

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited

Company number: 2693163

Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Governors held in the Boothroyd room, Portcullis House, on Wednesday 14 September 2016

Present Sir Henry Bellingham MP (Chair)
Sir Jeffrey Donaldson 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)
Julie Scott (Head of Gulf Team, Middle East and North Africa Directorate, FCO)
(Bahrain Desk Officer)
Tom Pember-Finn (Desk Officer, Egypt Team, North Africa Joint Unit)

1. Apologies

Rushanara Ali MP, Rt. Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP and Ken Caldwell sent their apologies.

2. Conflicts of interest

There were no new conflicts of interest to declare.

3. Matters arising

On behalf of the Board, Sir Henry Bellingham congratulated Sir Jeffrey Donaldson on his knighthood.

Anthony Smith informed the Board of the progress made against the action points from the last Board meeting and Board Away day. Regarding action point 1, plans for events in Westminster and the devolved assemblies are underway.

Anthony provided an update on how WFD's new information systems (SharePoint) will assist in identifying gaps in WFD's work and how this will contribute to meeting strategic objectives.

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

The Board approved the minutes for the record for 11 May 2016.

Update items

4. CEO's Report (Document 2)

Anthony Smith reflected on his second year as CEO at WFD by flagging positive change that occurred including the greater cohesion that exists within the organisation today, the secure funding position WFD is in and how relevant our work is in light of Brexit.

He also noted the potential challenges the organisation could face over the coming year, including the change in Government and the impact this has on engagement. The challenges of capturing and describing the impact of WFD's work on the ground, as well as the problems posed by expansion and growth are also relevant.

Anthony added that this provided WFD with an opportunity to make a statement about WFD's vision with the Government and within the broader democracy strengthening community, including expanding WFD's election portfolio.

The Board agreed to send a cross-party letter to new Ministers about WFD's work, with many Governors commenting that the timing provided a real opportunity to promote WFD's offer and relevance to good governance.

ACTION POINT 1 – Anthony Smith to draft letter for Ministers on behalf of WFD's Board of Governors.

Oversight and Performance Monitoring

5. Quarterly progress report

Anthony Smith and Paul Naismith presented the quarterly progress report noting the revisions to the format that include a small number of graphics that capture key issues:

- The target of £9million spend has been achieved for this financial year. Financial agreements with DFID and FCO have secured core revenue for next year. For third-party funding pipeline estimates of good prospects are being watched.
- After the first four months of the year the level of spend is trailing under where we expected implying there will be an intense final quarter.
- On overheads, two corporate staff have been added to address growth needs, with further additions made in the number of delivery staff. The percentage compared to the total revenue is going in right direction.
- The programme summary flags whether programmes are performing in line with expectations. Anthony noted that the number of programmes receiving green ratings has increased, whilst those with amber rated programmes have steps in hand to tackle issues.
- Updates were provided on WFD communications, with specific reference to stakeholder engagement and demonstrating what we are doing and providing examples of how we make a difference.

Bronwen Manby flagged concerns about the level of political party spend. She also noted that lower staff percentages can have a negative impact on the quality of programmes.

Bronwen sought clarification regarding the 26% of programmes designated on the communications update slide. Anthony confirmed that the programmes received a separate communications rating outside of the overall programme rating.

John Osmond noted that the progress report should provide the Board with a level of information to scrutinise and challenge the management of WFD. He flagged that information on quality, delivery, cost and people should be measured but raised concerns that this version

does not assist the Board to measure against key performance indicators. He requested that the management accounts were circulated to the Board. Anthony added that he is happy to include more information and circulate the management accounts.

Action point 2: Paul and Anthony to take early action to review spending plans and inform the Board, FCO and DFID of any likely underspend.

6. Risk Management

Anthony flagged 'risk one' on reputational damage and 'risk three' on internal coherence for discussion. Regarding reputational damage, the change in Government was noted as an area for concern, but the Board agreed that the letter to Ministers should help mitigate any concerns.

On internal coherence, Anthony added that whilst improvements have occurred this is an area that requires continued efforts from both parliamentary and political party teams to continue working together in an effective manner. Taking forward the integrated programme concept has helped to address this issue but progress can still be made.

7. Summary of programmes

A summary of programmes compiled through the quarterly monitoring and evaluation reports provided a brief overview of each programme for the Board of Governors for information.

John Osmond thought it was a very useful document, but questioned some programmes absent from the summary and reflected that the Pakistan programme has always been rated red or amber and has not achieved the buy in needed from recipients. Anthony provided reassurances that this rating was related to events like the registration law for INGOs and added that he had just returned from a successful trip meeting key stakeholders in Pakistan.

Jeffrey Donaldson questioned the absence of Burma/Myanmar to which Anthony assured that the contract was still being finalised with DFID and that the first quarterly update would be received in November.

8. Report of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

John Osmond reported on the most recent Audit and Risk Committee meeting which had focused on finalising the annual report and accounts. The committee continue to conclude internal actions from internal audit reports and are reasonably confident they can clear the list.

The Board should note the planned internal audit reports planned for this year will include a continued assessment of overseas offices, reviewing business continuity and looking at tenders and contracts

Simon Walker will become a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Policy

9. WFD Gender Policy

Anthony notified the Board of the internal review undertaken on WFD's approach to gender which highlighted a lack of clear policy concerning gender sensitivity across all programmes. The broad outline of the review was to strengthen the focus on programmes that tackle women's representation.

Steps outlined included agreement on a WFD wide vision, developing a range of approaches to include more gender sensitive programming and the recruitment of an additional gender advisor. Anthony welcomed Board support for a more rigorous and coherent approach to addressing gender issues.

- Bronwen Manby fully supported the suggestion of having a written document and questioned how it would be applied to discussions in countries like Bahrain for example. She added that this doesn't mean WFD should not engage in such areas, but noted that there are contexts where it is difficult to push gender equality.
- Alex Salmond M.P. referenced the SNP party programme 'Women in politics in the MENA region' noting that his colleague, Tasmina Ahmed-Sheik M.P. had a positive experience engaging with the programme and would have a lot to offer in this area.
- John Osmond was also very supportive of this initiative, but flagged concerns around defining the ambition and tracking progress of this work.
- Anthony added that the policy will ensure that WFD asks about the impact on women's empowerment when making decisions about programming and the context for women. The policy will be calibrated to focus on visible contribution to women's empowerment in contexts where the number of women parliamentarians are low.

10. Bahrain, Kosovo, Egypt

Julie Scott, Gulf Team Leader from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Desk Officers for Bahrain and Egypt were invited to provide insight for the Board on the need for parliamentary strengthening support in Bahrain and Egypt. The Kosovo programme was also outlined.

Bahrain

The FCO team leader advised that, despite the recent political crackdown, there was continuing support for reform in Bahrain and that the WFD programme should continue. The Board agreed.

Julie Scott argued that stability in the gulf is crucial for UK foreign policy. She added that the UK is able to express concerns when we have them, but should have a presence in country to support reforms.

Regarding the recent political crackdown, she added that the FCO does not fully understand the motivations of the Bahraini government at this moment in time, but is working hard to get

to the bottom of how the situation has arisen. However, while the political will exists the UK should try to work on reforms there ahead of the 2018 scheduled elections. The FCO have funded activity in Bahrain through the CSSF including supporting work on independent oversight mechanisms and with the police.

- Bronwen Manby asked what we know about the makeup of the parliament itself and whether it contains independent voices. Adding that we would want to see all different elements of society represented in parliamentary groupings. Anthony responded noting that the programme will work with parliamentary staff to develop their technical skills. work later to build independent voice of parliament
- John Osmond questioned the risk the exposure will give to WFD. Anthony recognised the strong Bahraini opposition community in the UK, adding that monitoring of this criticism will be key.
- Bronwen flagged the broader reputational risk associated with human rights abuses taken place in the country. It would be useful to develop red lines on human rights issues and have an exit strategy planned deciding what action would need to happen for it to be activated.

Kosovo

Anthony described the innovative nature of the new FCO-funded programme in Kosovo, outlining how it will tackle long-standing problems with the entire political system. The programme will involve a flexible approach to political party support. The Board welcomed this and hoped that it would be possible to use this model in other countries or regions.

- Simon Walker expressed his support and referred to his experience in Kosovo ten years ago where he found partners to be very receptive and interested.
- Bronwen Manby added that the programme seems very interesting, especially the model. She stressed that the learning should be taken forward from this project in designing other programmes.

Egypt

The FCO desk officer noted the continuing political evolution in Egypt and the case for some cautious re-engagement by WFD, not least because of the strategic importance of the country. The Board agreed and asked us to discuss options with the Embassy.

- Sir Jeffrey Donaldson referenced his experience in Egypt through his role as UK trade envoy. He noted his relationship with the parliament and ambassador in Cairo and how they were keen for WFD to engage in the country.
- Alex Salmond expressed his support and agreed with Sir Jeffrey Donaldson. He referenced the SNP office work with women in the MENA region and added that it is not possible to ignore Egypt.
- John Osmond noted previous Labour Party involvement in Egypt and the current work by Global Partners, suggesting the possibility of collaboration.
- Sir Henry Bellingham thanked the representatives from the FCO for participating in the discussion.

11. Cost of Politics programme

Anthony updated the Board on the Cost of Politics research programme noting the successful launch event that took place in July. The research highlights the day to day costs MPs face from their decision to stand, the cost of running an election campaign to sitting as an MP and the connections these have with corruption.

Next steps for the programme will include a regional meeting in West Africa and the development of more case studies. Teams will also focus on how we can incorporate the findings into our own programming, as well as collaborate with donors who focus on corrupt practices and encourage them to evaluate the whole system.

Governance

12. Business development strategy

The Board agreed the new business development strategy with one amendment, namely to leave room for securing resources from foundations, who might be more open to funding sister party work than Government donors would be.

13. Any other business

- Anthony informed the Board that there had been three freedom of information requests that focused on the provision of recruitment and office services.
- Anthony informed the Board of WFD's membership to the European Partnership for Democracy, a group of organisations with an office in Brussels well plugged in to the European Commission that will provide an opportunity for WFD to remain competitive regarding European funding opportunities.
- John Osmond noted that Sir Henry Bellingham and Andrew Rosindell's terms have expired but they remain directors. Anthony informed that the re-appointment as governors is still pending with the FCO.
- Sir Henry Bellingham informed the Board that Alex Salmond had notified him that this will be his last board meeting. Sir Henry Bellingham expressed thanks to Alex for his participation on the Board and contributing his wealth of experience.

14. Date of next meeting

23 November (NB this is the new date)

2017 Dates

Wednesday 22 February

Wednesday 7 June

Wednesday 13 September

Wednesday 29 November