

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Nominations Committee of the Barbican Centre Board Barbican Centre Board	20 November 2017 20 November 2017
Subject: Skills and Effectiveness Review 2017	Public
Report of: Town Clerk Report Author: Greg Moore	For Decision

Summary

Members of the Barbican Centre Board have recently undertaken a skills and effectiveness review. This review asked Members to comment on various aspects around the work of the Board and the management of meetings. It explored Members' understanding of the Board's role, the input into and quality of meetings, the governance and clerking support received by the Board, and Members' thoughts on communication from the Centre. It went on to assess personal attributes such as the level of training received by Board Members, the interaction of Board Members with the Centre and its affiliates outside of formal meetings, and the skills and expertise that Members feel they bring to the Board.

The results of the survey are annexed to this report and Members will note that the data is split in to red, amber and green areas. A short summary analysis of the results is also provided in the body of this report for your consideration.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider any areas they wish to highlight for further deliberation. It is also recommended that Members agree to instruct officers to develop an action plan with proposed measures to address the various issues highlighted by Members.

Main Report

Background

1. In July 2017, Members agreed that a Skills Audit should be undertaken in order to assess the current balance of expertise and knowledge on the Board and to inform future recruitment.
2. A survey was circulated in the summer following the meeting and a reminder issued at the September Board meeting. Following the receipt of responses, the results have now been collated and are attached as an appendix to this report.
3. A short summary analysis, outlining the primary issues or points for consideration raised by the responses, is also set out below.

Summary Analysis

Role and Vision

4. Responses suggest that the Board is content that the role and vision are sufficiently clear to Members, although perhaps a dedicated session explaining these, along with the Centre's strategic aims and objectives, would be beneficial for new Members – particularly given the differences between the role with the Barbican and traditional "Trustee" roles.
5. Members also expressed a clear desire to engage more with the Centre on-site – whether it be through regular visits, away-days, or spending time with particular teams. This would allow Members to get a greater feel for the activities underway at the Centre and, indeed, the day-to-day operation of the Barbican more generally – which would in turn allow for a greater appreciation of the role and facilitate improved input.
6. Several Members suggested that future appointments to the Board should be mindful of the need for increased experience of arts administration and programming – sentiments echoed by the responses to the Skills Audit.

The Board's Business

7. The results demonstrate that Members are generally satisfied with the administration of the Board, although there is a recognition that the reports – whilst of good quality – are, on occasion, overly lengthy.
8. They could also benefit from being geared towards facilitating more strategic discussions and greater Member input, with some Members feeling there was a surfeit of "for information" papers at present.
9. There was some reference to the structure of the agendas not allowing for strategic discussions to happen as effectively as could be hoped, although it was recognised that working within the confines of the City Corporation and general local authority regulations concerning public and non-public items placed difficult limitations on the latitude available to make changes here.
10. The timing of meetings was raised by two Members, one indicating a preference for a move to early or late meetings; another with reference to seeking to avoid overlaps with outside bodies.

Self-Assessment

11. Responses to the "self-assessment" questions indicated that Members are, perhaps, minded that they have the capacity to offer greater input if there were a mechanism to focus or facilitate this. This would suggest that there is work that the Clerk and the Management Team could explore in increasing Members' engagement with certain issues and exploring training requirements, so as to provide the right environment for this desire for increased participation to flourish.

Information and Communication

12. Induction of Members emerged as an issue for consideration, with the split of responses between longer-serving and new Members indicating that the Board's relatively newly-instituted induction process has been timely and well-received. However, it was clear that it would benefit significantly from further review and more focus – there is certainly more work to be done in increasing the effectiveness of this process.
13. The Board was broadly pleased with the general information and communications coming directly from the Barbican Centre, although it was felt that there was more scope to provide more Board-specific communications which might assist Members in their roles.

Skills Audit

14. The results of the skills audit demonstrate that the Board has a good balance of skills and interest in the majority of areas.
15. However, there are a number of areas where, despite a level of interest, there is perceived to be a lack of sufficient expertise – namely, Arts Administration, Dance, Unreached Audiences, and Visual Arts.
16. These findings accord with the general sentiments expressed at previous Nominations Committee meetings, as well as through the responses to the Survey, that there is a need for at least one individual with hands-on administrative and programming experience to bring a greater spread of skills and expertise to the Board.
17. Four areas were highlighted as lacking in both expertise and interest, i.e. Facilities Management, Health & Safety, Quality Systems and Marketing.
18. Although Marketing had previously been identified as an area of need by the Board and Nominations Committee, the remaining three areas represent subjects previously unidentified as in need of additional expertise. Members are invited to consider whether these represent real or significant “gaps” in the Board's knowledge; although it should be borne in mind that, given the format of the Survey and the limited number of responses Members were invited to provide, they may simply represent areas where Members felt it less of a priority to declare their interests (as opposed to, say, arts-specific options, which the responder might feel were more pertinent to the Barbican's needs).
19. Members may also wish to bear in mind that several of the areas in the Audit may not necessarily be identified as direct skills and, rather, could be mitigated through training opportunities.

Conclusion

20. The results are presented for Members' review and comment. Subject to the outcomes of your deliberations, it is suggested that the Board might wish to instruct officers to develop an action plan, with a view to resolving or mitigating again some of the issues raised.

21. It should be noted that some issues, such as more regular visits to (or interaction with) the Centre, are already the subject of ongoing work and will be factored into this action plan.

Appendices

- Results and analysis – Barbican Centre Board Skills and Effectiveness Review 2017

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