

Minutes

The British Museum Board Meeting 18 March 2021

Held digitally

Present

Sir Richard Lambert (to Item 17)
Chairman
Professor Dame Mary Beard
Ms Cheryl Carolus
Dame Elizabeth Corley
Ms Clarissa Farr
Professor Chris Gosden
Ms Muriel Gray
Mr Philipp Hildebrand
Dame Vivian Hunt
Sir Deryck Maughan
Sir Charlie Mayfield
Mr Mark Pears (to Item 16)
Sir Paul Ruddock
Lord Sassoon
Baroness Shafik
Sir Mark Walport (to Item 17)
Mr George Weston
Professor Dame Sarah Worthington

In Attendance

Hartwig Fischer
Director
Jonathan Williams (except Item 6.2)
Deputy Director
Christopher Yates (except Item 6.2)
Deputy Director
Mark Bates
Governance & Planning Manager
Jane Whittaker (Items 3 to 7, except
Item 6.2)
Director of Resources
Jill Maggs (Item 3)
Head of Exhibitions

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies had been received from Patricia Cumper and Grayson Perry.

2. Declaration of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

For Discussion

3. Exhibitions

3.1 Jill Maggs gave a presentation on the Museum's exhibition programme.

4. COVID-19 update

4.1 Jane Whittaker reported on the Museum's planning for re-opening.

4.2 Jane Whittaker reported that capital funding had been secured from DCMS for 2021/22, and that a decision on additional support to compensate for the impact of COVID-19 was awaited.

For Approval

5. Budget and Operating Plan 2021/22

5.1 The Board approved the Budget and Operating Plan for 2021/22, recognising that full details about government funding had not yet been received. The Board asked that the Standing Committee should be kept informed on progress in balancing the budget.

6. British Museum reserves and grants

6.1 The Board approved revisions to the Reserves policy, and the retention of the designation of any BM Publications funds held at year-end as part of the unrestricted Trust Funds.

Christopher Yates, Jonathan Williams and Jane Whittaker left the meeting for Item 6.2 because they were Directors of the British Museum Company (BMCo).

6.2 Having carefully considered whether it would be for the overall benefit of and in the best interests of the Museum, the Board approved a grant request from the Directors of the BMCo to support it in its work of advancing the charitable objects of the British Museum, and in recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the Standing Committee would receive reports on expenditure of the grant.

Item 7 constituted a meeting of the British Museum Friends Board.

7. British Museum Friends

7.1 The BMF Board approved the Budget for 2021/22.

7.2 The BMF Board confirmed approval of the current Reserves policy.

7.3 The BMF Board approved the designation of a resilience fund to deal with current uncertainties.

7.4 The BMF Board decided that there were insufficient funds available to make a grant to the British Museum.

8. Acquisition

8.1 The Board approved the acquisition by bequest of the Thomas Collection of German stoneware and tin-glaze wares.

Standing Business

9. Minutes

9.1 The minutes of the Board meetings held on 3 December 2020 were approved as a true record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

10. Chairman's Report

10.1 The Chairman provided an update on the current Trustee recruitment campaign being conducted by DCMS.

10.2 The Chairman reported on his recent meeting with The Queen's Private Secretary to discuss a successor to Cheryl Carolus.

10.3 The Chairman advised the Trustees that the annual away meeting would be held at the Museum from 1 to 2 October.

10.4 The Chairman thanked Trustees for their input to the Museum's thinking about its future in a post-pandemic world.

11. Management Report

11.1 The Board noted the report.

11.2 The Director provided information on the Museum's digital engagement over the past year, gave an update on communications and an update on the *Reimagining the British Museum* project.

11.3 Jonathan Williams provided an update on the care of the collection.

12. Committee reports

12.1 Vivian Hunt reported that Nigel Boardman was welcomed back at the January Audit Committee meeting as a co-opted member. The COVID risk register was reviewed; the external audit strategy was agreed; the deferral of a number of planned internal audit reviews because of the pandemic was agreed; and there was discussion of staff resilience. At the meeting held earlier in the day, there was a review of the management of BM_ARC risks. Hywel Ball had been reappointed as a co-opted member for a second term.

12.2 Minouche Shafik reported that Nominations and Remuneration Committee meeting held earlier in the day had discussed findings from the Board performance review;

agreed a proposal to conduct a review of Board skills and diversity; and considered potential candidates for upcoming Trustee vacancies.

For Information

13. Committee minutes

13.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee of 3 September 2020; the Audit Committee meeting of 22 October 2020; and the Standing Committee meetings of 5 November 2020 and 21 January 2021.

14. Archaeology approvals

14.1 The Board noted the Standing Committee's approval of the disposal of unregistered and bulk-registered archaeological material stored at Blythe House.

15. Loan approvals

15.1 The Board noted loans approved by the Standing Committee.

16. Any other business

16.1 The Chairman noted with regret that this was Cheryl Carolus' last Board meeting and thanked her for her contribution to the Museum.

The management team left the meeting.

Closed session

Mark Pears left the meeting for Item 17.

17. Trustee reappointment

17.1 On the recommendation of the Nominations and Remuneration Committee, the Board approved the reappointment of Mark Pears as a Trustee for a second term of four years from 7 July 2021 to 6 July 2025.

18. Chair search

18.1 Minouche Shafik provided an update on the Chair search campaign.

_____ Chairman

Date of next meeting: 1 July 2021, 15.00-18.00