

**Minutes of Meeting of Board of Governors of Westminster Foundation for Democracy,  
on 28 November 2024**

*Meeting IN-PERSON (PORTCULLIS HOUSE): 9:30-11.30am.*

**Present:** Yasmin Qureshi MP (Chair)  
Milica Delevic (Vice Chair)  
Liz Saville Roberts MP  
James Deane  
Duncan Hames  
Anthony Smith (ex-officio, CEO)

**In attendance:** Janet Bamisaye (Acting Finance Director)  
Clare Scott (Board Secretary)

**Welcome and Apologies**

The new Chair, Yasmin Qureshi, welcomed the Board members to the meeting.

It was noted that that there were apologies for absence given by Natasha Kurzeja.

The meeting was quorate.

**Declarations of interest**

None were raised. It was noted by the Board that the formal declaration of interest was an annual process that would commence in April 2025.

**Minutes and matters arising**

The Board approved the minutes of the September Board meeting.

**Actions from 19 September 2024 meeting****Action point 1**

- The Chair to write formally to the Foreign Secretary asking for clarification and a decision on who will be the Minister overseeing WFD. **Complete**

**Action point 2**

- The Chair to write formally to the leaders of the Reform and Traditional Ulster Voice parties. **Complete**

**Action point 3**

- CEO to email the Board members with further details of the Israeli NGO visit for their consideration and approval. **Complete**

**Action point 4**

- Informal meeting to be arranged for the start of November if there is a significant update related to the Board appointments and the first stage of the spending

review process. **Complete – Meeting not held as no significant update known.**

### **Ongoing actions from previous meetings**

#### **Action point 3 – June 24 Meeting**

- The implications of AI technology to be added to the Agenda for the Board away day. **Ongoing – Will be added to away day agenda.**

### **Chair's opening comments**

The Chair, Yasmin Qureshi MP opened the meeting by welcoming new Board member, Duncan Hames to the meeting. Duncan thanked the Chair and gave an overview of his background to the Board.

### **1. Post-Election Governance**

The CEO informed the Board that since the last meeting held in September the term for Mark Babington has ended.

#### **Board and Committee appointments**

The CEO informed the meeting that in November, two independent Board members were appointed, Duncan Hames and Iain Wright. It was noted that Duncan had been welcomed to the meeting however Iain was unable to attend. Currently the four political members appointments are waiting for final clearance from the PM.

The CEO informed the Board the recent ARC and People meetings were postponed due to the Committee Chairs not being in place. Once all appointments have been finalised the Board will have to decide on new Chairs and additional members for the committees. It was noted that Milica was appointed as the independent vice chair by the Board Chair and would continue in her role as Programme lead.

#### **Party Political Engagement**

The CEO informed the Board that following the September meeting, Reform UK and Traditional Ulster Voice were written to by the Board Chair describing the work of WFD and suggesting a meeting to discuss their participation in WFD funded programmes. A response has been received from Nigel Farage MP, Reform UK, declining engagement at this time due to their tight resources. There has been no official reply from TUV.

#### **Governance Handbook**

The CEO informed the Board that at the February meeting the Governance Handbook would be included for the Board to approve the recent updates. It was noted that one of the updates is related to the Party-Political Programmes; an annex will be included that formalises the process following an election related to funding and oversight.

#### **WFD-FCDO Framework Agreement**

The CEO informed that Board that the Framework agreement is in its final draft awaiting comments before it can be signed off. The main outstanding issue is the Treasuries consideration of the continued need for an exemption for WFD to continue to use a commercial bank instead of the Bank of England.

#### New Board member Inductions

The CEO informed the Board that due to the large number of new Board members he proposed an informal meeting is held in January to introduce them to the Board and provide them with an overview of the work and current strategy for WFD. The Board discussed the proposal, and it was agreed that the meeting should be arranged for a Wednesday at the end of January.

**ACTION – Informal Board meeting to be arranged for the end of January.**

## **2. Quarterly Progress Report**

The Board were informed that Quarterly progress report has now been split into an overview report and an in-depth report to make reading and interaction easier for Board members. The CEO informed the Board that the overview report (Doc 3a) shows that good progress is being made against the 3 strategic goals with the in-depth report (Doc 3b) providing the context behind the progress that the Board could read at their leisure.

The CEO informed the Board that 2024 was a year for an unprecedented number of elections, with a few positive outcomes observed there has been an overall shift in the balance towards populist leaders that would be willing to dismantle democratic guardrails. There were concerns that the use of AI and disinformation would play a major role in elections; AI usage was seen to a much lesser extent with disinformation playing a much larger role. The Board discussed the roles of AI and disinformation in elections with it being noted that the capability of AI is not currently ready to have a large influence but will do in 2/3 years.

The acting Finance Director provided an overview to the Board of the finance report included in the Quarterly progress overview (Doc 3a).

The CEO presented the corporate risk register and commentary paper (Doc 4a and b) to the Board and gave an overview of the current strategic risks being monitored.

The CEO advised the Board that over the recent months, focus had been on the following risks:

Risk 1: Short- or long-term funding

Risk 7: Inadequate or insecure systems and processes

Risk 9: Constraints on market competitive remuneration

The Board accepted the risk register reported and discussed the points raised.

## **3. Any other business**

The Board were informed that the provisional Governance cycle for 2025 had been produced, copies were shared with the Board and any issues were asked to be sent to the Corporate Affairs Manager.



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The Board were informed that several WFD Country Directors were currently in the UK and if available would be in the atrium following the meeting for the Board members to meet and discuss their programmes.

There being no other business to discuss, the Board noted that the next formal Board meeting would be held in February 2025