AAETO Board – 01/10/21

Minutes of a meeting of the AAETO Board of Directors held via Zoom Conference call on Friday 1st Oct 2021.

Minutes prepared by Company Secretary

Present	Pat Carrington (PC) (Chair), Dipa Ganguli (DG) (Vice Chair), Simon Martin (SM), Debbie Scarborough (DS), Arinola Edeh (AE)
Attending	Sue Pember (Director of Policy and External Relations (PD), Charlie McKenna (Operations Officer/AAETO Company Secretary (CS) Henry Taylor (HT) – HOLEX intern joined at 14:00 to present his findings to the board

1. Apologies, quoracy, conflict of interest

- No apologies.
- Quorum present.
- No conflicts of interest.

2. Review Minutes of last Board meeting

Directors received a copy of the minutes of the Board meeting held on 11th May 21 and accepted them as an accurate record.

3. AAETO Company Secretary's report

The CS had submitted a paper which the board had considered in advance. This included updates on the topics below.

3.1. Appointment of new board member

The board acknowledged the appointment of Arinola Edeh as a director of AAETO (decided upon via email correspondence between board meetings) and welcomed her to the board. They agreed to add her to the company's bank accounts.

ACTION 1. CS to progress adding AE to the AAETO bank accounts.

3.2. Appointment of 2 interns

It was noted that the Chair signed off appointing two interns earlier in the summer (based on differing skills and background and bringing different approaches to the role).

3.3. Consideration of board structure/processes/workload of Operations Officer

SM reported back following a previous discussion with the CS:

- It was agreed that the new split of board papers into Company Secretarial, Finance and Management elements is useful.
- It was noted that 5 is an appropriate number of directors, considering the size of the organisation and the skills/background of the board members. Given this background it was also noted that the directors do not need any additional training, but that we should review the Nolan Principles.
- It was noted that there is no particular need to formally allocate areas of responsibility to individual board members (who will naturally take lead where they have more expertise).
- It was noted that there is no further need for CS to receive additional training for the Company Secretary role.

ACTION 2. SM to review Nolan Principles at next board meeting

SM noted that there is need for some additional administrative support and that we need to consider how to approach this. It was agreed that we should consider project work as part of the review of workload.

ACTION 3. CS/SM to do some more work around options for administrative support; produce an options paper for the board.

4. Financial Report

The board considered papers relating to the AAETO annual accounts which included an annotated version of the accounts providing an explication of the figures. Directors were happy with the figures and agreed to sign off the accounts.

ACTION 4. CS to returned signed documents to accountants once received back from PC.

CS confirmed the previous stance (after discussions with DG) that, if AAETO spends from the reserves, this will impact on the bottom line (and thus could result in an overall loss in a future financial year); any such expenditure will be split out in reports so that it shows as separate to the core/project areas of the business. PD explained to AE the logic of AAETO building reserves to ensure that HOLEX can continue to support providers in the event that there are future issues with ACE funding.

5. AAETO Operational/Management report

5.1. Membership

It was noted that membership income is level on last year, with 3 members not renewing and 1 new member to date. 2 members pending are confirmation (one of whom is very likely to complete renewal).

5.2. Projects

Brief updates were included on active projects within the board papers. CS updated verbally on the funding received by Norfolk as part of the FE Professional Development Fund; HOLEX has a small role within this project as a support organisation with the aim of helping to further the reach of the project. It was noted that the bidding process was particularly tricky and that many who wanted to be involved were not able to.

5.3. PO Box

The board agreed that the PO Box is no longer necessary and that the CS should progress with a move away from its use in order to save funds. It was noted that new headed paper was not necessary as formats can be created professionally in Word.

ACTION 5. CS to start activity to lose the PO Box.

ACTION 6. CS to ensure that the Word version of HOLEX headed paper is professional and current.

5.4. HOLEX December Network event – hybrid meeting?

The board discussed the findings of a member survey around the format of the Winter Network event. It was agreed that HOLEX at its core is a networking organisation and that the benefits of face-to-face meetings are numerous. **After a detailed debate, directors concluded unanimously that we should progress with an in-person only event.** It was agreed that this should be communicated to the network with a clear narrative/rationale behind the decision.

5.5. Webinars

The board were happy for AAETO to trial the Zoom webinar functionality with a view to using this in lieu of Go to Webinar. Though it was noted that the Zoom meeting format is working well for us, particularly given the breakout room functionality.

5.6. Membership feedback survey/annual report

It was noted that the member feedback was once again positive, but that a final version of the annual report was not available as PD was keen to include more information around the impact of Covid/what last year felt like as a service.

ACTION 7. Directors to email PD with information around the experience of Covid within a service.

6. Policy Director's report

It was noted that this last period of May to September has been incredibly busy; being part of the induction for new civil servants is really worth doing but takes a lot of time.

6.1. Spending Review/cuts

A discussion was held around how best to broach hard hitting issues with services, with an acknowledgement that it is important for services to respond directly to certain issues and not always leave it to HOLEX. Hosting visits from government officials was agreed to be useful in raising visibility, and it was agreed that a webinar on lobbying MP's would be helpful for members.

It was noted that cuts need to be made (likely prior to the Spending Review) and that some areas of ACE may be viewed as simple to cut.

PC noted that it would be useful to understand vulnerability and to consider which councils are close to issuing section 114 notices; if a local authority is in this situation, would the ACE service be aware?

ACTION 8. PD to liaise with LGA around local authorities close to issuing section 114 notices.

ACTION 9. PD to produce a template that members can adapt to send to their own MP. Get colleagues to send it in. Need to make it clearer that defending against cuts is URGENT.

6.2. MCA's

A brief discussion was held around how HOLEX can support each of the MCA groups (which may also be added to with ten county councils devolved in the future). HOLEX is a national body, but funding is being devolved in multiple different directions.

ACTION 10. Directors to consider how best to support the multiple devolved groups of providers.

6.3. ESOL

A discussion was held around the issues of ESOL eligibility.

ACTION 11. Directors to get in touch with PD if share the concerns raised or have more to add.

6.4. Webinars

Directors considered topics for additional webinars. The below were put forward:

- How to lobby your MP
- Bring together Spending Review and FE White Paper/Urgency of defending in advance against cuts (possible a separate webinar)
- Learner Support Fund; aim to dispel confusion

ACTION 12. All to let us know if have any other suggested topics

7. AOB

7.1. Afghan response

A discussion was held around the difficulties of the Afghan response.

7.2. Community Renewal Fund

A discussion was held around the Community Renewal Fund and the lack of comms around the bidding process; funding due to be spent by March.

8. Intern presentation

The board meeting concluded with the first of the two HOLEX intern presentations.

9. Time and place of next board meeting

Next scheduled board meeting Thursday 9th December 2021, 14:30 to 16:00 – virtual meeting via Zoom. Joining link within Outlook meeting invitation.