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Email:
membership@trustee.net.org.uk

Tip

Are you having problems with trustees failing to attend board meetings regularly? If you're brave enough to do it, keeping a kind of register of attendance which is made public can just be enough to shame trustees into coming a bit more regularly.

news and opinion from a trustee's perspective

New Duties for Company Directors

On 1 October 2008 the next set of provisions from the Companies Act 2006 comes into force. These are-

Directors Duties:

- Duty to avoid conflicts of interests
- Duty not to accept benefits from third parties
- Duty to declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements with the company

These are in addition to the Directors' Duties which came into force in October 2007 which were –

- To act within powers
- Duty to promote the success of the company for the benefit of the members (or in the case of charities, to achieve the charity's purposes)
- Duty to exercise independent judgment
- Duty to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence

If you're thinking, oh no, not more duties, don't worry most of them codify things that you will already be doing (hopefully) as good practice. Some however, do require additional actions, and information about this is available at - www.russell-cooke.co.uk/downloads/IMPLICATIONS%20FOR%20CHARITABLE%20COMPANIES%20OF%20THE%20COMPANIES%20ACT%202006%20-%20scan.pdf

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CIO consultation delayed

Lots of charities are interested in the new charitable incorporated organisation legal structure, introduced by the Charities Act 2006. A consultation about the detail of the new legal structure was due to open this summer but has been delayed until Parliament returns in early October.

Keep an eye on this newsletter and our website for details of the consultation when it opens.

So, what does your board spend its time on?

According to the BoardsCount™ report in 2007, 'If a board spends its time wisely, the organisation will have a clear sense of direction that honours its values and works towards delivering its mission.' Not only that, it will also be able to 'hold the staff appropriately to account' and 'ensure that lessons are learned' from the work that the organisation has done.

An example of how a board wisely spent its time is Hesters Way Community Project in Cheltenham. The charity was faced with closure in 2005 following significant funding pressure, but the board was determined to avoid closure AND show that a resident-led management committee

Pass it on:

Have you told your fellow trustees about CTN? The more trustees register for free on our website the more we can help and support by sending out this newsletter and other information. So do pass on our details.

had the skills to manage a major change programme. By embarking on a strategic planning exercise the embattled organisation got a new sense of direction which, after a difficult period, led to new growth, a renewed sense of energy and purpose and a more secure future.

In an environment in which there is so little time and board meetings are precious, how a board spends its time is an important question.

One area where many boards are weak is in effective performance reporting and review. Only about half of 450 board members taking part in BoardsCount™ 2007 felt that they understood the quality of the work delivered by their organisations and exactly where they were in delivering their plans.

If this is a concern for your board, why not ask these questions?

- Are we spending the right amount of time on planning and reviewing performance strategically?
- Do we have the right information upon which to assess the organisation's performance?
- Do we have the skills to probe issues that should be probed? What can we do to improve?
- How do we know we are on track overall?

If you want to explore these issues in more depth, go to www.BoardsCount.com. CTN has teamed with BoardsCount™ to offer a discounted member rate. For more information on how to register for these benefits go to www.trusteenet.org.uk/upgrade

Different is good

In the first of a series of short pieces, Golam Morshed shares his experiences of being a trustee.

In my experience an organisation always benefits from having a diversified trustee board. In the simplest terms, you get different views, a wider perspective while discussing issues at meetings and the benefit of a range of different personal experiences. A while ago I joined a board whose trustees were all about 70 years old, white, and from an affluent economic and professional background. It was a great learning experience for all of us – I was surprised how welcoming they were to me, and they frequently sought my views on subjects, as I could provide a different perspective.

However, there was one significant problem. The trustee meetings were held at 10am on a working day, and to attend them I had to take a day off work, which I couldn't afford to do. I wanted to stay on the board and pointed out that the meeting time was a major barrier for many younger people who might be interested in becoming a trustee but were employed full time or self-employed. The trustees were keen that I should remain a trustee, and also to attract new people to the board so agreed to change the meeting time, which made a huge difference. By the time, I left the board after four years, they had two more "different" people. I believe that as a result the board is younger, more vibrant and that all the trustees are enjoying the work they do for the charity.

Steering group members needed – Shropshire charity trustee network

Shropshire Trustee Network are looking for steering group members to help take the Shropshire network forward.

KEEP YOUR DETAILS UP TO DATE

If you are no longer a trustee or your details have changed, log in to www.trusteenet.org.uk to update your details.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS?

Do let us have your feedback on this e-newsletter by replying to this email. Let us know if we are getting it right or how we can improve this e-newsletter, **trustee focus** goes out bi-monthly, and we want as much content as possible to be from you - we would really welcome your ideas and submissions.

This is a voluntary role which will involve attending 4 meetings a year. For more information about the role contact Nickie Edwards on nickie.edwards@shropshire-rcc.org.uk or for more details about the network see www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk/voluntary_sector_support/networks_and_forums/charity_trustees_network/index.html

Consultations

The current consultations are now open. For more information and details on how to make your voice heard on these subjects, go to <http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/your-voice/consultations/open>

- **Consultation on draft guidance on NHS charities**
- **Consultation on substantial donors to charity:** an HMRC review of anti-avoidance legislation around large donors to charities.
- **The Empowerment Fund:** Consultation on proposals for funding third sector organisations to empower communities across England.
- **Consultation on proposed changes to copyright exemptions in respect of music licensing** – of potential interest to all charities who use recorded music.

Be a trustee of CTN

Could you be a trustee of CTN? We're looking for new trustees to replace trustees who are leaving at the end of their term of office.

Meetings take place in London every 2 months, and expenses will be paid to trustees who travel from outside London. The closing date for applications is 20 August. For more information, including how to apply, go to www.trusteenet.org.uk/files/Board%20Recruitment%202008.pdf

Guidance for housing charities

Joint guidance has been published by the Charity Commission, HMRC and the Housing Corporation for Registered Social Landlords that are also registered charities.

It clarifies the circumstances in which providing low cost "shared ownership" housing is charitable, and reminds charities of the need to ensure that their activities are carried out in furtherance of their charitable purposes. The guidance also explores the tax and other implications of such charities providing low cost home ownership schemes. It is available at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/homeown.asp

Workshops on Codes of Conduct for Trustees

CTN is running a number of workshops as part of its current project on Codes of Conduct for trustees and how they can be used to address issues on trustee boards.

These will practically work through developing and using a code of conduct. Attendees will be provided with different models of codes of conduct and case studies, and there will be opportunities to network with other trustees.

Workshops are being held in Warrington on 17 September, Manchester on 18 September and in Ipswich on 7 October. For more information go to

<http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/events>

Network Events in August, September and October

Please go to www.trusteenet.org.uk/events for more details of these and other events

20 August – Thameside Chairs Network

21 August – Lewes District Trustee Network

1 September – Network of Women Chairs - London

16 September – Networking for Network Organisers - Nottingham

17 September – Warrington Trustee Network

18 September – Manchester Trustee Network

23 September – Voluntary Arts Network – London

24 September – Honorary Treasurers' Forum – London

24 September – Cumbria Trustee Network - Kendal

1 October – Cumbria Trustee Networks - Barrow

2 October – Hampshire Trustees Forum - Basingstoke

2 October – Cumbria Trustee Network – Carlisle

13 October – Southwark Trustee Network – London

13 October – Shropshire Charity Trustee Network – Shrewsbury

30 October – Vale Trustee Network

30 October – Lewes Trustee Network

This newsletter is sent to you by CTN

3-4 Frensham Suite, Friary Court 13-21 High Street, Guildford GU1 3DG.

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phone: 01483 230280

website:
www.trusteenet.org.uk

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