

MEETING OF THE ENGLAND COMMITTEE
10th September 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

 Catherine Lindsey Senior Governance Officer (Minutes)

FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS:

Hannah Rignell Deputy Director, England (*Item 3*)
 Mike Bates Senior Head of Finance (*Item 3*)
 Natalie Deller Funding Officer (*Item 4*)
 Ella Mizon Funding Manager (*Item 4*)
 Gillian Hart Funding Manager (*Item 4*)
 Juliette Kelvin Senior Grant Making Manager (*Item 4*)
 Nicola Thurbon Senior Head of Regional Funding (*Item 5*)
 Tracey Bennett Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Peter Foggo Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Heidi Haxeltine Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Lucy Tennant Funding Manager (*Item 5*)
 Jaymie-Lee Tapsell Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Rachel Mitchell Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Helen Snowden Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Nicholas Timms Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Christine Cooper Funding Manager (*Item 5*)
 Octavia Gilby Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Jenny Fish Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Suko Fricke Funding Manager (*Item 5*)
 Steve Lowden Funding Officer (*Item 5*)
 Ruth Stephens Senior Grant Making Manager (*Item 5*)
 Mark Purvis Deputy Director, England (*Item 6*)
 Laverne Sampson Head of Funding(*Item 6*)
 Shane Ryan Senior Advisor to SMT(*Item 6*)

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. The Chair advised that Kamran Rashid had a declared interest in relation to Item 6, as CEO of Impact Hub Bradford which was one of the Phoenix partners. Kamran

would therefore leave the meeting and not participate in discussion of this item. He had not received a copy of the relevant paper (P86) ahead of the meeting.

- 2.4. The minutes for the business meeting of 9 July 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. ENGLAND UPDATE

- 3.1. Phil Chamberlain gave a brief update regarding ongoing political engagement. With the new government was considering a Community Cohesion Strategy, the Fund's CEO had attended a recent roundtable event to discuss how communities could best be supported.

Racial Violence and Disorder

- 3.2. Phil Chamberlain and Jon Eastwood updated the Committee regarding the response to the nation-wide riots and disorder seen during August 2024. Alongside support to staff and agreed Fund-wide core messaging, regional teams had reached out in a targeted way to grantholders and offered solidarity, support and flexibility around what they might need to effectively support affected communities.
- 3.3. The Chair praised the quick and decisive action taken to support grantholders and communities, noting however that there were broader considerations around what happened during the period of disorder, and what it might tell the portfolio about how it should deploy its resources.
- 3.4. The Fund would be reflecting on lessons learned from its overarching response, with a formal report being tabled for the Board at their September meeting, to include a letter from the Fund's Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Network. The Chair requested that the report and letter also be circulated to the Committee following consideration by Board.

ACTION: Governance

- 3.5. ESLT advised that the portfolio would be carrying out its own lessons learned exercise, which would be reflected in future reporting to Committee.

Portfolio Review

- 3.6. Hannah Rignell provided a brief update on work carried out since the Committee's strategic session in June. The Committee would be considering the portfolio refresh at their meetings in late September and early October, ahead of an anticipated launch of the new portfolio in early November. The Chair thanked Committee members for their time and input on specific areas of the review.

Trusts

- 3.7. Phil informed Committee that some long-standing Trusts established by the Fund were approaching closure. All three were keen to come and speak with the Committee once the overarching portfolio approach had been agreed, in order to discuss what came next for the projects they had supported and what the portfolio's legacy ambitions were in this space. The Committee agreed that reflections from the Trusts would be welcome at future meetings.

ACTION: Governance, ESLT

'Suggestions Tracker'

- 3.8. Following a request made during the last Committee meeting, a 'tracker' for members' suggestions had been compiled and circulated for comment. The Chair

advised that the document was a good initial step but further work was needed. He asked Committee members to provide feedback by Friday 20th September in order to inform a further draft.

ACTION: England Committee Members

Latest Financial Position

Mike Bates joined the meeting.

- 3.9. The presentation provided at Annex A summarised the portfolio's financial position. Mike highlighted the impact of The Phoenix Way on some figures including the projected spend profile, and confirmed that income was on track for this year's forecast. The Committee was grateful for the positive update and thanked Mike and the team for their continued hard work.
- 3.10. In response to queries from the Committee, ESLT advised that travel expenditure was now exceeding budget due to a combination of some gradual reductions to budget, and an increase in colleagues travelling for meetings. This was not a negative outcome, but ESLT were keeping an eye and would need to adjust during the directorate's budget-setting process.

Mike Bates left the meeting.

General Update Discussion

- 3.11. The Chair noted that a number of regional updates provided within the paper referred to a deterioration in the quality of incoming applications. Committee discussed possible causes and the most appropriate approach to address the issue. ESLT advised that teams were picking up locally where there was infrastructure to do so, and elsewhere there was consensus that colleagues were currently managing transition to the new portfolio, and would signal the Fund's position and work with partners accordingly when in a position to do so.
- 3.12. Committee members noted the improved presentation of EDI figures in the England Update paper, and were pleased to see a general trend of the percentage of awards granted to organisations supporting/led by groups with protected characteristics being higher than the percentage of applications received by those groups. There was, however, an anomaly for applications relating to black and minoritised communities, where the percentage of awards granted was lower than applications received. The Chair requested that this specific matter be looked into by ESLT and an update circulated to the Committee via email before the next business meeting.
- ACTION:** ESLT
- 3.13. Committee discussed that there was a meaningful difference between organisations working with communities, and organisations being led by members of those communities. They indicated that they would prefer to see the England Update EDI section specifically reporting on the latter category.
- 3.14. The above matter had been raised at several meetings, and while Committee had been advised previously that legislative issues around data protection restricted reporting, Committee asked for further detail regarding the actions being undertaken to progress their requests, and when the information that the portfolio was measuring would be reflected in reporting to Committee at a headline level.

3.15. Members also requested a clearer and more detailed explanation of the legislative issues affecting reporting in this space, noting that data was collected from applicants but not analysed. ESLT provided some context to the Committee and assured them that the information was considered during pipeline and used as a prioritising factor. They agreed to take this back to teams as it should be reflected in reporting, but the Committee didn't see this presented consistently.

REQUEST: ESLT

3.16. Committee members noted a continued trend of variation requests coming to them for grants which had initially been awarded just below the threshold for England Committee consideration, with the subsequent uplift taking them above the threshold. The Chair asked ESLT for insight as to why this might be taking place.

3.17. ESLT, while noting that the number of applications coming to the Committee for consideration had trebled, recognised the issue being flagged by members. They informed Committee that the cause could relate to both timing and cultural behaviours within teams, which leadership were actively managing. Directors advised that governance arrangements as a whole would be considered as part of the portfolio review, which could help to improve issues around the time lag between submission of applications and approval by Committee.

3.18. The Committee were keen for this matter to be addressed, expressing concern that applications that required Committee's scrutiny weren't receiving it, and that applicants might be under-pitching proposals to avoid the £500k threshold, and therefore weren't receiving appropriate levels of funding. They asked ESLT to examine the clustering of applications below threshold and consider what changes needed to be made to encourage a shift in behaviour.

REQUEST: ESLT

4. GRANT VARIATIONS & FUNDING DECISIONS *Annex A is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)*

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

4.2. A number of broader discussions took place during consideration of funding applications, which could be summarised as follows:

- Committee requested that a standardised template be developed for the presentation of funding and variation requests, in order to help Funding colleagues set out different aspects of applications more clearly and consistently.
- The template should also require Funding staff to quantify justifications for funding put forward by applicants
- Due to a number of errors and inconsistencies identified in papers provided, the Committee asked ESLT to revisit the mechanisms by which papers were prepared, reviewed and signed off, noting that responsibility and accountability for quality assurance sat with leadership.
- asked ESLT to articulate the portfolio's position on applications from large national organisations, and how these should be approached. Members noted that a well established and thought out Equity-Based Approach could provide a useful lens for considering such applications.

REQUESTS: ESLT

Kamran Rashid left the meeting.

5. THE PHOENIX WAY - UPDATE

Mark Purvis, Laverne Sampson and Shane Ryan joined the meeting.

Section 5 is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)

Mark Purvis, Laverne Sampson and Shane Ryan left the meeting.

6. REFLECTIONS

Kamran Rashid joined the meeting.

6.1. The Chair thanked ESLT for being receptive to challenge and feedback during the meeting, referring to several suggestions and requests that the Committee would now expect to be actioned and progressed.

6.2. He also indicated there was a need for thinking and engagement regarding the Committee's role and purpose, particularly with regard to how it was perceived by Funding colleagues. Time should also be set aside to build on the existing dynamic between ESLT and Committee members, in aid of strengthening the overall operation and mechanism of the Committee.

ACTION: ESLT, Governance

Jon Eastwood and Catherine Lindsey left the meeting.

6.3. Committee continued their discussion in a closed session with England Directors.

6.4. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 3.59pm.