

JANUARY 2024 NEWS

The Trustees of the Benevolent Fund meet six times per year and the most recent meeting was on 16th January 2024. Six Trustees were present, three in person and three by video conference, with three apologies for absence.

The trustees were hoping to greet Mrs Jean Harkin on her appointment as a Trustee but, sadly, she had to offer an apology because of personal circumstances.

Six awards were made with grants of £2,000 and loans of £76,875.

Five 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, all but one case were put back for a further review in two years time.

A further 13 cases were considered, either as a result of actions arising from previous meetings or from correspondence received.

Further to the report of the meeting in November 2023, the Trustees approved the text of the draft Constitution of the Catenian Association Benevolent & Children's Fund CIO, to be made available to stakeholders during the consultation period recently announced in Catena. The text of an explanatory consultation document was also approved. This will also be made available to stakeholders and will invite comments and responses on the proposed Constitution. Some other resolutions were approved concerning the legal processes that must be followed in preparing the subsequent application to the Charity Commission.

Two new Trustees' policies were approved. Some policies are in place because they have to be, e.g. the Privacy Policy. Others are based on precedents and will guide Trustees on future applications that have similar characteristics. The latter usually arise from considering applications where decisions have been difficult and the principles behind the decisions need to be recorded to guide future cases. The policies also serve as a guide to others who may be considering making an application.

The first of the policies approved at this meeting is called "Relief of Need" This policy sets out some basic principles of how the Charity works. It has been written in preparation for formation of the CIO and replaces an older document that is annexed to the existing Governing Document.

The second policy approved is called "Assisting Newly Enrolled Brothers" . Rule 1 of the Association, dealing with Admission to the Association, suggests that a brother should be in a reasonably stable financial position on enrolment, not necessarily wealthy but able to cope. Should he then suffer misfortune his brothers and the Association, including the Benevolent Fund, should support him in full measure. However, if financial difficulties giving rise to an application for help existed before the brother's enrolment, the Trustees will normally consider the application to be out of scope.

The next meeting of Trustees is on Tuesday 19th March 2024.