

Local Trust Board

Meeting minutes, decisions and actions

St Luke's Community Centre, 90 Central Street, London EC1V 8AJ

9.30am – 1pm Thursday 29 June March 2023 (Trustee only session 9.30-10.30)

Discussion and decision		
Present Trustees David Warner (chair), Matt Bell, Chris Catterall, Patrick Melia, Charlie Pickles, Nicola Pollock, Caroline Macfarland, Richard Wilson Apologies: Sahil Khan Non-Trustees Rosie Chapman (protector), Margaret Bolton, Jon Fox, James Goodman, Matt Leach, Rachel Rowney (minutes)		Actions
1.	Welcome, intros and apologies for absence The chair welcomed trustees and staff to the meeting. Items 7, 8 and 9 would be taken at the beginning of the meeting. The board congratulated David on his MBE.	
2.	Declarations of interest There were none declared further to those already on the register.	
3.	Minutes and matters arising	
3.1.	Approve minutes of board on 23 March 2023 The minutes of the meeting on 23 March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record subject to amendment that those who sent apologies were noted as present.	Verity - to Amend minutes of meeting of 23/3
3.2.	Matters arising/action points not covered by the agenda	

Discussion and decision		
	The board noted the actions update and that all actions were complete or on the agenda.	
4.	Committee proceedings	
4.1.	Governance and remuneration committee – 4 May 2023 Trustees noted that the annual pay award was well received by staff; that the more generous pay is likely to change the results of the benchmarking review completed in March 2022 and this is going to be reported on in September to committee. A decrease in staff turnover was noted as positive.	
4.2.	Programme delivery committee – 7 June 2023 The minutes of the meeting were noted. The board noted the committee’s active engagement in the discussion relating to the Closure Pathway and in particular the decision to increase the ‘standard’ threshold from £50k to £75k.	
4.3.	Finance, audit and risk committee – 18 May 2023 The board noted the discussion with CCLA on the investment income, recent bank failings and our low exposure to risk. While there is an expectation that the yield will increase the November meeting will be important in understanding the implications for managing the portfolio in the future. The board approved the finance manual.	
4.4.	Learning and legacy committee – 8 February 2023 The board noted the important and helpful discussion on Big Locals Together (now ACT) and alumni discussion. There was a discussion on what financial commitment had been made to the ESRC research centre. It was confirmed that the position was as stated in the paper to Legacy and Learning Committee: Local Trust has been asked if it could provide partnership funding for the research centre by each of the three bidders. Having consulted with David Warner each was told that based on the level of support trustees had previously earmarked for CANI Local Trust might be able to make a commitment of as much as £1m to the research centre but this would be a decision for the trustees and was likely to be dependent on the extent to which the final proposal reflected the content and approach already agreed by trustees for CANI. Any final decision on the use of Local Trust money to support the ESRC research centre would be made by board.	Verity to share the recording of the meeting (if available)
5	CEO’s report, performance and risk	
5.1	CEO Report The CEO’s report was noted.	
5.2	Local Trust Business Plan Performance Monitoring May 2023 The performance monitoring report was noted.	
5.3	Risk Register June 2023 Trustees noted that the risk register had been substantially revised in the light of the new business plan and welcomed the register as easier to engage with. It was noted that the legacy risks felt that they were at a different level / feel to the other risks. It was agreed that the register would continue to be reviewed by SMT and the committees.	

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	The board agreed the new risk register as an initial draft which would be reviewed and updated by relevant risk-owning committees going forward.	
6	<p>Finance and investment reports</p> <p>6.1 Big Local Trust and Local Trust management accounts to 31 March 2023 The board noted the Big Local Trust and Local Trust management accounts for the quarter ended 31 March 2023.</p> <p>6.2 Local Trust and Big Local Trust Investment reports to 31 March 2023 The board accepted the investment report for the quarter ended 31 March 2023.</p> <p>6.3 Local Trust Investment report to 31 March 2023 The board accepted the Local Trust investment report for the quarter ended 31 March 2023 with no further comments.</p> <p>6.4 Big Local Trust and Local Trust management accounts to 31 March 2023 The board noted the Big Local Trust and Local Trust management accounts for the quarter ended 31 March 2023.</p>	
7	<p>State of the Programme update</p> <p>Jon provided an updated on the state of the programme. He particularly noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reports to board will increasingly focus on cash not commitment • that decisions about plan B/alternative approaches will be made this year so it's not too late to deliver on area plans • the team will need to make some calls on what support will make the most difference moving forward, and that partnerships respond best to those offers when we are able to make those connections with them. <p>In discussion, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees asked what the money was being spent on. Jon responded that there is such a lot of activity and diversity between areas it would be hard to do justice to the programme by just listing some of the things that have been funded. It was agreed that the board awayday in September will start to give a sense of the disparity, along with the types of activities / projects funded. • Board was interested in how people feel in Big Local areas at present, given the mass closure of infrastructure and young people's mental health (for instance). For Connects 2023 the policy team are commissioning work looking to the future, interviewing Big Local people about what the big issues are for them, what their response is and what they need government policy makers to do. This will give us some ideas around what's important to areas. Board noted that the last question could be extended beyond central government to local government, businesses and others. • It was noted that the delivery team are covering a lot and board were briefed on plans to review the team, ensuring that we are making the most of the skills available and we are able to cover the work that needs doing. • The risk of areas spending on activities that are less valuable because of time pressures is – at the moment – considered to be low by the team. This is because the focus is on supporting areas with their priorities and giving them time to make good decisions, and helping them move away from ideas that are no longer viable. 	

Discussion and decision

- There doesn't feel like there's a shift to Big Local being Local Trust-led (rather than partnerships / residents) as the focus is on what we can do to help.
- There are 50 areas (approx.) with around £150k or less left to spend on Local Trust's "account", but this did not take account of funds held within areas. There is an expectation that around 30 areas will exit the programme this year, with another 15 on the closure pathway by year end.
- Board commended the good and pragmatic approach taken, being aware of risks and limited amount of time left in the programme, and trusting in the team to make good decisions. The closure pathway proposals will both release pressure on the team and support the message that communities are trusted by us.
- Trustees were supportive of delegating power to staff to make more decisions and the experimental approach, knowing that there are safeguards on decisions. There is a shared and helpful recognition that not everything will go perfectly and a more satisfied staff team, will keep people motivated and enthused.

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Closure Update

Rachel introduced the slidedeck included with Board papers; noting:

- That the Governance and Remuneration Committee would be considering a range of important related papers and policies on 11 July. All trustees would be welcome to join the meeting, in person or virtually, and papers should be available well in advance.
- The rationale for simple and clear messaging for staff and areas around plans for closure – there was a risk that rumours regarding for instance any role in the CWF could distract focus from the critical path to programme and organisational closure.
- The strong links across to the Programme Delivery Update; our ability to meet the agreed targets (on areas moving through closure pathway and gaining momentum in slow spend areas) directly impacts the assumptions we make to underpin the scaling down of our delivery capacity/roles through to closure. This in turn influences the level of contingency which may be available to deploy on legacy priorities.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Trustees expressed a level of concern around the suggested timing of options for the use of contingency funds being presented to the Board (March 2025) and whether this was too close to closure. It was noted that trustees would be regularly appraised on the level of contingency and the Executive's assessment of risks in terms of allocating funds earlier, with the next report back on progress taking place towards the end of the year. The most significant factor here would be whether successful conclusion of the programme required additional resource committed to grant management and area support in the final stages (or into 2026/7), which could make a significant call on remaining

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	<p>contingency funds, and would need to take priority in the terms of meeting the requirements of the Trust Deed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested in would be helpful for Trustees to be reminded of the Trust Deed requirements. • Confirmation that an option of voluntary redundancy would be available where appropriate, though this needed to be balanced by recognition of critical roles to retain, which in itself is relatively complex (for example where we would need one of two current posts). Local Trust can refuse a VR request. • It was noted that planned closure and associated lack of job security was playing into some challenges in recruitment to particular areas of the business; we may need to do more to incentivise candidates to take on roles with a relatively short lifespan. • It was suggested that coaching being made available to staff at an early stage was likely to be helpful, even if risking creating more ‘churn’ as people focus on their future. The Executive team confirmed this is in train. • Trustees recognised that they have an important role in the communications approach; with the suggestion that it will be helpful to separate the governance requirements of programme and agency closure, with a broader role as custodians of the longer-term vision and learning. 	<p>ML to send copy of deed to trustees with cover note summarising previous advice</p>
<p>9 9.1</p>	<p>Legacy projects update James presented the paper, noting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 130 people signed up to Connects already (and a waiting list). There is a sense this is being driven by people knowing this is the last one. The focus is on celebrating achievements, particularly the value of Big Local’s impact on social capital and how that manifests. • The event “Beyond the food bank” was attended by 18 areas, which was about moving away from short term and reactive approaches following Covid into strategic, long-term planning. This event really resonated with people. • A report into the factors that have enabled Lawrence Weston to be successful will be published soon. This was a piece of work commissioned following the discussion at board in September. • Board members are interested in understanding how and why Big Local in London is experienced differently, and how that is shared with others working in this space. • Local Trust is looking at developing an alumni network for three groups: staff, Big Local partnership members and workers. For workers the team are reviewing offering something that is accredited as part of the package. 	
<p>9.2</p>	<p>Learning and influencing update Margaret introduced the paper and noted:</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Trust are partners in three first stage bids for the ESRC research centre on community participation and connection. A University has to lead and they are Sheffield Hallam (CESR); Sheffield Uni; and UCL (IoCS). There are overlaps between what the ESRC want to achieve with the centre and our plans for CANI. Such a centre could help us achieve our legacy ambition of having a successor body to carry forward our learning. Decisions on first stage bids will be made in July. Trustees complemented the team on how the process had been handled and noted that if designed well such research centres can be very high impact. • The new Head of External Affairs started on Monday. <p>Board discussed the extent to which the policy work is focussed on government, which largely reflects the pull of the election period and the legacy of the success of the CWF. However, there is also engagement taking place with local authorities, with the NASP on social prescribing, with trusts and foundations, and with housing associations. This reflects our approach to reach out and populate more space with our learning, to ensure that as resources become available to enable a broader focus to our policy work, we have a strong foundation on which to build, which broadly reflects the focus of interest identified by trustees.</p>	
12	<p>Any other business</p> <p>There was no other business</p>	
13.00 – Meeting close		