

Status: Public

OXFAM GB

CHAIR'S REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING ON 13 MARCH 2015

The following people were present at the meeting:

Trustees

Karen Brown (Chair)

David Pitt-Watson

Katy Steward

Tricia Zipfel

Steve Walton

James Darcy

Ruth Ruderham

Gavin Stewart

Kul Gautam

Nkoyo Toyo

Rajiv Joshi

Corporate Management and Staff

Mark Goldring (Chief Executive)

Penny Lawrence (Deputy Chief Executive)

Andrew Horton (Trading Director)

Olga Ghazaryan (International Programmes Director)

Bob Humphreys (Finance & Information Services Director)

Jack Lundie (Communications Director)

Tim Hunter (Fundraising Director)

Francoise Vanni (Campaigns, Policy and Influencing Services Director)

Joss Saunders (Company Secretary)

Anne Gornall (Governance and Leadership Team Officer)

Apologies were received from Marjorie Scardino.

The Chair welcomed Namukale Chintu (Association and Trustee Audit and Finance Group (TAFG) member) who was attending as an observer. The Chair also welcomed Tim Holmes (Regional Director of Middle East and Commonwealth of Independent States) who attended for the morning session. The Chair thanked Francoise Vanni and the Campaigns Policy and Influencing Team for the trustee seminar on the previous evening which had given trustees an invaluable insight into the choices the team needs to make as it develops its strategic framework for 2015 and beyond. This would return to Council for sign off. Declarations of interest were made.

Chief Executive's Report

Mark Goldring gave an update on the most recent developments in Oxfam's ebola work, including: Sue Turrell is now leading on Oxfam's ebola response in West Africa to ensure effective management of the work and transition in the longer term, including the scaling up of WASH work; and that Mark had recently attended a meeting in Brussels with the President of Liberia. Tim Holmes updated trustees on the situation in Syria and the region, including: in Jordan Oxfam and other agencies are working in a very complex and challenging context; they face some technical and public health challenges; progress is being made but in the meantime refugee families are living in harsh conditions; in Syria Oxfam is reaching 1.2m people through partnership and WASH work; but there is a risk to staff with daily mortar attacks. Trustees expressed appreciation for the achievements in Jordan and Syria, acknowledging that the work was difficult, slow and frustrating. They thanked the staff concerned for their efforts and their ongoing work.

Jack Lundie gave details of ongoing public engagement work and Mark Goldring provided an update on the 2020 process and there was discussion about the approach to enable Oxfam to build on the experience of the single management structure and to implement a new model. Oxfam GB remains committed to a single Oxfam regional team running one Oxfam programme and the vision of country programmes becoming affiliates, but the new structure needs to be further tested.

Annual Plan (Corporate Objectives and Budget)

The Chair welcomed Ali Henderson (Head of Corporate Planning and Reporting) and Saskia Jones (Head of Communications Engagement). Jack Lundie gave a presentation to update trustees on the organisational story. It is a tool to enable a clear identity for deeper supporter, partner, staff and volunteer engagement. The concept had been refined following input from the October 2014 and January 2015 Council discussions and from the Leadership and Senior Management Team. Council congratulated Jack Lundie and Leadership Team on the progress made on this narrative. Building on this framework, Mark Goldring introduced the draft corporate objectives and budget.

The budget had been finalised on the basis of guidance from Council. Olga Ghazaryan gave more details of strategic choices that Oxfam GB had made for investment. Andrew Horton also spoke about the strategic choices made in regard to the investment in shops, which is proceeding as discussed previously with Council, but at a slower pace and in a more cost effective way. Ali Henderson responded to questions about the corporate objectives which linked with the Oxfam GB Accountability Report 2013-14. Bob Humphreys gave a presentation to summarise the current year outlook, the key budget drivers and a budget summary up to 2017/18. The Honorary Treasurer gave details of the discussion at TAFG. Having also noted the organisational risk register, Council approved the Annual Plan.

Staff survey

As lead trustee for Human Resources, Katy Steward chaired this session. She welcomed the following: Sarah Ireland, Head of Strategy, Planning and Organisation Development; Tina Trythall, Head of Insights; Saskia Jones, Head of Communications Engagement; and Tim Burridge, Learning and Organisation Development Manager. Tina Trythall gave a presentation which summarised what had been learnt from the staff survey. Saskia Jones gave a presentation on communicating with staff. Karen Brown thanked Katy Steward, Penny Lawrence and the other staff for their input to the overall and group discussions. Council looked forward to a further update in July Council with a full paper for discussion in December.

Oxfam GB Accountability Report 2013/14

The Chair welcomed Ali Henderson for this discussion. She drew trustees' attention to the report and it was discussed. Council agreed that the report could now be finalised subject to the points raised in the meeting. It would be published on the website and Oxfam GB would now move to a two year accountability reporting cycle in tandem with Oxfam International.

Governance review

A number of points were raised including: it was helpful for Leadership Team to have Council's ongoing challenge on risk; groups like TAFG are doing a good job in providing a constructive challenge, which also fed into Council; some trustees expressed appreciation for constructive discussions at the Programme Review Group and its work on upstream risk and this group has considerable potential to supplement and enrich Council discussions; given the crowded agendas, it was agreed to minorly adjust Council timings for two of its four meetings per year. Mark Goldring observed that Council was supportive and creative and while staff updates and presentations were important, he emphasized the importance of allowing enough time for Council to discuss issues.

Other Governance matters

Programme Review Group terms of reference: Terms of reference to enhance the group's role as an official committee of Council were approved.

Declarations of interest: Joss Saunders gave an update about the information contained on the trustees' register of interests.

Trustee Audit and Finance Group on 27 February: The TAFG minutes were noted.

Remuneration Committee on 27 February: An update was provided.

Programme Review Group on 12 March: An update was provided.

Recruitment and Development Group: An update was provided.

The next meeting of Council will be on 9 and 10 July 2015, in Johannesburg.

Karen Brown
Chair