



NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the board of directors held via video conference from 15:00 to 18:00 on Thursday 27th January 2022.

Present	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Ahmed Ibrahim (Youth rep.)	Jacque Nnochiri
	Hannah McLellan (Youth rep.)	Deborah Tavana
	Nick Hurd	Ndidi Okezie
	Tristram Mayhew	Lord Iain McNicol
	Ashley Summerfield	
In attendance	Louka Travlos (Secretary)	Naim Moukarzel (Item 6)
	Lizzie Hanna (Items 1 - 4)	Helen Kirkman (Item 6)
	Amanda Best (Item 1, 2 & 6)	Michael Devlin
Apologies:	Laura Jackson	Sir Ian Livingstone

1. Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting. There was one potential conflict of interest declared by Ms Okezie. The organisation she leads as CEO, UK Youth, has expressed an interest in the market engagement process which has been started by the Trust. She confirmed that she has shared this in advance of the meeting with Mr Gifford and sought advice on how to manage a potential conflict of interest. Mr Gifford advised that what was being shared at this board meeting did not contain commercially sensitive information and had been shared with other organisations as part of the market engagement process. It was agreed there were no conflicts to Ms Okezie's attendance at this meeting, but that she would take advice from Trust management and may excuse herself from future Board discussions on commercial matters.

Ms Tavana and Lord McNicol joined the meeting.

- 1.2 Mr Wigdortz provided an update on the current situation regarding **board membership appointments and renewals**:
- Renewals - board members would be presented at the 16 February Privy Council meeting for a two-year appointment.
 - Appointments - two new board members would be interviewed at the end of February and if successful, would also be approved by the Privy Council for a three-year term.

2. Management update

- 2.1 Mr Gifford provided a summary of the Management Report which included an update on 2022 delivery and 2023 strategy. The Trust is delivering its 2022 contracts, whilst planning to re-commission 2023-2025, alongside a period of transformation. Risks around retention in a buoyant job market and upcoming staffing changes were being proactively managed.

The Trust continued to focus on building strong relationships and ensuring its voice was heard. It had won three awards since the last Board meeting; an award for its social action work with EFL Trust and Northern Rail to raise awareness of antisocial behaviour on public transport, a Children and Young People Now award for the uniform donation scheme in Gateshead, and the Youth Voice Award at the Youth Friendly Employer Awards run by Youth Employment UK. The young people involved in the EFL Trust and Northern Rail award had been invited to Parliament to showcase their work to MPs; Northern Rail was also utilising the content created by the young people for their social channels. The Trust would continue to ensure that its work was being promoted and recognised on a broad stage.

- 2.2 Ms Best explained the focus on quality and quantity for 2022 delivery. A new quality initiative, 'Ready for Residential', was one of several strategies in place to assist delivery partners with operational readiness for 2022. The Trust had overcome challenges with securing residential bookings caused by the level of demand for bookings from schools.

Pre-registration for sales had opened in December 2021 and generated 6,000 registrations. Although the first week of sales had been ahead of the target, the following two weeks had been below target. It was noted that sales had been impacted by Covid 19 and the continued spread of the Omicron variant in schools, which had limited the level of face-to-face engagement taking place. However, some schools continued to engage remotely or had agreed to delay their NCS assemblies until later in the month.

The Trust had pre-empted the challenges of the continued impact of Covid 19 upon access to schools and consequent sales. Contingency plans were in place with all Trust partners and creative strategies to promote recruitment, including utilising virtual methods, were being supported. The Trust was running additional training for new recruiters and continuing to hold its providers to account. The sales figures were being monitored daily.

Mr Gifford spoke to the Board about his confidence that the Trust would hit its target number of places, which were lower than a traditional year, by supporting some over performance and investing in social media to drive awareness and EOLs during peak recruitment windows.

- 2.3 The Board was assured of the level of accountability being placed on delivery partners and the proactive approach taken by the Trust.

Ms Best left the meeting.

3. Finance update

- 3.1 Ms Hanna provided the Board with a financial update, building upon the figures that were outlined during the Management Report.

Key Influences



- The Strategic Business Case and year-end preparation

Game Changers

- The contractual relationship with the Trust's network and the successful outcomes of this.

The key financial updates were noted:

- The Trust had secured all Summer 2022 CCNs.
- Trust costs continue to be well controlled and are under budget and forecast. An underspend that could not be repurposed given controls that exist on spend has been identified with DCMS and DCMS will receive those funds to be able to repurpose within the department.
- The Trust had delivered strong partnerships with its network and renegotiated 80% of its cost base twice over two years. Commercial tools had been utilised to ensure that agreements with suppliers were closed at the end of each season.
- Cost bases were being constantly reviewed and optimised so that investments could be made in the right areas and resources could be allocated effectively across the Trust.
- Work on the 2023/24 budget was underway. The Trust was mindful of supplier health and stability, as there were elements of risk within the supply chain caused by the pandemic. These risks were being reviewed on a regular basis with investigations being completed, where required, to assure the Trust of the safety and security of the supply chain.

3.2 Mr Wigdortz thanked Ms Hanna for the financial update. It was noted that a significant underspend had been able to be repurposed but also disappointing that not all had been repurposed given the constraints. The executive team were encouraged to think how they could build in greater flexibility in the next recommissioning round to prevent this within the constraints that apply.

3.3 The following questions were raised in relation to the impact of recent changes within the Trust

- whether the move away from having a central head office had affected morale and whether the Trust was doing enough to promote a sense of belonging, value, and purpose amongst staff.
- whether staff were being supported to understand and accept the new challenges presented by the pandemic and dealing with the losses that people had faced across the last few years.

The Trust was focusing on thanking staff for their contributions, sharing successes, and keeping everyone engaged in the regular heartbeat of the Trust. The Employee Voice Forum had been utilised to gather valuable feedback from employees. The Trust continued to invest in hybrid working spaces, wellbeing and employee assistance programmes.

Mr Gifford provided an insight into the challenges faced by employees and what the Trust was doing in response. He discussed the investments being made in property to help employees reconnect.

Mr Wigdortz thanked Mr Gifford for his efforts and progress in change management.

4. Regular business

4.1 Advisory Board minutes 2nd December 2021 for approval and signature

The Board approved the Advisory Board minutes of the meeting on 2nd December 2021 as a true and accurate record.

4.2 2nd December approved Strategic Direction and Actions by Correspondence for noting

The Board noted the correspondence.

4.3 Verbal updates from Committee chairs; Updates from Committee chairs were provided as follows:

ARC

- The previous meeting had been positive and showed a good level of continuity.

Safeguarding

- The Committee had not convened since the last Board meeting. The Board was advised that the Safeguarding Policy was being updated and broadened with required terminology updates. A Safeguarding audit in December 2021 had not highlighted any issues for the Board's attention. Safeguarding data had been shared and no concerns were highlighted. It was noted that the lack of residential had a major influence on this data as well.

Impact

- The first impact committee had been postponed to take into account the new delivery model and resultant changes to how the Trust will measure impact. The scope of the Committee was discussed. There would be a focus upon longer term impact measurement, with a particular view to employment and education outcomes. Two external members had been approved to join the committee as advisors for their evaluation and impact expertise.

People and Remuneration

- The Committee had not convened since the last Board meeting.

Ms Hanna left the meeting.

Lord McNicol rejoined the meeting.

4.4 Verbal updates from Youth Representatives

Mr Ibrahim, Co-Chair of the Youth Voice Forum (YVF) updated the Board that 57 YVF applications had been received so far and 24 young people had applied for the Co-Chair role. Interviews for the positions had started, with support from Mr Gifford, Mr Wigdortz and Mr Devlin..

The Co-Chairs were involved in the interviewing process for the new Trust Board member. They were also involved in a workshop on 16th February regarding the recommissioning of NCS.

Ms McLellan updated the Board of the current Youth Voice Forum event on 8th February whereby the current members would be thanked for their work and shown the impact they had made in their roles. Board members were invited to attend the onboarding event for the new Youth Voice Forum on 12th March; an invitation would be circulated.

The Board agreed that a presentation should be delivered by the young people at the Board away-day in June.

4.5 **Board action log - for noting**

There were no open actions.

DECISION: The date and time for the next board meeting was agreed as 5.30-7pm on Wednesday 23rd February

5. Governance

5.1 Policies for Board approval

The following policies were approved by the Board:

- Travel and expenses
- NCS Board member conflict of interest
- Corporate gifts and hospitality
- Modern Slavery Statement

5.2 The Youth co-chair appointments update was covered by Mr Ibrahim under item 4.4.

6. Transformation

Mr Moukarzel, Ms Best, Ms Kirkman joined the meeting

6.1 Transformation Update

Mr Wigdortz opened by reminding the board of the Trust's priorities and the board key areas of focus after the December board meeting - redesigning and recommissioning services, mobilising partners and prioritising operational readiness to "go live" with new services and contracts in 2023.

Mr Gifford discussed the core vision of NCS and how the Trust could make an even greater impact. He noted a focus upon confidence, resilience and wellbeing. The Trust's key objectives were outlined and he emphasised the importance of youth voice and increasing choice for young people in their NCS journey in order to enhance their experience. He described the steps the Trust would take to drive this forward, including refining the customer journey and investing in a single online platform MyNCS.

6.2 Mr Devlin introduced the Transformation Paper which had been shared in advance with the Board. He provided an overview of the Trust's approach to transformation and the timelines within which the plan was set. He discussed the pressures and potential risks to the plan, which spanned the key deliverables of market engagement, procurement, tendering, and awarding of contracts. The Board was assured that the Trust had reviewed lessons learned previously and was ensuring that changes were being made as a result of these lessons.

The requirement for an Extraordinary Board meeting on 23rd February was noted in order to gain board approval for the proposed new service delivery model.

Ms Best reflected on the changing context of the 2023 service delivery and how the Trust had been forced to adapt and improve. The Trust had improved in the areas of evaluation, engagement of young people, and contract management. It was noted that the Trust's current contracts and payment mechanisms were overly complex and that efficiencies could be found in future contracting.

Ms Best outlined the three principles for mobilisation - have the right players, engage them and manage their performance well. Lessons had already been learnt from a successful recommissioning in 2019.

A discussion was had on potential delivery models and a recognition that a full discussion may be needed later regarding the Trust's legal structure.

The board noted:

- The transformation programme is well planned, but the timescales are tight: the complexity requires robust programme management, proper resourcing and senior team oversight
- Prioritisation would be key during the next 2 years and difficult trade-offs might need to be made
- Market engagement would supply evidence to inform the parameters and some practical choices around service delivery model

Mr Gifford thanked the board and assured them the full service delivery plans will be presented at the February extraordinary board meeting within the strategic outline business case. He added that while there was a lot to be done, the transformation programme was on track and that additional management resources would be found quickly if the programme required it.

6.3 Mr Moukarzel and Ms Kirkman presented to the Board on three key topics:

1. Outcomes-based commissioning
2. Income generation
3. Optimising budgets

The following feedback was noted:

- The board were broadly in favour of each one
- There was support for outcomes based commissioning, despite the risks they noted to brand identity because it provides more rigour and space for innovation
- Income generation and selling Trust services was welcomed, however the Trust's primary objective should remain the managing the performance of its core programmes through DCMS grant funding
- There was support optimising budgets through strategic partnerships and match funding, but also a desire to better understand the parameters

ACTION: Engage youth board to agree the principles of fundraising and business development

7. Any other business

The board briefly discussed Dormant Assets and whether the Trust could support the government in identifying funding priorities within the youth sector. No other business was raised.

8. NED only session

9. Meeting close

The meeting closed at 6:00 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Board at its meeting on 23 March 2022, and signed by the chairman as authentication.



Brett Wigdortz
Brett Wigdortz (Mar 28, 2022 14:07 GMT+1)

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Chair