BOARD PAPER BRILLIANCE

The Big Six

1 USE YOUR TEMPLATE

Consistency builds trust

- Don't repurpose old papers. Refer to the template every time.
- A good template helps the board analyse a large volume of detailed papers faster.
- It ensures important items are consistently included.
- It keeps writers on track and shortens review cycles.

2 BE OBJECTIVE

Tell the plain truth

- To make the best decisions, the board needs the unvarnished truth. Avoid 'spin'.
- Avoid vague generalities; dig for the facts.
- Quantify for cred. Not, 'It's a *significant* problem', but *how* big a problem is it? e.g. 'We risk losing X% of Y if we don't do Z.'
- When the risks are harder to foresee, give examples from your or others' businesses.

3 DO THE WORK FOR YOUR READER

Easy reading is hard writing

- Start early: Engage stakeholders; clarify their pain points. Test and challenge views.
- Get clear up-front on your 'WHAT?' (issue), **'SO WHAT?'** (implication) and 'NOW WHAT?' (action). Stay on track to address them.
- Stand in their shoes: Anticipate their reactions, questions and concerns.
- Complexity kills trust. Write simply.

4 CUT TO THE CHASE

Big news first

- Front-load your main points. If more detail is needed, show where to find it.
- Know your audience (the board) and what is MOST interesting to them.
- Consider the context, e.g. current business priorities, past papers, company values, changing economic and regulatory environments, competitors, etc.

5 WRITE TIGHT

Be clear & concise

- Edit with your audience in mind. **Keep** what will help them think through the decision. **Delete** or reference most of what they already know (unless needed for context).
- Use clear headings, key-point lists, summaries and bullets to keep it lean.
- After writing, edit **with fresh eyes** (the full paper, each paragraph, each sentence).

6 PROOFREAD CAREFULLY

Give no reason to doubt you

- Typos and poor grammar can be red flags for other errors or omissions.
- Check your facts, numbers, logic and argument, as well as your writing, before you send a first draft to anyone.