Minutes of the meeting of the TSI Board, 21st April 2026, In person Inveraray Hub

Present – Nicola Porciani (NP), Hilary Pearce (HP), Michelle Mundie (MM), Nicola Hackett (NH), Takki Sulaiman (TS) - CEO, Lauren Martin (LM) - Business Manager

Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Alison Gildea and Luke Winter.

3.Declaration Of Interests

No amendments.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed as accurate by all present.

5.1 CEO Report

TS presented the CEO Report, providing an overview of national policy developments, local strategic partnership activity, the Our Voices Matter campaign, strategy development, Positive Destinations funding and changes to Scottish charity audit requirements.

TS confirmed that Scottish Government funding for the TSI had been awarded for 2026/27 at a standstill level. It was noted that the TSI Scotland Network may develop a business case for an uplift in funding for consideration by the next Scottish Parliament.

The Board discussed the Community Wealth Building agenda and the recently passed legislation, noting that local authorities now have three years to develop the required plans. Concerns were raised regarding the scale of implementation required and the absence of additional funding to support delivery. The Board also noted the passing of legislation relating to The Promise and recognised that implementation would be a long-term process.

TS provided an update on the HSCP Joint Strategic Plan and ongoing concerns regarding cuts to third sector and preventative services. It was noted that the HSCP had agreed to fund the first stage of the work; however, concerns remained regarding subsequent funding decisions following previous assurances that cuts would not be made.

The Board discussed the position regarding Lorn and Oban Healthy Options (LOHO) and concerns around the governance and decision-making process underpinning the reduction in funding. TS advised that there remained uncertainty regarding the authority under which the reduction had been made and whether the position represented a governance issue or a misunderstanding of the decision taken by the IJB.

NP asked what support or direction from the Board would be helpful at this stage. TS advised that the immediate requirement was to assess the level of risk to ABTSI and consider the governance implications of the HSCP's position, including whether any further action should be taken.

The potential for legal challenge through judicial review was discussed. MM expressed the view that ABTSI should exercise caution given its relationship with statutory funders. NP and NH agreed with this position. TS agreed to review the relevant IJB minutes again, as the recorded decisions did not appear to reflect the interpretation subsequently being applied by the HSCP.

TS updated the Board on the award of funding for the Positive Destinations programme and the concerns raised by Inspiralba. The Board discussed the differences between the organisations' client groups and delivery models. NH highlighted the significant positive impact of the Positive Destinations programme and confirmed that they were comfortable with ABTSI continuing to deliver the project and maintaining its position.

The Board also considered forthcoming changes to Scottish charity audit requirements. TS advised that a full paper would be presented at the July Board meeting to allow the Board to consider whether ABTSI should continue with a full audit or move to an independent examination when eligible. MM and NH expressed a preference to retain the current auditors. HP noted that independent examination could offer cost savings but suitably qualified independent examiners can be difficult to secure and agreed that retaining the auditors was likely to be the most practical approach.

The Board noted the report and agreed the actions arising from the discussion.

5.2 Management Accounts

TS presented the Q4 Management Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026, reporting a year-end deficit and a reduction in reserves. The accounts showed that the financial position had been affected by lower than budgeted income, increased direct expenditure, planned expenditure from reserves and variances in grant administration income and expenditure. Despite the deficit, the organisation continued to hold a significant level of reserves and cash and investments of approximately £475,000 at year end.

The Board discussed the underlying financial position and the need to clearly identify the recurring operating deficit separately from planned expenditure from reserves and other one-off or accounting variances. TS advised that work would continue on both the three-year budget forecast and the revised one-year budget to provide a clearer picture of the organisation’s future financial position.

The level and purpose of reserves were discussed, with approximately £400,000 held to provide financial security and meet the organisation’s estimated costs in the event of closure, including staffing and redundancy liabilities. It was agreed that the Reserves Policy should be reviewed to ensure the level of reserves held remains appropriate and clearly linked to identified organisational risks and liabilities. A revised Reserves Policy will be brought to the July Board meeting.

HP expressed concern that the current level of overspend could not continue and should be investigated to establish the underlying causes and ensure appropriate action is taken.

The Board noted the financial position and agreed the remaining recommendations contained within the report.

5.3 Business Management Report

LM presented the Business Management Report, providing an overview of operational activity during the quarter, including event delivery, developments at the Inveraray Hub and Rockfield, planning for the Volunteer of the Year Awards, implementation of the Soldo system, communications activity and cost savings achieved through the renewal of organisational mobile contracts.

Event delivery had doubled compared with the same quarter in the previous year, with eight events attracting 190 attendees. It was noted that overall attendance was lower than the previous quarter, which had included the National TSI event and AGM and was therefore not directly comparable.

LM provided an update on the Inveraray Hub, where the completion certificate had been received and longstanding internet and heating issues had been addressed. The ThinkSmart equipment remained under repair and further improvement works to the main room were planned. At Rockfield, new equipment had been ordered for installation during the summer and VisitScotland had renewed its lease and paid one year's rent in advance.

Planning for the Volunteer of the Year Awards continued, with sponsorship secured, nominations promoted through a range of channels and additional work undertaken to increase nominations in underrepresented categories. The introduction of paper nomination forms was noted as a measure to improve accessibility.

The Soldo system had been established but implementation had not progressed as quickly as originally intended due to competing workload pressures. Work to fully explore the system, introduce the cards and embed the necessary financial controls was planned ahead of the summer period.

The Board also noted strong communications performance across social media, email marketing and local press, alongside savings achieved through the renewal of the organisation's mobile contracts.

The Board noted the report with no further comments.

6.1 Health & Safety policies review

LM presented the Health & Safety Policy Review, outlining amendments made as part of the scheduled annual review of the organisation’s health and safety policies. The updates reflected current working practices, including lone working, travel, hybrid working, workplace stress and a stronger focus on proactive risk management and prevention.

The Board discussed the practical arrangements in place to ensure ongoing compliance with the policies. It was agreed that general health and safety checks should be carried out periodically, with a formal annual check added to the policy arrangements. Health and safety risks and actions should also be cross-referenced with the organisational Risk Register where appropriate, providing the Board with assurance that identified risks are being monitored and managed.

The Board discussed the importance of providing clear assurance on health and safety compliance, including confirmation that required checks, risk assessments and training are up to date. Legionella awareness and other relevant training requirements were noted, alongside the organisational and legal risks associated with failing to meet health and safety obligations.

PAT testing arrangements were also discussed. It was noted that ACHA has access to trained PAT testers, which may provide a practical option for supporting ABTSI's annual testing requirements.

The Board approved the updated Health & Safety policies, subject to the agreed additions and actions.

6.2 HR matter and EDI policy review

TS presented the Workforce Matters paper, providing an anonymised overview of a recent workplace matter considered under the organisation's Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy and the organisational learning arising from the process. The paper highlighted the need to review the links between relevant HR policies, strengthen organisational understanding of EDI and harassment issues, and consider the capacity required to manage complex workforce matters.

The Board discussed the need for EDI and anti-harassment training for both staff and Board members and agreed that the relevant policies should be reviewed and road-tested to ensure they work effectively in practice. It was noted that the current policies do not link together clearly enough when moving between a complaint, investigation and potential disciplinary process. A clear process flowchart should therefore be developed alongside the policy review.

The Board noted that the matter had arisen from a conversation outside the normal workplace environment and discussed the importance of ensuring policies provide sufficient clarity on their application to work-related events and social settings.

The capacity implications of managing complex workforce matters within a small organisation were discussed. With no dedicated internal HR function, the CEO had been required to lead the process, placing significant demands on CEO time and organisational capacity. It was agreed that this should be reflected within the organisational Risk Register and that access to external HR advice should be explored for complex employee relations matters. MM supported the use of external HR support, noting that this would provide independence and separation from the organisation.

The length of the investigation was also discussed, with the Board noting that a three-month process can place considerable stress on the individuals involved. It was recognised that earlier access to specialist HR advice may have allowed the matter to progress more quickly and efficiently.

The Board agreed the recommendations contained within the report, including the review of the EDI and Anti-Harassment and Bullying policies, delivery of training for staff and Board members, development of clearer procedural guidance, and exploration of external HR support arrangements.

6.3 ABTSI Business Plan 2026–2027 and Scottish Government Reporting

TS presented the draft ABTSI Business Plan for 2026–2027, which was required for submission to the Scottish Government as part of the organisation's grant conditions. The plan set out activity across the TSI's core functions and reflected Scottish Government priorities, including public service reform, Community Wealth Building, prevention, quality assurance and improved evidence of third sector impact. It was noted that the evidence base underpinning the plan had been strengthened considerably through the recent strategy development work, sector survey and focus groups.

The Board discussed the scale and breadth of activity contained within the plan. It was noted that the Scottish Government reporting template, developed by Evaluation Support Scotland, was lengthy and contributed to the level of detail within the document.

NH welcomed the overall direction of the plan and its alignment with current priorities but expressed concern that, given existing staffing and resources, the programme of activity appeared ambitious and substantial. TS acknowledged the concern and explained that the breadth of the plan reflected the diverse needs of communities and organisations across Argyll and Bute. Support requirements varied considerably between areas and organisations, and the TSI could not provide the same level of intensive support to all organisations across every area of activity. The plan therefore reflected the breadth rather than the depth of the organisation's potential activity, including work around volunteering, communications, schools and locality-based support.

HP asked whether feedback had previously been received from the Scottish Government on ABTSI's business plans. TS advised that no direct feedback had been provided, although guidance had been received regarding the need to better align organisational activity and staff objectives with Scottish Government priorities. It was noted that the TSI's work needed to demonstrate value beyond the third sector portfolio and contribute to wider government priorities and outcomes.

The Board approved the Business Plan for submission to the Scottish Government, subject to ongoing review of organisational capacity and the resources available to deliver the proposed activity.

AOCB

NP advised the Board that she intends to step down from her role at the AGM. It was agreed that the process of recruiting a new Chair should begin ahead of the AGM to allow sufficient time to identify potential candidates and support an orderly transition.

Actions

Action Item	Description	Responsible Person	Status (RAG)
1	Review IJB minutes and clarify the HSCP funding decision.	TS	Green
2	Bring the audit options paper and revised Reserves Policy to the July Board meeting.	TS	Green
3	Complete budget forecasting and investigate the underlying overspend.	TS/LM/HP	Amber
4	Strengthen H&S compliance arrangements, including annual checks, training, PAT testing and Risk Register links.	LM	Amber
5	Review EDI and workforce procedures, arrange training and explore external HR support.	TS/LM	Amber
6	Begin recruitment and succession planning for a new Board Chair.	TS/LM	Green