

SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWS

The Trustees of the Benevolent Fund meet six times per year and the most recent meeting was on 20th September 2023. All eight Trustees were present.

It was a busy meeting, for applications received for assistance, for correspondence regarding ongoing cases and, on this occasion for “Any Other Business”.

Nine awards were made, with grants of £69,341 loans of £66,625. Three of the applications were assisted by the Emergency Committee with smaller sums to tide the applicants over until the meeting took place, when the Trustees considered their longer term needs (over the next year) and increased the awards accordingly.

Eight cases were reviewed. These are cases where a loan has been made previously and remains outstanding. The Trustees review such cases at intervals of no longer than two years. Occasionally, a beneficiary might offer to start making repayments; more often, it is appropriate to offer additional assistance. On this occasion, no action was considered necessary at and all eight cases were put back for a further review in two years time.

A further 17 cases were considered, either as a result of actions arising from previous meetings or from correspondence received.

In the previous report, of the July 2023 meeting, it was noted that, as part of a risk reduction process following a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission, to change the Appointing Council for Trustees. Central Council was consulted and had indicated that it objects to the proposal. The Trustees instructed solicitors who wrote to Central Council explaining the reasoning behind the request. At the time of this meeting Central Council had not replied to the solicitor’s letter though it had indicated to the Trustees that it continued to object. The next steps will entail consulting with stakeholders of the Charity.

The Trustees attended a training course on Charity Governance on the day before their meeting, accompanied by several brothers who were Trustees of the Bursary Fund, GBNC and the Central Council Chairman. It gave much food for thought for the Trustees at the meeting and some decisions to move forward with updating the Governing Document of the Charity by incorporating, introducing a policy of the management of conflicts of interest and loyalty, raising the maximum number of trustees permitted to give flexibility in succession planning and increasing diversity. This will lead in due course to proposals that will be put to stakeholders (beneficiaries, persons such as Catenians who are potential beneficiaries and benefactors) of the Charity.

The next meeting of Trustees is on Tuesday 21st November 2023.