

Board Meeting

11 December 2017

6.00pm Woodend, Scarborough



RAINCLIFFE
WOOD
COMMUNITY
ENTERPRISE

MINUTES

Present:

Robert Sword (RS) - Chair, Dave Evans (DE), Ian Horton (IH), Cllr Andrew Jenkinson (AJ), Robert Peacock (RP), James Risker (JR) Julie Stewart (JS)

In attendance

Angela Doherty (AD) - Administrator and Company Secretary, Nigel Lowthrop (NL), Mark Walton (MW), Shared Assets

Description

Action

1. Apologies

Karl Gerhardsen (KG), Stephen Parker (SP), Simon Marrington (SM), Roy Blenkin (RB) and Cllr Bill Chatt (BC)

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3 Making Local Woodlands Work (Plunkett Foundation): Business Plan Review

The Business Plan and Governance Review had been circulated to all Board members in advance of the meeting. Members unable to attend were invited to submit comments to the Chair to bring to the meeting. Comments were received from KG and SP. For the benefit of those not at the meeting, the comments submitted by KG and SP will be emailed to all Board Members.

RS read out the email he had received from KG in which KG stated his support for the review which he believed was essential for RWCE moving forward. He was fully supportive of having the education team in place first and agreed with the proposed partial funding of the business over three years. (SP submitted detailed comments.) RS handed out copies to those at the meeting, and read the main points. There followed a general discussion and the key points noted were:

- The approach taken is deliberately not overly detailed. The review sets out the bones of a discussion which it is then up to the Board to flesh out.
- Specific project work which is funded (eg WATW) is not included as it does not impact on the Business Plan. For example, the work carried out by Hidden Horizons is specific to a project so there is no capacity to do other work.
- The original Business Plan included Biomass opportunities but those opportunities have gone – Government policies have changed, and incentives cut therefore a new plan is needed to identify current opportunities. The Government has identified Scarborough as an area of educational need so is putting money into education based projects.
- It is assumed that the proportion of costs not covered by grant funding will be covered by income generated by RWCE. This would be on a sliding scale from 80% funding in Year 1, 40% in Year 2, 20% in Year 3 with the aim of being fully self-funded in Year 4.
- It has previously been agreed that it is critical for RWCE to have a paid staff resource to enable it to develop with the priority being to appoint a Development Manager to take the organisation forward and develop the business as flexibly as possible.

- Projected turnover over the next 5 years is not expected to change much but where the money comes from will change as the funded proportion diminishes and the commercial income proportion increases.
- It is proposed that two funding applications are submitted – one to focus on covering the core costs (initial staffing ie Development Manager/Admin support, offices, professional services,) and one for the business development (next stage staffing ie Foresters/Rangers, equipment, any other revenue costs). Each should link to the other.
- Funding bodies are no longer focused on only innovative, new ideas. They are keen to support a model which may replicate another organisation, as long as it works within the local setting. They will focus on sustainability and whether immediate economic needs will be met rather than innovation.
- Appointing the right Development Manager is critical. The post would, of course, be promoted locally but it would also need to be advertised nationally to ensure that the right person with the right skills is appointed. That could well be someone from the local area but could equally be someone from elsewhere. That person would then build the staff team. The person appointed would need to be proactive, entrepreneurial and adaptable to take advantage of any business opportunities and to find other sources of income as the funding reduces. The experience at Hill Holt was that the initial manager was from outside the area, but the team built around them was from the local community.
- Both Esmee Fairburn and Tudor Trust (both funding sources) are not particularly prescriptive so RWCE can state what it would like to do, and set its own targets, rather than be overly directed by the funders.
- It is important that any funding applications include the ability of RWCE to retain any surplus it makes, rather than having it clawed back by the funding body.
- RWCE can only employ staff if it is successful in its funding bids. Both Esmee Fairburn and Tudor Trust have a two-stage application process. Feedback on the initial stage one application is usually about 4 weeks, so it will be clear very quickly if the bids have been rejected. If they pass Stage 1, there is an 80% success rate on stage two applications.
- The lack of a lease should not stop the funding bids being submitted but, for Stage 2, there will need to be, at the very least, a letter 'in principle' from SBC in respect of the lease. (RS has been promised an update on the lease from Martin Pedley at SBC but has still not had anything. RS to email AJ who will follow up directly with Martin Pedley.)
- MW has a day and half worth of time left so he will be able to provide a little more support.
- If Stage 1 applications are successful, the Plunkett Foundation may be able to provide support with the Stage 2 applications.
- What the support might be from the Woodland Trust should be clearer at the January Board meeting when Mark Feather will be giving his presentation.
- The proposed timeline, assuming funding applications are successful, leaves 6 months before the Development Manager is appointed and able to start taking the organisation forward.
- It could be worth considering applying for a local "Awards for All Grant" to run a programme of activities in 2018. This could perhaps also fund a consultative event.

RS

To move things forward, it was agreed that a Board Focus-Group should be established to focus on the funding applications and to look at opportunities over the next 6 months. The group would need to elect a leader and feedback to the Board at each meeting.

The remit of the group is:

1. Plan for and allocate funding over the six-month period to enable the group to seek professional advice where necessary, to fund the grant applications, and to stage events to consult, communicate and present the proposals to Members and the local community.
2. Submit grant applications to the Tudor Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (as well as others), as per the Business Plan Review.
3. Arrange at least one consultative event for the benefit of members and the local community. (Hidden Horizons might be the appropriate adviser, using existing funding).
4. Prepare a Brief and Job Description for the appointment of a Development Manager.
5. Prepare a timeline post the appointment of the Development Manager.

The following Board members were proposed for the Sub-Group: Steve Parker, Dave Evans, Simon Marrington, Robert Peacock. DE and RP agreed to take on this role. RS will email SM and SP to ask if they would be willing to be a part of the group. JS offered her support if required.

RS

For the Governance Review a similar Sub-Group is proposed but this will be raised at the Board meeting in January.

The Board **AGREED** with the board principles of the Business Plan and Governance Review proposals. The Board **AGREED** that a Sub-Group of Board members should be set up to move things forward, with the remit as stated above.

4. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 16 January 2018, 6pm, Woodend

All members of the Board are bound by the principle of Collective Responsibility. This means that whilst Board members are at liberty to express their individual points of view at Board meetings, and are encouraged to engage in full and frank discussion, once a matter has been agreed, that decision is then owned by the Board. All Board members should present a united front outside of the meetings taking collective responsibility for that decision whether they personally agreed with it or not. Board members should not share with people outside of the Board the views expressed by individual Board members in discussions, or how they voted. Only the decision should be shared as recorded in the minutes.