

UNITE Ltd.
MEDIATION•CONCILIATION•TRAINING

Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting
Wednesday 28th January at 5.00 p.m.
Conference Room 1, Southland's Centre

Present	J Shepherd	Chair
	G Dobson	Treasurer
	D Whiting	Director
	P Frankland	Director
	S Twist	Secretary
	H Wallace	Director

Apologies	L Laidler	Director
	C Butterfield	Vice Chair
	C Fields	Director

In Attendance	Helen Lowrie	CEO
----------------------	--------------	-----

BO71/08 Good Governance
Appraisal dates were agreed for Directors who were present. The Chair to contact absentees.

BO72/08 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest
There were no declarations of interest. L Laidler, C Butterfield and C Fields gave apologies.

BO73/08 Approval of the minutes of the BOD Meetings of November 2008
D Whiting attended the meeting but was reported as absent. With this correction the minutes were approved by H Wallace and P Frankland.

BO74/08 Matter arising from the BOD Meeting of 26 November 2008

- ❖ All of the actions were completed on the agenda or have future completion date with the exception of the following:
- ❖ BO20/08 No further action to be taken.
- ❖ BO52/08 Board Members 100 word profile. Final date for amendments now Friday 6th February.
- ❖ BO63/08 Additional column on financial report not now felt to be necessary.
- ❖ BO63/08 Company Secretary attended Community Justice Initiative Project meeting. The CEO and the Board thanked him for his time and input.
- ❖ BO63/08 Staff thanked the Board for the cost of living increase. The Board confirmed its intention to agree action on this by September each year and not then to backdate it.

BO75/08 Financial Matters

- **Income and Expenditure Account**

The Treasurer reported the Income and Expenditure Account continues to show a potential surplus for the year-end. It was felt that an increase in reserves would be advisable in the current economic climate.

Work was currently on going to seek to invest the reserves in £xxx tranches.

Balance Sheet

The Treasurer noted the Balance Sheet was showing a healthy position.

- **Income Generation Table – January 2009**

The contents of the table were noted. The Board discussed the need for all staff to understand that the current economic climate meant that funders would be looking closely at value for money and that it was imperative that everyone did their best to deliver on service promises and increase case conversion rates. Whilst this had been discussed at the Board Social Evening (with staff and guests) that preceded this meeting, the CEO felt it would be helpful for it to be reinforced at a mediator's Support Group event and Directors were asked to attend if they could. The Company Secretary agreed to attend the February Support Group meeting.

The Company Secretary informed the Directors that Family Mediation in York was closing their contact centre due to funding issues.

D Whiting requested an update on the Stockton Borough Council/Catalyst funding for 2009/10. D Whiting highlighted that he had registered his conflict of interest as a Director of the Catalyst Board.

- **Case by Case sessional mediators**

The Board discussed this issue at length. The amount of work already undertaken was recognised but after some considerable debate it was agreed to put the issue into abeyance for the immediate future.

It was recognised that action would still need to be taken to address the issue of resources but it was felt that this was not the way to proceed at the current time. The Board thanked the report authors for the work that had been done to clarify the issues and assist in decision making.

In the light of this decision, further work is to be undertaken to address UNITE's resources shortfall. This to be undertaken by email conferencing with Directors.

- **Draft Budget**

The first draft of the budget was agreed. The Treasurer confirmed that further work was necessary and that a final version would be available for consideration by the Board meeting in March.

BO76/08

Human Resources

The Directors agreed to extend relevant temporary staff contracts by a month from April pending the confirmation of funding for 2009/10.

BO77/08

Business Plan Action Plan

The Board had been sent an electronic update of the Business Plan Action Plan. The CEO asked for any comments on it. The Board felt that progress on the actions had been good and thanked the staff for their hard work over the year.

BO78/08

Key Performance Indicators

The Board noted that the waiting list had improved at the end of last year. The CEO informed the Directors that there had been an increase in demand in the last couple of weeks. The CEO added that securing an effective strategy to resource the service remained a very high priority. The other area not meeting targets - conversion rates - was being tackled by supervisors. Strategies such as linking inexperienced and experienced mediators together is effective in improving conversion rates, although the system is hampered by lack of

competent and experienced mediators who have time to carry more than a couple of cases.

BO79/08

Allotment Report

The Board agreed that UNITE staff and volunteers should rent and work a local allotment. The resources as set out in the report agreed.

BO80/09

Verbal update from the Strategic Customer Forum

The Forum had been well attended and was very ably led by R Lofthouse. It had been interesting to understand the issues from the customer viewpoint and the need to deliver on waiting times in particular was reinforced. Customers also welcomed the briefing on confidentiality and to see the wider issues this involved.

BO81/08

Policies and Procedures

Absence Management Policy

Directors had provided R Lofthouse with copies of their policies and R Lofthouse had provided a draft policy. Further work was needed on this and it was agreed that this be completed and a revised policy circulated to all Board members electronically.

BO82/08

Equality & Diversity

Nothing to report.

BO83/08

Health and Safety

It was noted that a mediator had had her car broken into when working. Separately it was noted that Southlands car park had had a number of incidents of vandalism.

BO84/08

Correspondence

Nothing to Report.

BO85/08

Any other business

Staff thanked the Directors for the additional day at Christmas.

Staff Awards given as follows:

Person that has given an outstanding contribution and added value within the organisation over the last 12 months **Jayne Gray**

Someone who works cross team, brings excellent customer focus and gives 100% even under pressure. **Lauren Pearsall**

The person who has been the most outstanding volunteer, office based, mediators or Director **Paul Jarrold**

Senior Management Team Award - Debra Rhodes for her contribution to team working and mediation case work and **Melanie Baker** for her successful contract negotiations and strong relationship with customers/stakeholders.

It was agreed that the results of the staff awards should appear on the UNITE website and in the next Annual Report.

The Directors added their congratulations to all the winners.

BO86/08

Date of next Board Meeting

Wednesday 25th March 2009 at 5.00pm

P Frankland may not be able to make the March meeting.