



NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of directors held by teleconference at 09:00 am on Wednesday
17 March 2021

Present*:
Brett Wigdortz (Chair)
Paul Cleal
Ndidi Okezie
Ian Livingstone
Nick Hurd
Ahmed Ibrahim (Youth rep.)
Mark Gifford (CEO)
Jacquie Nnochiri
John Maltby
Lord Iain McNicol
Ashley Summerfield
Deborah Tavana
Hannah McLellan (Youth rep.)

In attendance
Sarah Knight (Secretary)
Michael Devlin (Director of Governance)
Lizzie Hanna (CFO)
Amanda Best (COO) - items 1 and 2

Apologies: Dean Creamer (Govt' rep., observer) Tristram Mayhew

*all by teleconference

1 Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting. No conflicts of interest were declared.

2 Management report

2.1 Mr Gifford introduced the management report that had been tabled.

2.2 Ms Best explained the six key NCS service lines to the board as follows:

- **Changemakers** (previously known as Local Action Groups), to lengthen and improve consistency of engagement;
- **NCS Connect** to build on the previous NCS Digital offer of “Staying Connected”;
- **Traditional NCS Residentials (two-week and three-week summer experience)** with a key emphasis on skills for life and work. It was noted that the 2 week programme was a new option this year and given Covid would also be non-residential for this year only. This represented an innovation which also provided options for embedding in term time;
- **Condensed Autumn programme** available from September to December for schools or colleges who wish to offer it in term time, otherwise available in October half term with a short residential, skills for life and work and a local community project;
- **Skills Booster**, supporting the non-academic parts of the curriculum providing resources including topics on hope, resilience, employability which are aligned to Ofsted and Gatsby benchmarks, building on the success of the 2020 “School Support” initiative.

2.3 Planned volumes of participants across service lines was lower than in previous years in accordance with the spending envelope that NCS had been allocated for FY 21/22.

2.4 The contracting process with the network was coming to an end; success metrics were in the process of being finalised which covered scale and reach, network health, quality and cost. Once final, success metrics would be shared with the Impact and Safeguarding Committee and would then return to the Board for sign off.

2.5 Mr Maltby queried whether the Changemakers programme could be used to bolster the

impact and longevity of social action projects on programme by creating a stronger linkage between local NCS providers, Changemaker groups, local authorities and other local organisations. Mr Hurd built on his point stating that bottom up engagement with the local NCS network, young people and alumni was crucial to ensure that causes were determined upwards from communities and youth led. It was also noted that social action “themes” which brought the country together was also an important area of focus.

- 2.6 Ms Best thanked the Board members and welcomed their points. She noted that the same providers who run local action groups also run Changemaker groups and that improved local linkage was a key intention. Initiatives such as “Action Day” presented a good opportunity to unite young people behind national causes (this year would cover the Environment). The recommissioning process also represented an opportunity to further hone the social action model to ensure maximum impact. Mr Gifford added that links had been made with local police forces and other groups but recognised there was a bigger opportunity to be exploited.
- 2.7 Ms Tavana asked about how bespoke and responsible NCS Connect would be; as it was important that this was reactive to external events and provided tailored content, rather than being a “one size fits all” model. Ms Nnochiri also queried whether an NCS App had been considered.
- 2.8 Management noted that NCS Connect would provide a range of opportunities for young people, from virtual programmes, content and safe spaces for young people to meet and discuss. The Trust recognised the need for a united and emboldened digital strategy and digital was now being centralised in the Trust. Mr Livingstone was already providing invaluable support to ensure the Trust provided a digital space that was both youth led and provided a forum for idea creation and exchange rather than information absorption alone.

The Board welcomed these developments and requested that the digital strategy was presented at the next meeting.

- 2.9 Ms Okezie thanked the Board for the update and asked what Management believed they were losing through the changes going forward and whether there was a way of monitoring the impact of change. Mr Gifford noted that Management were confident in the omnichannel plan which provided more flexibility with options and avenues for all young people. The main change the Trust was monitoring was the impact of reduced days of residential on NCS’ impact metrics such as confidence and employability. It was expected that the introduction of more quantitative metrics to complement qualitative metrics in this space would ensure that the impact could be closely understood.
- 2.10 Concern was expressed about the reduction of numbers this year as a direct consequence of the funding envelope agreed by Government. This concern was acknowledged by Management. There was strong confidence in the omnichannel offer being built which would engage young people in a more diversified and tailored way (including the Trust’s new digital offer, Changemakers, Kickstart etc). The evidenced residential programme was shown to have strong outcomes and echoed what young people stated they needed in the out of school space. Therefore this remained a key component of the Trust’s strategy which was reflected in the Youth Review submission that had been sent to DCMS.
- 2.11 Ms Nnochiri queried whether more could be done to emphasise the effect of taking part in NCS programmes on apprenticeship statements and university applications. Covid had presented fewer opportunities for young people to gain employability skills and NCS represented a key opportunity to demonstrate this.
- 2.12 Before the discussion closed, Ms McLellan noted a final point on the earlier discussion on social action. Having completed NCS and worked on the programme, she strongly agreed that it was the providers that worked to establish connections with local areas and

communities that created the most successful, long-lasting and impactful social action projects.

2.13 The Board put on record their thanks to the teams who had worked hard on all the developments discussed. Members were pleased and encouraged by the work being done, while noting their concerns about reduced numbers.

2.14 **Action: Digital strategy to be presented at the next Board meeting**

3. Update on Youth Review

3.1 The submission had been sent on 12th March and the Trust's ideas and recommendations had received positive initial feedback. A conversation ensued about next steps between now and the outcome of the review being known.

3.2 **Action: Ensure all Board members have an opportunity to visit the 2021 programme, Covid permitting**

3.3 **Action: Ensure all MPs receive an invitation to visit the 2021 programme**

4 Finance update

4.1 January management Accounts:

Key Influences

- Ms Hanna noted that the Spring review and its outcome remained a crucial dependency for the Trust. The 2021 contract negotiations were nearing completion, with Summer 2021 Contract Change Notices (CCNs) due to be completed by the end of next week.

Game changers

- Structural transformation at the Trust, together with the ongoing health of the Trust's supplier relationships, remained game changers.

Key focus areas

- Trust costs were looking likely to end the year on £24 - £25 million, compared to £39 million at the same time last year. This represented the completion of "phase one" of cost savings, with further reductions planned. The Trust had reduced its cash holdings by £2 million between December and January and were expecting to reduce by a further £7 million by the end of the financial year, showing improved cash management processes were working well. Risk Management was stable and proactively managed, with the quality of risk conversations improving.
- The possible risk of contractual claims resulting from the changes to the NCS Programme in Summer 2020 necessitated by the rapid onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions was successfully addressed, working closely with legal colleagues.
- A risk remained with one supplier where the Covid 19 impacts were more acute and harder to resolve. Negotiations were being proactively managed.
- Conversations were in progress to finalise year end positions, with the expectation that all would be closed by the close of the financial year.
- The year was ending with a headcount of 226 FTEs, which was 6.5 FTEs lower than April 2020.

4.2 Budget

The Trust's allocation for FY 21/22 totalled £60.8 million not including permitted carry over from FY 20/21 of £34.7 million, giving the total figure of c£100 million. The budget which had been tabled included Trust costs, Programme costs, including a buffer for overdelivery of 10%. Recommissioning costs had not yet been included and this was currently in discussion. It was expected that there would be a significant saving compared to 2019 recommissioning costs. Further recosting was also required to account for the impact of the activation of contingency 1, as well as to ensure there was no additional activity in the Trust's plans that required investment that had not yet been accounted for. The Trust's estate costs represented an opportunity for significant further savings as the

Trust had permanently moved out of its Kensington office and was planning a more flexible and cheaper future working model. Organisational design change principles had been communicated to the staff. The Trust expected that salary costs would remain flat in the short term whilst waiting for the outcome of the Spring review and CSR while investing in areas of critical future importance such as commercial and digital.

- 4.3 The Board thanked Ms Hanna for the update, remarking that the Trust was managing forwards and increasingly able to respond to emerging issues and challenges. The focus on tight management of public money was welcome and a credit to the team. Ms Hanna thanked the Board for their comments and Mr Cleal and Mr Maltby in particular for their ongoing support.

5 Annual Report and Accounts

- 5.1 The Board approved the FY 19/20 Annual Report and Accounts.

6 Governance

- 6.1 Merging People and Remuneration Committee: The merging of the People and Remuneration Committee and updated People and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference was approved by the Board.

7 Regular business

- 7.1 Board minutes for approval: The minutes from the Board meetings on 28 January 2021, 22 February 2021 and 08 March were approved by the Board.

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

- Audit & Risk Committee (ARC): The ARC had signed off the Annual Report and Accounts for FY 19/20. The internal audit was now mapped to the Trust risk register and had been approved subject to minor changes. Planning was in place for the FY 20/21 Annual Report and Accounts.
- People and Remuneration Committee: The Committee had reviewed the People strategy and overall benefits package, as well as hearing an update from the Employee Voice Forum.

- 7.4 Action log: The action log was reviewed and all actions were agreed as complete.

8 Update from Youth Voice Forum (YVF) Co-chairs

- 8.1 Ms McLellan and Mr Ibrahim (YVF Chairs) presented slides setting out progress to date made by the YVF with youth voice being implemented at every layer of the Trust's governance. While everybody was keen to include Youth Voice in the Trust's operations it was important to ensure that contributions were meaningful both for the Trust and Young People and thus quarterly assessments were planned to monitor progress and ensure success.

- 8.2 It was discussed that Ms McLellan and Mr Ibrahim were already having a significant positive impact on the Trust's Board and its Committees and it was agreed that going forward a YVF update would be provided to all board meetings together with the Board Committee updates.

- 8.3 It was suggested that Board members may wish to join YVF discussions as well as Ms McLellan and Mr Ibrahim attending the Board as YVF representatives. This would allow the Board to witness YVF members in a more natural environment as the formal setting of a board meeting may prove daunting for some. It was suggested that as well as hearing from Young People directly, this provided an opportunity for Board members to share relevant skills and experiences which may be of benefit to YVF members.

- 8.4 There was a short discussion around reverse mentoring as an area to explore between the YVF and the Board members.

8.5 The Board members expressed their excitement at the slides which had been presented and the potential they represented for young people to play a much more strategic role in challenging and shaping the Trust's thinking and strategy.

8.6 **Action: Share list of upcoming YVF meeting dates with the Board.**

8.7 **Action: Link board members to their local Changemaker contacts.**

9 AOB

9.1 The Board were updated on a virtual social due to take place this evening, as well as plans to hold an off-site meeting later in the summer at one of the Trust's provider venues, Covid-19 permitting.

The meeting closed at 12:00 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Board at its meeting on 24 June 2021, and signed by the chairman as authentication.



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Chair

NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Board meeting 17 March 2021 - Action schedule

Min	Action	By whom?	Status
2.14	Digital strategy to be presented at the next Board meeting	Sarah Knight	Complete
3.2	Ensure all Board members have an opportunity to visit the 2021 programme, Covid permitting	Sarah Knight	
3.3	Ensure all MPs receive an invitation to visit the 2021 programme		
8.6	Share list of upcoming YVF meeting dates with the Board.	Hannah McLellan/Ahmed Ibrahim	
8.7	Link board members to their local Changemaker contacts.	Sarah Knight	