

Review finds strong commitment by BSA to care for sociology

A statement from the BSA Board of Trustees:

In 2022, the trustees commissioned a full governance review to ensure that the BSA is meeting the expectations of good charity governance, delivering its objectives and working effectively as a membership organisation.

The review was conducted by academic external consultants drawing on detailed scrutiny of board papers, BSA charity and trading company documentation, BSA policies and procedures, and interviews with staff, trustees and key stakeholders.

The review report recognised that this governance review was carried out as the world was emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and at a time where many charities, including the BSA, were considering new working models and practices, building on the learning and opportunities from the pandemic and re-instating practices that may have been paused for practical reasons during that time.

The consultants summarised their findings to the board, saying that there was a lot that was working well including:

- There is strong clarity of purpose amongst the board and strong commitment to and care for sociology and its stakeholders, including members.
- Trustees have a shared sense of the challenges facing the BSA.
- Meeting effectiveness is supported by wellpresented and succinct papers and a warm, welcoming style of chairing which encourages contributions from all.
- Risk management is prioritised, with an annually reviewed risk register and new risks brought to the Board at meetings.
- Board effectiveness is supported by a commitment to externally reviewing governance every five-seven years, an annual trustee skills audit, and continuity and certainty about succession (with the Vice-chair taking up the Chair's role at the end of the latter's term).
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion is prioritised and considered at meetings, supported by a working group.
- There is a strong commitment to the green agenda and tackling climate change.

There are 14 recommendations for improvement, which is normal for this type of review:

- Strategic development and performance monitoring (build a mechanism to track the difference we make).
- Trustee role and division of labour (improve trustee role descriptions).
- Practical suggestions to enhance Board meeting effectiveness (e.g. introduce timed agendas).
- Strengthen board assurance mechanisms (co-opt someone with financial skills onto the board).
- The President's role (more clarity of the role needed).
- The Chief Executive's performance review (return to pre-Covid annual appraisal by Chair).
- Conflicts of interest and loyalty (introduce a separate agenda item at every board meeting).
- Risk management and oversight (introduce formal codes of conduct and mechanisms for dealing with breaches of code of conduct).
- Board effectiveness and development including induction (return to pre-Covid induction).

- Diversity, equity and inclusion (increase outreach for new trustees to increase diversity).
- Website information (increase clarity and transparency).
- Trading company (co-opt independent expert onto board).
- Advisory Forum (draft clear Terms of Reference and seek feedback in a more explicit manner on issues of strategic concern).
- Develop organisational 'values'.

The next review is scheduled to take place in the next five to seven years, by the end of 2029.