

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited

Company number: 2693163

Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Governors held in Room U, Portcullis House, on Wednesday 11 May 2016

Present Sir Henry Bellingham MP (Chair)
Rushanara Ali MP
Ken Caldwell
Jeffrey Donaldson MP
Rt Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP
Bronwen Manby
John Osmond
Andrew Rosindell MP
Rt Hon Alex Salmond MP
Simon Walker
Anthony Smith (CEO)
Paul Naismith (Finance Director)

In attendance Kerrie Doogan-Turner (Board Secretary)
Alex Stevenson (Head of Communications)
Graeme Ramshaw (Director of Research and Evaluation)
Dina Melhem (Regional Director, Europe and Asia)
Oliver Bennett (House of Commons Clerk)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Conflicts of interest

There were no new conflicts of interest to declare.

3. Matters arising

The Board noted that the action points from the previous meeting would be addressed today. An additional action point from September 2015 on the Business Development Strategy was still being implemented.

Minutes of Board meeting held on 11 February 2016 (Document 1)

The Board approved the minutes for the record for February 2016.

Update items

4. CEO's Report (Document 2)

Anthony Smith updated the Board on the progress made against the action points from the April away day. The Transparency policy and the review of the risk appetite feature on the agenda. The only outstanding point is setting a final date for the Terms and Conditions Committee to meet, however there is scope to arrange this before the summer recess. The Annual Report narrative has been provided in draft format for the Board to comment on. The amended business plan has been circulated for comment.

- On the engagement of parliamentarians Anthony noted the recent efforts of WFD to implement a new strategy, but welcomed suggestions from MPs on how best to achieve this. The Board welcomed Anthony's suggestion about WFD providing targeted briefings to MPs ahead of debates, or where there is clear synergy with WFD's work. However, the Board warned about the amount of resources such briefings would require and recommended an extremely targeted approach. The Board concluded that WFD should continue to monitor and target communications to parliament. The Board suggested broadening requests for engagement to include select committee and APPG members and not just the Chairs of the groups. The Board suggested organising an information event on WFD in parliament, and offered support in circulating information to MPs in their respective parties.

Action point 1: WFD to organise parliamentary event to promote our work with parliamentarians.

- On the allocation of additional resources, the Board welcomed the increased spend on research programmes, but requested more information on the types of programme this would include. Anthony informed the Board of the key areas WFD was looking to pursue: women's political empowerment, the cost of politics, tolerance across the MENA region, political parties in the MENA region and Decentralisation across Asia were areas flagged. Margaret Hodge cautioned against extra spending on monitoring and evaluation of WFD programming.
- On the Annual Report narrative, Ken Caldwell offered further advice and support to WFD staff on what works most effectively. Ken noted that the key achievements from 2015-2016 have not been emphasised clearly enough.

Action Point 2: WFD to re-draft annual report narrative for Board comment based on suggestions for improvement outlined.

Oversight and Performance Monitoring

5. Quarterly progress report

WFD results framework

Following up on Away Day discussion, Graeme Ramshaw, Director of Research and Evaluation, and Alex Stevenson, Head of Communications, explained the design of our results framework and how it relates to real impact on the ground.

- Graeme noted the complexity of the political environments that WFD works in which make tracking progress difficult for any organisation. WFD's approach is to develop indicators for each programme that show the level of progress being made so we are assessed on the direction of travel and rate of progress, not against an unrealistic absolute standard of effective democratic practice.
- Alex expanded on this point explaining the importance of stories of change that would illustrate the impact that WFD programmes can have on the ground, connecting citizen beneficiaries to the work we do in parliaments and with political parties.

The attached note summarises WFD's approach to measuring progress.

Board progress report

On the progress against performance targets, Anthony explained the shift towards graphics that capture key performance indicators. He noted that this was to give the Board an idea of how the data could be presented since there was minimal performance data available at this stage in the financial year.

- Bronwen Manby questioned the definition of “performance” and whether it relates to spending, committing money or impact of the individual programmes.
- Anthony and Paul offered to fix one to one meetings with some Board members and then consult others on their views before finalising the format.

Action Point 3: Anthony and Paul to revise Board progress report and submit to Governors in advance of September Board meeting.

Budget implementation

For approval:

- *Allocation of additional FCO resources* (document 3a)

Anthony outlined to the Board WFD’s plans to allocate the additional resources being provided by the FCO. He noted the unusual position of being able also to reallocate the underspend from the previous financial year, which DFID has allowed WFD to retain. The Board approved the reallocation on the basis that a revised budget would be circulated shortly.

On the underspend, Governors agreed to stick with the Short formula for allocation this year, but many Governors were in favour of introducing a bid system in future, if an underspend occurred again. This would allow the political parties in the Multi-Party Office to get more involved in WFD’s work and reduce the burden on the larger parties to deliver more programmes effectively without additional human resources.

Action Point 4: Anthony Smith to recirculate budget highlighting the allocation of additional resources.

6. Risk Management

The Board reviewed the high level risks, paying particular attention to the Board’s risk appetite, which had last been reviewed in 2013. Paul noted that the revised draft risk appetite statement reflected recent discussion in the Board on political, financial and security risks.

The Board welcomed the review of the risk appetite and was happy with the proposed text with the exception of the risk on corruption (F-H), where Governors wanted to ensure that the language on our policy of zero tolerance of corruption did not imply that we would only operate in countries with zero risk of corruption since this would require us to stop virtually all of our programmes. They requested Paul and Anthony to provide some additional text to clarify this.

7. Summary of programmes (Document 5)

The revised summary of programmes was welcomed by the Board; however additional explanation of the rating system would be useful in the future.

8. Report of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARC) (Document 6)

John Osmond reported back from the previous ARC meeting, noting the four internal audit reports on (i) the development of the programme manual, (ii) safety and security procedures, (iii) performance monitoring and (iv) the first ever audit of an overseas office, which was encouraging. John noted the follow up work required and would write to the Programme Quality Committee and Terms and Conditions Committee to draw their attention to the relevant reports (done).

Governance

9. Transparency Policy (For adoption)

The Board approved the policy, subject to minor adjustments in language.

10. Cooperation with CPA UK

Anthony provided the Board with information about the protocol that has been developed for cooperation with CPA UK, and noted willingness of both Chair and Deputy Chair to meet their WFD counterparts to discuss future cooperation.

Policy

11. Burma

Dina Melhem, Regional Director for Asia and MENA, presented WFD's plans for new programming in Burma, including through a potential grant from DFID. She was joined by Oliver Bennett, House of Commons Clerk who was seconded to the Burmese Parliament for two years.

Dina outlined the findings from the assessment visit she conducted in March 2016 with WFD's Director of Programmes. She noted the historic opportunity to support the major transformation in Burma. WFD's plans had been developed with the House of Commons, building on the very positive experience from the secondment of a Clerk to the parliament. There was a clear need, and appetite, for a combined UK approach bringing together the expertise of the House of Commons with WFD's wider programme implementation. Oliver explained the background to his secondment, the extent to which he was able to build trust with his Burmese colleagues, and the continuing need for extensive capacity-building in the parliament.

The Board welcomed the opportunity for programming in Burma, and supported the development of the planned programme. In the discussion they raised a number of issues that would be important to tackle, notably the way in which the new government dealt with

inclusion of ethnic minorities. Dina noted that by working with different state legislatures, that often have a higher proportion of ethnic minorities, WFD would have the opportunity to address these issues. Dina added that David Thirlby, Senior Programme Manager for Asia, was currently conducting an assessment of two states with a high minority population. Oliver noted the difficulty he experienced when he began his secondment, as he was perceived as an outsider, it was only by demonstrating his impartiality over time that he was allowed to work with the committees. He added that these issues will be raised naturally as the parliament improves its other functions, for example in his time in Burma, he supported the development of a research briefing on the Rohingya issue.

The Board asked about the number of democracy-strengthening organisations that are active in Burma. Dina agreed that there were a lot but that there remained several niches that WFD would work in. She also noted the appetite for the UK experience. Alex Salmond suggested the experience of the Scottish Parliament, and its historic relationship with Burma should be utilised. Andrew Rosindell referenced the importance of pressing for Burma to join the Commonwealth.

Rushanara Ali and Margaret Hodge informed the Board of their plans to visit Burma in September and welcomed opportunities for liaising with the WFD programmes.

12. Any other business

Given the long gap until the September Board meeting, Henry Bellingham suggested an update bulletin from Anthony to the Board before the summer recess.

13. Date of next meeting

14 September

23 November (NB this is the new date)