



## NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

### OFFICIAL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of directors held by teleconference at 15:00 pm on Thursday 03 December 2020

Present*:	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Paul Cleal	Dame Julia Cleverdon
	Ndidi Okezie	John Maltby
	Ian Livingstone	Lord Iain McNicol
	Dame Sally Coates	Ashley Summerfield
	Tristram Mayhew	
In attendance	Sarah Knight (Secretary)	Deborah Tavana (observer)
	Jermain Jackman (Youth representative)	Michael Devlin (Director of Governance and Delivery)
	Nick Smith (Head of Strategy) - item 3	
Apologies:	Dean Creamer (Govt' rep., observer)	

\*all by teleconference

#### 1. Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting.
- 1.2 Dame Cleverdon and Ms Okezie had a conflict of interest on the #iWill agenda item, and Ms Tavana had a conflict of interest on the appointments agenda item. All would excuse themselves for the relevant sections of the meeting.
- 1.3 Mr Maltby noted that he would need to leave the meeting for 30 minutes between 4:30pm and 5:00pm due to a pre-standing commitment.
- 1.4 Apologies had been received from Dean Creamer, who had been invited to observe the Board meeting. He had been sent the Board papers via correspondence for any comments.

#### 2. 2020 focused Management Report

- 2.1 Mr Gifford noted that Autumn performance had been strong, with the Trust endeavouring to work more closely with schools and colleges, offering a schools support option as well as more standard, albeit non residential, NCS activities. Around 75,000 young people had taken part in Autumn activities, including over 13,000 turn ups to date and counting, which was an improvement on 2020 performance. Performance on attrition had also improved.
- 2.2 The Trust had been asked by Ministers to work specifically on targeting disadvantaged groups and had seen a rise in engagement across several of these including white working class boys (WWBs), young people from under-represented regions (especially in the north), young people from the BAME community, young people with special educational needs and those on FSM. The Trust was working hard to both be seen as a universal programme while working to target those who were underrepresented.
- 2.3 NPS scores for autumn were encouraging, however it was noted that there were still inconsistencies in the sign up experience across the country that the Trust was looking to address. Feedback from colleges had been very strong and demonstrated that NCS was still a credible brand. The virtually delivered curriculum had been well received and highlighted a gap in provision that NCS would look to embed as a permanent feature of its strategy moving forward.

- 2.4 The Board noted that it would be important for the Trust to raise its voice on these successes in order to deliver a strong message on the impact and potential of NCS.
- 2.5 There was a discussion around Trust-led performance. While direct regions had performed better than last year, they were not currently in the top three places. The Board challenged the Trust on this area, and it was noted that there were learnings for the Trust around how it tracks and monitors performance in its own regions, and takes corrective measures and interventions where necessary. Improvements had started to be made throughout autumn and these would need to be built on in 2021.

### **3. CSR update and 2021 focus**

- 3.1 The Trust was pleased with the outcome of the Spending Review which had been announced during the previous week. It had secured £100M to deliver the 2021 programme. This included c.£35M to be spent in the current financial year in prepayments for the 2021 programme, and the remainder to be spent in the 2021 financial year. While this was a lower settlement than in previous years, the Trust was confident in its ability to continue to deliver impact. However, given the one year spending review, the Trust remained at a commercial disadvantage given its inability to leverage into 2022. The Board asked about the breakdown of Trust versus Programme costs, and heard that c.84% of the Trust's base were provider costs. There was a 2% contingency for any potential legal costs, which left 13% for the Trust central costs. There was an appetite to reduce these to 10% of the total Trust budget.
- 3.2 A review into the youth sector including NCS had been announced for Spring 2021. The Trust was working with DCMS to understand the Terms of Reference and timelines as quickly as possible.
- 3.3 The meeting heard further detail on the Trust's delivery plans for 2020, which the Executive hoped would allow the Trust to deliver on its vision, support the Government agenda, while also showing impact ahead of the spring review. The Trust noted that it was not bound by the CSR submission and was looking at ways to show more ambition within the £100M envelope it had been given. The Trust was looking to progress towards its vision of a year-round, omnichannel offer that worked closely with the youth sector and supported the government's building back better and levelling up agendas. especially through delivering non-classroom based skills for work and life. The Trust would look to upweight its digital and school support which had proved successful during 2020, to step up its employability work through Kickstart in light of the rise in youth unemployment worsened by Covid, as well as focusing on embedding sustained social action through local action groups to support communities.
- 3.4 The Trust planned to afford this by carrying out a higher proportion of shorter residential programmes which were cheaper, in order to release cash to provide more support to schools and colleges. The drive to continue to reduce central costs including through the exit of the Trust's London premises would further shift funds to the Trust's front line programmes. The Trust was also being encouraged to explore alternative sources of funding outside of Government grant-in-aid.
- 3.5 The Board commented that the importance of developing skills for employability post Covid could not be underestimated in terms of improving social mobility and tackling the levelling up agenda. The Trust's planned support to Kickstart was an important step in the right direction for the Trust to bolster its existing impact on employability.
- 3.6 The Trust's commitment to working closely with the youth sector continued, and the Trust planned to work closely with youth organisations as the spring review approached, so as to develop a holistic offering with serving young people at its heart.
- 3.7 There was a side discussion of the spring review and its impact on the ability of the Trust to provide an assessment of going concern for the purposes of signing off the FY 19/20 accounts. The Board was asked to approve the management's assessment of the Trust

as a going concern for the upcoming 12 months. The Board requested further analysis of the spring review and its outcomes including the financial effects of these before it would be willing to sign off the Trust as a going concern.

3.8 The Board discussed the many young advocates of the Trust who had taken part in its programmes and would be willing to speak up for the impact of the Trust and agreed it would be important to ensure these voices were heard as the spring review approached.

3.9 ***ACTION: Share modelling with the Board around the outcome of the spring review in order for the Board to agree the Trust as a going concern for the purposes of the FY 20/21 accounts sign off.***

#### **4. October 2020 management accounts - for noting**

4.1 The meeting was given an overview of the Trust's financial position, including the Trust's work to manage cash to an acceptable level following the discussion on this at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting in the previous month. Trust costs continued to reduce. The Trust continued to work to provide refunds to young people who had paid for the 2020 programme but had been unable to take part due to Covid. The Audit and Risk Committee were looking closely at this matter to ensure every effort was made to contact young people who had not yet received refunds, and to agree the treatment of any remaining funds that could not be returned.

#### **5. Cabinet Office controls breach and compliance review**

5.1 Mr Maltby stepped out of the meeting

5.2 The Board heard an update about the Trust's work on strengthening organisational compliance following the Cabinet Office Controls breach which had been flagged earlier in the quarter. A draft report on the Trust compliance with spend controls and wider governance framework had been written and presented to the Audit and Risk Committee and included in the board papers. DCMS and the Trust were working closely to finalise open questions about the Trust compliance in order to strengthen the Trust's performance in this area and a meeting had taken place with the National Audit Office the previous week. Training was being put in place in January for Trust management on key controls, and a compliance tracker was being developed that the governance team would use to track compliance going forward. The Trust would be sharing its report with the Minister the following week. It was noted that the breach presented a risk to the accounts for FY 20/21, but it was hoped that given the Trust's transparency over the issue, and the nuances involved, this would not transpire as a qualification. The Trust would work closely with DCMS on the narrative around the breach for the FY 20/21 Annual Report and Accounts.

#### **6. Policy updates for approval**

6.1 Modern Slavery Statement: The Modern Slavery Statement was approved.

6.2 Health & Safety Policy: The updated Health and Safety Policy was approved.

#### **7. Update on induction of new Board members**

7.1 Ms Tavana left the meeting. Mr Malby rejoined the meeting.

7.2 A short update on the public appointments process for the recruitment of three new Board members was provided. The candidates' applications had been through the Secretary of State and were currently with the prime minister for approval. They would shortly be provided to the Privy Council for approval. It was expected the outcome of the process would be known after the Privy Council meeting on the 16th of December, and an induction would follow in mid-January. The Trust was concurrently recruiting two new co-Chairs for its newly formed "Youth Voice Forum" (YVF), designed to ensure the Trust embedded the youth voice at every level of its governance structure. The YVF chairs would be invited to observe the Board meetings and it was planned that their induction

would be shared with the Board members to ensure they were included and involved. The outgoing youth representative to the Board had recommended that the YVF co-Chairs were provided with a thorough understanding of the Board's purpose, content and dynamics in order to contribute fully, and this was planned as part of the co-Chairs' induction. Several Board members offered to support this process, including attending the induction. There was potential for a joint Board meeting to happen in person in the New Year, to ensure the newly restructured Board bonded well as a team and had the opportunity to get to know each other; however this would be heavily dependent on Covid restrictions.

7.3 Ms Tavana rejoined the meeting.

7.4 ***ACTION: Invite Board members to induction on 13 January and offer Board members the opportunity to play a role in this induction.***

## 8. Update on #iwill

8.1 Ms Okezie and Dame Cleverdon left the meeting.

8.2 The Board was given an update on the #iwill bid which had been submitted. As soon as the outcome was known, the Board would be informed. Irrespective of the outcome of the bid, the process had given the Trust the opportunity to build relationships and show its intentions to work with the sector as a collaborator. The outcome of the review would not change this.

## 9. Governance

9.1 Board minutes for approval: The minutes from the Board meetings on 15th September and 29th October were approved by the Board.

9.2 Verbal updates from committee chairs: Updates from the committee chairs were provided as follows:

- Impact and Safeguarding: The committee had revised its Terms of Reference during its last meeting on 8th October 2020 as per the action arising from the 22nd September Board meeting. The committee was planning to meet in January in order to look at the 2021 programme offering in detail and to ensure service lines were appropriate and suitable metrics were in place to measure and evaluate activity.
- People: The committee had had an update from the newly formed Employee Voice Forum and noted that while there was work to be done, the culture had noticeably improved. A detailed discussion had taken place on the Trust's work in the D&I space, as well as the future property strategy.
- Remuneration: The committee was being appropriately cautious of any pay rises during this period. It was pleased to note that the Trust was being diligent around looking at its own gender pay, an overview of which would be provided in its Annual Report. The committee had challenged the Trust to look also at its ethnic diversity at senior level with similar vigour.
- Audit and Risk: The Audit and Risk Committee was dealing with three main issues: the going concern question, the Trust's cash balance and the Cabinet Office Controls breach. Aside from these however, the Trust was relatively stable and the committee was very pleased with improvements that had been made, especially around compliance, governance, risk and audit. The committee commended NAO, Mazars, the Government Representative and Trust staff on how they had worked hard as a team to strengthen these areas. Broader issues remained around the strength of financial and commercial oversight within the Trust, which it was looking to strengthen.

9.3 Revised Impact & Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference: The updated Impact and Safeguarding Committee terms of reference were approved.

9.4 Confirm dates for 2021 and 2022: The dates were shared and confirmed.

**10. AOB**

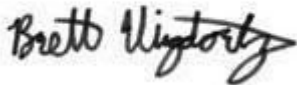
10.1 The Trust thanked Mr Jackman and Dame Cleverdon for their service to the organisation. This would be Mr Jackman's last Board meeting. It was expected this would be Dame Cleverdon's last Board meeting; however she would remain in post until the Privy Council announced the new Board members.

10.2 The Board were reminded of a request to provide feedback on Mr Wigdortz as Chair of the Board for his DCMS appraisal by close of play 4th December.

**11. Private Non Executive Session:** This session did not take place.

The meeting closed at 18:00 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Board at its meeting on 28 January 2021, and signed by the chairman as authentication.



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Chair