

NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of directors held by teleconference 3:00 pm on Thursday 23 September 2021

Present	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Ndidi Okezie	Jacquie Nnochiri
	Ian Livingstone	Ashley Summerfield
	Ahmed Ibrahim (Youth rep.)	Deborah Tavana
	Hannah McLellan (Youth rep.)	Ian Livingstone
	Tristram Mayhew	John Maltby
In attendance	Sarah Knight (Secretary)	Lizzie Hanna (CFO)
	Michael Devlin (Director of Governance)	Anna Kittow, EA to the CEO
	Simon Sharkey Woods (item 4)	Craig Hayward (item 4)
	Adrian Ruddock (item 4)	
Apologies:	Lord Iain McNicol	Paul Cleal

1 Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting. Mr Mayhew declared a conflict of interest that did not pertain to this meeting in question but which would be sent via correspondence to Ms Knight following the meeting.

2 Management report

- 2.1 Mr Gifford gave an overview of the Management Report as tabled, drawing out the following key messages:
- The start to the summer had been challenging, navigating Covid-related issues such as the cancellation of the residential element of the programme, and some specific programmes. Despite this the summer had been strong with just over 35,000 young people participating compared to almost 6,800 in 2020 (Covid-restricted) and 81,000 in summer 2019.
 - Nationally the Trust had retained a good social mix, with over-representation for all key groups (compared to Local Authority statistics):
 - Asian - 4.9% over
 - Black - 1.6% over
 - Other ethnicities - 1.7% over
 - Young people with Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans = 8.7% over
 - YP receiving free school meals - 5% over
 - YP in care - 2.5% over
 - Autumn 2021 was estimated to reach 12,000 young people for the main programme, compared to around 16,000 for a revised set of activities in autumn 2020 and around 11,000 in autumn 2019. Early recruitment reports for Autumn were promising, with over 3000 young people signed up and just over 1000 places already delivered.
 - 46 MPs (29 Conservative. 17 Labour) had attended the NCS programme this summer. Rishi Sunak's visit had been a specific highlight for the Trust.
 - In the last week three major events had taken place:
 - The UK Year of Service Event hosted by Onward has been an opportunity

to update on the UK's first Year of Service pilot, led by the Trust, surrounded by politicians and sector leaders.

- The Non-Formal Education workshop was attended by a number of key players within the youth, education and skills sectors and represented an important opportunity to partner better with the sector on education recovery through non-formal learning.
- Hope Collective Hack event in Manchester. The Hope Collective has been set up in memory of Damilola Taylor (who was murdered by 2 teenagers in 2000). NCS (alongside Onside Youth Zones) led one of five "Hope Hacks". Saturday's event was focused on mental and physical well being and included the guest speaker Paul Canoville who spoke openly about his battle with racial abuse and mental health to a panel of young people including the NCS Youth Voice Forum and the Place2Be mental health charity.
- Cost control at the Trust remained strong, though teams were being stretched, especially against a backdrop of Covid and ongoing CSR uncertainty. The Trust was continuing to upweight focus on physical and mental health as well as resilience. An "away day" was being planned in November following the CSR outcome. The Board expressed their thanks for the ongoing commitment of NCS staff.
- The extent of the impact of Covid on the summer programme was still being determined. The cancelling of the residential component of the programme, a key draw for young people, was believed to have played a part in reduced numbers, together with the 'pingdemic' causing whole programmes to be cancelled.

3. Strategy follow up and CSR update

3.1 Mr Gifford presented the CSR update, noting the below key points.

- Reshuffle
 - DCMS had a new Secretary of State in Nadine Dorries. Initial signs were promising, with the Secretary of State being understood to have a strong interest in social mobility, accessibility and levelling up. She had expressed a wish to meet key youth sector representatives and the Trust would endeavour to schedule a programme visit with her as soon as possible.
 - The new Minister for Civil Society was yet to be fully confirmed. Depending on the portfolio they were responsible for, it may be possible to realise new synergies across DCMS priorities.
- CSR
 - Expectations had been set that the upcoming Spending Review would be fiscally tight. Value was seen in what the Trust had proposed, and alignment with DCMS policy priorities.
 - It was encouraging to hear a willingness to explore the scope of the Trust's founding legislation as well as its legal structure to enable transformation and progress.
 - There was concern among the Board about possible cost reduction scenarios and the implications this could have on the programme. A range of views and suggestions were put forward to mitigate this risk.
 - Mr Gifford gave thanks to the Board for their support, and also thanked the Trust team that was working on the CSR, especially Ms Knight, Head of Strategy. These thanks were echoed by the Board.

4 Digital deep dive

4.1 Mr Sharkey Woods, Mr Hayward and Mr Ruddock joined for this session. Mr Gifford and Mr Sharkey Woods presented the Digital strategy which had been tabled. A range of views were expressed on the proposed strategy, and it was agreed that the Executive would revert to the Board for a second 'deep dive' meeting, with a formal update tabled

at the next Board meeting.

- 4.2 **Action: Schedule Digital Deep Dive meeting for November and table an update for the next Board meeting in November**

5 Finance update

- 5.1 Ms Hanna provided a short overview of key finance headlines, a comprehensive version of which had been shared at the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) the previous week.
- Key influencers included the CSR, Autumn CCNs (which were complete and signed), as well as the RFC for Summer 2022 which was expected to conclude by the end of September.
 - Game changers remained supplier relationships which were key enablers and continued work to ensure contracts were watertight and mitigated financial risks.
 - The cost base was stable and well controlled, with the cost optimisation strategy continuing to be prioritised.
 - Risks included pay inflation for key resources which created flight risks in some areas.
 - The NAO audit had closed with good progress made and a marked pace change compared to last year. Minimal risks had been flagged and better management of cash had been acknowledged. Mr Maltby agreed, noting a marked improvement in engagement.

6 Annual Report

- 6.1 Ms Knight and John Maltby presented the report as tabled. Background was given to the Going Concern assessment and the Board agreed that the Trust was a Going Concern for the FY 21/22 Financial Year. It was noted that NAO had confirmed in writing their agreement with the Trust's Going Concern Assessment since the ARC meeting. It was agreed that the report should be laid as soon as possible, given the "Going Concern" window was time limited and Ms Knight reassured the Committee that the Trust was working at pace to achieve sign off as soon as possible, but this was subject to NAO and Finance colleagues processing finalities, Ministerial recess and other dependencies.
- 6.2 **Decision: The Board approved the Annual Report including the Trust's Going Concern assessment.**

7 Governance

- 7.1 The Board approved the split of the Impact and Safeguarding Committee, and in turn the creation of a new Safeguarding Committee and new Impact Committee. Membership of these committees would be officially confirmed by the Board in December. The Board did not approve the creation of a formal digital committee, but agreed that a subset of the Board would continue to meet from time to time to provide advice and direction in this area.
- 7.2 **Decision: The Board approved the split of the Impact and Safeguarding Committee.**
- 7.3 **Decision: The Board did not approve the creation of a formal Digital Committee.**

8 Regular Business

- 8.1 The following Board minutes were approved and would be sent to the Chair for signing:
- 24 June 2021
 - 21 July 2021
 - 27 July 2021
- 8.2 The Committee Chairs provided updates as follows:
- In Mr Cleal's absence, Mr Maltby updated that the Audit and Risk Committee had made good progress on countering fraud in line with Government guidance, as well as on the NAO audit and the Annual Report



and Accounts, as covered earlier in the meeting.

- Mr Summerfield noted that the People and Committee had not met since the last Board meeting. The next meeting was due to take place on November 9th, and a key focus of this meeting would be the implications of the CSR announcement.
- Mr Mayhew noted that the Safeguarding Committee meeting in June had been replaced by a comprehensive written update. The Committee were confident in the safeguarding systems that the Trust had in place and had nothing further to report.

8.3 The Youth Representatives provided updates as follows:

- Mr Ahmed and Ms McLellan were pleased with the way that the organisation continued to prioritise the Youth Voice Forum in organisational governance and decision making. By way of example, Mr Sharkey Woods had engaged the group on the digital strategy.
- The Youth Voice Forum had been grateful to have been included in key events mentioned earlier in the meeting including the Onward and Education Recovery events, and the Hope Hack.
- Mr Wigdortz thanked the Youth Voice Forum for their valuable contributions to the recent Trust Strategy Day.

8.4 The following Committee minutes were noted which had been approved and signed since the last Board meeting:

- 08 03 2021 ARC minutes
- 11 03 2021 People & Remuneration Committee minutes

8.5 The Board action log was noted with all actions marked as closed.

9 AOB

9.1 **Decision:** The bank mandate for the RCB HSBC Bank Account was approved.

10 NED only session

11 Meeting closes

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 02 December 2021, and signed by the chairman as authentication.

Brett Wigdortz
Brett Wigdortz (Dec 13, 2021 15:57 GMT)

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Chair