



NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

OFFICIAL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of directors held by teleconference at 09:00 am on Thursday
28 January 2021

Present*:	Brett Wigdortz (Chair)	Mark Gifford (CEO)
	Paul Cleal	Jacquie Nnochiri
	Ndidi Okezie	John Maltby
	Ian Livingstone	Lord Iain McNicol
	Tristram Mayhew	Ashley Summerfield
	Nick Hurd	Deborah Tavana
	Ahmed Ibrahim (Youth rep.)	Hannah McLellan (Youth rep.)
In attendance	Sarah Knight (Secretary)	Michael Devlin (Director of Governance and Delivery)
	Miriam Jordan Keane - item 4	Naim Moukarzel - item 4
	Amanda Best - item 4	Nick Smith (Head of Strategy) - item 4
Apologies:	Dean Creamer (Govt' rep., observer)	

*all by teleconference

1. Welcome and declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed the Board to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies had been received from Dean Creamer, who had been invited to observe the Board meeting. He had been sent the Board papers via correspondence for any comments. Mr Maltby had sent his apologies in advance for leaving the meeting early; he left after item 5.

2. Welcoming new board members

- 2.1 Mr Wigdortz welcomed three new members and two new youth advisors to the Board: Nick Hurd, Deborah Tavana, Jacquie Nnochiri, Hannah McLellan and Ahmed Ibrahim.

3. Management report

- 3.1 Mr Gifford provided a summary of the Management Report. As the Trust neared the close of the Financial Year, NCS had engaged with 91,000 young people both in person and digitally, while volunteering hours exceeded 500,000. As NCS did look to target vulnerable and underrepresented young people, while the programme was universal, 34% of participants had a vulnerable characteristic. The Trust overrepresented on BAME backgrounds as well as White Working Class boys (WWB), especially in the North. This would continue to be a focus in light of the levelling up agenda and need to close the attainment gap.

Throughout this difficult period, the Trust had repurposed and worked closely with its network, embedded cost savings, and tightened governance. The Spring Review provided an opportunity for NCS to cement itself within the youth landscape; however, ongoing reviews were starting to have an impact. A number of network partners were opting to make redundancies and hold off investment. The Trust itself was starting to see regretted attrition. If the Spring review resulted in more uncertainty the Trust's network may struggle to continue to deliver and a growth in attrition may be likely. The meeting discussed Mr Gifford's concerns, including the Trust's commercial strategy in light of a

range of possible Spring Review outcomes.

- 3.2 Further detail was requested on the Trust's digital offering and it was responded that Trust's "Staying Connected" offering had included digital curriculum content, mental health support with the Trust's partner The Mix, as well as an upweighted social media presence. The Trust had also hosted digital "Think-ins" with Tortoise Media. Further "Youth Rising" podcasts had been developed which were produced, edited and presented by young people. In the coming months the Trust was planning further content allowing young people to connect with other young people, social influencers and politicians to discuss the topics they care most about. This would be part of the evolution of "Staying Connected" - "NCS Connect". The Board welcomed this planned activity and it was suggested that the platform was just as important as the content; the Trust was challenged to think of creative ways to engage young people digitally, such as through live games.

- 3.3 **Action: Ms Jordan Keane to link with Mr Livingstone to explore ideas and options for engaging young people through the NCS Connect offering.**

4. Priorities for 2021 and beyond

- 4.1 Members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Head of Strategy joined the meeting. Mr Gifford reminded the Board of the NCS vision and Plan on a Page to March 2022. The Plan on a Page primarily included delivery of a revised high impact service portfolio, consisting not only of residential programmes but new options to build the omnichannel offering as NCS moved from "a moment" to "a movement". New offerings included two types of residential, changemakers (previous Local Action Groups), Skillsbooster (previously School Support), and establishing NCS as a Kickstart provider. The Trust would continue to work closely with other organisations across the sector, embedding the voice of young people at every level of the Trust's governance, would continue to build a productive and positive culture at the Trust, and look to develop new income streams while controlling costs.

- 4.2 Mr Gifford also spoke to the Board about some of the Trust's longer term plans and options, including immediate possibilities where the Trust may be able to step in to support the Covid recovery effort. The above would all be important inputs for the review of NCS and youth which was planned for the Spring. The Trust were working closely with DCMS on this to ensure alignment and the Trust noted it would need to seek the Board's support also over the coming weeks. The Board welcomed the Trust's ambition and simultaneously urged the Trust to continue to be robust, grounded and realistic; ensuring its core delivery was underpinned by clear KPIs and measures of success.

The meetings attendees broke into breakout rooms to discuss the Trust's Plan on a Page and longer term strategic options. Upon their return, feedback was provided by a member of each group. The SLT would take on board feedback that the board had provided, and noted that they would be working closely with individual Board members in the coming weeks. It was agreed that an additional Board meeting would be held in mid-February.

- 4.3 **Action: Board meeting to be scheduled for mid-February.**

5. December 2020 Management Accounts & Budget

- 5.1 It was noted that the cash balances held by the Trust were reducing, with costs being controlled both within the Trust and across the partner network; the 0.6% error rate on the sunk costs audit was a strong example of this. The Trust was planning further budget savings in FY 21/22 to add to £11.5 million of savings realised to date. This would be achieved through continuing low office costs and other efficiencies including around pay. A more specific breakdown of the budget would be shared once the Request for Change process with the network was complete.

Mr Cleal provided a brief update from the Audit and Risk Committee on the subject of the FY 19/20 accounts and delay to sign off due to the outstanding “Going Concern” assessment, which required confirmation of the Spending Review funding settlement in writing. Given the Spring Review in March, it may be necessary to cite “material uncertainty” in the Board’s assessment. The ARC chair would revert to the Board at the relevant time to achieve sign off; hopefully achievable by the March Board meeting. Mr Maltby left the meeting.

6. Personnel policy changes

- 6.1 Personnel issues that had been discussed at the People Committee the previous week were considered by the Board. The Board agreed to introduce a waiting period of 12 months before an employee qualified for the Trust’s pension contribution. The Board recognised that organisational changes were needed and gave permission to render a small number of roles redundant if this was necessary to respond to the issues the Trust had to respond to. The Board recognised that our Redundancy policy was to mitigate redundancy and the executive would work with and support any individuals who may be at risk of redundancy. Mr Summerfield had consulted the Government representative on the pension matter and was awaiting a response. Mr Gifford would return to the Board with an update on organisational design in March, with further updates to be provided in the summer and autumn.

7. Governance

- 7.1 Board minutes for approval: The minutes from the Board meetings on 03 December and 14 December were approved by the Board.
- 7.2 Verbal updates from committee chairs: Updates from the committee chairs were provided as follows:
- Impact and Safeguarding: Mr Mayhew updated that Ms Nnochiri and Mr Abraham had joined the Committee and were already having a positive impact. It would be important in the coming weeks to develop strong impact measurement and metrics for the expanded NCS service portfolio. Mr Freedman and Ms Perera were experts in this field and were already supporting the Programme Team in this area. The development of a more nimble internal evaluation approach to compliment the external evaluation was welcomed as cost efficient and necessary, though it was noted that the approach remained too sentiment focused and the Committee continued to challenge the team on developing more quantitative methods where possible.

On safeguarding, an incident had been escalated to the Committee. The Committee were being kept abreast of the situation and welcomed the transparency displayed showing robust escalation procedures.


- People: Mr Summeffield noted that Mr Gifford had covered the People Committee update at item 6) of the meeting.
 - Audit and Risk: Mr Cleal noted that the key update from the committee had been discussed at item 5) of the agenda.
- 7.3 Action log: The action log was reviewed and all actions had been marked as complete.

8. AOB

- 8.1 Mr Gifford noted that the Trust had received an instruction from the Directors of the NCS Trust CIC to transfer funds owned by the CIC, to the CIC. The Board wanted formal confirmation that the Government supported the transaction and asked Mr Gifford to speak to the Directors of the CIC and to the Government to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 12:00 pm.

These minutes were approved as a correct and complete record of the proceedings by the Board at its meeting on 17 March 2021, and signed by the chairman as authentication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Brett Wigstortz'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Chair