

Local Trust board meeting minutes, decisions and actions

25 March 2020

Via video call

Discussion and decision	Action
<p>Present</p> <p>Trustees</p> <p>David Warner (chair), Miatta Fahnbulleh, Sahil Khan, Ben Lee, Jeannette Lichner, Caroline Macfarland, Karen Mellanby, Peter Mills, Nicola Pollock, Kevin Sugrue, Bob Thust, and Rich Wilson</p> <p>Non-trustees</p> <p>Rosie Chapman (Protector), James Goodman, Nicola Hutcheson, Matt Leach, Rachel Rowney, Verity Soons (minutes)</p>	
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction and Apologies</p> <p>The chair welcomed trustees and staff to the meeting.</p> <p>There were no apologies.</p>	
<p>2. Declarations of interest</p> <p>Peter Mills, owner, Brand Ethos (commissioned by UnLtd, delivery partners for Big Local).</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of last meetings and matters arising</p> <p>3.1. Approve minutes of board on 21 November 2019</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>3.2. Matters arising/action points not covered by the agenda</p> <p>The update on actions from the last meeting was reviewed; it was noted that all were being actioned or formed part of the agenda for the meeting.</p> <p>The board noted that the date for the next Audit and Risk committee would be changing and that the board secretary would be contact those committee members in due course to confirm a date. There were no other matters arising.</p>	<p>VS to contact ARC members to confirm new date.</p>
<p>4. Subcommittee minutes</p>	

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<p>4.1. Programme delivery committee – 26 February 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the February meeting were noted.</p> <p>Peter Mills updated the board on the process taken by the programme delivery committee to develop the programme delivery framework which was provided for information at item 7.4. Trustees noted that there had been comprehensive challenge and development over a number of meetings and that the investment strategy had allowed more resource to be available in the strategy.</p> <p>Rachel Rowney thanked trustees for their input and support to develop the framework.</p> <p>4.2. Finance and Investment Committee – 5 March 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the March meeting were noted.</p> <p>Nicola Pollock updated the board that under the new investment strategy assets had now been transferred fully to cash or new cash.</p> <p>There were ongoing conversations for Nicola Pollock and Nicola Hutcheson with CCLA to finalise the fee.</p> <p>4.3. Audit and Risk Committee (extraordinary meeting)– 10 March 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting in March 2020 were noted.</p> <p>Jeannette Lichner noted for the board that the audit and risk committee had met in March in an extraordinary meeting to discuss immediate risk management of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would be discussed in more detail at item 11.</p>	
<p>5. Chief Executive’s Report</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the report, bringing the following to the attention of the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a small number of areas where conflict may be emerging, and support would be needed. The team were working with area reps to better understand the situations in these areas and the programme delivery committee would remain informed. • Parliamentary engagement was ongoing and the APPG remained in development with around 30 parliamentarians from across parties showing interest. Meetings with parliamentarians had now temporarily ceased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. • Scaling of the community leadership academy (CLA) evaluation was being looked at and the second cohort of a further 80 participants was being engaged. However, it was likely that plans would be significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CLA was now looking to move to coaching online. 	<p>PDC to be informed of significant developments</p>

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The board noted the report.	
<p>6. Performance, risk and finance and investment report</p> <p>6.1. Local Trust business plan monitoring to end March 2020</p> <p>Nicola Hutcheson introduced the paper with nothing further to draw to the attention of the board.</p> <p>The paper was noted with no further comments.</p> <p>6.2. Big Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2019</p> <p>6.3. Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2019</p> <p>Nicola Hutcheson introduced the reports for 6.2 and 6.3 and noted for trustees that some revisions had been made to the presentation of these papers. Any comments on presentation could be sent directly to Nicola H outside of the meeting.</p> <p>The board noted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reports were both until the end of December 2019 and as such the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had not been felt at the time of preparing the reports. • there was an underspend on the year to date and reforecasting and re-budgeting was being looked at accordingly. • there would be additional costs to account for as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but no negative impact was expected. <p>The board noted the Big Local Trust and Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2019 with no further comments.</p> <p>6.4. Big Local Trust investment report to 31 December 2019</p> <p>6.5. Local Trust investment report to 31 December 2019</p> <p>The board noted the Big Local Trust and Local Trust investment reports with no further comments.</p> <p>6.6. Risk register as at 18 March 2020</p> <p>The board noted that the risk register presented at 6.6 contained key risks associated with COVID-19 planning and these would be discussed at items 9 and 10 on the agenda.</p> <p>The board accepted the report had no further comments on existing risks.</p>	
<p>7. Strategic Framework, Business Plan, Budget</p> <p>7.1. Budget, Business Plan, Strategy – cover paper</p> <p>7.2. Strategic Framework</p> <p>7.3. Business Plan</p> <p>7.4. Programme Delivery Framework (for info only)</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the item. Trustees noted that the papers;</p>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were a result of the work completed with trustees over the summer bringing together the trustee and programme delivery strategies • set out a reflection of long-term intentions and business plans to move towards those ambitions over the next 12 months. • described some targets and achievement measures, but that some of these would need to be further defined and refined over the period of the strategy. <p>It was also noted that the strategy and business plan had been written before the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategic framework remained relevant, but it was highly likely there would be changes to what could be delivered in the next 12 months. A revised business plan and targets would be prepared for mid-year, with the focus of business activity before then largely defined by the COVID response plan.</p> <p>James Goodman expressed his thanks to trustees for the time dedicated to developing the strategic framework over the past nine months and highlighted how important it would continue to be in navigating the next 12 months in particular.</p> <p>The board agreed an approach to receive updates over the coming months with proposed amends to the business plan considering the pandemic and which would reference back to the original trajectory.</p> <p>The board discussed/raised/noted the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic framework provided enough flexibility to adapt and shift whilst remaining an anchor for the direction of travel in challenging times. • The framework and business plan will provide a basis and context within which to recalibrate and reconsider our actions in line with the economic and political outcomes of the coming months. • The plans inspired optimism about the possibilities and opportunities for Local Trust and the communities it works with. <p>The board expressed their thanks to the management team for their work to develop the strategic framework, business plan and programme delivery framework with a thorough and rigorous approach.</p> <p>The board approved the strategic framework, business plan and programme delivery framework.</p>	<p>Review of the strategic framework and business plan would be added to the board forward look for September 2020</p>
<p>8. BLT and LT Budgets</p> <p>8.1. BLT Budget Report</p> <p>8.2. LT Budget Report</p> <p>Nicola Hutcheson introduced the reports at 8,1 and 8.2 with no further points to bring to the attention of the board. The board noted that the budget papers presented mapped out the remainder of the programme and whilst they could be amended year on year as required, in the main they would remain the same.</p> <p>Nicola Pollock noted for the board that whilst the budgets had been scrutinised at the finance and investment committee meetings, a lot of the detail had also</p>	

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<p>been scrutinised by the programme delivery committee through the development of the programme delivery framework.</p> <p>The board agreed that the budget was representative of the work on the strategy and what Local Trust was looking to deliver in the big local programme.</p> <p>The board approved the Local Trust and Big Local Trust budgets.</p> <p>8.3. Cost of living increase</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the paper which sought approval for a 2.25% cost of living increase for all staff in post at 1 April 2020. The board noted the paper and that the proposal had been discussed at the finance and investment committee in March.</p> <p>Matt also updated that, in the future, the annual cost of living increase would be discussed in line with the Local Trust pay policy at a meeting of the nominations and remuneration committee in January with recommendations being received at the finance and investment committee in March.</p> <p>The board approved the cost of living increase of 2.25%.</p>	
<p>9. Strategic contingency allocation</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the paper which sought agreement from the board for an allocation of funds from the strategic contingency reserve in response to priority areas as identified by the board and the executive.</p> <p>Legal advice had been sought on what would constitute ‘minor’ spend in terms of the deed and the proposals presented were in line with the guidance received.</p> <p>The items for which the funds would be used were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extension of the research project ‘Our Bigger Story’, already commissioned and underway with TSRC, to expand the work over the next 12 months to include a greater number of areas and to focus on the response of areas to the COVID-19 pandemic. • Boost policy and influencing capacity over the next two years with a focus, amongst other things, on delivering an APPG and developing messages from government into Local Trusts own thinking. • Create a COVID-19 contingency fund which would enable a rapid response to emerging needs. <p>Extension of our bigger story research project</p> <p>Trustees were supportive of the extension to the research project to record the response from areas to the pandemic but raised concerns about the capacity of the organisation to deliver.</p> <p>It was noted that the extended project would also include a variety of support partners already in place to support data collection and build capacity for the project. A consortium of organisations would deliver the project under the guidance of TSRC as the lead.</p>	<p>Research project extension of Our Bigger Story to be written into the business plan</p>

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<p>Trustee agreed the extension of the project and that his work would be added to the business plan.</p> <p>Policy and Influencing The protector, Rosie Chapman, raised whether it was appropriate for the senior policy officer role which would deliver the APPG to be fully funded from big local funds or if other collaborators should be asked to share the cost associated with that role.</p> <p>Matt Leach responded to the protector and the board noting that the legal advice obtained and shared at the January awayday clearly stated that this type of commitment was within the power of the board of trustees to approve and that it was fully consistent with the terms of the deed. Trustees noted that within the budget, the Community Wealth Fund was situated in the Local Trust budget and not that of Big Local Trust and that it would be funded from the CDF funds as much as possible. There was the potential, post pandemic, to explore options for additional funding to support the APPG, but it was clear from legal advice that this was not a necessary action to take.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that the overall work of the policy team was integral to the Big Local programme and being able to share, influence and build change beyond the 150 communities and were content with the approach described.</p> <p>Trustees noted the view of the protector and the chief executives' response and Considered that in light of legal advice received that they were content to commit to the proposed commitment of funds.</p> <p>COVID-19 contingency Trustees welcomed this approach to ensure rapid response during the pandemic.</p> <p>Decisions</p> <p>The board agreed the allocation of the following from the strategic contingency allocation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £250,000 allocated to an immediate project to capture what is happening in communities across the country in repost to the COVID-19 crisis via a project by TSRC. • £612,000 to boost capacity around policy and influencing (allocated as £306,000 in each year of 2020-21 and 2021-22 • £350,000 as an initial COVID-19 contingency fund to allow for rapid responses to opportunities or needs during the current period of disturbance. <p>The board agreed that oversight and approval of spend from the COVID-19 contingency fund was delegated to the chairs group which was convened to maintain oversight of the management response to the pandemic.</p>	
<p>10. COVID-19 strategic discussion</p> <p>David Warner chaired a discussion with trustees in which they shared their experiences and views on the COVID-19 pandemic situation.</p> <p>Key points raised were as follows;</p>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic implications were huge and vulnerable people were at very high risk as well as the risk of thousands more people falling below the poverty line • The mental health impact on communities would be of epic scale and should be a key area of focus. Workforce issues and maintaining/integrating services would suffer greatly with the voluntary sector being viewed as a workforce back up option. • Immediate actions in Big Local areas have been driven by the need for local organisations to come together and support people; however, this was challenging where some community-based businesses were facing financial difficulty • Building trust in communities and the swift adaptation of business models were paramount to making things work at a local level. • BL areas have the potential to be slightly ahead of the curve in their readiness to respond due to the structures and levels of community engagement that they already have in place at a local level. • Long term considerations included recalibration of the economy and the impact of this on BL areas, as well as points of national security and national resilience. • Misinformation and fake news was a huge risk as people find their information in different ways e.g. only relying on friends or social media to remain informed. • The impact on the entire country will be profound with deep economic recession which will be sustained and comes against the backdrop of pressure on communities which already existed. • Local Trust has a role to play in identifying a different type of local settlement. Devolution is currently absent in the debate and there needs to be a voice to support empowerment. • The recovery phase will be a period of considerable economic uncertainty and a time to look in detail at social infrastructure and reconfiguration of the economy. • Local Trust should seek to play a role as a convener in bringing people and organisations together to explore, prepare for and influence the future. • The Community Wealth Fund would continue to be an important campaigning focus, with potential to contribute to the shape of the rebuilding effort after the crisis. 	
<p>11. COVID-19 Local Trust Update</p> <p>11.1. Update paper</p> <p>11.2. Local Trust COVID-19 Action Plan – for info</p> <p>11.3. Risk Register (presented at item 6.6)</p> <p>David Warner introduced the item and expressed thanks to the Local Trust team for their work to move promptly to a homeworking situation for all staff and for the fast planning work to develop a response plan.</p> <p>Trustees noted that a weekly meeting had been set up for chairs of committees and the board to maintain an oversight of the management response to the pandemic. An extraordinary meeting of the audit and risk committee had also</p>	

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<p>taken place on 10 March 2020 to discuss risks associated with the pandemic and how these were being mitigated.</p> <p>Rachel Rowney gave an update on Big Local areas and noted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there had been a focus on strong communications to areas and reps for things to start considering during this period such as virtual meetings. Weekly updates signposting to helpful information were now being sent. • An emerging priority for many areas was to ensure the supply of food now that schools were closed and free school meals were unavailable. • Volunteer burnout was an issue we expected to see emerge along with some issues around safeguarding. • Pressure on partnerships to now core fund organisations which were supported by them is increasing and areas are looking to Local Trust to advise. • Longer term issues around loan sharks and high rate loans were expected to emerge • The funding team were working on monitoring information to establish the value of funds held by LTOs and develop virtual financial review processes - this work would be a priority • Overall, areas felt well supported and feedback was positive. <p>James Goodman gave an update on staff and noted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A digital team was being established and was developing a programme of digital support to areas and reps. All reps and partnerships had been surveyed to establish their digital needs. • Working from home had been established for 2 weeks and we were drawing on the expertise of some team members who had worked from home a lot or who were home based to help manage this. • Management were aware of risks to mental health and wellbeing and productivity arising from isolation and were building an infrastructure to manage this. • Policies for sickness and holiday had been temporarily amended to better support employees. • Team meetings and one-to-ones had been increased, the all staff huddle was made weekly, a buddy system (non-pastoral) was now in place, and guidance on communications channels for staff was being developed. <p>Matt Leach gave an update on the first online event with Big Local areas and noted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A zoom meeting for areas had been arranged to provide an opportunity for them to share thoughts and concerns about the current situation • 100 people joined the discussions and one of the key outcomes was a demand for more similar sessions to be arranged. • Some of the information shared was as follows; 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An area had successfully argued to keep the community hub open to operate as a food bank ○ In a number of areas, the foodbanks were run by people aged over 70years so they've had to close for now with no other plans in place which has been a devastating blow. ○ Local authority has ordered a village hall to close despite it doubling as the local foodbank. ○ Some areas have reacted with confidence and risen to the challenge ○ Digital access and mobile data remain a prohibitive issue in many areas preventing people from connecting or working. ○ Safeguarding was a growing concern <p>Trustees welcomed the update and commented that the steps taken to date were thorough and demonstrated a move in the right direction which was ahead of the curve of many other organisations. Trustees also shared the following comments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff should be reassured that increased anxiety and stress was a natural reaction to a challenging situation. ● The potential for a partnership to break up or cease due to the loss of volunteers was high risk and regular updates would be welcome ● The actions taken demonstrated strong leadership and Local Trust should consider if anything could be shared with the wider sector <p>To ensure the successful ongoing management of the situation and planning for the future, trustees were asked to convene a small informal subgroup to work alongside directors to consider future strategy. The board agreed to convene a strategy group and the chair would contact trustees in due course.</p> <p>The governance review would still be undertaken though it was possible that the timeline for this would now be amended. The chair would discuss the approach to this with trustees in one-to-one meetings in due course.</p> <p>The board noted that to recruit to two trustees in the next 6-9 months would be challenging given the current situation. The potential to amend the articles of association to allow an extended term to cope with the pandemic situation and bring continuity in leadership of Local Trust whilst in extenuating circumstances would be explored.</p> <p>The board noted the risk register and that it was being reviewed regularly through the weekly SMT and chairs meetings. The board were content for the chairs group to maintain oversight of the risk register at this time.</p>	<p>The chairs group would remain informed on partnerships temporarily ceasing to operate and any impact through a loss of volunteers</p> <p>Convene a subgroup of trustees to discuss matters of influence on the future strategy</p> <p>Explore options to amend the articles of association to allow extension to board members terms in extenuating circumstances.</p>
<p>12. Any other business</p> <p>There was none.</p>	

Dates for future meetings

Board and AGM

- **Wednesday 20 May 2020** – Zoom – additional meeting re COVID-19
- **Friday 10 July 2020** – Zoom meeting (was originally at connects)
- **Thursday 24 September 2020** - TBC [likely all day commitment – includes visit and Board meeting]
- **Wednesday 15 November 2020** - TBC - (including AGM) - [likely all day commitment – includes visit and Board meeting]

Board Awayday

- **Thursday 21 and Friday 22 January 2021** [two day commitment – includes visit, dinner, overnight stay and awayday to finish around 4pm]

Programme committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2-4.30pm unless otherwise stated

- Thursday 4 June 2020
- Wednesday 9 September 2020
- Wednesday 4 November 2020

Finance and investment committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2-4.30pm unless CCLA are in attendance in which case the meeting will run until 5pm

- Wednesday 27 May 2020
- Tuesday 1 September 2020
- Wednesday 11 November 2020

Audit and risk committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2.30-5pm unless otherwise stated.

- Wednesday 7 October 2020

Nominations committee (at Local Trust offices)

- Wednesday 20 July 2020
- Thursday 15 October 2020