

Local Trust board meeting minutes, decisions and actions

24 March 2021

Zoom, 9.30am - 12.30pm

Discussion and decision	Action
<p>Present</p> <p>Trustees</p> <p>David Warner (chair), Miatta Fahnbulleh, Sahil Khan, Jeannette Lichner, Caroline Macfarland, Karen Mellanby, Peter Mills, Nicola Pollock, Bob Thust, Rich Wilson,</p> <p>Non-trustees</p> <p>Margaret Bolton, Rosie Chapman (Protector), Chris Falconer, James Goodman, Matt Leach, Rachel Rowney, Verity Soons (minutes) and Frankie Sykes (minutes), Jessica Wenban-Smith</p>	
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction and Apologies for absence</p> <p>The chair welcomed trustees and staff to the meeting. There were no apologies.</p>	
<p>2. Declarations of interest</p> <p>Community Wealth Fund - Nicola Pollock sits on the board of the Oversight Trust which oversees the companies funded by dormant assets which report to the sponsoring department of DCMS.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of last meetings and matters arising</p> <p>3.1. Approve minutes of board on 25 November 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record, subject to a correction to agenda item 4.3, replacing 'inflation rates' with 'investment rates'.</p> <p>3.2. Matters arising/action points not covered by the agenda</p> <p>The board noted the actions update paper and that there were no new matters arising.</p>	<p>Verity/Frankie – correction to agenda item 4.3 in board minutes 25 November – replace 'inflation rates' with 'investment rates'</p>

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<p>4. Committee proceedings</p> <p>4.1. Nom and Rems Committee 26 January 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that took place on 26 January 2021 were noted.</p> <p>4.2. Programme Delivery Committee 24 February 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that took place on 24 February 2021 were noted.</p> <p>Peter Mills noted there would now be reporting from two different teams, Programmes and Partnerships, following changes to team structures.</p> <p>James provided an update to the board on the Kickstart scheme noting that reps had been commissioned to explore appetite for the scheme in Big Local areas. This was on the basis it would provide an opportunity to engage and support young people into employment and increase capacity in areas over the next year. Local Trust had received approval from The Department for Work and Pensions to go ahead but further scoping on the viability is required before any decision to go ahead is made.</p> <p>4.3. Finance and Investment Committee 2 March 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that took place on 2 March 2021 were noted.</p> <p>Nicola Pollock updated the board that the finance team were receiving additional support, particularly to manage the investment portfolio. Due to capacity issues the amendment to the stewardship code had not yet been added to the website and the annual review of investment managers had been deferred from November 2020 to May 2021.</p> <p>The board noted that as we moved towards the end of the programme it might be beneficial to move towards presenting a forward-looking budget to 2026, in place of spend lines across the 15-year budget which was provided historically. This might require some additional work to address how costs are presented across budget lines – for example where central costs had changed as a result of bringing services in house for value for money and effectiveness, as had happened with rep management and some aspects of area support.</p> <p>Work was ongoing on presentation of financial information, with the aim of ensuring it was efficiently produced and that finance and investment committee were able to engage with it effectively.</p>	
<p>5. Governance review Update</p> <p>The chair noted the next steps on governance review implementation, noting the trustee-only session held before the board meeting reflected on additional thinking around timelines and recognition that we might need more support in taking forward the recommendations of the review.</p>	

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<p>Bob Thust announced he would be standing down from board after the next finance and investment committee meeting due to personal and workload commitments.</p> <p>The board discussed the following regarding trustee recruitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair confirmed he had now agreed a deadline of the end of March with recruiters for direct replacements for Kevin Sugrue and Ben Lee. • Peter Mills noted he would be retiring from the board at the November AGM at the end of his term, and that it would be worth recruiting for his replacement in the current round. • The chair noted that once recruitment consultants were confirmed, the Connectives would support LT in developing a person specification for use when recruiting new trustees. This would be shared with the board and feedback would be welcomed from trustees. <p>The board noted that Bob Thust would be stepping down at the end of May agreed with the proposed actions for implementation of governance review recommendations. The board agreed Nicola Pollock would join the nominations and remuneration committee on an interim basis until trustee recruitment had taken place and to the inception of the new governance committee.</p>	
<p>6. CEO's Report</p> <p>Matt introduced the CEO's report, noting that rather than providing a long narrative, the paper presented instead highlighted key areas of work and strategic priorities as well as notable forthcoming publications and events. Historic information would now be included in the new monthly trustee bulletin.</p> <p>The board noted the new format of the CEO's report and provided the following feedback:</p> <p>Trustees agreed the new format was useful and there was excitement about the inaugural Community Power Lecture and interest in the development of plans for 10th birthday anniversary celebration.</p> <p>Work on advocacy of CWF was noted as being impressive as was the level of engagement achieved. The board expressed their congratulations to the team. Trustees noted that there were likely to be a range of calls on dormant assets going into this spending round and it would be important to consider what that might mean for the CWF campaign.</p>	

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<p>The chair brought to the attention of the board the imminent publication of the “timeline of community power”, an exciting piece of work prepared by David Boyle with input from a wide range of contributors.</p> <p>The chair also noted an upcoming meeting with Matt and newly appointed chair of TNLCF Blondel Clough around work of Local Trust and would update the board after the meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted that staff might be returning to the office in late Summer. Trustees suggested a celebration might take place on the return to the office.</p>	<p>Chair to update the board on conversation with new chair of the TNLCF in April</p>
<p>7. Review of past year</p> <p>Matt introduced this agenda item, noting that the cover paper provided an overview of the papers presented.</p> <p>7.1. Local Trust business plan monitoring to 24 March 2021</p> <p>Matt introduced the paper highlighting that Local Trust had done well against targets set for the last year, despite the challenges of COVID.</p> <p>The board noted the paper.</p> <p>7.2. Strategic contingency impact report</p> <p>Matt introduced the paper, noting achievements in policy and influencing owing to investment in the team throughout 2020.</p> <p>The creation of the policy team in the last budget had created additional capacity to influence and inform, allowing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further growth of the CWF campaign • The launch and successful development of APPG. • Increased capacity to contribute to the Budget and Spending Review. • Increased involvement of residents from Big Local areas in events and other public engagements, such as the APPG, giving local areas platforms for their voice they had not previously benefited from. • The creation of the Big Local and CCC advocacy panel and virtual town hall event format, providing Big Local areas with further opportunities to have their voices heard <p>The board raised/discussed/noted the following key points in discussion:</p>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impressive volume of achievements and progress made by the policy team with increased capacity. • The APPG had a dedicated website where briefings, reports and presentations were published. As well as parliamentary members, there was a growing band of interested external organisations and individual experts disseminating messaging to constituencies. 2021-22 would be peak influencing years for Local Trust. • Currently focus was on securing a commitment to the CWF during Autumn’s spend review. If this was not achieved, the strategy would be reviewed and would look towards the launch of a public advocacy and lobbying campaign. • Although a network on supportive and influential politicians had already developed though the APPG, they would be even more effective once lockdown had ended. • Churn in government officials – particularly in MHCLG – had affected progress with relationship building. • There was increasing rhetoric about the value of “hyperlocal”, but this had not yet been followed through in concrete policy. • There was likely to be scope to get our policy asks in front of other audiences – for example health or transport. <p>The board noted the strategic contingency impact report and thanked Margaret and her team for their impressive achievements over the last year.</p> <p>7.3. Review of first year progress against Strategic Plan 2020-26</p> <p>Matt introduced the paper, noting that it provided a summary of progress against ambitions set in March 2020.</p> <p>The board noted the review of first year progress against Strategic Plan 2020-26 and discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Trust has commissioned Dame Julia Unwin to interview politicians and key policy makers which would provide more sophisticated analysis of Local Trust’s current influence and reach. This would be reported on later in the year. • Trustees were positive about Julia Unwin’s review being commissioned but some questioned if a ‘small scale’ piece of work was enough. • Some Big Locals (for instance in North Yorkshire) are being seen by other stakeholders in their areas as part of local infrastructure, partly because they were able to mobilise so quickly in the pandemic. 	<p>Share the APPG health session and APPG website ‘past sessions’ page with the board</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a plan for the 'BL archive' (compendium project) which will be a collection of data for every area made available online. An invite would go to areas to tell their stories and narrate around the information. This will start mid-year and run to the end of the programme. • The Community Leadership Academy appeared to be a success, and its future progress, including involving new external partners, was looked forward to. • This was the first year that areas had been asked in the partnership survey if they felt more connected to other organisations in their areas. Responses indicated that they were. <p>7.4. Big Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2020</p> <p>The board noted and approved the Big Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2020</p> <p>7.5. Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2020</p> <p>The board noted and approved the Local Trust management accounts to 31 December 2020</p>	
<p>8. The year ahead and what it will bring - facilitated discussion</p> <p>James Goodman invited trustees to consider the context for the next year ahead of consideration of plans and budgets for the coming year. James set the scene for discussions and the board used breakout rooms to consider the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One thing about 2021 that is expected but you think unlikely and: 2. One thing about 2021 that is not expected but which you think is quite possible <p>Trustees discussed the following key topics within break out rooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounce-back from the pandemic, particularly financial, was expected to be slower than anticipated. • Political upheaval, change and unrest was likely to be widespread • Young people were likely to be an important part of discussions over the coming year • High youth unemployment and the challenges of the last year meant that civil unrest was possible as lockdown was eased over the summer • Worlds have contracted a little - travelling less - and possible element of people not returning as quickly to "normal" as might be expected 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographical disparities were likely to continue to be an issue <p><i>Jeannette left the meeting</i></p>	
<p>9. Business Plan and Budget 2021-22</p> <p>9.1. Business Plan 2021-22</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced business plan providing an overview of 2021-22 priorities and context within which it was being presented for the board. He brought the following key points to the attention of the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business plan for 2021-22 had been framed within the context of the existing strategic plan for 2020-26. A key focus would be on re-energising and re-launching the programme in Big Local areas and ensuring legacy plans were in place There would be development of our evidence base and a need to invest in relationships that support our work in the run up to the comprehensive spending review (CSR). There would be a big focus on influencing and engagement this year, consolidating our position as a voice in the dormant assets process and continuing to invest in these areas. Local Trust remained on track to spend out by February 2027. The next three years would see a heavy commitment to spending to remain on track. Areas at risk of not spending out ("RONSO areas") had been identified and would be the subject of more intensive engagement over the coming year A few areas had less than £100k to commit and there would be a focus on how they would exit the programme whilst staying engaged (if they wished) There was potential that as a result of COVID disruption, some areas would fall outside of the criteria set for partnership members/numbers. Work would be done to look at how we support areas in this position. Staffing plan showed plans for some very limited growth staffing in the next couple of years – predominantly in partnership and programmes teams to support key areas of the business plan. <p>The board noted the papers and the key points raised by Matt. Key comments noted/raised in discussion were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenarios had been used to look at what would happen if areas don't spend out. These would be revisited over the summer. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The executive were satisfied that most areas would have enough time remaining in the programme to make good decisions on spend. Reps had already started flagging to areas the risk of poor spending. Retaining Big Local funds as leverage was an issue that may arise and support for managing this would need to be considered. • Some staffing changes had been made to maintain oversight and support development and focus on LTO scrutiny. A new assessor pool would also be in place to support work on LTO risk. The approach to managing this area of work has been amended to reflect growing concern around the viability of some LTOs. • The legacy of Local Trust and Big Local would be as much about the richness of institutions and people who now carried the skills and confidence to make change as a result of the Big Local programme as it was about the impact of the financial input. • The policy strand at Local Trust had not been programmed to 2026 and there would be a discussion during the next budget round on use of the contingency to extend the work of the team further. This would need to be balanced against programme requirements in March 2022. • Staffing structure changes at leadership level were noted. The title of chief operating officer was reflective of additional work Rachel Rowney was undertaking to maintain oversight and coordination of cross-organisational work and refresh of business systems including GMS and finance systems. • External support had been commissioned to consider a return to the office later in 2021. An update would be given at the July board meeting. • A report would be received in at the July board on EDI following the work that was being undertaken by BRAP. An away day in January 2022 could be used to explore this further. There were no formal considerations for trustee recruitment as an outcome at this time. <p>The board noted that the section entitled 'Status of this document' was a legal statement which explained trustees had considered the budget and were satisfied it was consistent with the deed requirements.</p> <p>The board agreed with the status statement and approved the Business Plan 2021-22</p> <p>9.2. Big Local budget and cashflow to 2027</p> <p>Rachel Rowney introduced the item, bringing the following to the board's attention:</p>	<p>Update on working culture and return to the office to be received in July.</p> <p>EDI report to be received in July</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the strategic contingency and additional income from investment to increase rep support, increase programme consultancy, extend support for policy and influencing work and allocate a continued COVID-19 contingency provision. • Given the longer-term impact of COVID-19 remained uncertain, we would need to be ready to respond again quickly if the assumptions on which the budget was created were challenged or changed significantly <p>Nicola Pollock noted that the bulk of expenditure was on grants and support. The budget had been discussed at finance and investment committee in March, particularly the increase in staffing over past couple of years and what was proposed for 2021-22. The Committee recommended the budget and cashflow for approval.</p> <p>The Board agreed and approved the Big Local Trust budget (2021-27) and cashflow, including the 2021-22 budget.</p> <p>9.3. Local Trust Budget and cashflow to 2023</p> <p>The board approved the Local Trust Budget and cashflow to 2023 with no further comments.</p> <p>9.4. Risk Register March 2021</p> <p>Rachel introduced the item and presented an approach to managing risk moving forward which would take into account the work which had been undertaken to revise risk management to date and create a more holistic approach. Trustees noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the operational risk register would be revisited within committee meetings in full following monthly SMT review and key risks would then be presented to the board at its regular meetings. • The strategic risk register would be reviewed once a year as part of the business planning cycle and included with budget and business plan documents at the March board meetings. • Board would receive a high-level risk summary report containing up to 6 key risks at each board meeting – these would be drawn from across both risk registers. Full risk documentation would be shared for reference only. <p>The board noted the current risk registers and approved the revised approach to risk.</p> <p>9.5. Research Strategy</p>	

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<p>James Goodman introduced the final draft of the Research strategy, noting how trustees had been consulted in the process which continued with a hypothesis led approach.</p> <p>The board discussed the strategy and key points were noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst volume of work appeared high, this was in consistent with what the team had been producing to date and the executive were confident this could be maintained • The research team will further consider how current reporting in the form of rep reports, partnership reviews etc and information from workplace could be used to help populate the compendium. • Local Trust research was a key part of building the narrative of Local Trust and the comms plan would ensure that effective presentation and use of research was well supported • The 'Power in our hands' series would support reflections on proof of concept for Big Local as they outlined learning around resident -led decision making, place-based funding models and Big Local reflections on positive and lasting change as a result of the programme. <p>The board noted and approved the Research strategy</p> <p>9.6. Communications Plan</p> <p>The board noted and approved the Communications plan.</p>	
<p>10. Any other business</p> <p>Trustees thanked Bob for his contributions to the board during his time as a trustee.</p> <p>Matt Leach updated trustees on progress with the National Debt Fund noting that further information was being gathered so a view could be taken on Local Trust engagement. Trustees would remain informed ahead of any decision to commit to any course of action that might involve LT in significant litigation costs or bring them into potential conflict/competition with other parts of the sector.</p>	<p>ML/MB to update trustees on progress with the National Debt Fund as appropriate</p>