

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Governors of Westminster Foundation for Democracy, on 26 February 2025*Meeting IN-PERSON (PORTCULLIS HOUSE): 9:30-11.30am.*

- Present:** Yasmin Qureshi MP (Chair)
Milica Delevic (Vice Chair)
The Rt Hon Wendy Morton MP (Vice Chair)
Sir Alec Shelbrooke MP
Alice Macdonald MP
James Deane
Duncan Hames
Iain Wright
Anthony Smith (ex-officio, CEO)
- In attendance:** Natasha Kurzeja (Director of Operations)
Janet Bamisaye (Acting Finance Director)
Shannon O'Connell (Director of Programmes & Policy)
Clare Scott (Board Secretary)

Welcome and Apologies

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

It was noted that there were apologies for absence given by Liz Saville Roberts MP and Tom Morrison MP.

The meeting was quorate.

Declarations of interest

None were raised.

Minutes and matters arising

The Board approved the minutes of the November Board meeting.

Actions of 28 November 2024 meeting**Action point 1**

- Informal Board meeting to be arranged for the end of January. **Complete, informal Board meeting held 29 January.**

Chair's opening comments

The Chair, Yasmin Qureshi MP opened the meeting by welcoming the Board members to the meeting. The Chair outlined the meeting agenda and advised the Board that the key issues to be covered in the meeting were WFDs Spending review and the budget for FY 25/26.

1. Quarterly Progress Report

Spending Review Update

The CEO informed the Board that recent weeks have been spent working on the phase 2 (multi-year) spending review submission for WFD. Following the recent developments in the US the submission was reworked and will be again due to the announcement in the reduction of UK ODA by 2027. The submission has focussed on what the FCDO current and future priorities are and how WFD aligns with them.

The CEO also informed the Board that the office of the Director general for Development had contacted him to arrange a meeting. The Board asked the CEO to keep them informed of the outcome of the meeting.

Governance Handbook update

The Board were informed that the Governance Handbook (Doc_3) had been updated and required the Board approval for the revisions. No concerns were noted by the Board, and the updated Governance Handbook was approved.

Quarterly Progress Reports

For information for the new Board members the Board was informed that Quarterly progress report is 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 2a) shows that satisfactory progress is being made against the three strategic goals with the in-depth report (Doc 2b) providing the context behind the progress that the Board could read at their leisure.

The acting Finance Director provided an overview to the Board of the finance report included in the Quarterly progress overview (Doc 2a)

The Director of Programmes & Policy provided the Board with an update on the programme in Georgia

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 risk register and commentary paper (Doc_4a and b) were taken as read with no issues or areas of concern highlighted by the Board.

2. Report of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The ARC Chair informed the Board that the committee had meet in February and focussed its time and attention on:

- Reserve level – The ARC reviewed the reserves policy and agreed a new reserve level of £520k.
- Draft Budget – The ARC reviewed the draft budget for FY 25/26 and agreed it provisionally subject to change following the outcome of the spending review phase 1.
- External Audit – The ARC received a positive update from the NAO regarding their interim audit fieldwork with planning finalised for the final fieldwork to be completed.
- Risk – The ARC discussed current risk to WFD with focus on funding uncertainty and uncertainty for colleagues due to changes to funding.

3. In-depth review: Annual plan & Budget for next financial year

The CEO and acting Director of Finance presented to the Board the Draft Budget 25/26 (Doc_5) to the Board. The Board were given a brief overview of the assumptions that had been used and the risks and mitigation factors that had also been considered when setting out the Budget for 25/26.

The Board were informed that the budget is still subject to change due to the 2025/26 GIA amount not being confirmed by FCDO currently but has been approved in principle as outlined in the ARC update. It was noted that different scenarios were also been prepared so that if there is any change in the GIA amount a new budget could be prepared quickly in response. It was agreed that any revision made to the 2025/26 budget would be shared with the ARC and Board for approval.

ACTION – Revised 2025/26 budget to be shared with the ARC and Board for comments and approval.

4. Programming Priorities for FY 25/26

The Director of Programmes and Policy joined the meeting and provided an update on the programming priorities for FY 2025/26 (Doc_6).]

The Board were informed that the regional annual planning process started in Q3 of 2024/25 and involves significant consultation and alignment with FCDO current priorities. Regional Directors and Thematic leads are part of the process that looks at each programme and reviews them based on their impact and strategic value, this is then used to set out the priorities for the upcoming year.

The Board thanked Shannon and discussed the annual plans with those specific for the political parties highlighted and discussed. It was agreed that Shannon would share the PPO annual plans with the Board.

ACTION – PPO annual plans to be shared with the Board.

Any other business

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