



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA
CHILL DARÁ AGUS CHILL MHANTÁIN
KILDARE AND WICKLOW
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

Kildare and Wicklow ETB Governance Report 2021

The annual Governance Statement provides an overview of the key governance activities of KWETB in 2021. Kildare and Wicklow ETB remain committed to continued implementation and maintenance of robust governance structures that support the deliverance of our strategic objectives.

Governance Schedule

A comprehensive governance schedule, detailing the key legislative and governance requirements of KWETB from an Executive and Board perspective, was implemented by KWETB in 2021. Developed in collaboration at the Governance and Compliance Officers Network at ETBI level, the schedule documents and provides assurance that key governance deadlines are being achieved. The existence of such a schedule of key governance activities supports transparency, accountability and succession planning.

Reporting

Several statutory reports are required annually to be drafted and submitted in accordance with the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. Kildare and Wicklow ETB have developed formal structures to support the timely submission of such reporting requirements and several other reporting requirements to the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Skills, SOLAS and other funding bodies. The purpose of these reports are to demonstrate to stakeholders KWETB's commitment and effectiveness in achieving its statutory purpose. Table 1.1 details some of the key reporting deadlines achieved by KWETB in 2021.

Table 1.1 Reporting deadlines

Report Name	Required by/submitted to	Date for submission	Submitted on time (Y/N)
Ethics Return	Ethics Acts	30 th January	Yes
Service Plan 2021	ETB Act 2013, Department of Education	1 st March	Yes
Annual Financial Statements	ETB Act 2013, Department of Education & C&AG	1 st April	Yes
Protected Disclosure Report	Protected Disclosure Act, Department of Education	30 th May	Yes
Annual Report	ETB Act 2013, Department of Education	30 th June	Yes
Charity Annual Return	Charities Act 2009	31 st October	Yes

The well-established 'Deadline tracker' developed in 2020 is used to track and monitor reporting deadlines. The level of reporting to various sections of the department and other funders is significant, for which teams across KWETB work to complete reports to a high standard and submit them within the deadlines required.

The Performance Delivery Agreement and Oversight agreement (PDA/OA) with the Department of Education is a performance contract in which an agreed level of service is formalised between the Department and KWETB. The agreement supports specific high level goals and objectives and defines the output and outcome of performance indicators on which performance of KWETB is measured. KWETB commits to the targets specified in the PDA and the Department formally reviews the PDA and requires that KWETB also submit a quarterly 'Early Warning Report' to notify the department of any potential issues of concern. Furthermore, the Department of Education maintain oversight of reporting as part of the PDA which include formal quarterly review meetings, at which amongst other things, the submission of required reports is reviewed.

Board activities

The Board of KWETB met on 7 occasions in 2021 to fulfil its statutory requirements, referred to as the reserved functions of the ETB Act 2013. The statutory responsibilities completed by the Board in 2021 included adopting/approving;

- Service Plan 2021
- Draft Annual Financial Statements 2020
- Draft Statement of Internal Control 2020
- Annual Report 2020
- Attendance of members at ETBI Conference
- Continuation of overdraft facility
- Leasing arrangements
- Appointments to Board of Managements and/or committees of the Board

As part of the Board enhancing their effectiveness and as an example of good governance, a working group was established in late 2020 to review the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders were amended to reflect current best practice guidance, incorporate requests of the Board in relation to distribution of meeting materials and ensure that Board procedures are in line with the *reserved functions* of the Board. The Standing Orders were approved by the Board in April 2021. Both the Board and Executive of KWETB are committed to upholding the commitments of the Standing Orders.

An external review of the Corporate Governance Programme completed in late 2020, which validated the work of the programme, recommended that the Board engage an external third party to review the Board's effectiveness. An external party was procured with the support of the executive and a review of effectiveness of the Board is currently ongoing. The outcome and implementation of any recommendations of this review will further enhance Board effectiveness and assist members in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

The Board administration team also continue to support the Board members in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. In 2021 the Board SharePoint site was improved to include additional supporting documentation and redesigned for ease of use. The Board administrator provided dedicated training to

Board members to assist them in using the site and how to access pertinent information to ensure they are well informed.

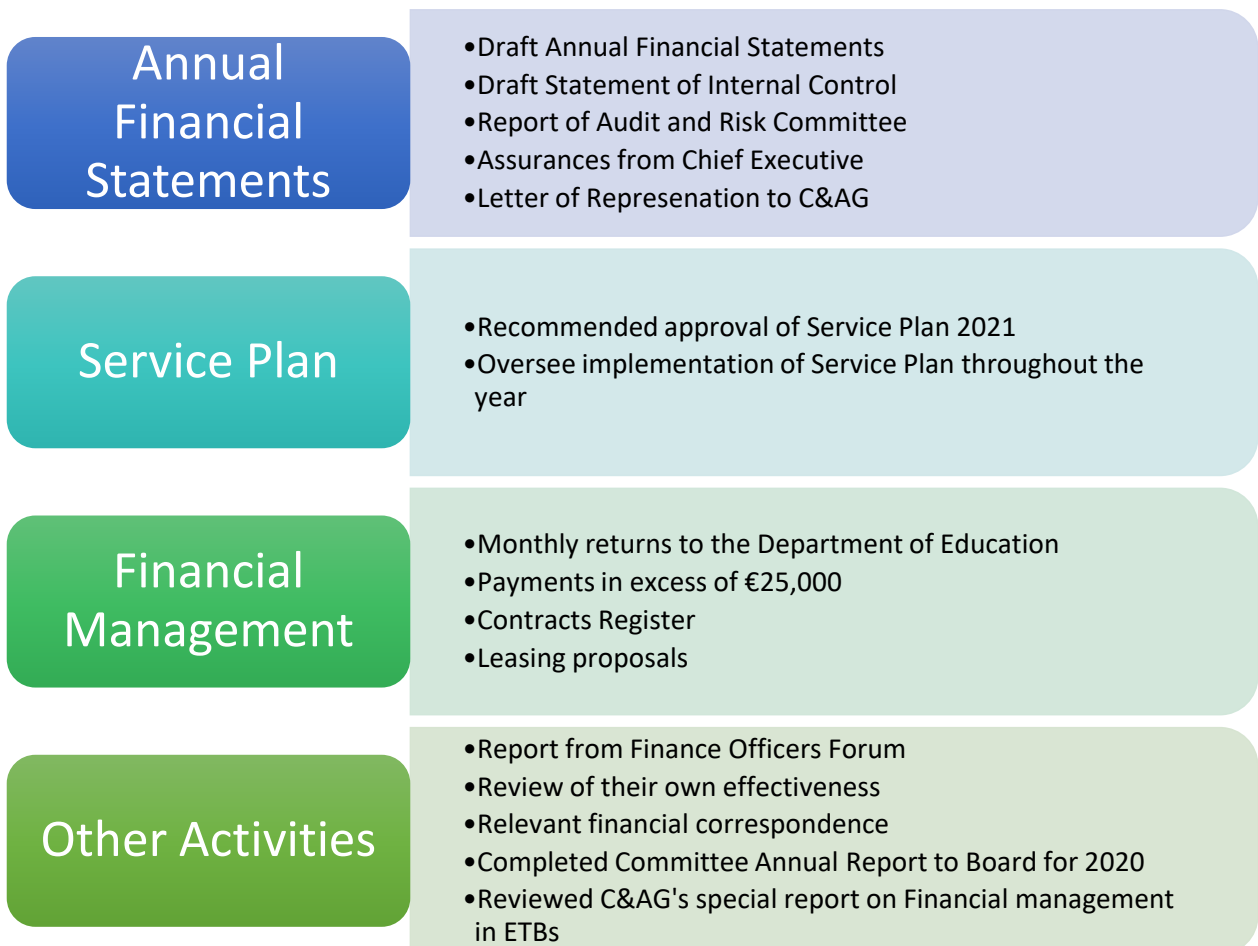
In addition, the Board received various briefings on other aspects of service provision across KWETB, including a presentation on Blessington Youthreach e-portfolio for external authentication and FET’s Dynamic Collaborations for a Sustainable Future.

The Board of KWETB are supported in their role by the Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee continues to operate effectively and consists of both Board members and externally appointed members who bring an array of expertise to the Committee and support the Board by examining and reporting on financial matters. The Finance Committee have a particular responsibility in the consideration of the Service Plan and its implementation and the approval of the draft Annual Financial Statements (AFS).

In 2021 the Finance Committee’s activities included;



The Financial Committee met on 5 occasions in 2021, fulfilling the obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance of ETBs to meet at least on 4 occasions, furthermore in accordance with both the ETB Act 2013 and Code of Practice for the Governance of ETBs, a written report of the Committee was submitted to the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Finance Committee who is also a member of

the Board also provided a verbal report on the Committees activities. This structured reporting arrangement provides reassurance to the Board that the Finance Committee are completing their activities in line with their Terms of Reference and allow the Board to then make informed decisions regarding financial matters should it be required.

To support the Finance Committee in their responsibilities, a SharePoint site dedicated to their function and providing valuable resources was established in 2021, allowing for the confidential and timely sharing of documents to allow the committee to complete their work programme.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) have a particular role in supporting and advising the Board on matters in relation to risk, audit activity and internal control, and continue to play a highly effective and crucial role in supporting the Board. Similar to the Finance Committee, the ARC membership is composed of both Board members and external members who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in the areas of risk management and governance. Annually the ARC completes a significant work programme and in 2021 it included;



The ARC met on six occasions in 2021, fulfilling their obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance of ETBs to meet at least on 4 occasions, to complete their substantial work programme, providing oversight, guidance and support to the Executive and assurance to the Board of KWETB. Along with written reports being submitted to the Board following a meeting of the ARC, in 2021 the practice of a

Board member who is also a member of the ARC reporting to the Board verbally at the meetings commenced. This practice was welcomed by the Board as it added further context and assurance.

Internal Control

Internal control comprises not only internal check and internal audit, but the entire system of controls, financial and otherwise, including risk management and corporate governance (Code of Practice for the Governance of ETBs 2019).

Activities of 2021 to enhance internal control in KWETB included;

Assurance enhancements

The process of providing assurance to ourselves, senior management, the ARC and the Board was enhanced in 2021. In the OSD directorate, the introduction of the process whereby Assistant Principal Officers (APOs) provide written assurance, through the form of completed checklists, to the Director of OSD (DOSD) was completed. The assurances they provided for the area under their remit was broad and comprehensive, demonstrating active oversight of their area of responsibility. Subsequently the DOSD provided written assurance to the Chief Executive. Similarly, the Director of FET and Director of Schools provided written assurances to the Chief Executive for their directorate of responsibility.

The Chief Executive then provided written and verbal assurance to the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance Committee and the Board of KWETB, to support the finalisation of the draft Annual Financial Statements and signed of Statement of Internal Control. The practice of providing assurances will be further enhanced in 2022, demonstrating, responsibility, transparency and accountability.

Sanction process

The process of managing sanctions was reviewed to encourage a central repository of sanctions and record official sanctions appropriately. Importance was given to digital filing, as due to the current working remote working arrangements and for ease of recall. A Standard Operating Practice (SOP) was established for the management of these sanctions, aligning with practicality to remote working, security and accessibility to the necessary persons and best practice in relation to governance. This was established by the Corporate Governance and Compliance team and handed over to Corporate Services General for management regarding post and sanctions incoming.

Executive support enhancements

Supports to the Chief Executive (CE) have been strengthened to support efficiency and tracking of communications and requests received both internally and externally, this includes a weekly tracker of items maintained by the CE support to ensure that appropriate action is completed and recorded, and items are managed and communicated appropriately to relevant persons. The CE support provides a direct and structured framework for the management of CE requests for efficiency, effective communication on behalf of the CE and overall good governance in recording, tracking and managing such requests and approvals.

Controls around signing have been established for both manual and digital signing. Strict controls are in place for the use of the CE's digital signature ensuring appropriate authorisation recorded and enacted in appropriate circumstances.

A set of protocols for the use of the organisation official seal have been created, implementing a protocol for the use of the official seal is another reassuring layer of good governance within the organisation.

Risk Management

As a key element of internal control, KWETB are committed to a robust and active risk management framework. Combined with the regular review of the Corporate Risk Register, reporting to the Board and ARC, the executive continue to review the process of risk management to identify and implement actions that best mitigate against identified risks. The ARC make a significant contribution to the development of risk management activities in KWETB through constructive and robust discussions. In 2021;

- The risk numbering system was amended for more efficient and effective tracking of risks
- The risk report was amended to include an executive summary to improve communication with committee/Board
- Introduction of verbal ARC report to Board
- Engagement with IPB on best practice risk management activities

In addition, in 2021 the drafting of the Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) commenced, this will be completed in 2022 in conjunction with the Service Plan and act as a lens for decision making.

Charities Compliance

As a registered charity, annually KWETB is required to submit an 'annual return' to the Charities Regulator. With the introduction of the Charities Governance Code in 2019, which sets out the minimum standards a charity should comply with, 2021 is the first-year charities are required to report on compliance with the Code. To that effect, each Charity is required to complete a 'Compliance record form', approved by the trustees that details how the charity complies with the Code, guided by our governing document, the ETB Act 2013. KWETB is in full compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

Completion of this report further demonstrates KWETB's commitment to the highest standards of governance and accountability and upholding its responsibilities as a registered charity. This reporting structure was worked on at national ETBI forum level via the Governance and Compliance Forum.

Policy Management Framework

The purpose of the Policy Management Framework (PMF) is to establish a protocol for the development, approval, communication and review of policies in KWETB. The establishment of such a framework not only reflects best practice and implements a structured approach to policy management but also satisfies a recommendation arising from the external review of the Corporate Governance Programme. The

implementation of the framework will commence in 2022 and ensure that our policies are up to date, relevant and effective.

Audit Activity

Not unlike previous years 2021 was busy in terms of audit, both from the Internal Audit Unit (IAU-ETBs) and external auditors. All recommendations of internal and external audit are captured and managed as part of the *Audit Register* which is presented on a formal basis bi-annually to the ARC.

Audit	Conducted by	Audit Status
Local Training Initiatives	IAU-ETBs	Opinion report awaited
DEIS programme funding	IAU-ETBs	Opinion report awaited
School Meals Programme	IAU-ETBs	Opinion report awaited
Youth Services	IAU-ETBs	Audit commenced
Audit of Financial Statements 2020	C&AG	Audit commenced

IAU-ETBs – Internal Audit Unit ETB

C&AG – Office of Comptroller and Auditor General

In addition to the above audits, the IAU and C&AG issued sectoral reports, these reports are useful to identify recommendations issued in colleague ETBs that may be suitable to implement locally. Sectoral audits included;

- Youthreach – IAU – ETBs
- Contracted Training – IAU – ETBs
- School Bank Accounts – IAU – ETBs
- C&AG special report into Financial governance and reporting in education and training Boards

The above reflects the audit culture in which ETB's operate, while several ESF verification audits were also conducted.

Ethics in Public Office process

To further bolster our governance mechanisms the procedure surrounding the obligations of the Ethics Acts was reviewed and enhanced in 2021. Although directed by the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO), in 2021 KWETB critically evaluated how it completes the process with a view to ensuring that any potential or perceived conflict is captured and handled appropriately. Standard operating procedures were created for the annual process and enhancements to the final review of returns was implemented.

School inspection reports

To facilitate the shared learning of school inspection reports and maintain oversight of reports and a master register of school inspection reports was established. School inspection reports are available via the Department of Education's website. Due to the pandemic inspections were limited to the 'Supporting the

safe provision of schooling'. Since the onset of the global pandemic in March 2020, 21 inspections have been completed, supporting the safe provision of schooling, these inspections contain a level 1 child protection oversight element, ensuring that child protection measures remain robust and effective despite the current challenges in the school environment.

Annual report process

The Annual report was completed by the Governance and Compliance team this year taking a Statement of Strategy (SOS) driven approach. Following the first year of the strategy, the annual report was based upon both the SOS objectives and Service Plan objectives as set out at the beginning of 2021. This was supported by the SOS tracking functionality in place by enhancing the ease of information flow and gathering, to document and communicate KWETB's achievements of 2020.

Statement of Strategy implementation

With the completion and adoption in April 2020 of KWETB's Statement of Strategy 2020-2024, 2021, was a significant year for identifying and implementing actions to ensure achievement of our objectives. To support this process a structured project management approach was selected to track, monitor and report on the status of strategic objectives. In 2021, actions and projects were completed that contributed to the achievement of 53 objectives of the Statement of Strategy.

Governance and Compliance Officers Network

A working group at ETBI level consisting of those involved with governance and compliance activities across the 16 ETBs was established to support the sharing of knowledge and resources and supporting common templates/approaches to compliance tasks where appropriate. GCON serves as an important forum to consult and debate challenges with likeminded colleagues.

School Board of Management supports

A MS Teams channel to support principal's in their role as Secretary to their Board of Management went live in 2021. The channel includes information to support principals in the composition, management, reporting and governance of their BOMs. This channel can be further enhanced based on the feedback of principals.