

TRUSTEE BOARD 2022-03 MINUTES

Meeting Date and Time	Monday 3 rd October 2022 at 10:00
Meeting Location	Zoom (Online)
Date of the Next Meeting	Thursday 1 st December

MEMBERS PRESENT – MEETING QUORUM IS FOUR VOTING MEMBERS

- Ian Potter (IP) – Chair
- Deb Outhwaite (DO) – Vice-Chair
- Fiona Creaby (FC) – Treasurer
- Victoria Showunmi (VS) – Conference Chair
- Caitlin Donnelly (CD) – Secretary
- Bethany Kelly (BK) – Council Member
- Steve Courtney (SCO) – Council Member
- Suzanne Culshaw (SCU) – Council Member
- Bernardita Moreno (BM) – Council Member
- Janet Hetherington (JH) – Council Member
- Saeeda Shah (SS) – Council Member
- Denise Mifsud (DM) – Council Member
- Tony Bush (TB) – EMAL Editor & BELMAS President (Non-Voting Council Member)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

- Ryan Beasley (RB) – Executive Officer & Minute Taker

APOLOGIES SENT IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

- Paul Armstrong (PA) – MiE Editor (Non-Voting Council Member)
- Catherine Simon (CS) – Council Governance Support (Non-Voting Council Member)

03.01 Chair's Welcome and Declaration of Interests

IP welcomed the Board to the third Trustee Board meeting of the year. IP indicated that the meeting would be recorded to assist the Executive Officer (RB) with writing up of the minutes and assured colleagues that recordings will be deleted once the minutes have been approved.

The Board introduced themselves for the benefit of the newly appointed members.

IP stated that any declarations of interest should be announced as and when the Board get to the specific agenda point.

03.02 Apologies or Absence

RB noted that he had received apologies from PA and CS, and that SS would be joining the meeting slightly late due to an overlap with another meeting.

03.03 Minutes of the Last Meeting

APPROVE: The Board approved the minutes from the last meeting.

03.04 Matters arising from the minutes

RB noted that most actions and matters arising are within reports on the agenda.

FC stated that the Grants and Awards work had begun and the portfolio of the work had been passed to RB for membership consultation, however, felt that this work should be placed on hold until after the Strategy Day in December.

03.05 Matters arising not on the minutes

None.

03.06 Items to ratify

03.06.01 – Approval of £2k Sponsorship for IEAL-J 10th Anniversary

The Board acknowledged the decision to agree funding of £2k sponsorship for the IEAL-J 10th anniversary, which was agreed via email prior to the meeting.

03.07 Executive Officer Report

RB gave an overview of their report for the Board. RB highlighted concerns regarding the financial health of the organisation. While he recognised the healthy reserves, the financial control and forecasting is an issue that will be improved through new management accounts for the future. RB also highlighted further concerns around the large deficit on the annual conference and a need to increase membership.

RB also spoke about:

1. Issues with the organisation's bank provider.
2. A useful meeting with the auditors and the Finance Officer regarding how BELMAS manages VAT.
3. The audit being completed and report and accounts uploaded on time and recognised by Companies House and the Charity Commission.
4. The sale of the former Treasurer's laptop for a fee of £300, which has now been actioned.
5. The work with external HR consultant Liah O'Shaughnessy on the new policies for BELMAS.
6. An overview of BELMAS current insurance provisions which expire in February.
7. The move away from the physical space to the virtual office had been completed.

DO mentioned that some members, particularly retired ones didn't get the link for voting as they wouldn't have checked their emails during September while they are away. RB explained that the voting period can easily be extended to be flexible for the members, but reminded colleagues that it is the members responsibility to ensure that they do check their emails regularly.

TB expressed concerns about the conference deficit, but would discuss these in the conference section.

FC thanked RB for the detailed report and was pleased to see the insurance provisions reported to the Board.

(NOTE: SS entered the meeting)

03.08 Finance and HR Reports

03.08.01 – Management Accounts

RB demonstrated the difference between the previous management account template and the new template to launch in 2023. The end of year position currently stands at a projected £77k deficit, which is largely due to a £95k deficit from the conference and an increase in staff salaries from the overlap of the Business Manager and Executive Officer during the handover period.

There had also been considerable spending on BELMAS international agenda with nearly £12k spent on partnerships and international conferences and additional costs in stationary and office as BELMAS bought out lease contracts for printers and office equipment moving away to a virtual office.

RB highlighted the largest spend areas away from central admin costs and flagged that two of the three largest areas include opportunities for Trustees – Trustee places to BELMAS conference and Trustee attendance at international conference. There is a risk to the organisation where we need to be certain that these aren't considered Trustee perks in terms of charity law and we are clear of the benefits against charitable objectives.

There was a discussion held about how BERA offer Trustee places at their Conference where Trustees have specific duties at the conference.

Reserves remained healthy with a projected year end position of around £35K over a 12-month operating reserve.

FC believed that the new management accounts are moving in the right direction and understanding where we are, where we should be and where we are going. FC stated she is looking forward to hearing from the conference committee regarding sustainable changes to the conference moving forwards.

APPROVE: The Board approved the management accounts

03.08.02 – Employee Appraisals (Be At Your Best Plans)

RB presented the new employee appraisal system to be introduced for 2023. RB explained that it is important that all employees have objectives against strategic plan KPIs, particularly while working from home. Employees have seen the documents and are happy with them moving forwards. There were no questions.

IP noted that he would be meeting with RB in November to discuss his probation. IP invited any Trustee to discuss their thoughts on his performance during his probation period prior to the meeting. SC stated via the message function that she would welcome sight of what IP will be covering in that discussion.

ACTION: Trustees to contact IP with any thoughts on RB performance during their probationary period.

03.09 KPI and Strategy Progress Report

RB explained what the KPI Dashboard was and how it will be used to track the progress against any future strategic plan. RB explained this is a standing item and would appear on every meeting agenda.

03.10 Organisational Risk Register

RB presented the new Organisational Risk Register and stated that it will be presented twice annually, usually every other meeting. RB recognises that he is new into the organisation and will therefore be reliant on Trustees to input into the document. RB reminded the Board that the Risk Register is a live document to ensure Trustees make an informed a decision.

FC raised an additional risk to the organisation of having a small staff team, and what happens when one person is absent or away. FC recognised the employee benefits package on the agenda and how that may mitigate some of the risks to the organisation there.

SCO stated that the risk register was a great piece of work for the Trustee Board to better understand risk.

03.11 Policies to Review/Approve

03.11.01 – Return to Work Discussion and Self-Certification Forms

Return to Work Discussion

VS made comments regarding holding discussions with the manager and having scope to have a discussion with someone who isn't the manager.

FC raised some concerns around the language used that could be changed to feel a little more supportive. FC also mentioned how other types of leave, or disability related leave fit within the policy.

APPROVE: Pending amendments to language within the document.

Self-Certification Form

BM asked if employees could have the opportunity to not disclose the reason for their illness. VC thought that it would be important to understand a general reason why an employee is absent.

APPROVE: Pending an amendment to the option to disclose of the reason for illness.

03.11.02 – Employee Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policies

Disciplinary Policy

DO identified a need to change some of the language from “company” to “charity” or “organisation” to reflect on the movement of BELMAS. FC agreed and stated that there are additional consistency issues around terminology including “line manager” and “Executive Officer” that needed tidying up.

VS asked if the policy was for employees or employees and trustees. RB confirmed that there will be separate policies for trustees that will be within a new Constitution and Bye Laws.

APPROVE: Pending language changes and consistency issues resolved.

Grievance Policy

FC asked about malicious grievances and if there could be space to include that within the policy.

NOT APPROVED: To review document.

03.11.03 – Leave, Flexible Working and Personal Policies

Annual Leave & Toil Policy

FC asked about the organisation encouraging employees to take five consecutive days off and how that works for PT employees. RB stated that this is not about holding people to account to take annual leave, and there's an element of common sense.

FC would also like the AGM to be included in times where employees annual leave might not be accepted. FC was concerned by the word "genuine" when describing religious holidays as it is subjective and perhaps could be changed to "official". FC would also like to see a stance paragraph on employees fulfilling their hours and recognising that from time to time there might be a requirement to work over those hours.

NOT APPROVED: To review document.

Sickness Absence Policy

SC would welcome an explicit reference to mental health. FC asked how disability related illness recognised within the sickness absence policy and how is it handled. VC asked about sickle cell illnesses as they reflect certain communities of society. RB stated that we need to be cautious that we don't be too specific on individual illnesses and disabilities.

NOT APPROVED: To review document.

Other Types of Leave Policy

FC wanted clarification on how the Executive Officer requests other types of leave.

FC stated that the compassionate leave wasn't clear and needs a read through. FC also asked how we approach leave for Jury Service, career breaks and leave for gender reassignment. RB stated that a career break policy may need to be a standalone policy.

SC had concerns about the language used in terms of "female" and the use of brackets. It is a stylistic point, but one that needs to be consistent. SC also asked if we are accommodating needs of those with caring responsibilities.

There was a further discussion on the stance of a supporting transgender policy. SCO stated that the Board need to be aware that gender critical beliefs are protected under the law referencing the recent Forstater tribunal case. We might be inviting a discrimination claim against a protected belief, which goes beyond our support for transgender people which we all agree on.

NOT APPROVED: To review document.

ACTION: RB to seek guidance from NCVO on inclusive policies within legal boundaries.

(NOTE: IP moved the agenda forwards to 03.12 due to the timing of the meeting)

ACTION: RB to re-draft policies based on FC notes and circulate via Dropbox for further review and comments by Board members ready for the next meeting.

03.12 Verbal Reports from the Editorial Boards

TB was unable to give an update due to connection issues. PA had sent his apologies to the meeting.

03.13 Verbal Update on the 2023 and 2024 Conference

VS gave a verbal report on the 2022 conference. VS was shocked with the final deficit of the 2022 conference, and the reports never looked like it was going to be overspent by that amount. VS received the same email as everyone else stating a £20k-£40k deficit.

VS stated the conference for 2023 had been selected for Belfast and while they recognised the challenges of holding it in Northern Ireland, they will look to press ahead. All risks and financial challenges will be discussed at the Conference Committee. VS stated that the Conference Committee had two new members, DM and JH who will join the group's first meeting on Monday 10th October 2022.

(NOTE: IP signalled that he would need to end the meeting as the allocated time had arrived)

IP asked RB to circulate any discussions or papers that he felt was appropriate through email for approval. RB stated that the website expenditure had a time frame on it and required approval before the next meeting. Everything else wouldn't be appropriate due to RB conflict of interest.

ACTION: RB to circulate details of the website proposal via email to Board members for approval.

ACTION: RB and IP to move all other items onto the next agenda.

- Ends -

Trustee Board Actions Table

Date of Action	Action Required	Date TBC	Responsibility
03/10/2022	Trustees to contact IP with any thoughts on RB performance during their probationary period.	04/11/2022	All Trustees
03/10/2022	Seek guidance from NCVO on inclusive policies within legal boundaries.	18/11/2022	RB
03/10/2022	Re-draft policies based on FC notes and circulate via Dropbox for further review and comments by Board members ready for the next meeting.	18/11/2022	RB
03/10/2022	Circulate details of the website proposal via email to Board members for approval.	07/10/2022	RB
03/10/2022	Move all other items onto the next agenda.	01/12/2022	IP/RB