

MBC Trustees Meeting: 18 Jun 2020 Minutes

Attendees:

Present: Silabodhi (SB -Chris Effendowicz) - Chair, Aparajita (AJ – Ajay Gilbert), Dayanandi (DN – Christine Robertson), Acharashraddha (AC – Judith Tomlinson), Prasadu (PS), Vishangka (VS – Keith Green), Dharmakarunya (DK – Ursula Tidd), Mahasraddha (MS – Mark Leach), Chandana (Ch - Stuart Orvis).

Apologies: none

| 1. Welcome | Actions |
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| SB welcomed all to the meeting. | |
| 2. Check in | |
| All present checked in. | |
| 3. Spiritual welfare of MBC sangha and Centre Team | |
| <p>The recent online sangha weekend was briefly reviewed; feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive, and SB estimated that a total of around 100 individuals attended (albeit at different times).</p> <p>Taravandana’s Fri evening talks have been proceeding ‘steadily’ (SB), and have also been well-received.</p> <p>On Heart Kula matters, VS has begun (yesterday) a broad conversation, which is likely to develop over time, about the Centre’s future in the context of serious financial concerns. He has been deriving external support from Suryaka, although in the basic belief that the Heart Kula is capable of navigating its own process. AS commented that some team members’ perceptions of the state of health of the team are surprisingly diverse.</p> <p>AS spoke about her desire for the trustees to work as “the best team that we can be”, given the need to communicate on screens rather than in close proximity, and the challenging discussions that are sure to be coming. She felt that a key aspect of this work would be to hold more 1-to-1 conversations, which she feels are currently rare.</p> | |
| 4. Minutes of meeting of 05 Jun and matters arising | |
| The minutes were agreed; the action by VS had been progressed (as described above), whilst the one delegated to SB (regarding the search for a new treasurer) was not seen as pressing and so had been postponed. | |
| 5. When and how might we re-open the Centre? | |
| <p>SB remarked that he felt the government’s current guidance to be unhelpful, but that a more complete statement might be expected within the next 2-3 weeks.</p> <p>It was felt desirable to have a variety of working models for safe operation in place, so that there can be a possibility of communicating something positive to the sangha in readiness for such time that opening becomes legal.</p> <p>It was suggested that a degree of staff ‘unfurloughing’, to enable planning to proceed, should happen in early Aug, and an appropriate communication should go to the sangha in the meantime, announcing an intended meeting date – perhaps Sat 26 Aug.</p> | |

6. Should we have a protocol for putting out potentially controversial statements?

A fairly complex discussion took place, with considerations including the ability to distinguish 'statements' from more neutral communications and the possibility of large groups within the sangha being able to make their own 'statements'. SB described his recent experience of sections of the sangha (particularly younger members) having a strong desire for a 'position' to be taken on a contemporary issue, and the danger that silence might be, in some contexts, a position in itself.

VS argued that the voice of the sangha (if such a thing can be defined) is a separate concern from that of the Centre, and the latter doesn't necessarily function to communicate the opinions of the former.

On how trustees might fulfill their responsibility to oversee potentially controversial communications, it was acknowledged that a very wide range of views may often exist across the sangha. VS felt that there is such a diversity of opinion, even amongst us as a group of Trustees, that it would be very difficult for statements to represent such a diversity of views. DN felt that it would be unwieldy to expect the trustees in general to exercise scrutiny. DK felt strongly that that we as a Centre need to restate our position as Dharma practitioners, and that the Dharma transcends specific political questions and is what unifies us. In a similar vein, PS felt that, as custodians of the spiritual vision of the charity and consistent with the need for diligent governance, we remain accountable for whatever goes from the MBC into the public domain. In this accountability, we should emphasise the teachings of the Buddha over any current secular concerns or movements. PS also suggested that, practically speaking, what is required is simply consensus amongst the trustees about the content of any communication referring to events 'in the world'.

It was felt important to invite Vidyapala to a meeting soon, to hear what his work "on the front line" is currently like, before progressing the discussion. This suggestion was supported.

SB to invite Vidyapala to attend a trustees' meeting in the near future

7. Any Other Business

None.

Next Trustee Meeting – suggested Thu 02 Jul 2020, 13.30 to 15.30 – TO BE CONFIRMED.