

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Governors of Westminster Foundation for Democracy, on 23 November 2023*Meeting IN-PERSON (CLIVE HOUSE) AND VIA ZOOM: 9:30-11.30am.*

Present: Richard Graham MP
Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP
Liz Saville Roberts MP
Milica Delevic
Anne McLaughlin MP
Julie Elliott MP
Femi Otukoya
Anthony Smith (ex-officio, CEO)

In attendance: Chris Lane (Company Secretary)
Shannon O'Connell (Director of Policy & Programmes)
Matthew Hedges (Regional Director, Asia & Americas)
Jeremy Newman (Public Body Review Team)
Jessi Catsambas (Public Body Review team)
Clare Scott (Board Secretary)

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Richard Graham MP welcomed the Board members to the meeting. It was noted that two members of the Public Body Review team were in attendance to observe the meeting.

It was noted that there were apologies for absence given by Mark Babington.

The meeting was quorate.

Declarations of interest

None were raised.

Minutes and matters arising

The Board approved the minutes of the September 2023 Board meeting. All actions noted as complete.

ACTION – The CEO to meet with Milica Delevic to discuss the role of Programme Lead.
Completed

Chair's opening comments

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the Public Body Review team to the meeting. The Chair informed the meeting that following the ending of Sue English's term as a Governor there are currently vacancies in both Vice Chair posts. The Chair informed the meeting that the political Vice Chair is currently waiting to be agreed however Mark Babington has consented to act as the non-political Vice Chair until the end of his term in 2024.

The Chair informed the meeting of the mentioning of WFD in the recent government white paper on International Development has been published and WFD has been mentioned in

several places with a paragraph included in Chapter 9 that included a commitment to increasing grant-in-aid subject to the outcome of the public body review.

1. CEO's Report

The Board accepted the CEO report (Doc_2) as presented. The CEO provided an overview on the main points of the report.

Israel – Palestine war

The CEO informed the Board that the crisis that has unfolded has had a direct and indirect impact on WFD staff and our work due to a shift in views of stakeholders and partners, particularly young people towards WFD and the UK. To support staff working in neighbouring regions, an internal staff meeting has been held where colleagues shared their own stories and views, as a result a letter was to be written by the CEO to the FCDO to pass on these insights.

The Board discussed the current crisis with members confirming that they had also heard of views changing towards the UK from other sources. The Board appreciated the support that was been provided to staff and asked for the letter once written to be shared.

ACTION – CEO to share his letter to the FCDO on the implications of the Israel-Palestine war with all Board members.

FCDO Strategy and WFD Strategy Mid-term review

The CEO informed the Board that as already discussed by the Chair the White paper on International Development had been published which included a welcomed mention of WFD with a commitment to increase the grant-in-aid.

The Board were advised that the WFD Strategy Mid-term review would be conducted in the New Year once the PBR outcome had been received. This would be a light touch review and a report would be available to the Board at the next meeting.

ACTION – The WFD Strategy Mid-Term review outcome to be placed on the agenda for the February meeting.

Board Effectiveness Review

The Board were thanked for their support with the Board effectiveness review and the Director of Operations provided a brief overview of the effectiveness report that had been produced by the external consultant, Victoria Rae.

The Board discussed the report and noted about the need to raise visibility and utilising Board members to build relationships and communicate the role of WFD. The Board discussed the possibility of political Board members meeting with younger party members to provide an introduction to WFD.

ACTION – Political Board members to look into holding introduction to WFD sessions within their parties with focus on younger colleagues.

2. Quarterly Progress Report

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited

Company number: 2693163

The Board accepted Management's Quarterly Progress Report (Doc_3) covering the Q2 FY2023/24 period and endorsed the latest version of the Corporate Risk Register, as presented.

The Board discussed the recent changes to the reserve level that had been approved at the ARC meeting. The Board were given an overview of what the reserve covered and supplied assurance that it was reviewed yearly to ensure that the level was set appropriately.

3. Report of the People Committee

The RT Hon Dame Maria Miller MP advised the Board that the People committee had met in November with Peter Taylor, Deputy Director & Head of Safeguarding Unit (FCDO), attending as a co-opted member.

The People committee had focussed their time on:

- Employee engagement,
- WFDs code of conduct,
- Improved career options/advancement.

Thanks, was also given to the PCS representatives that are part of the committee for their positive and helpful attitude, though it was noted that there was a need for representation for overseas staff at the meeting.

4. Report of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

In the absence of the Audit and Risk Assurance committee (ARC) Chair the meeting were advised that the ARC met in November and focussed its time and attention on:

- Reserves – Following the recent draw on reserves the ARC reviewed the Reserves Policy and agreed that a new reserve level of £500K would be held.
- Internal Audit – The ARC reviewed and agreed the terms of reference for the Learning & Development audit.
- Outstanding Organisation Strategy – The ARC reviewed the progress and next steps towards Strategic Goal 3 – Reinforce our Outstanding organisation.

5. Regional Programme Focus – Asia & Americas

Matthew Hedges, Regional Director of Asia-Pacific and Americas joined the meeting and provided an update on his region with focus spotlighting the programmes in the Solomon Islands, Indonesia, and Venezuela.

The Chair thanked Matthew for his report and the Board held a discussion about the success of the differing programmes. The Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller expressed her interest in the success of the Indonesia programme focussed on "Advancing Equal Societies through Women's Political Leadership in ASEAN" and asked to be provided with further information.

ACTION – Regional Director of Asia-Pacific and Americas to provided Board member Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller with further information on the Indonesia programme "Advancing Equal Societies through Women's Political Leadership in ASEAN".

5. In-depth review: WFD's Approach to Political Party Programming

The Director of Policy and Programming, Shannon O'Connell joined the meeting and provided the Board with a brief update on the Political Party Programming that built on the overview that had been shared at the Board way day. The Board were informed that the PPO's were currently in their annual planning stage for the next financial year with these to be finalised in Q4 and shared with the Board.

ACTION – Political Party annual actions plans to be shared with the Board when finalised.

The Board were informed that the PPO's were also organising a cross-party international conference to be held in February. Invites to the conference were due to go out shortly to Board members.

6. Any other business

There being no other business to discuss, the Board noted that the next formal Board meeting would be held 22 February 2024.