

Chair's report on Council meeting of 23 November 2007

The following people were present at the meeting:-

Trustees

John Gaventa (Chair)
Maureen Connelly
Gareth Davies
Sandra Dawson
Norman Sanson
Angela Sealey
Richard Taylor
Stan Thekaekara

Corporate Management and Staff

Barbara Stocking (Director)
John Shaw (Finance & Information Services Director)
Jane Cotton (Human Resources Director)
Penny Lawrence (International Director)
Phil Bloomer (Campaigns & Policy Director)
Cathy Ferrier (Fundraising & Supporter Marketing Director)
David McCullough (Trading Director)
Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)
Anne Gornall (Policy and Trustees Officer)
Keith Johnston (Oxfam International Chair Designate)

Apologies were received from Andy Friend, Jackie Gunn and Adebayo Olukoshi. The Chair welcomed incoming trustees (Susannah Cox and Vanessa Godfrey). They were attending as observers, and their appointments were scheduled to be confirmed at the AGM.

This was the final meeting of Council's annual cycle for 2006/07 and took place in Oxford.

1. The Director gave an update on recent events. These included:-

- Oxfam's response to the Bangladesh cyclone. Trustees reflected on the BBC coverage of this as part of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal. Penny Lawrence advised that the cyclone response was taking place via partners who were handling the distribution of key items.
- *Climate Change*. Barbara Stocking gave details of Oxfam's planned involvement in the forthcoming UN framework convention on climate change (3-14 December 2007). Oxfam's central message was to focus on some ground rules including adaptation.
- *Let's Talk*. Trustees were given details and publicity material about 'Let's Talk', a gender campaign being launched on 26 November. The campaign had been designed in India, and the rest of Oxfam was now taking part.
- *Oxfam International*. Barbara Stocking gave a brief update on the agenda for the Oxfam International Executive Directors and Board meeting in late November 2007. Keith Johnston, the incoming Chair of Oxfam International, then spoke about his vision of the Oxfam International priorities. Trustees raised some additional points on Oxfam International in the wider context of global movements, the relationship with partners, and accountability issues. They thanked Keith Johnston for his comments and for his open approach to the forthcoming agenda of Oxfam International.

2. Council then approved Oxfam's strategic plan update 2008/09-2010/11. This placed a greater emphasis on climate change and on Oxfam's role in calling for a more just carbon allocation; from experience in 70 countries, it could demonstrate that climate change was impacting on poor people now. Trustees also considered some papers on the strategic plan process and monitoring. These included a number of mechanisms for tracking, monitoring and delivery of strategic plan reviews to Council together with a possible rephrasing of the strategic plan cycle (to be considered initially by the Trustee Audit and Finance Group).
3. Council reviewed the final draft of the accountability report (an earlier draft had been considered at the July Council meeting), and some final clarifications were suggested. After a final review by the Chair and Director, Council agreed that the accountability report should be published on the Oxfam website by the end of 2007. The report and its reception during the first year would be reviewed by Council at its meeting in December 2008.
4. The Honorary Treasurer (Gareth Davies) presented the annual report of the Trustee Audit and Finance Group. He advised trustees that the external auditors (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP) had not made any high priority recommendations. Council agreed the recommendations in the report, and expressed appreciation for the progress which had been made on control in Oxfam. Trustees also noted the annual control assurance report together with senior management's efforts to embed effective and creative risk management throughout the organisation.
5. Council agreed the majority of trustee and group appointments for the year 2007/08; final appointments will be made in February 2008 in tandem with the annual review of Council.
6. Council was notified about two small requested ex gratia payments in connection with legacies made to Oxfam. These were subsequently authorised electronically by a majority of trustees.
7. Finally Council paid tribute to Norman Sanson who was retiring after eight years on Council. He had made a very significant contribution to Council and to Oxfam, and would be particularly missed for his insight, wisdom and leadership.

During the afternoon trustees joined the larger meeting of the Oxfam Association and debated some key strategic issues e.g. humanitarian policy and dilemmas, the private sector's role in poverty reduction. This meeting adjourned to the AGM, and in the evening Council and the Association were joined by the Friends of Oxfam who attended for their annual meeting.

John Gaventa
Chair