

Committee(s)	Dated:
Barbican Centre Board	24 January 2024
Subject: Barbican Centre Ethics Code	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,3,4,7,10 and 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No, within existing resources
Report of: Claire Spencer, CEO Barbican Centre	For Decision

Summary

The world in which the Barbican Centre operates has become increasingly complex to navigate as expectations of Cultural Institutions have increased across all stakeholder groups – our team, the artists we work with, the audiences we welcome and the funders we encourage to support us. To move forward in both our strategy and day to day operations, it is critical that our people are equipped and feel supported in the decisions they make.

It is not easy to codify ethics in a policy. We have chosen instead to develop an Ethics Code (“The Code”) – to guide decision making that happens every day, all around us as we go about our work. The Code covers how we work with our audiences, our artists, how we run our business and how we support our team. It is bespoke to the Barbican.

The Code has been developed with the input of our Board, our Trust, the broader Barbican Team, facilitated by a dedicated working group from the Management Team and is presented here for approval.

Recommendations

That the Board APPROVE the Barbican Ethics Code and NOTE the plans for implementation.

Main Report

Background

The need for a revised Ethics Policy was first identified in February 2023, following our post event review of the Jerusalem East West Orchestra concert, and confirmed in our Strategic Framework work that was signed off by the Board in July 2023.

This was followed by a Board and Trust workshop (facilitated by an expert in the Code of Ethics for Museums) and, over the course of the summer, a series of workshops to pin down the pillars of our ethics code.

This was then shared with the Nominations, Effectiveness, and Inclusion Committee (now the People, Culture and Inclusion Committee) in September 2023. Comments from that meeting are included in this updated draft, which has also been subject to review by the Comptroller and Director of Communications at the Corporation, with minor amendments made.

Current Position

The context in which the Barbican Centre operates is unique within the Corporation (working with artists, funders, welcoming a broad range of audiences to the Centre each year) and the ethical context in which we operate has changed significantly since the last policy update in 2017.

The Ethics Code covers the following areas:

1. Audiences and Visitors: public engagement and public benefit
2. Artists and Programmes: working with artists and creative organisations as a force for good.
3. Institutional Integrity: how we generate income to fund our work and make decisions
4. Barbican Team: how we value our team and how we work as individuals

The Code outlines our ethical principles, and then describes how we will uphold these in practice. The principles have been tested in recent discussions around how we welcome audiences, how we programme and how we consider complaints – they have held up well.

The Code also outlines how advice can be sought and how we will address more complex ethical matters through a series of working groups and committees. The CEO will seek guidance on extremely complex or high-risk matters from the Barbican Board and the Barbican Trust as necessary.

On approval, the Code will be designed as a Barbican document, with training to be designed and rolled out in early 2024. Training will be focused initially on leaders in areas most impacted (Audience, Programming, Fundraising and HR teams) with broader training needs considered following this initial stage. The training will focus on helping the team understand what this means for their day-to-day decision making and how to apply the Code in practice. It will include worked examples from Barbican real-life and aim to enhance literacy and capability to hold space in ethical debates.

In readiness for this, we are encouraging leaders to commit time to ethical reflections, and not to just escalate to the Director Group or CEO as a default response. It will take time for this muscle to strengthen, but it is only by exercising this in practice will that happen.

Additional work is also underway to review and strengthen the Gift Acceptance Policy and develop associated due diligence procedures.

It is recommended that the code is reviewed at least every 24 months.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Sub-headings

- Strategic implications – the Code outlines how we will conduct our business, make choices, and manage relationships. It will allow us to execute our strategy from a solid ethical base
- Financial implications – costs of training to be assessed during next phase. Not expected to be material and will be prioritised within existing budgets
- Resource implications – no incremental resourcing required.
- Legal implications – none. The Code has been reviewed by the Comptroller and all comments addressed in this final draft.
- Risk implications – the Code should reduce reputational risk over time as we become more confident in our decision making and application of the Code.
- Equalities implications – positive impact if the Code is applied as intended
- Climate implications - positive impact if the Code is applied as intended
- Security implications – none

Conclusion

The Code is presented for approval, and with thanks to all Board Members and Trustees and Barbican Staff who have been part of its development. Thanks also to colleagues in Communications and Comptrollers at the Corporation for their counsel and advice during its development.

Report author

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