

NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors held in room C25/26 at 1 Victoria Street on 26 January 2023 between 15.00 and 18.00

Present:

Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
Lamin Tarawally (Youth Rep)	Ndidi Okezie
Jacque Nnochiri	Jessica Evans
Deborah Tavana	Tristram Mayhew (virtual)
Darren Xiberras	Ian Livingstone
Laura Jackson	Ashley Summerfield (virtual)
	Nick Hurd

In attendance:

- Sarah Knight
- Lizzie Hanna
- Hannah Stoddart
- Amanda Best
- Una Walker

Apologies: Amanda Timberg

Item 1. Chair's welcome and declaration of conflicts of interest

1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting. No conflicts of Interest were declared. Mr Wigdortz noted that he had two meetings remaining as Chair before a new Chair was expected to join the Trust in Summer 2022. Ms Evans was welcomed to her first Board meeting as Youth Representative Ms Harrison was welcomed to her first Board meeting as Board Apprentice. It would be Ms Hanna's final Board meeting before she departed as the Trust's CFO. Her contribution including tight grip on costs and commercial approach was recognised by the Board and she was thanked

Item 2. Regular Governance

The minutes from the previous meeting on 12 December 2022 were approved and would be shared with the Chair for signature. The approved, signed Committee minutes were noted. The Board action log was noted and agreed. Updates from the Committee Chairs highlighted the following:

- **People:** The Committee last met in November and had updated at the 1st December Board. For recap, useful employee feedback was provided with valuable reflections and there was a discussion around succession planning both at senior team and board level.
- **Safeguarding:** The Safeguarding Committee last met on 6th December 2022 where it had input around the new NCST service lines from a safeguarding perspective. The Committee had taken part in refresher training and had an independent meeting with the Trust's Safeguarding partner. A new safeguarding lead was expected to join the next Safeguarding meeting in May.
- **Impact:** The Impact Committee met on 16th November 2022 and had already updated the previous Board meeting on interim 2022 results. The next meeting was due to take place on 15th February 2023 which would discuss full fundings.
- **ARC:** The ARC had met last week on 19th January 2023. The Annual Report had been laid in December 2022 as planned, the Management Letter had been reviewed by the previous ARC meeting, where other key business included Management Accounts and Cyber Security.
- **Youth Co-Chairs:** Youth Co-Chairs continued to prioritise activity around the three service lines, with plenty of youth engagement on the community strand including youth voice

representatives on each panel. Work was underway to ensure alignment with youth priorities in collaboration with the successful residential bidder. More could be done to improve youth engagement in the digital space, and there would be more space for collaboration with the arrival of a new executive in this space.

Item 3. CEO updates

- 3.1** The Management Report was taken as read with the below points highlighted:
- **Residential:** The Trust had successfully funded another c.1,300 places through an extended Winter residential programme, successfully repurposing FY 22/23 underspend. This allowed the Trust to test a year-round model in line with its new strategy for residential experiences. Prior year(s) contracts had now been closed with no expected challenges albeit it is recognised there are some significant implications on organisations given the scale of historical funding. NCST was now preparing to sign a contract with Ingeus and the Youth Hostel Association (YHA).
 - **Community:** Market engagement has gone well with c.1,500 people attending the roadshow and 500 people attending online events. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, especially the opportunity for organisations to work in strategic partnership with NCS both centrally and locally, including Central Government and Regional Youth Units. The most recent event had been hosted by the Greater London Authority. Mr Gifford was asked about how the Trust intended to avoid negative impact when bidders were unsuccessful. This is a potential risk but it was noted that expectations had been set that money available was significant but not unlimited, and parameters had been clearly set up and the process for award transparently shared, taking on board key learnings and feedback from the market engagement and consultation process. In the “open to all” pot, it had been made clear that 18 grants would be available and group bids were being encouraged from each region, with the expectation that 3-4 groups may come together from each area. Ms Jackson noted that the competitive element was also important in ensuring value for money and a robust process.
 - **Digital:** Digital - Progress has been made in market engagement and establishing a procurement pipeline but Young people’s engagement on digital has not been as good as it should be. It was noted that creating a digital start up requires different skills and different cultures and the Trust will reflect upon this. With a new digital director who has a wealth of experience, a clear plan on youth engagement and the securing of an external organisation to assist us (Future Foundry) we are confident about picking up pace. Discussion was had on how we keep relevant to young people and the relationship with social media to engage and promote. The Board concluded that Digital culture within NCS and organisation - needs to be driven by youth and not Board and the relationship with schools and colleges is still important.
 - **Trust matters :** Mr Devlin will remain in the Trust for a bit longer and will lead some important pieces of work. Mr Gifford offered his thanks to Ms Hanna and confirmed the recruitment process for her replacement has started. Ms Hutchinson starts on the 17 April.

Action - Ms Hutchinson to present on Digital strategy at the June offsite.

Item 4. FY 23/24 Budget

Ms Hanna presented the paper as tabled. Taken as read. Key messages.

- Forecast - Despite some tough challenges we are on track and will finish the year end slightly below budget.
- Programme underspends had been used to support additional delivery of Skillsbooster and Residential programmes.
- Transformation. The Trust had done all it needed to do with a budget of £2.5m this compares to £8m for NCS 2.0.
- Looking forward - the budget reduces next year to 50.3M and we are on track to manage within this but there is little flexibility to manage headwinds. Work is being done to find further savings to provide us with the flexibility we need.

The Board approved the budget and thanked all for their hard work especially our Finance and Contract Management teams.

Item 5. Framework Agreement for sign off

A verbal update was given and the Trust was pleased with what is emerging as the final agreement.

The Trust was keen to secure greater flexibility on People and Pay.

A discussion was had on approach, implications and giving the Executive advice.

Approval: The Board were happy to approve the Framework agreement, subject to People and Pay being resolved to the Executives satisfaction.

Note/Action: DCMS to confirm resolution of People and Pay Remit outstanding discussion within the Framework Agreement

BREAK

To set the scene for the next 3 sessions, Ms Best described how they are all linked and what The Trust is seeking to achieve.

Item 6. Update on influencing strategy

Overall aim to position NCS as an indispensable part of youth provision, securing our future and our funding. Deliver impactful experiences, and crucially tell the story of that impact including through media stories.

There was greater emphasis on our strategy on showcasing our impact and the knowledge we have to influence Policy and engage in public debate.

A discussion was held.

It was recognised that there is sensitivity on anything perceived as lobbying and we need to ensure we do not lobby.

There is also sensitivity in using the term "Thought leadership". Instead promote what we do and the impact we have and that will ensure people recognise our specialism and expertise.

We should not underplay "World Ready" and should dial it up. Creating a narrative in business that someone who has done NCS is a better employee would be a positive step forward. It was recognised that we need to do more with the private sector and thinking about the changing economy

Strategically important was telling the story of NCS impact and Ms Stoddart described what work her team were leading on to support this.

Continuing to be part of wider Government activity was important and the Board praised the work the Trust was doing with others and Dept for Education on enriching education recovery making the case for non formal learning. Ms Stoddart described what was being done and the outcomes we are seeking.

The Board challenged itself and the Executive on how we can embed a culture of youth insights into the Trust. The Board also recognised the priorities of young people and the support they need on issues like resilience, social isolation, confidence amongst many.

Item 7. Update on Patrons

It was recognised that Patrons had not been prioritised for a variety of reasons which the Board recognised.

The current Patrons had been reviewed and reengaged. Some stepped down and others recommitted and have been proactive and supportive especially Sarah Sands and David Sheepshanks.

Approved

Feedback from Young people, from market engagement and in trying to secure new Patrons is that the concept of Patronage is outdated and not reflective of modern Britain.

The Trust wanted to retire Patronage and replace with "Friends" which would be a lighter touch commitment and would link to an alumni strategy. The Trust did wish to secure a high profile, non political figurehead which may help with regards to longevity.

A rich and constructive discussion took place, to influence thinking.

Themes included ; Royal connections, the differing roles of Friends, how we have to talk to young people, business and parents/carers so we need to ensure we have one voice or approach.

The longer-term potential had to be to democratise the friends proposition.

APPROVAL: The Board approved the creation of Friends

Item 8. Update on business development and self generated income

Ms Walker described what she has been doing over the last 6 months ; horizon scanning, informal conversations, articulating our approach and establishing due diligence.

We have worked well with DCMS who support our focus,

Our priority is to grow the UK Year of Service.

Secondary is to bring in additional income which can be used to fund further places in Residential and Community experiences.

A discussion was had on opportunities and risks. Themes included an inability to hold reserves, who we would work with, securing young people support, and the role of informal partnerships and contractual relationships.

The Board approved the work and encouraged the Executive to continue developing their thinking.

Item 9. NED only session

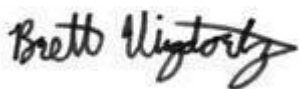
The Executive are doing a good job and have navigated significant challenges well.

The Board is best when it is in discussion mode so the Executive should be encouraged to write shorter papers and be more explicit on the ask of the Board.

Board effectiveness - feedback on the papers, feedback - overall it went quite well and the Board is in a strong place.

Board succession - discussion was had on new Chair and new NED recruitment and a plea that colleagues promote roles and secure a wild field of quality candidates.

MEETING CLOSED. The next meeting will take place on 22 March 2023.



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Chairman
Date signed:

Approved