

TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 3rd, 2025
The Malthouse, 10:00



In attendance: Neil Davies (ND, Chair), Michelle Ryan (MR, Vice Chair), Alan Simson (AS), Stella Bolam (SB), Rob Murison (RM), Sarah Armstrong (SA), Steve Westmore (SW), Sarah Kiss (SK), Keith Sacre (KS), Paul Barton (PB).

Staff: John Parker (JP).

Apologies: Laura Ancell (LA).

MINUTES

1. Opening

1.1 Introductions and welcome

Attendees recorded for minutes as above

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from LA.

1.3 Conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared

2. Finances

2.1 2024 Finance update

The final figures for 2024 will not be confirmed until after the audit. However, the overall picture is more positive than at the time the budget was set. Whilst there has been an in-year deficit, this has been much smaller than was anticipated.

2.2 2025 Finance update

At this stage in the financial cycle there is very little to report in terms of a 2025 budget update, other than to say that in the first few weeks of the year we appear to be on track.

2.3 Approve 2025 Budget

A final draft of the proposed 2025 Budget had been shared with Trustees via email in November so that it could be adequately considered and discussed prior to implementation on January 1st.

Questions and comments from Trustees:

Can we include the significant spend on systems coming up in 2025 as a line at the bottom of the budget sheet somewhere?

ACTION: JP to ask Finance Team about adding a line about significant spend to the budget.

Can we have a diagram/pictorial interpretation of finances which shows reserve levels etc.?

ACTION: JP to ask Finance Team if we can provide a diagram showing finances.

MR proposed that the 2025 Budget be approved, SW seconded, all in favour.

2.4 Ratify Reserves Policy

Each year the Reserves Policy needs to be reviewed and ratified by Board. This has been considered by F&G Committee and it is recommended that the Policy be formally adopted at this meeting.

RM proposed that the Reserves Policy be ratified for 2025, MR seconded, all in favour.

JP requested that the Board starts reviewing and ratifying the Reserves Policy in the summer meeting rather than the winter/spring meeting. This is because the Reserves Policy requires updated figures which are not confirmed until the audit. So it would be helpful to bring the policy review into line with the audit. This was agreed.

3. Previous meetings

3.1 November 2024

SK proposed that the minutes of the November 2024 Board meeting were accepted as a true record. PB seconded, all in favour.

3.2 Actions from previous Board meetings

JP provided an update on actions from the previous Board meeting.

- JP to write some guidance to accompany the Fellowship proposal and progress the changes. DONE
- JP to add dates to the Risk Register for when changes are made. DONE
- JP to start sending out the Risk Register after F&G Committee, with the latest finances. DONE
- JP to have the Code of Conduct amended to include the AI reference, and communicate the change to members. This is being done, the Technical Team is working on template and article for Arb Magazine.
- JP to have the change made to the Complaints Procedure to reduce the maximum period within which a complaint might be submitted from two years to one year. DONE

- JP to progress with the Education Provider Working Group. IN PROGRESS
- JP to bring final version of Governance Policy to the next Board meeting for approval. DONE
- JP to circulate a final draft of Strategic Plan 2025-27 for approval in December. DONE
- JP to circulate proposed 2025 Board meeting dates for February, May, July and November. DONE
- JP to arrange Committee meeting dates for 2025 to be held approximately one week in advance of the Board meetings. DONE
- JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting. DONE

4. CEO Updates

4.1 CEO Report

JP had provided a written CEO Report in advance of the meeting. Some key points:

- 2024 was another very successful year when looking at any metric. The headlines are probably that we look to have delivered a far stronger financial performance than forecast, and we ended the year with a record number of paying members.
- The systems work is ongoing. GRM has completed their Discovery phase and we are hoping to be able to go out to tender soon. There will be a verbal update about this at the meeting.
- Improvements to the Malthouse continue, with a programme of window replacement and decorating being put together.
- Our tenants, JPR, will be vacating the upper floor soon and moving into portacabins which have been installed elsewhere on the Malthouse site. This frees up a considerable amount of space and means the building is entirely ours.

Questions and comments from Trustees:

It was asked if we could encourage community groups to attend conference. JP agreed to investigate the possibility.

It was asked what we were planning to do with the upper floor of the Malthouse when it is vacated by our tenant. JP confirmed that there were a number of options which were being explored.

It was asked where we were with the State of Arboriculture Report. JP confirmed that some final comments had been sent to the researcher and it is close to completion.

4.2 Complaints

- JP provided an update on the status of complaints.

The Complaints Procedure is reviewed annually to determine if any updates are required. SK volunteered to take this on in the first instance before reporting back to Board.

ACTION: JP to send Word version of the Complaints Procedure to SK.

4.3 Risk Register

No recommendations had been made by F&G Committee for changing the Risk Register.

It was asked if the risks relating to staffing were set at the right level? All agreed that they were.

It was asked if we should be adding local government reorganisation and the potential impact on tree officers, and others? It was agreed that this change should be made.

ACTION: JP to add local government restructuring to the Risk Register, adding to risk of membership attrition.

5. Committee updates

5.1 Finance & Governance Committee

RM and ND provided an update. Key items discussed were:

- Financial update.
- Risk Register.
- 2025 budget.

5.2 Resources Committee

SB provided an update – no meeting but have discussed the Committee Terms of Reference via email and agreed they are suitable to continue with.

5.3 Standards Committee

KS provided an update. Key items discussed were:

- Complaints and ongoing legal advice.

6. Items for discussion and agreement

6.1 Approve Governance Policy

The draft Governance Policy was sent to Board in advance of the meeting. This has been in development for some time and has now reached completion.

PB proposed that the Governance Policy be adopted, MR seconded, all in favour.

ACTION: JP to send the Governance Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website.

6.2 Approve Strategic Plan 2025-27

The text of the Strategic Plan 2025-27 had been circulated to Board prior to the meeting for comment. JP thanked Trustees (and the staff team) for their input into this important document.

AS proposed that the Strategic Plan 2025-27 be adopted. SB seconded, all in favour.

ACTION: JP to have the Strategic Plan 2025-27 launched.

6.3 Approve Publications Policy

JP thanked Resources Committee and Kate Beamish for their input into this Policy.

SA proposed that the Publications Policy be adopted. SB seconded, all in favour.

ACTION: JP to send the Publications Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website.

6.4 Skills Audit for the Board

This had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. All agreed that it was a good idea to undertake a Skills Audit.

ACTION: ND and MR to discuss and circulate a proposal for a Skills Audit to the Board.

7. Any other business

JP provided an update about the progress with the systems review project, which was discussed at length by the Board. Trustees agreed that the next step of this process was to obtain competitive quotes from a number of companies before selecting the best option to proceed with.

JP provided an update on the progress with the project to develop the Approved Contractor Scheme. A proposal has almost been finalised and pending one more internal meeting to go over some detail is almost ready to be sent out to a small group of individuals for comment, prior to a more extensive consultation.

SK raised a concern about the accessibility of training and qualifications for people who have difficulty with reading and writing. It was agreed that this would be something useful to explore.

ACTION: SK, ND, MR and JP to discuss what options might be available to make training and qualifications more accessible.

8. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on May 12th, 2025, online at 15:00.

ACTION: JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting.

9. Confidential items

- JP left the meeting.
-

Meeting closed at 1325

Minutes to be circulated to all Trustees and posted online once approved at the next meeting.

Summary of actions

- JP to ask Finance Team about adding a line about significant spend to the budget.
- JP to ask Finance Team if we can provide a diagram showing finances.
- JP to send Word version of the Complaints Procedure to SK.
- JP to add local government restructuring to the Risk Register, adding to risk of membership attrition.
- JP to send the Governance Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website.
- JP to have the Strategic Plan 2025-27 launched.
- JP to send the Publications Policy to be designed and uploaded to the website.
- ND and MR to discuss and circulate a proposal for a Skills Audit to the Board.
- SK, ND, MR and JP to discuss what options might be available to make training and qualifications more accessible.
- JP to send out link and agenda for the next meeting.