

**THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION OF THE BLIND INC**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD ON SATURDAY 6 JULY 2024**

BLVNZ Hamilton office, 15 Liverpool Street, Hamilton Central.

**Present:** Ms J Small (Deputy Chair), Ms Abel-Williamson (via Zoom), Mr J Billings, Ms D McCaskill, Mr C Orr, Mr R Patete, Ms AM Taggart.

By Invitation: Ms A Midgen.

Observers: David Allen, Vaughan Dodd, Benny Foar, Geraldine Glanville, Paula Waby, Raeleen Smith.

In Attendance: Ms J Harris (presented item G7.4).

Apologies: Mr C Lansink (Chair), Mr R Scott.

*Note: The minutes reflect the order of items on the agenda, not necessarily the order in which items were discussed during the meeting.*

At 9:04am the Deputy Chair, Ms Small, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Ms Taggart opened the meeting with a Karakia.

All present stood in silence as a mark of respect to members who had passed away since the last meeting on 4 May 2024.

Ms Small initiated a round of introductions of those present, and extended a warm welcome to the observers. She advised that Mr Lansink was unable to attend the meeting and that she would be chairing it.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the meeting accept the apologies from Mr Lansink and Mr Scott.

Ms Small outlined the agenda for meeting, including those presenting papers.

# A1. STANDING ITEMS

## A1.1 Directors’ Interests Register

Ms Small asked if there were any changes to the interests register.

Ms Abel-Williamson mentioned her appointment to the Northern Consumer Council, Health NZ, Te Whatu Ora.

There were no further updates. Ms Small advised notifying the Board Secretary immediately of any changes rather than waiting until the next meeting.

# B2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

## B2.1 Minutes of the full Board Meeting of 4 May 2024

Ms Small opened the floor for any comments about the accuracy of the minutes. There were no comments.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the minutes of the full Board meeting held on 4 May 2024, be accepted as a true and accurate record.   
Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Ms McCaskill.Motion Carried.

## B2.2 Status Report of actions arising from the last meetings

Ms Small opened the floor for discussion.

## B2.3 Any other matters arising from the minutes

There were no other matters raised.

# C3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORTING

## C3.1 Report from the Chief Executive for June 2024

The report was taken as read. Ms Midgen highlighted the appendix, which included the Voice of the Customer (VOC) results from three surveys: registration process (8.9/10), goal-setting process (9.3/10), and completion of service (9/10). These are the highest scores to date, indicating strong client engagement and delivering on their expectations.

Ms Small opened the floor for comments or questions.

Mr Patete acknowledged the new GM People and Performance, and discussed the initiative to optimise space in the property portfolio, ensuring it won't negatively impact services from those offices, which Ms Midgen agreed with.

Mr Patete discussed communication to staff regarding changes to flexible working and their benefits, and asked how that’s been received by staff. Ms Midgen mentioned that it was a tough message to deliver, especially given tough economic times. She noted that a four day working week wasn't feasible for the organisation, opting instead for flexible working with roles able to work two days from home and three days in the office. She highlighted that about a third of the workforce received pay parity adjustments and the transition to a pay for performance remuneration system, which will implement a graded scale by next year.

Ms Taggart discussed the employee engagement survey with Ms Midgen, noting its high participation rate. Ms Midgen explained that unlike previous years where survey results were cascaded down and worked on by each team, this year they will focus on four key themes. Each theme will have a dedicated workstream and involve organisational wide participation through focus working groups, comprising of volunteers from the organisation who are passionate about those particular areas, rather than just having to be part of the process. Ms Midgen and Ms Simanu will initiate this approach next week, prioritising the top four themes initially.

Mr Orr mentioned the Dunedin build, thanking the Dunedin donor involved. He asked about the plans and suggested casting an experienced eye over the plans to ensure accessibility features are built in from the outset rather than an afterthought.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow-up on the accessibility plans and features for the Dunedin build.

Ms Abel-Williamson thanked Ms Midgen for initiating the library review questions and commented on the performance review process. She expressed excitement about volunteers but noted that some registered volunteers' skills aren't being utilised. Mr Orr added that he hasn't been contacted either. Ms Midgen explained the ongoing process of vetting volunteers and noted the need to involve volunteers across all parts of the organisation, not just client services. Regarding performance reviews, she mentioned a calibration process involving the ELT and People and Performance teams to ensure fair and unbiased ratings.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow-up regarding progress with the volunteers programme.

Ms McCaskill asked about the status of the individual advocacy service and whether the job had been closed off.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow-up on the status of the remaining individual advocacy case.

Ms Abel-Williamson highlighted the importance of including members and clients in partnerships. She expressed concern about not seeing anything related to this in the May Board minutes and emphasised the value of promoting internal skills rather than relying on external agencies.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the report from the Chief Executive is received.

Moved by Ms McCaskill. Seconded by Mr Billings. Motion Carried.

## C3.2 KPI Report

Ms Midgen took the report as read. She mentioned that progress was tracking reasonably well, with specific focus areas identified, including fundraising and determining the appropriate production level for guide dogs.

Ms Small opened the floor for comments or questions.

Mr Orr referred to guide dogs, and suggested considering reinstating the client group. Ms Small pointed out that Blind Citizens NZ fulfils this role as a national group that meets regularly and addresses issues, with the Guide Dogs Manager, Peter Hoskin, who participates in their meetings, which are accessible online via Zoom. Ms Midgen acknowledged having discussions with Blind Citizens NZ and recognised it as an active group. She emphasised avoiding duplication of efforts and suggested addressing any gaps rather than running two separate groups.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the KPI report be received.

Moved by Mr Orr. Seconded by Ms Small. Motion Carried.

## C3.3 BANZAT Trustee Appointments

Ms Small opened the floor for comments. There were no comments.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board approves the appointment of Leeanne Wojtowicz and Joy Martin-Holm as the two BLVNZ appointed trustees to the Braille Authority for the next three years.

Moved by Ms Small. Seconded by Ms McCaskill. Motion Carried.

# D4. STRATEGIC ITEMS

## D4.1 Draft Briefing to the Government

Ms Small opened the floor for discussion.

Ms Midgen mentioned that she discussed the matter at the last Board meeting, gathered feedback, and subsequently revised the document. It has since been peer-reviewed and finalised as the new version.

Ms Taggart mentioned providing feedback at the previous meeting, expressing approval of the document and plans for various upcoming meetings.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board approve the BLVNZ briefing to the Government master document.

Moved by Ms Taggart. Seconded by Ms McCaskill. Motion Carried.

## D4.2 FY25 Operations Plan and Board KPI’s

This paper was discussed at the Board’s in committee meeting yesterday, and it was decided to defer it to September. The Board intends to have further discussions with the Chair and seek his input before proceeding.

**Action:** include the FY25 operations plan and Board KPI’s paper in the September in-committee meeting to incorporate input from the Board Chair.

## D4.3 Proposed Changes to the RNZFB Constitution Review

Ms Small opened the floor for discussion.

Ms Midgen mentioned that the final document has been reviewed by lawyers. She highlighted minor changes such as pronouns and correcting the registered address. The two main substantive changes concern director remuneration and clarifying the disputes process, specifically distinguishing between governance and operational matters. This version is intended to be sent out to members for voting at the Special Meeting prior to the AGM.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** on the recommendation of the Governance Committee, the Board approves the changes to the constitution.

Moved by Mr Patete. Seconded by Ms Taggart. Motion Carried.

## D4.4 BLVNZ Tauranga Property Sale

Ms Small opened the floor for discussion, mentioning that previously raised questions from earlier meetings are now addressed in the paper.

Ms Taggart acknowledged the efforts made to enhance visibility and transparency in the paper. She noted that her feedback from the previous discussion has been incorporated, but expressed reservations about the idea of selling a property in a depressed market. She referred to considerations such as the rateable value and appraisal, questioning the timing and when it would be appropriate to cut losses on the it.

The consensus was supportive of the sale, delegating the decision to management to maximise the process and ensure obtaining the maximum value. Timing was emphasised as crucial to achieving the best possible value from the sale.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board approves the sale of the property located at 21A Warrington Street, Matua, Tauranga.

Moved by Mr Orr. Seconded by Mr Patete. Motion Carried.

## D4.5 Equipment Solutions Vision Store Update

Ms Small handed the floor over to Ms Midgen, who acknowledged that this topic had been raised at previous meet and greet events. Ms Midgen outlined plans for the next couple of months to address these concerns. She referred to Mr Lansink’s feedback regarding penfriend labels, shipping and talking tapes measures and emphasised the commitment to directly engage with clients on existing or new product suggestions. Mr Lansink also expressed concerns about how the Pearson Fund subsidies are applied, noting they cover the total cost of the order without differentiating higher subsidies for certain products.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to discuss Board feedback with Pearson Fund staff regarding the equipment store.

Ms Small opened the floor for comments.

Ms Taggart highlighted consistent themes and strong messages from members at meet and greet events. She mentioned the benefits and challenges people face, particularly with accessing smaller items and the cost of freight and couriers. Ms Taggart suggested that identifying barriers to product delivery is an opportunity to find ways to eliminate them.

Mr Patete emphasised the importance of a strong communications strategy to inform members about the topic and the plan to address it. He suggested equipping staff who conduct roadshows with responses to minimise exposure to related questions.

Ms Small encouraged members and clients to explore available products by looking online and locally within the New Zealand market.

Mr Billings mentioned receiving feedback from people with low vision who have purchased magnifiers that didn't work for them and couldn't be returned, highlighting the issue of not being able to try before buying.

Ms Small discussed the suggestion of BLVNZ contracting with opticians, paying $50 for a person's visit, and allowing individuals to purchase magnifying glasses for $35.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** that the Board receive the equipment solutions vision store update.

Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Mr Orr. Motion Carried.

## D4.6 Guide Dog Services Update

Ms Midgen took the report as read. Ms Small opened the floor for discussion.

Mr Billings mentioned the success rate being down to 22% for some time and asked about a turnaround. Ms Midgen discussed new initiatives in the programme, including training puppies to be robust to noises and changes, rather than just cuddling and playing with them. She noted efforts by Peter Hoskin and emphasised the importance of “catching them early” if puppies can't cope.

Mr Orr asked about changes in the next 12 months to increase the number of dogs in the programme. Ms Midgen responded that while there is an intention to improve, it is too early to make a definitive call.

Mr Billings asked about the new mobility training centre’s utilisation, which wasn't mentioned in the report. Ms Midgen explained it's business as usual for orientation and initial training, including matching. She noted the facility is possibly underutilised, particularly the recreation centre, and suggested hosting corporate team days to raise awareness and learn about guiding blind people.

Ms Small suggested hosting traffic engineers and design professionals for staff to explain the rationale behind using directionals, warning tactiles, and audible signals, highlighting their importance in the mobility training centre.

Mr Billings requested adding the usage percentage of the training centre compared to the last reported figures.

Ms Taggart mentioned receiving significant commentary on the topic and questioned whether actions are being taken that aren't clearly articulated. She mentioned uncertainty about the last deep dive and emphasised the value in supporting current efforts. Ms Small suggested inviting Mr Hoskin to present at a Board meeting to provide clarity on the “so what.”

Mr Patete suggested that the presentation should focus specifically on priorities, problems, or risk areas, such as the success rate, and include discussions on current status, ideal goals, and plans to achieve them. He emphasised the need for a more targeted approach to address the recurring discussions and clarify the “so what.”

**Action:** Ms Midgen to organise a “so what” presentation and paper on guide dog services for the November Board meeting.

Ms McCaskill asked about the progress of the low vision assistance dogs programme and requested statistics on its status. Ms McCaskill agreed to send details to Ms Midgen.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to circulate information about low vision assistance dogs.

Ms Abel-Williamson suggested sending a note to members about sponsored dog food, noting some confusion in the messaging. Mr Orr mentioned it was already included in an email. Ms Midgen referred to the weekly newsletters sent every Friday from guide dog services, acknowledging initial logistical challenges with food deliveries and volume.

Ms Abel-Williamson discussed feedback from the recent meet and greet event where members raised concerns about stricter policies around training and placing guide dogs. She shared her personal experience of having four guide dogs and being told she doesn't work enough to apply for a new one, which she found challenging. She proposed either submitting a paper or informing others that if the service can't place someone, alternatives like training their own dogs or going to another guide dog centre should be considered. She requested exploring options for members facing restrictions on applying for dogs and expressed concern that stricter criteria might lead members to seek services in other countries. Ms Midgen agreed to organise a meeting with Ms Abel-Williamson to discuss the issue.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow up on the policy regarding training and placing guide dogs, including exploring options available to members if our service cannot place someone.

Ms Small mentioned the guide dog newsletter advising people to apply earlier for their next dogs, but noted the timeframes were vague and unclear. She emphasised the need to clarify when to apply. Additionally, she discussed Susan's point from the recent meet and greet event about low vision, stressing the importance of clarity on how dogs assist individuals with low vision by filling in gaps in their vision.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow up on the process of reapplying for a guide dog and clarify the timeframes for application.

Mr Orr mentioned the restriction of people in certain areas from receiving guide dogs due to concerns about perceived dangerous dogs in those locations.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow up on the issue of people who are unable to get a guide dog due to concerns of dangerous dogs in their area.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board note the paper for their information.

## D4.7 Guide Dog Services Kennel Build Project Update

Ms Small mentioned the Board's in-committee discussion about the Cape invoices related to the guide dog services kennels build. She then handed the floor to Ms Midgen, who updated the Board on their request for regular updates. Ms Midgen reported that the project is progressing well, staying within the adjusted budget discussed in previous meetings and is on schedule. She noted that three invoices, each exceeding $400k, were sent to the Audit and Risk Committee Chair for approval during the interim period, and all were approved.

Mr Patete clarified that the invoices are progress payments, reviewed and verified by the project manager and CEO to ensure they align with the project's schedule. He mentioned that these invoices pertain to the months of April, May, and June 2024, exceeding the CEO’s delegated financial authority, but have been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee Chair of April $734,500 May $648,917.79 and June $686,170.51.

Mr Patete referred to the statement in the paper that the fundraising team has secured funding for the majority of the project and questioned what "majority" means. Ms Midgen clarified that currently, they are approximately $2 million short of the total funding needed.

**Action:** Include an update on the guide dog services kennel build project on the agenda for the September Board meeting.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board note the contents of the paper.

## D4.8 Policy and Advocacy Quarterly Report

Ms Small handed the floor over to Ms Midgen. Ms Midgen mentioned her role as a Trustee on Eye Health Aotearoa. She highlighted an upcoming strategy workshop at BLVNZ Parnell in September. Ms Midgen discussed a project with Roche that she will be meeting about on Monday, focusing on specific areas related to macular degeneration. She noted challenges in finding qualified research participants and BLVNZ's efforts to identify people who meet the criteria for the study.

Ms Small opened the floor for discussion. There were no comments.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board notes the report for the period 1 January to 31 March 2024.

# E5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

## E5.1 Update from the Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, Mr Patete, noted that the committee hasn’t met since the last Board meeting.

He mentioned that the Audit and Risk Committee maintains visibility on financial results, with the monthly financial reports for April and May circulated between meetings, noting that the May financials were included in the July Board agenda pack.

The next Audit and Risk Committee meeting is scheduled for 9 September 2024.

## E5.2 Update from the Governance Committee

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Ms Small, reported on the meeting held on 18 June.

Key highlights from Ms Small:

* Proposed Changes to the RNZFB Constitution.
* Appointment of Returning Officer for the Special Meeting of Members and constitutional planner.
* Conflicts of Interest Policy.
* Board Retreat.

**Board Retreat**

Ms Small discussed the rescheduling of the Board retreat to 31 January and 1 February 2025 in Auckland. She emphasised the importance of defining a clear goal for the retreat to focus planning efforts. Ms Small requested assistance in organising the retreat, including new ideas, thoughts, and planning logistics such as the timetable and venue. Mr Orr agreed to join the Board retreat organising committee, and Ms Abel-Williamson also expressed willingness to participate in the organising process.

**Action:** the dates for the Board retreat have been changed to 31 January and 1 February.

The next Governance Committee meeting is scheduled for 27 August 2024.

## E5.3 Update from the People Committee

The Chair of the People Committee, Ms Taggart, reported on the meeting held on 23 May.

Key highlights from Ms Taggart:

* Te Ao Māori Programme update on the number of attendees. Management decided to pause the programme and assess its effectiveness, considering whether further investment is warranted.
* Employee Engagement Survey and an early report was received, as previously discussed in the CEO’s earlier update under item C3.1.
* Internship programme discussion about the continuation of the programme, with a focus on learning from the experience of the three interns the organisation has had, to inform the relaunch of the programme in the future.
* As mentioned in the CEO’s earlier update during item C3.1, the four day working week pilot will conclude on 30 September 2024. It was noted that resolutions were made regarding pay for performance and the remuneration system, with a slight change shifting from the four day working week to a slight increase in annual leave.

Ms Taggart is looking forward to working with the new GM People and Performance and setting the next agenda.

The next People Committee meeting is scheduled for 24 September 2024.

## E5.4 Update from the Client Services Committee

The Chair of the Client Services Committee, Mr Lansink, was absent from the meeting, and no update was provided.

Ms Small requested Mr Lansink to include certain points from the previous meeting into the minutes.

Highlights from the discussion include:

* Possible formation of a client reference group: One of the committee's responsibilities is to oversee consultation with clients and stakeholders regarding services. One suggestion being explored is a client reference group. Thinking is still at an early stage, but an outcome from this meeting is that staff will prepare a paper that looks at the Vision Australia client reference group. The committee is also planning a discussion forum on the general topic of client and stakeholder involvement with services to be held with consumer organisations.
* COPM: The committee received a helpful presentation on this from Jessica Nelipovich. This arose from a question raised at the March Board meeting.
* Library and Accessible Format Strategy: This matter was referred to the committee from the Board's April meeting. During this discussion it was noted that a survey is planned in the near future, to assess clients' use of the library service.
* Voice of the customer: The committee was pleased to see the high scores being achieved and positive comments being received.

The next Client Services Committee meeting is scheduled for 3 September 2024.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the report from the Chair of the People Committee, Chair of the Governance Committee and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is received.

Moved by Ms Taggart. Seconded by Mr Billings. Motion Carried.

# F6. PROPERTY AND TRUSTS

There were no further updates, refer to updates in the Chief Executive’s report under item C3.1.

# G7. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

## G7.1 Report from the Chair on his formal activities for the period

The Chair opened the floor for discussion. There were no comments.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the paper was noted.

## G7.2 Governance Annual Work Plan 2024

The paper was noted. Ms McCaskill will attend the Retina NZ AGM on 21 September in Christchurch.

## G7.3 Register of Board Resolutions

The Board duly noted the Register of Board Resolutions.

## G7.4 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report

*Ms Harris joined the meeting at 10:45am.*

The Chair extended a warm welcome. Ms Harris noted that the data included in the report is for the month of May.

### G7.4.1 Health and Safety Meetings

Ms Harris provided an update on the main discussion points from the May health and safety committee meeting. The key items discussed at this meeting:

* Reminders about quarterly site inspections.
* Reminders about flu immunisations with vouchers available until August.
* Telus Webinar: incivility in the workplace.
* Telus Webinar: eco-anxiety, how to cope when the future looks bleak.
* Health and safety in relation to visitors, guests and volunteers at BLVNZ premises, noting concerns about volunteers not following sign in procedures at reception.
* Emergency Response Plans for each property are nearly complete.

### G7.4.2 Previously Identified Hazards

The issue of the risks relating to dogs was discussed in terms of:

* Dog behaviour.
* Emotional stress.
* Environmental hazards.

### G7.4.3 Events Reported

* There were two hazards identified for May.
* There was one near miss recorded for May, with the hazard eliminated.
* There were no incidents reported for March.
* There were no accidents resulting in first aid injuries.

### G7.4.4 Health and Safety comments from the Board

* Mr Orr queried about environmental hazards, and Ms Harris mentioned general hazards such as tripping or bumping into objects.
* Mr Billings asked about emotional support for puppy raisers, handlers, and volunteers, especially in cases where handlers lose a dog. Ms Harris mentioned that external support from EAP is only available for employees. She suggested encouraging communication with the guide dog team and highlighted Victoria Davy and Belinda Turnbull as contacts for volunteers to discuss any issues or circumstances they may face.
* Mr Patete questioned whether staff understand the fiduciary responsibilities of Board representatives attending health and safety committee meetings, and suggested that clarification be provided at the next meeting as the Board has a duty of care in ensuring comprehensive safety measures are in place.
* Mr Patete asked about promoting awareness of accidents and hazards, and how employees are encouraged to practice safety. Ms Harris mentioned the health and safety observation form and suggested promoting good practices through her monthly emails to remind people about using the tool.
* Mr Patete reported on the health and safety review of the Hamilton office, noting no significant issues. He mentioned the presence of an AED in Hamilton and questioned whether staff are trained in its use. Mr Orr asked whether blind staff are trained to use the AED.
* Ms Taggart thanked Ms Harris for her update on health and safety. She noted a discussion with Mr Patete about the importance of clarifying why Board members attend health and safety committee meetings. Ms Taggart suggested introducing Board representatives at the beginning of meetings to provide clarity on their roles.
* Ms Taggart mentioned that it would be beneficial to be copied on the monthly staff newsletters sent to the Board, emphasising the Board's commitment to their responsibilities.

**Action:** Ms Harris to follow up regarding training blind staff on the use of AED (automated external defibrillator).

**Action:** Ms Harris to circulate staff health and safety newsletters to the Board.

**Action:** Ms Harris to introduce Board representatives at staff health and safety committee meetings.

**Action:** Ms Harris to include updates for June, July and August in the next health and safety report to be presented at the September Board meeting.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board receive the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report for the period ending 31 May 2024.

Moved by Mr Patete. Seconded by Ms Taggart. Motion Carried.

*Ms Harris left the meeting at 11:09am.*

## G7.5 BLVNZ Financial Accounts as at 31 May 2024

Mr Patete acknowledged the challenges faced eleven months into the financial year, attributing them to softened donations and legacy revenue due to economic circumstances. He mentioned that management has been proactive in implementing cost saving initiatives and maximising revenue to ensure ongoing financial sustainability. Mr Patete highlighted the positive impact of financial investments, noting that despite an operating deficit, the return on long term investments has exceeded budget expectations. This has contributed to a net surplus of $3 million year to date, a positive outcome for the organisation.

Ms Midgen provided a preliminary high level overview of the full year financials. She mentioned that income is at $32.8 million, which is $3.5 million below budget primarily due to lower than expected legacies. Expenses stand at $34.4 million, which is $1.9 million below budget, resulting in a net operating deficit of $1.6 million compared to the breakeven budget. However, including income from investments results in a net surplus of $3 million, which exceeds the budget by $1.9 million. Ms Midgen emphasised that the organisation's plan for the year is on track at the operating line.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board receive the BLVNZ financial accounts for the period ending 31 May 2024.

Moved by Mr Patete. Seconded by Ms Taggart. Motion Carried.

## G7.6 Conflicts of Interest Policy

Ms Small mentioned that the policy has been updated to specify how conflicts of interest are recorded and addressed. She gave examples of how individuals with conflicts might handle themselves, such as staying at the table but not voting, stepping outside during discussions, or abstaining from voting while still contributing to the discussion. She asked if everyone was clear about what constitutes a conflict of interest under the new changes to the Incorporated Societies Act and the advice from Bell Gully.

Ms Small opened the floor for questions regarding the new policy, emphasising its mandatory policy and will be circulated to the community for consultation and feedback.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** on the recommendation of the Governance Committee, the Board approves the Conflicts of Interest Policy to be circulated for consultation and comments from the community, as proposed.

Moved by Mr Patete. Seconded by Ms McCaskill. Motion Carried.

**Action:** Conflict of Interest Policy to be circulated for consultation.

## G7.7 Proposed Client Services Policy

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** on the recommendation of the Client Services Committee, the Board approves the Policy on Client Services, as proposed, is adopted.

Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Mr Orr. Motion Carried.

## G7.8 Donations Resolution

Ms Small noted there have been no changes to the resolution, and is something the Board approves twice a year.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT:**

1. The Board confirms the authority already delegated to the Chief Executive to implement fundraising programmes that will attract sufficient funds to meet the income targets for voluntary-giving contained in the approved business plan.
2. The Board confirms the authority delegated to the Chief Executive and to the Chief Financial Officer to make specific approaches to trusts and other funding agencies for financial support and approves the release of whatever information is required to support the applications. Applications may be to support the general purposes of the Foundation or a specific service, project or programme.
3. All applications for funding must be in the name of the Blind Low Vision NZ and signed by the Chair, Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, Secretary of the Board, Trusts and Foundations Fundraiser or such other officer as may be authorised by the Chief Executive from time to time. All grants received must be banked in an approved account of the organisation and used solely for the purposes for which they were made. All transactions will be subject to normal external financial audit.

Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Ms McCaskill. Motion Carried.

## G7.9 Special Meeting of Members

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** on the recommendation of the Governance Committee:

1. The Board appoints the Board Secretary as the Returning Officer for 2024 for the purpose of running a Special Meeting of Members.

2. The Board approves the date and time of the Special Meeting of Members as 9:30am on Saturday 16 November 2024 in South Auckland AND notes the Summary of Key Dates proposed.

Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Ms Taggart. Motion Carried.

## G7.10 Proposed Board 2025 Meeting Dates and Locations

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board approved the Board meeting dates for 2025:

1. Board Retreat – Friday 31 January and Saturday 1 February: Auckland.
2. Saturday 1 March: Gisborne.
3. Saturday 3 May: Whangarei.
4. Saturday 5 July: Dunedin.
5. Saturday 20 September: Auckland.
6. Friday 21 November: Wellington.
7. Wednesday 3 December: Board In-Committee Meeting via Zoom.
8. That the AGM for 2025 be held on Saturday 22 November: Wellington.

Moved by Ms McCaskill. Seconded by Mr Orr. Motion Carried.

**It was noted that in conjunction with its December in-committee meeting, the Board usually meets face to face with Management to start the business planning process. This needs to be reviewed given the Board plans to meet on Zoom.**

**Action:** Ms Midgen and the Board Chair to discuss the business planning session with management.

**Action:** The Board Secretary to send the confirmed 2025 Board meeting dates to the Board.

## G7.11 FY25 Insurance Cover

Ms Small opened the floor for comments.

Ms Midgen noted that the current plan is effectively the same as last year. She instructed the team to incorporate feedback from the previous year into the paper to ensure all comments were addressed.

Mr Patete expressed pleasant surprise at the 8.5% figure, considering it quite good. He emphasised the importance of managing risk comprehensively, ensuring a wide range of policies cover all business needs and risk points. Mr Patete acknowledged the challenging market conditions, particularly in material damage insurance, and anticipated premium increases. He highlighted the value of understanding coverage details, mentioning D&O insurance. He also mentioned the not for profit package, specifically association liability cover, noting that the documentation for it was not included in the pack.

**Action:** Ms Midgen to follow up on obtaining the association liability cover documentation for the not for profit package.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the Board notes the contents of this paper, which outlines the RNZFB’s insurance cover for FY25 effective 30 June 2024.

# H8. BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence received or sent.

# I9. ITEMS FOR RATIFICATION

The following papers contained in this section have been previously circulated to the Board:

## I9.1 Pearson Fund Minutes, 16 April 2024.

## I9.2 Pearson Fund Minutes, 21 May 2024.

## I9.3 FPL Board Meeting Minutes, 20 March 2024.

## I9.4 Meet and Greet Event Notes, 3 May 2024.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** the above items are ratified as having been received and contents duly noted.

Moved by Mr Billings. Seconded by Mr Patete. Motion Carried.

# J10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

## J10.1 Presentation from Parents of Vision Impaired

*At 9.24am Ms Rebekah Graham from PVI joined the meeting.*

Ms Small thanked Ms Graham for the opportunity to meet face to face while the Board was in Hamilton.

Ms Graham thanked the Board for their support. She mentioned being busy responding to the 18 March announcement by Whaikaha, noting that the change has brought a lot of uncertainty and stress.

Ms Graham discussed her Winston Churchill Fellowship trip to England and Scotland, where she visited RNIB. She noted similarities between RNIB and BLVNZ, highlighting common challenges such as serving geographically diverse populations across the country. She mentioned that parents face difficulties in traveling with children, leading to effective use of Zoom meetings for parent engagement, which has proven successful.

Ms Graham mentioned the PVI conference last year and conducting a codesign workshop with parents on their preferences. She noted that the workshop was rolled out via Zoom in May and June of this year and was well received. The sessions aimed to provide parents with insights into not only the blind sector but also the broader disability sector in New Zealand. Topics covered included understanding where to seek support, eligibility criteria, children's rights, UNCRPD, and enabling good lives. The initiative was designed to help parents grasp the context of disability rights in New Zealand and distinguish between organisations like BLENNZ and BLVNZ, to ensure parents feel well supported in the sector.

Ms Graham referred to the comprehensive report submitted to Ms Midgen for the financial year, noting its length and coverage. She then opened the floor for questions.

### J10.1.1 Questions from the Board

Mr Patete thanked Ms Graham for her presentation and acknowledged the important advocacy role of PVI in supporting parents and educating various stakeholders, including government agencies. He asked what PVI communicates to parents about what BLVNZ and BLENNZ offer. Ms Graham explained that BLENNZ is primarily funded by the MOE to provide educational services, whereas BLVNZ receives funding primarily from MOH, with some support from MOE and MSD, focusing on service provision. She highlighted camps offered for children and encouraged enrolment for newsletters and updates.

Ms Abel-Williamson, as the BLENNZ RNZFB Board representative, mentioned reviewing transition issues and recently receiving a report on students leaving school last year, which provided enlightening insights. She emphasised the importance of not oversimplifying these matters and thanked Ms Graham for attending and presenting at the meeting.

Ms Graham commented on a disconnect, noting that what she hears from parents doesn't always align with Ms. Abel-Williamson's perspective. She mentioned the challenges some parents face in their first experience with blind and disabled people, and in understanding the sector's complexities. Ms Graham emphasised the importance of providing an overview and context of the sector initially to prevent parents from feeling overwhelmed. She suggested starting with foundational information before delving into specific details, as many parents can feel bombarded with information initially.

Mr Patete mentioned the new counselling service offered by BLENNZ. Ms Abel-Williamson added that BLENNZ has employed four counsellors.

Ms Taggart acknowledged and appreciated the supportive work Ms Graham has done for parents and children, not only within the blind community but also in the broader disability community, amidst uncertainties due to changes in government. She recognised Ms Graham's impactful contributions in this area.

Ms Midgen mentioned being invited to the PVI Board meeting on 27 July and conference later in the year. She highlighted the ongoing work needed with BLENNZ to ensure there are no gaps or confusion between the two organisations.

## J10.2 Presentation from Retina NZ

Mr Mike Smith provided an update on Retina NZ, stating that Retina NZ is managed by a committee of five people, with himself serving as President and Paul Glover as Deputy Chair. He mentioned that the committee is relatively young due to leadership changes in 2019.

Mr Smith highlighted that Retina NZ's main activities include publishing resources such as the "NZ Low Vision Handbook," formerly known as the Blue Book, which is distributed for free at BLVNZ offices, eye health professionals, and optometrists. They also produce eye condition related disease specific information booklets in A5 size and various colours. Additionally, they print a high-quality newsletter placed in hospital waiting rooms and eye clinics, and produce Amsler Grids. He noted that the newsletter is available in narrated format through BLVNZ and is accessible via the Talking Book Service TIS menu 310.

Mr Smith discussed Retina NZ's collaboration with Auckland University and optometry students, as well as their participation in the Auckland Hospital Low Vision Day across two clinics. He highlighted their presence at the 'Show Your Ability' expos, disability equipment expos held in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch, and Dunedin, which attract a diverse audience including low vision individuals, eye professionals, and occupational therapists. Mr Smith emphasised the expos' role in raising awareness through cross-promotion, despite capacity limitations this year. He also highlighted Retina NZ's public meetings, open to all, and announced their upcoming AGM on 21 September at Spark Place in Turanga Library, Christchurch.

### J10.2.1 Questions from the Board

Ms Taggart asked about Retina NZ's membership, and Mr Smith explained that half of their members are also members of BLVNZ, typically diagnosed with inherited retina diseases early in life through optometrists or ophthalmologists. He emphasised the importance of keeping those who don’t qualify for BLVNZ services informed about support mechanisms. Retina NZ has about 100 youth members, a closed Facebook group for youth, and a total membership of 300-400, with approximately 200 being BLVNZ members. They also offer corporate memberships for eye health professionals at a higher fee, providing access to publications and special educational sessions, aiming for a diverse membership where services are not limited to members.

Ms Small asked about Retina NZ's relationship with Eye Health Aotearoa. Mr Smith confirmed the previous president had been involved, eventually becoming a trustee, but noted Retina NZ wasn't invited back after changes in leadership. He expressed support for Eye Health Aotearoa's work, mentioning Retina International's close alignment.

Ms Midgen queried Retina NZ's involvement in macular degeneration, questioning if Retina NZ was the first in this area before a new organisation was established specifically for that purpose. Mr Smith explained that Retina NZ previously attended meetings to provide peer support but ceased due to involvement with Vision 2020 initiatives by former CEO. He mentioned Macular Degeneration NZ was launched in 2012 and has focused on that specific condition with substantial funding and success. Retina NZ aims to avoid duplicating efforts and instead focuses on areas of the community not adequately served, particularly in diabetes, influenced by insights from Retina International.

Mr Patete asked about collaboration opportunities between Retina NZ and BLVNZ to enhance relationships. Mr Smith acknowledged capacity limitations without paid staff but highlighted collaboration in support groups and joint awareness initiatives. He mentioned tools like a lighting assessment device and a low vision toolkit for occupational therapists, aiming to distribute these resources widely. He expressed interest in conducting low vision awareness days across BLVNZ offices and advocated for providing white (identity) canes to PSPs as part of induction.

Ms Small thanked Mr Smith for his presentation.

Ms Small opened the floor for any other items to be raised under general business.

## J10.3 Thank you to Hamilton staff

Ms Taggart made a comment acknowledging the staff support in Hamilton and requested that it be formally recognised.

**Action:** The Board Chair to thank the Hamilton staff for their support over the two days while the Board were in Hamilton.

**Closing Remarks**

Ms Small thanked Ms Midgen and the Board Secretary for their support leading up to the Board meeting. She acknowledged the people joining online and informed them they can write to the Board via the Board Secretary. Ms Small thanked the Board members for their work and participation in the meeting.

Ms McCaskill closed the meeting with a Karakia.

The open meeting closed at 12:44pm.

**IT WAS AGREED THAT** **due to the commercial and personal sensitivity of some items, the Board will move into Committee to discuss these.**

Moved by Ms Small. Seconded by Ms McCaskill. Motion Carried.

**Moved by Ms Small and seconded by Ms McCaskill, it was unanimously agreed to move out of Committee and that no statement would be made in the minutes of the public meeting.**

# K11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled on **Saturday 14 September** in Wellington.

**Judy Small**

**Deputy Chair**