

MEETING OF THE ENGLAND COMMITTEE

9th July 2024
Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

PRESENT:

John Mothersole	Chair
Ray Coyle	Member
Halima Khan	Member
Karin Woodley	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Phil Chamberlain	England Director
Emma Corrigan	England Director
Jon Eastwood	Deputy Director, England
Mark Purvis	Deputy Director, England
Hannah Rignell	Deputy Director, England
Catherine Lindsey	Senior Governance Officer (Minutes)

FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS:

Mike Bates	Senior Head of Finance (Item 3)
Alice Ridgeway	Funding Manager (Item 3)
Rebecca Maxton	Funding Officer (Item 3)
Surinder Singh	Funding Manager (Item 3)
Vijay Kumari	Funding Officer (Items 3&4)
Natalie Deller	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Amy Ingram	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Claire Webley	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Gillian Halliwell	Head of Regional Funding (North West) (Item 4)
Emma Gedzielewsky	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Tracey Bennet	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Amanda Form	Funding Officer (Item 4)
Juliette Kelvin	Senior Grantmaking Manager (Items 4)

1. COMMITTEE INFORMAL CATCH UP

1.1. The Committee held a closed session for members only.

ESLT and the Senior Governance Officer joined the meeting.

2. WELCOME

2.1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all.

2.2. Apologies were received from Kamran Rashid.

2.3. There were no declarations of interest.

2.4. The minutes for the business meetings of 12 March 2024 and 21 May 2024, and the strategic meetings of 17 April 2024 and 11 June 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record, with corrections regarding attendance to be made to the April and June minutes.

2.5. There were no matters arising.

3. ENGLAND UPDATE

- 3.1. Phil Chamberlain updated the Committee regarding work which was underway following the recent General Election, including the organisation of meetings with the Fund's sponsor department and preparation of letters to be sent to MPs which introduced the Fund and highlighted work taking place in their constituencies.
- 3.2. While the election had delayed the launch of England's portfolio refresh, this had provided an opportunity to engage with new ministers regarding the portfolio and work through policy positioning.

Portfolio Review

- 3.3. Since the Committee's last strategic session there had been considerable staff engagement across the directorate. Outlined plans had been well received and staff were positive about the direction of travel, although some colleagues were cautious and curious about what the review might mean for their work.
- 3.4. There had also been a session during the Board's most recent meeting which had looked at the portfolios together, to demonstrate how the Fund as a whole was delivering the new strategy. The Chair was pleased to report that the Board had responded positively and were reassured by the amount of visibility they had over plans as they developed. He noted that England's plans were the most distinctive of those presented, and while positive he recognised this also brought pressure.
- 3.5. Hannah Rignell noted that ESLT had written to the Committee regarding changes to their lead roles, and they along with the Portfolio Review Team would be following up with members over the summer. The PRT was due to close in October and be replaced by a smaller function, and work was underway to ensure a smooth transition and transfer.
- 3.6. Regarding the planning of key dates for the portfolio refresh in Autumn 2024, the Committee and ESLT were in agreement that it would be best to avoid coinciding with planned celebrations for the 30th birthday of the National Lottery.

3.7. The Phoenix Way Update

Laverne Sampson joined the meeting.

Sections 3.8 - 3.11 are Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)

Laverne Sampson left the meeting.

Latest Financial Position

Mike Bates joined the meeting.

- 3.12. Mike Bates summarised the portfolio's financial position, highlighting performance on Grant Awards, Operating Costs, Income and headline figures from the latest forecast.
- 3.13. In response to queries raised by Committee members, ESLT clarified that data within the body of the update report and the finance annex had been gathered at different points, which explained a discrepancy in some figures.
- 3.14. The Committee and ESLT discussed potential risks to the directorate hitting its year end balance, and any measures for contingency that were in place. They also

reiterated that a pre-emptive session would be needed for the Committee to discuss different scenarios of increased budget and how the directorate and wider Fund might respond in terms of spending.

- 3.15. The Committee praised Mike and finance colleagues for consistently ensuring that the directorate saw a smooth start to the financial year.

Mike Bates left the meeting.

General Update Discussion

- 3.16. The Chair commended the regional reports presented in the England Update which had been distilled and made more reader-friendly since Committee had last provided feedback, and thanked both ESLT and relevant authors.
- 3.17. The Committee were also pleased to see the update from the East of England team, noting the continuous engagement and product now coming out of 'cold spots' in the region. Reflecting on the report of a drop in quality of applications from the North West, the Committee and ESLT discussed what might be causing this, and whether there might be scope for accelerating applicant support aspects of the portfolio refresh.
- 3.18. The Committee also discussed the corporate approach to major initiatives taking place in UK cities, for instance Bradford City of Culture 2025, and if there could be opportunities to link in with the first year of delivery of the new strategy. ESLT assured the Committee that this was given due consideration, and the new strategy addressed how the Fund should approach such events and what its role should be.

Feedback on Funding Decision Papers

- 3.19. The Chair suggested that an offline discussion with some ESLT members would be beneficial to clarify issues around consistency and information requested for inclusion in papers, which at this point were not being captured or tracked effectively.
- 3.20. Of particular note were the following aspects:
- Consistent inclusion of key financial information - several applications for decision at this meeting didn't confirm where match funding would be coming from.
 - Better consistency in report formatting and templates.
 - The Committee wanted a clearer understanding of the variations framework, and clarity around Cost of Living considerations.
 - Committee members had previously discussed how to enhance the EDI assessment of applications, particularly through assessing the makeup of applicants' leadership and governance cohorts.
 - An overview of the nature and scale of unsuccessful applications would be useful.
 - The Committee wanted reports to make it clear what risk sensitivities had been considered during assessments.
 - Reports should make clear any partnership arrangements which were required or had been reviewed, especially if an application included multiple partners.

- 3.21. It was agreed that Governance would develop a log to capture, track and facilitate the progression of these requests and suggestions going forward.

ACTION: Governance

4. GRANT VARIATIONS & FUNDING DECISIONS
Section 4 is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)

- 4.12. Grant Variations and Funding decisions are restricted and can be found in Annex A.

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE DAY

- 5.12. Committee members and ESLT reflected positively on the meeting, and acknowledged that some slips in the standardisation of reports may have resulted from requests to shorten the length of papers. ESLT would address this with Funding Colleagues, and the Chair looked forward to holding further discussions offline, to be supported by the new log developed by Governance.

- 5.13. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 15:25.