

MEETING OF THE ENGLAND COMMITTEE

4th November 2024

Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS:

Ade Desalu	Finance Business Partner (<i>Item 3</i>)
Laverne Sampson	Head of Funding (<i>Item 5</i>)
Shane Ryan	Senior Advisor (<i>Item 5</i>)
Miaya Dangol KC	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Alexandra Cosme	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Jennie Serfontein	Head of Funding Strategic Programmes (<i>Item 7</i>)
Maddie Knell-Taylor	Funding Officer (<i>Item 7</i>)
Vanessa Bennett	Funding Officer (<i>Item 7</i>)
Christine Cooper	Funding Manager (<i>Item 7</i>)
Joe Dobson	Head of Regional Funding (<i>Item 7</i>)
Amanda Form	Funding Officer (<i>Item 7</i>)
Amanda Form	Funding Officer (<i>Item 7</i>)
Jon Sparkes	Funding Officer (<i>Item 7</i>)
Ruth Stephens	Senior Grant Making Manager (<i>Items 6&7</i>)

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. No apologies were received.

2.3. Kamran Rashid had a declared interest in relation to item 5 (The Phoenix Way), and the Bradford Culture Company Ltd application under item 7. Kamran would therefore leave the meeting and not participate in discussion of either application. He had not received a copy of the paper relating to item 5 (P96) ahead of the meeting.

2.4. The minutes presented for review were approved accurate records, subject to a correction being made to paragraph 2.22 of the minute of Committee's 8th October Strategy meeting.

3. ENGLAND UPDATE

New England Portfolio

- 3.1. Phil Chamberlain updated Committee regarding plans for the upcoming launch of the new portfolio, advising of the considerable efforts around internal briefing and training, and external engagement including a successful meeting with the sponsor department. The communications approach had recently been agreed and ESLT would be circulating to Committee members ahead of the launch.

ACTION: ESLT, Governance

- 3.2. Jon Eastwood set out in greater detail what the launch would mean in terms of responsive funding, with updated text on the website to link to the England story and strategy. It would also clearly signal the intent to start assessing applications in line with missions-based criteria, and the implications of high levels of demand. Funding teams were also undertaking outreach work, particularly in areas of high demand, and were ensuring that key organisations were well placed to spread the message locally regarding the portfolio's changing position.
- 3.3. The Chair highlighted that messaging should emphasise that change was taking place with the aim of improving the portfolio's impact, and should encourage organisations to buy into the portfolio's ambition and bring forward great projects from communities the fund served. The Committee wished portfolio colleagues all the best for the launch, and the Chair suggested that before the end of the Financial Year Committee members should be invited to visit projects which were local to them in order to promote key messages regarding the new portfolio.

General Update Discussion

- 3.4. Committee members were pleased to see reference to an EDI dashboard having supported the work of the London and South East team, and asked whether this could be included as an example the next time Committee received an update regarding metrics and progress on developing an equity-based approach. Jon clarified that the dashboard was currently being piloted by the L&SE team along with the Wales portfolio, with the hope of it being rolled out early next year. He also advised that EDI funding colleagues would attend an upcoming meeting to update Committee regarding Fund-wide EDI activity.
- 3.5. Committee, pleased to see that the portfolio was meeting targets around EDI, wished to have a dedicated discussion regarding whether targets were as meaningful as they should be. ESLT confirmed that a request around use of EDI data was already on the Suggestions Tracker, and that the intention was to investigate how currently available data could best be used, and what further data the portfolio would like to have. They agreed that a session with Committee to clarify their expectations would be helpful in informing this work.

REQUEST: ESLT, Governance

- 3.6. Referring to an update regarding the Live Well social prescribing programme in Greater Manchester, the Chair suggested that the local team should consider the time and effort being spent to mediate between parties, given the issue did not lie in a lack of capacity or ability to facilitate.

Latest Financial Position

Ade Desalu joined the meeting.

- 3.7. The presentation provided at Annex A summarised the portfolio's financial position.
- 3.8. The portfolio was currently ahead of forecast on grant awards, and the Committee thanked to staff for their work noting that the Fund's position was beneficial for the sector.
- 3.9. Given the recent government budget announcement, Committee queried whether the portfolio should be anticipating movement due to the 2025/26 National Insurance increase, which would see grantholders facing a 2% increase in employee costs. ESLT advised that at present the portfolio would continue with a flexible approach to variation and uplift requests, while affording staff the time to appraise and feedback on whether the approach was sufficient.
- 3.10. It was clarified to committee that £20m of unallocated funding had now been allocated to regional spend through a transfer to Reaching Communities. Committee members also discussed the impact of changes to NLAFA on the duration of projects applying for funding.
- 3.11. The Committee thanked Ade for the clear report presented, and suggested that a chart showing commitment for future years would be useful going forward.

Ade Desalu left the meeting.

4. ENGLAND COMMITTEE SUGGESTIONS TRACKER

- 4.1. Jon Eastwood introduced the session, which gave Committee an opportunity to provide feedback on the tracker of requests and suggestions which they had commissioned during their July meeting and had initially been presented to them in September. He provided an update regarding some key themes identified, including the quality of paperwork and use of templates, and ongoing discussions regarding the availability and use of EDI data.
- 4.2. Committee provided feedback which could be summarised as follows:
 - Tracker updates should not substitute for substantive discussions of issues by the Committee.
 - The tracker was intended to assure Committee, at a strategic level, that issues were being captured and that progress was planned with a clear trajectory for implementation. The level of detail currently tracked was useful at an operational level, but a higher level headline report should be presented to Committee which also committed ESLT to bringing more detailed papers for discussion at a future meeting.
 - Individual staff members within ESLT should be specified as owners.
 - Additional columns should be included to specify what was currently blocking a given request from being implemented, what action would be needed to unblock, and when implementation may be expected.
- 4.3. Noting that strategic meetings had been dedicated to discussion of the England Portfolio Review over the last year, ESLT advised they would be looking to re-introduce a broader spectrum of topics for strategic discussion in the new year. They presented a list of topics that weren't currently logged on the tracker, intended to

sound out Committee's appetite for substantive discussion at future meetings.

- 4.4. Committee stated that they did not commission the tracker with a view to it serving as a list of topics for future discussion, they wanted a mechanism whereby their requests and suggestions were logged and progress tracked. They suggested that a discussion regarding future agenda items be held once a revised, more strategic version of the tracker had been presented to them. Members expressed that discussions regarding the availability and use of EDI data, and clustering of applications below the £500k threshold should be prioritised on the tracker and for discussion at upcoming meetings.

ACTION: ESLT, Governance

- 4.5. Noting the feedback received, it was agreed that a revised version of the tracker be prepared and populated with the additional fields specified.

ACTION: Governance, ESLT

5. THE PHOENIX WAY

Section 5 is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)

Kamran Rashid left the meeting.

Laverne Sampson and Shane Ryan joined the meeting.

- 5.1. Funding decisions are restricted, a record of this decision can be found in Annex A.

Laverne Sampson and Shane Ryan left the meeting.

Kamran Rashid joined the meeting.

6. GRANT VARIATIONS & FUNDING DECISIONS

Section 6 is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)

- 6.1. Grant Variations and Funding decisions are restricted and can be found in Annex A.
- 6.2. In line with the interest declared under 2.3, Kamran Rashid disconnected from the meeting for the duration of Committee's discussion regarding the application from Bradford Culture Company Ltd.

7. REFLECTIONS

- 7.1. While acknowledging that the quality of funding papers had improved since the last meeting, the Committee asked ESLT to continue working on their oversight and approval process. They also, however, praised funding colleagues' handling of their presentations, and indicated that decision-making at the meeting had felt more collective as a result of the ongoing work to improve papers in line with Committee's suggestions.
- 7.2. ESLT and Committee members recognised that a number of significant funding decisions for the portfolio had been approved during the meeting, and they were particularly pleased to mark a milestone moment for The Phoenix Way. Kamran Rashid was thanked for gracefully handling his position as one of the Phoenix Partners and a Committee member.
- 7.3. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 3.58pm.