

ECUB 10/30

Minutes

Board meeting, 14 October 2010



Equality Challenge Unit

EQUALITY CHALLENGE UNIT

Company limited by guarantee

Nineteenth meeting of the Board of Directors

Held Thursday 14 October 2010 at ECU, Queens House, 55/56 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3LJ

Chair of the Board

John Brooks

Board members

Janet Beer

Chris Brink

Felicity Cooke

Paul Olomolaiye

Colin Riordan

Jenny Share

Barbara Stephens

Observers in attendance

Helen Bowles, GuildHE

Vikki Burge, HEFCW

Fariba Dashtgard, HEFCE

Jocelyn Prudence, UCEA

ECU secretariat

Juliet Adams, Head of Resources

David Ruebain, Chief Executive

Apologies

Paul Clark, UUK

Tariq Durrani

Jon Gray, SFC

Christina McAnea

John Pritchard, HEA

David Williams

Ginnie Willis, LFHE

Item 1 – Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed members to the nineteenth meeting of the Board and noted apologies.
2. The Chair acknowledged the findings of the recent Browne Review and the likely impact of the impending Comprehensive Spending Review and concluded that the position of the sector had shifted since the Board last met in July.
3. The Chair went on to give an update from the Funders Forum meeting which had taken place the previous week. The need for scenario planning in light of the spending cuts was reiterated.

Item 2 – Report on 2011-13 strategy consultation

4. The Chief Executive took Board members through the latest draft of the strategy, which had been amended following conclusion of the recent consultative process with stakeholders. In particular, he drew attention to the two additional objectives and noted that it was an iterative process. An updated version of the KPI section and a list of potential projects for 2011 were tabled.
5. The following comments were made during a discussion that followed:
 - Original document written in the context of normality
 - Important not to lose ambition of the process
 - Real impact of privatisation
 - Question of survival of the idea that equality is paramount
 - Value of ECU down to stakeholders
 - ECU could be commissioned to undertake an impact assessment of implications of Browne Review
 - Any impact assessment must consider all protected characteristics
 - Important to await the detail, government will have to respond with a White Paper
 - Any White Paper will relate to England, need to consider all four nations
 - Conditions of existence will change, there will be issues of institutional autonomy
 - More diversity, less inequality
 - If sector fragments then may be more diverse, topic for a think piece
 - Equality is about equality, diversity is about positive impact of difference
 - Important to reaffirm key beliefs in times of uncertainty
6. It was agreed that the Foreword be redrafted to headline the changes in the current economic funding situation and the strategic objectives be limited to four and be reprioritised. The updated version of the strategy and the tabled KPI paper would then be circulated to the Board for further consideration. The projects list for 2011 would be reviewed again once the strategy and KPIs had been finalised. **ACTION: SMT**
7. The Chair thanked the ECU team for work to date.

Item 3 – Financial matters

8. The profit and loss, balance sheet and budget for the current financial year were received and accepted.

Item 4 - Audit and Risk Committee matters

9. The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 5 October 2010 were received.
10. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee reported that the risk register presented had been reviewed by the Committee and alterations suggested including mitigation and introducing a traffic light system. The Company Secretary noted that action plans were being developed for those risks identified as high-level and acknowledged that the register would require further work in light of the spending cuts. It was also noted that the risks must align to the strategic objectives once these had been finalised. **ACTION: JA**
11. The Company Secretary gave a brief update on the search for new office premises, noting the fact that alongside consideration of alternative space within Queens House, a potential opportunity had arisen to lease space within the University of London building Senate House. This was being explored. **ACTION: JA**

Item 5 – Latest conference programme

12. The Chief Executive presented the latest conference programme and explained that ECU had been unsuccessful in securing a government minister. It was agreed that in light of the spending cuts it might be worth asking again and the Chair offered to contact Lynne Featherstone directly. **ACTION: JB**
13. The Chief Executive noted that the cost of registration had prevented some stakeholders from attending but all agreed that it had not been overpriced. The Company Secretary explained that ECU had recouped 30% at the last conference and planned to recoup 50% this time. The HEFCE observer noted that the funders would expect ECU to recoup even more next time.
14. It was agreed that the welcome be extended prior to the plenary sessions on both days to accommodate a presentation by the Chair and Deputy Chair on the implications of the spending cuts and the possible impact on ECU. It was also agreed that a strategic scenario planning exercise be incorporated into the Board development session taking place at the close of the conference. **ACTION: SMT**

Item 6 - Articles of Association

15. Further to decisions taken at the July Board meeting and AGM, and subsequent circulation of a tracked change version by e-mail to all Board members, the UUK and GuildHE representatives had proposed a small number of additional changes to Articles 42, 43 and 46 to accurately reflect the process for nominations of directors by UUK and GuildHE and the appointment of the Chair of the Board And Deputy Chair of the Board. These were approved without further comment.

16. It was proposed that a copy of the accompanying draft written resolution, which follows, be passed as a special resolution:

THAT new Articles of Association in the form annexed to this Resolution are approved and adopted in substitution for and to the exclusion of the existing Articles of Association of the Company.

17. The Written Resolution was considered carefully by the members and its terms noted. It was resolved that the Written Resolution be approved and forwarded, when appropriate, to the representatives at UUK and GuildHE, as members of the Company, for their signature in formal approval of the revised Articles of Association. **ACTION: JA**
18. It was noted that ECU was required to keep a copy of the Written Resolution and to file it together with a copy of the revised Articles of Association at Companies House. **ACTION: JA**

Item 7 – Board/Committee vacancy

19. The Company Secretary reported that following re-advertisement, one candidate was to be interviewed by the Nominations Committee immediately following the Board meeting. **ACTION: JA**

Item 8 – Chief Executive Report

20. The Chief Executive took members through his report, drawing specific attention to the progress made to date under each of the income diversification strands. He also pointed to the recent publication of his book on the Equality Act and noted that ECU had a small number of copies to send to key stakeholders. Lastly, the Chief Executive acknowledged that given the circumstances it was probably not the best time to change ECU's name. It was agreed, however, that it remain as a possibility for future consideration.
21. The Board was broadly supportive of the current efforts to forward the income diversification agenda and suggested that the subscription model should not be left unexplored. It was agreed that a paper be presented for discussion at Board level in the New Year. **ACTION: SMT**
22. The Report was received and accepted with no further comments.

Item 9 – Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 July 2010

23. The minutes from the last meeting were received and accepted.

Item 11 - Matters arising

24. There were no matters arising.

Item 12 - Any other business

25. There was no other business.