

MINUTES

Meeting of: Scottish Futures Trust Board

Date & Time: 2.30pm, 10 May 2010

Place: 48 Queen Street, Edinburgh

Attendees: Sir Angus Grossart - Chair (AG)
Graeme Bissett (GB)
Cllr Jim Fletcher (JF)
Colin Maclean (CM)
Barry White (BW)
Peter Reekie – in attendance (PR)

Apologies: Fiona Mackenzie

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies were received in advance from Fiona Mackenzie. AG will meet with FM to brief.

Declaration of Interests

No new declarations of interest were reported. It was agreed that the current published Register of Interests would be circulated and Board Members asked to reconfirm the details.

Action: BW to circulate Register of Interests.

Matters Arising not otherwise covered by the agenda

- a) BW gave the update that the OCPAS appointments process timetable, being run by the government, had slipped by 2 months. This may mean the government asking the Chairman and/or other Board Members about their willingness to extend their current appointments to allow the process to be completed.
- b) PR reported that he had spoken to the EIB with regard to Borders Rail and that discussions are currently ongoing. It was agreed that SFT's lead role in engaging with EIB with regard to projects that they can be involved in is important in improving value for money.
- c) BW advised that the SFT expenses policy has now been published on the website.
- d) There was a discussion on the role and chairing of the Schools National Programme Board (SNPB) and the need to ensure sufficient scrutiny. BW agreed to raise the issue at the next meeting of the SNPB in order to ascertain that the board is satisfied with the level of scrutiny and will minute whether an agreement was reached to stay with the current structure. AG asked that Board Members be mindful of such issues and raise at Board level where necessary.

Action: BW to raise at next meeting of the SNPB.

- e) BW reported that SFT's lead role in response to issues arising from Jarvis's administration difficulties has resulted in considerable cost savings for the Scottish Government and will result in more savings over the next 15 years. It was agreed that a figure should be put on such savings and that this should be recorded. Details will be logged in the 2010/11 Benefits Realisation pages.
- f) BW advised that the Hospitality Register has just been published on the SFT website for the period ending 31 March 2010 and will continue to be published on a quarterly basis. BW will circulate the Register to Board Members.

Action: BW to circulate the current Hospitality Register to Board Members who should contact BW if they have anything to record in the register.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

With the amendment made to paragraph 3.b) on page 2 as discussed and agreed, the minutes of the 25 January 2010 meeting were accepted as a true and fair record.

Subject to the amendment required to the second paragraph of section 7.b) on page 4 as discussed and agreed, the minutes of the 8 March 2010 meeting were accepted as a true and fair record.

2. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that he and the Chief Executive have been in regular contact in the period since the last Board meeting.

AG welcomed that the "Just the Facts" briefing paper is now available for distribution. This will be updated on a bi-monthly basis and used in a targeted way with the press and other stakeholders. BW advised that Just the Facts will be sent out to all MSPs this week.

AG reported that he is sensing a need to increase the awareness that SFT is moving forward at pace and has had several conversations recently where people have given the opinion that SFT should do more to create positive awareness of the work it is doing.

Given the recent elections, AG has not had any direct ministerial contact since the last Board meeting but has agreed to meet with John Swinney after the elections.

Action: Board Members to let AG know if they have anything they would like AG to raise at his next meeting with John Swinney.

AG also reported that the meeting with the Independent Budget Review panel had been very positive.

3. Chief Executive's Report

BW presented his update paper to the Board, advising that Kevin O'Hare, the new Communications Manager, is now in post and he will be working closely with BW in order to better explain and promote the value of SFT's work and the benefits arising from our work. The Board then discussed the need for SFT to make its progress more visible. BW highlighted construction of hub projects in autumn and construction on the Schools programme 2011 which both represent opportunities for SFT to promote progress it is making. It was also suggested that SFT highlight initial work on projects such as Borders Rail. BW advised that a calendar of events is being prepared to allow proactive communications.

a) Schools

BW reported that good progress has been made on the Schools Investment Programme with the East Renfrewshire/Midlothian pilot being launched. West Dunbartonshire and a number of primary schools have had their funding allocated. However, a delay in confirmation of the timing of government funding has meant other local authorities are waiting to be told when their funding will be available.

b) hub

There was a discussion as to whether primary schools should be included as part of hub given that they are not multi-use buildings.

Action: GB will discuss at the next meeting of the hub Board.

c) Progress against objectives

There was a positive reception to the good progress made against objectives in 2009/10 and agreement that the Annual Report will need to expand on the progress against objectives and explain in more detail how these have been achieved and/or to what extent they have been achieved as some naturally continue into this year.

d) Independent Budget Review

BW reported that he, AG and PR had a positive meeting with the review panel. The prioritisation of available spending on infrastructure, the challenge function and the focus on needs rather than wants were all issues that seemed to resonate. The panel seemed to agree with SFT's submitted view that continuing investment in infrastructure is important for future economic growth. A list of measures will be produced by the review panel and made public in July.

e) Scottish Water

BW/PR advised the Board that a draft report setting out two options has been sent to the Scottish Government. The Board discussed what should be the next step and whether the report could be published. It was agreed not to publish now but that as a factual document SFT should consider publishing it at the appropriate time.

Action: Publication to be reconsidered at the next meeting.

4. Business Plan 2010/11 and Resourcing

BW issued printed copies of the business plan for 2010/11. The Board Members advised that they viewed the document as very positive and would be keen to receive additional copies in order to be able to distribute further. BW gave an update on SFT's ongoing recruitment activities highlighting the shift in support staff to permanent employment and that, over the coming months, staff levels will increase to 32 in order to align with the amount of work SFT has recently taken on. The resource plan and fixed costs are all affordable within SFT's budget. BW highlighted Waste and Financing activities as key areas and advised that SFT are currently recruiting for this area. AG pointed out that SFT is now running at capacity and advised that it be careful not to overstretch itself by taking on too much.

5. Communications Plan

BW presented the Communications Plan to the Board and briefed members on the key actions. AG agreed that he is happy to give 3 or 4 high profile interviews/attend some events in order to increase visibility of SFT. The Board agreed that the regional press should be a key target area for communications and that SFT should be on the front foot.

Action: BW to ask KO to attend short slot at next Board meeting.

6. Future Office Accommodation

PR advised that terms have been agreed on the office in Thistle Street and that SG had given the go ahead in principle but needed final confirmation. It was highlighted that the rental rate for the new office is reasonable and provides value for money. SFT will also be looking at further ways of keeping costs down, for example, the purchasing of second-hand furniture. Brochures for 11 Thistle Street were circulated. The Board approved the leasing of office space for SFT at the first floor of 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh and authorised the Chief Executive to sign the lease and any ancillary documents on terms no worse than those set out in the heads of terms dated 22 April 2010.

7. Budget & Finance

a) Month 12 update

PR briefed the Board on the projected costs for the business. There has been a substantial under spend of £1.2 million against budget with SFT still delivering the benefits it set out to deliver within the full budget. Spending on consultancy has been lower than expected. AG welcomed the fact that SFT has not followed the rule of spending what is allocated. Overall running costs are viewed as sustainable and PR reported that it is likely that an under spend will continue this year. GB asked to see a detailed breakdown of the hub budget. The importance of recharging costs where possible and appropriate, as already happens for hub and is likely to happen for some of the work in waste, was agreed.

Action: PR to follow-up with GB re hub budget. BW to update Board periodically on amount of work being carried out on a recharge basis.

b) Investment subsidiary

BW and PR described the options for establishing a subsidiary as a ring-fenced investment vehicle. Following a discussion with the Board Members, it was agreed to establish SFT Investments Ltd as a wholly-owned subsidiary. It was further agreed that Board Membership would be the same as for SFT initially, but that this would be reviewed at a later stage.

8. Any Other Business

a) Benefits Realisation

BW advised that the benefits realisation paper is currently being reviewed and will then be validated externally. BW would like to bring the paper to the Board in August, once it has been validated.

Action: BW to look at dates for August meeting and coordinate.

b) NHT paper

AG reported that the summary paper on NHT he received last week had been very useful as a document to pass on to others.

Action: BW to circulate to Board Members.

c) Future plans

BW reported that he had had breakfast meetings with several team members recently and noted that there is great passion amongst the team for the work that they are doing. BW took the opportunity to formally thank the Board for their help and support over the past year and stated that he was looking forward to leading SFT's further progress, given that achieving value for money will increase in importance in a period of fiscal consolidation.

9. Date of next Meeting

An alternative date will be sought for the 21 June meeting.

Action: BW to send some alternative dates out to the Board Members.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Meeting Dates for 2010 – all meetings start at 2.30pm unless otherwise stated:

25 January	8 March	10 May	29 June at 3.00pm
17 August at 5.00pm	13 September at 3.00pm	15 November	