

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Barbican Centre Board	17 January 2018
Subject: Skills and Effectiveness Review: Action Plan	Public
Report of: Town Clerk Report Author: Greg Moore – Town Clerk's	For Decision

Summary

In late 2017, Members of the Barbican Centre Board undertook 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 were presented in November 2017, when the Board considered the findings and identified areas where action could or should be taken. The Town Clerk was consequently instructed to develop an action plan with proposed measures to address the various issues highlighted by Members. This report sets out a series of potential actions which could be taken to address the various items identified through the Skills and Effectiveness Review.

Recommendation

That Members consider and approve the proposed action plan and associated timelines, set out at Appendix A.

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 were collated to the November 2017 Board meeting, alongside a short summary analysis, outlining the primary issues or points for consideration raised by the responses.
3. Members discussed the findings and identified those areas where it was felt that action was required. Officers were instructed to identify actions or

measures that could be taken to address these items; set out in the below section are the various items raised under each section alongside a proposed response. The issues, alongside the corresponding proposed actions and timelines for implementation, are set out in summary form at Appendix A.

Issues and Actions

Role and Vision

4. **Issue:** Whilst the Board was content that the role and vision were sufficiently clear to Members, it was suggested that 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.

Action: This has now been added to the induction schedule and will be incorporated within the revised programme of activities for new Members going forwards.

Engagement

5. **Issue:** Members expressed a strong 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.

Action: The Centre's Directors have been tasked with scheduling a series of regular opportunities to address this and have already arranged for half-day sessions with both the Gallery and Theatre teams. It is proposed that a more formalised schedule of visits be produced moving forwards, covering the key areas of the Centre's activities and aligned (where possible) with the annual artform presentations to Board.

Recruitment

6. **Issue:** The Survey and Skills Audit both highlighted the need for the Board to be mindful of the need for increased experience of arts administration and programming when making future appointments. There were also a number of areas where, despite a level of interest, there was perceived to be a lack of sufficient expertise on the Board – namely, Dance, Unreached Audiences, Marketing and Visual Arts.

Action: The skills and expertise requirements will form a standing section of each of the recruitment papers presented to the Nominations Committee and Board, to draw attention to the identified needs and allow the opportunity for regular review. In addition, the Board will be asked to approve text to be circulated alongside the letter concerning the annual appointment to committee vacancies from the Court, highlighting the desire for candidates with particular skills or knowledge.

Written reports to Board

7. **Issue:** There was a recognition that reports to the Board – whilst of good quality – were, on occasion, overly lengthy. 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.

Action: Members are asked to consider the following proposals:

- Extension of the current “starred items” practice (whereby those items previously considered by a sub-committee are marked and not debated without prior request) such that this is applicable for all “information” items. This would facilitate increased time being allotted to items where a decision or strategic steer is required.
- The artform presentations could be re-cast as “for discussion” items, each with a selection of strategic questions for Members to consider and debate (a practice which has been employed on several occasions for these reports and has been well-received previously).
- Members may also wish to consider introducing discrete strategy sessions, whether in an “away-day” format or as short sessions pre- or post-Board.
- The Town Clerk to be asked to work with Directors / report authors with a view to decreasing report length where possible.

Participation

8. **Issue:** 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.

Action: It is hoped that the programme of increased interaction with the Centre will increase Members’ familiarity with wider aspects of the Barbican’s activities and facilitate greater participation. Notwithstanding this however, it is suggested that the Management Team and Town Clerk to be asked to consider further steps which could be of benefit.

Induction

9. **Issue:** 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.

Action: The addition of sessions on strategy, role and vision, as well as more regular scheduled interaction with the Centre’s operations (paragraphs 4 and 5 refer), represent good starting points in beginning to enhance the induction

process. It is suggested that the Nominations Committee be asked to review the revised induction schedule at its next meeting with a view to identifying further improvements. A survey could also be produced for new Members to complete either during or at the end of their induction, so as to inform continuous improvement.

Information

10. **Issue:** 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.

Action: It is suggested that the Communications team at the Barbican be asked to consider whether there is the opportunity for Board-specific information to be produced, or existing information to be presented through a more Member-friendly method.

Conclusion

11. The proposed actions are presented for Members' review, comments, and approval.

Appendices

- Action Plan – Barbican Centre Board Skills and Effectiveness Review

Gregory Moore

Principal Members' Services and Committee Manager

Town Clerk's Department

T: 020 7332 1399

E: gregory.moore@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Appendix A

Issue	Action and Owner	Completion Deadline
<i>Role and vision</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session for new Members outlining the Board's role, vision and strategic plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session to be added to induction schedule (<i>Town Clerk</i>) 	January 2018
<i>Engagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire for increased Board interaction with Centre's activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme of regular visits to be produced (<i>Directors</i>) 	Rolling; first visits to be scheduled by 17 January 2018
<i>Recruitment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional expertise desired in relation to Arts Administration, Dance, Unreached Audiences, Marketing and Visual Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills/expertise requirements to form standing section of recruitment reports (<i>Town Clerk</i>) Board to approve text to be circulated alongside annual appointment letter re Court vacancies, highlighting the desire for candidates with particular skills or knowledge (<i>Town Clerk</i>) 	January 2018 March 2018
<i>Reporting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many "for information" items Reports insufficiently strategic Reports sometimes overly lengthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial of extended "starred items" approach (<i>Town Clerk</i>) Artform presentations to be re-cast as strategic items each posing questions for Board consideration / direction (<i>Directors</i>) <i>Town Clerk</i> to work with officers to consider ways to reduce length where possible 	March 2018 March 2018 March 2018
<i>Participation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thought to be given to increasing Members' participation in discussion of areas beyond direct expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of engagement programme to be monitored; <i>Management Team</i> and <i>Town Clerk</i> to consider further steps which could be of benefit. 	May 2018
<i>Induction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Induction process to be enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy, role and vision session to be included (<i>Town Clerk</i>) 	March 2018

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-induction survey to be produced (<i>Town Clerk</i>) • Nominations Committee to review induction schedule (<i>Town Clerk</i>) 	<p>March 2018</p> <p>March 2018</p>
<p><i>Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought to be given to where more Board-specific communications could be circulated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications Team</i> to be asked to consider. 	<p>May 2018</p>