related data used within further education and training.

- Support the development of a learner data strategy for FE in conjunction with BIS, DCSF, SFA, YPLA and the Data Service by March 2010 to inform the development of the ILR, the settlement system and the MIAP learner record.
- Align FE, schools and HE data definitions and standards through ongoing dialogue and collaboration including through the Information Standards Board. Specifically:
  - Support the update of the ethnicity data standard to align with 2011 census definitions by February 2010
  - Support the development of other standards relevant to FE e.g. learner record
- Harmonise success rate reporting. Specifically:
  - Support the development of a single success rate definition for all employer responsive provision by March 2010
  - Support the publication of a calendar for success rate calculations for 2009/10 data onwards
- Review and agree proposed FE system collections, specifically:
  - LLUK's Staff Individualised Record 2010/11 (December 2009)
  - Framework for Excellence – Future phases (March 2010)
- Support the development of key sector initiatives e.g.
  - Qualifications and Credit Framework
  - Settlement system

### **1.3 Data collection and analysis**

- A transparent process and procedures for changes have been implemented. This will be reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis.
- Reference material to be included for all fields in the ILR specification for 2010/11 onwards detailing how data is used.
- Removal of data duplication – further fields to be proposed for removal in 2010/11
- Data model for the ILR specification to be developed to enable further rationalisation for 2011/12, a move to a single ILR for all types of provision and the potential implementation of a XML format. (Implementation is dependent on the learner data strategy).
- Ongoing management of the ILR specification annual cycle including a review of the specification timetable for 2011/12.

### **1.4 Data reporting**

- In conjunction with the LSC, its successors and the Data Service, data quality reporting issues to be assessed and prioritised for improvement.
- Continue work with the LSC, its successors, the Data Service, HESA and HEFCE to improve the reporting of FE data in HE and vice versa.

### **1.5 Data Service support**

- Provide requirements, data standards etc. in a timely fashion to the Data Service for data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Participate in Data Service governance arrangements – providing direction, support and scrutiny as required.

- Undertake joint projects with the Data Service to drive improvements in FE data collection, transformation and reporting.

### **1.6 Communication and engagement**

- Stakeholder engagement to identify required improvements in data collection / reporting etc, and consult on proposed changes. This is an ongoing process and includes stakeholders throughout the FE system as well as those in HE and schools as appropriate.
- Manage the communication of the changes to the final learner responsive collection close date for 2009/10 and operate an advisory sub-group.
- Review of stakeholder engagement including board membership to reflect Machinery of Government changes and closer alignment of employment and skills agenda.
  - Specifically to determine how best to engage with local authorities, the YPLA and the SFA to ensure effective governance of data requirements
- Analyse results from annual perception survey completed August 2009 and ensure feedback is acted upon.
- Produce annual report for ministers / stakeholders by October 2009.
- Revise communications strategy and plan for review by board in December 2009.
- Further development of community forum and website to support stakeholder consultation, sharing of best practice etc.
- Review infrastructure supporting community forum to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

### **1.7 Performance management of *the information authority***

- Manage *the information authority* against performance criteria agreed annually by *the information authority* board.
- Publish the second annual benefits report by February 2010.

### **1.8 Secretariat Support**

- Continue to provide secretariat support to the *information authority* board.
- Provide support for other groups such as the college data quality group.

## Appendix E – Dash Board - Separate attachment

### Appendix F

#### **1. The *information authority* – detailed performance criteria**

The performance criteria for *the information authority* (covering both the board and the secretariat) are described below. Performance against the criteria will be reviewed twice a year (in March and September) by the board, and the criteria will be reviewed annually. These criteria were approved by the board in March 2008 and the board completed a formal review of the criteria in March 2009.

#### **2. Criteria and performance**

##### **2.1 Develop a transparent process for data changes**

The *information authority* secretariat will:

- Publish a clear and transparent process for data changes
- Specify unambiguous assessment criteria for changes
- Support stakeholders in the development of business cases for changes
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for debating and challenging proposed changes. (These will include face to face groups and online communities)
- Present balanced recommendations on proposed changes to *the information authority* board.

The *information authority* board will:

- Take transparent decisions on change requests based on balancing provider burden versus the provision of useful information for providers and data users

Measures and **performance**:

- The publication of an agreed data change process, ILR change timetable and change assessment criteria. **Complete for 2009/10 and 2010/11. An appeals process has been agreed and published.**
- Publication of board papers showing how decisions were reached. **Complete / ongoing**
- The delivery of ongoing improvements in processes as agreed with stakeholders. **Feedback on the ILR change request process was sought in November 2008. An action plan was agreed and has been executed for the 2010/11 change process. A further review is planned for October 2009.**
- Feedback from stakeholders on support and communication mechanisms. **The annual perception survey in summer 2009 highlighted good levels of support.**

##### **2.2 Agree clear standards for FE data with alignment between schools and HE**

The *information authority* will:

- Set and communicate clear standards for FE data ensuring these are available to all interested parties
- Adopt any common data standards wherever possible
- Resolve any potential conflicts with HE and / or schools. In the first instance resolution will be through the appropriate body (HESA or the Schools Star Chamber), or if necessary via the Information Standards Board (ISB)
- Participate fully with the ISB, as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies

Measures and performance:

- Publication of data standards on *the information authority* website with links to other standards where appropriate. **ILR standards published and improved.**
- Adoption of agreed data standards by the Data Service, and increasing uptake by other users in the FE system. **The Data Service has started reporting against data quality standards. Advice has been given to LLUK on adoption of common standards. Advice being provided to various initiatives regarding use of wider standards.**
- Feedback from stakeholder groups including the ISB, HESA and the Schools Star Chamber on collaborative working enabling the adoption of common standards, and on the clarity / usefulness of standards. **Good working relationships in place with these groups. A draft MOU with the Schools Star Chamber is currently being reviewed with sign off scheduled for October 2009.**

## 2.3 Develop effective and wide engagement with stakeholder groups

The information authority will:

- Establish wide and deep networks across the FE system
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for engaging with stakeholder groups e.g. for consultation or promulgation of standards
- Ensure that the views of all stakeholder groups are considered in developing its work
- Develop an effective mechanism for tracking issues and incorporating them into *the information authority* workplan

Measures and performance:

- Development and implementation of a comprehensive stakeholder and communication plan. **Plan in place and being implemented – perception survey feedback indicates that stakeholder communication has improved.**
- Provision of face to face groups, teleconferences, and a user-friendly community website for stakeholder engagement. **Complete and ongoing. Data Users group established from March 2009 and local authority group established in July 2009.**
- The set up of a clear, easy to navigate website which provides easy access to documents, information and help. [www.theia.org.uk](http://www.theia.org.uk) **continues to be well-used and recent improvements include**

**introduction of web alerts. 70% of users thought that the website and feconnect met their needs. Areas of concern will be followed up.**

- In conjunction with the Data Service, provision of a responsive Customer Relationship Management function. **The Data Service service desk is being rolled out and supported as appropriate by the information authority; including provision of second line support.**
- Feedback from stakeholders as to effectiveness of engagement. **Generally good feedback received when interactions have occurred – our communications strategy includes actions to target specific audiences, such as new data users, including local authorities.**

## **2.4 Eliminate data duplication**

The information authority will:

- Undertake a complete review of data captured in the ILR to reduce data duplication
- Consider for all new change requests whether data is already captured or can be combined with an existing collection
- Challenge any proposals where data is to be collected which is already captured elsewhere
- Encourage the review of existing data collections to remove data duplication
- Rationalise data algorithms and reporting so that discrepancies in interpretation are eliminated.

Measures and performance:

- Review the key aspects of the ILR for 2009/10 to eliminate data duplication; with remainder to follow. **Complete for 2009/10; further proposals made for 2010/11. A data model of the ILR is being developed to support further improvements.**
- Development and application of an appropriate assessment criterion (to prevent data duplication) for any proposed change request, to be in place by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. **Complete; changes understood for the 2010/11 process.**
- Deliver an agreed approach for harmonising success rate reporting by LSC / Ofsted by June 2008. **Work is ongoing through the harmonisation group, with the Apprenticeships success rates being aligned to help resolve issues with employer responsive provision.**
- Identification of data collections / reporting mechanisms within the FE system and the provision of support for their review to remove data duplication or discrepancies. **Ongoing.**

- The establishment of standards to be adopted by the Data Service to eliminate data duplication and discrepancies in algorithms / reporting. **To be developed.**

## 2.5 Focus on data for key FE performance metrics

### The information authority will:

- Work with government departments / agencies and the FE sector to identify key performance areas
- Set standards for key FE performance metrics within priority areas
- Evaluate the standards being proposed for new / improved performance measurement mechanisms to ensure consistency, clarity and the minimising of data burden

### Measures and performance:

- Adoption of priority areas for *information authority* work: 1) learner data, 2) awarding data, 3) staff data. **Complete and ongoing**
- The specification of standards for key collections /reports within the priority areas, commencing with the ILR. **Complete for key part of ILR specification for 2009/10.**
- Development and implementation of clear data standards for performance management tools such as Framework for Excellence and Minimum Levels of Performance. **This work has yet to be planned.**

## 2.6 Reduced set of standard reports

### The information authority will:

- Specify a standard set of reports for key FE data
- Define data access rules for FE data (including Data Protection issues)

### Measures and performance:

- Evaluate through the Data Service which reports are currently produced, and propose a rationalisation of these reports; initial phase by October 2008. **Work is being driven by the Data Service.**
- Develop and publish clear, data access rules for the Data Service covering all agencies / departments / providers for April 2008 operation by June 2008. **Determined that this is the responsibility of the data owners e.g. LSC.**
- Establishment of a Data Protection champion within *the information authority* by May 2008. **Expertise sourced from within the LSC to provide Data Protection guidance for providers; training of staff within *the information authority* to be undertaken.**

## 2.7 Perceived to act with integrity and add real value

### The information authority will:

- Act to reduce bureaucracy wherever possible, balancing the data need vs. burden
- Establish clear and transparent assessment criteria for all change requests
- Communicate clearly how decisions have been taken

- Take decisions in the interests of the FE system as a whole including learners (and wherever possible act for the benefit of the wider education system)
- Deliver 'value for money'

Measures and performance:

- Feedback from stakeholders on reduction of burden and quality of decisions. **Feedback continues to be positive; more to be done.**
- Rationale for decisions to be published on *the information authority* website **Complete and ongoing.**
- Measurement of reduction in burden following initial benchmarking exercise (to be completed by May 2008). **Initial measurement taken; to be reviewed bi-annually. Next review planned for in May 2010.**

### **3. Next steps**

The board is asked to provide further feedback and guidance on performance to date.