

THE MACFARLANE TRUST

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 10 September 2013 at 10.30am in the basement meeting room, Alliance House, Caxton Street, London SW1H 0QS.

Present: Russell Mishcon (Chair standing in for Elizabeth Boyd)
Alan Burgess
Eileen Jackman

In attendance: Jan Barlow (Chief Executive)
Roger Evans (Chair) (Up to 591.13)
Keisha Hanchard (Support Services Officer)
Scott Craddock (Interim Deputy Chief Executive)

588.13 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Elizabeth Boyd, NSSC Chair.

589.13 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- i) The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

584.13(1) - 4th sentence, after "issues relating to", insert "ownership of property, including";
586.13 Case 10 – the part in quotation marks should read: "In order to discharge our responsibility as a charity, we need to take all necessary steps to prove that the funds are used for the purpose stipulated. This includes a surveyor's report to satisfy ourselves that there are exceptional circumstances".

587.13 – the meeting to be held on 28 August 2013 was rescheduled for 10 September 2013.

- ii) The grants schedule of the meeting held on 24 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

590.13 Matters Arising

- i) Attendance at tribunals and appeals by Neil Bateman, Specialist Benefits Advisor

The Committee discussed whether there should be a cap on the number of tribunals that Neil Bateman could attend in any financial year and the maximum amount that could be processed by the office for his invoices. The Committee agreed the following:

- A cap of up to £1,000 per tribunal can be processed through the office;
- Within any financial year, if the number of tribunal cases Neil Bateman attends exceeds 5, the NSSC is to be made aware.

- ii) Chair's correspondence with MP regarding a female primary beneficiary

Recent correspondence between the MP of a female primary beneficiary and the chair of the board had been circulated to all trustees. The correspondence related to a case that the NSSC had been considering for some months. RE advised the Committee that he had not wished to delay sending responses to the MP until after the NSSC meeting. It was noted that in addition to the correspondence with the MP, a letter detailing all the financial support which the primary beneficiary had received from MFT had been sent to her direct.

iii) E-mail correspondence from a primary beneficiary regarding the NSSC criteria for applying for grants

The Committee considered email correspondence from a primary beneficiary regarding grant application criteria. Following discussion, it was agreed that a reply should be sent to the primary beneficiary on the NSSC's behalf stating the following:

- That there are no stipulated grant criteria except Exceptional Circumstances in relation to grants for primary beneficiaries;
- A definition of Exceptional Circumstances should be given again;
- That the NSSC has to be satisfied that Exceptional Circumstances are met;
- Normal household expenditure can include items such as 'white goods', computer/laptops although, if exceptional circumstances could be shown, the request could still be considered.

591.13 Policy Issues

i) Reserves update

25 applications had been received to date totalling approximately £125k; 16 requests were from Primary Beneficiaries and 9 requests were from Widows.

592.13 Applications, including those circulated by "round robin" for clarification, cases and reviews/first appeals

- Case 1: Agreed a contribution of £1k towards a replacement boiler subject to the primary beneficiary first checking if the flue of the existing boiler could be replaced without the need for a whole boiler replacement.
- Case 2: Declined a grant for a sofa, TV and removal costs for a primary beneficiary as exceptional circumstances were not shown.
- Case 3: Declined a grant for wedding costs for the daughter of a primary beneficiary, a washing machine, fridge/freezer and a laptop as exceptional circumstances were not shown.
- Case 4: Declined a grant for a laptop for a primary beneficiary as exceptional circumstances were not shown.
- Case 5: Agreed a one-off contribution of £400 towards speech therapy sessions for the daughter of a widow.
- Case 6: Agreed a contribution of £1k towards university equipment for the dependant of a deceased primary beneficiary.
- Case 7: Agreed a grant of £3,000 towards course fees for a widowed primary beneficiary. £1,500 should be paid from the Wilson Fund and £1,500 from the Honeycombe Legacy. If the Wilson Fund no longer existed, the Honeycome Legacy would pay the full costs.
- Case 8: Agreed a contribution of £500 towards school travel costs for the son of a widow, subject to confirmation that the primary beneficiary was the child's father.

- Case 9: Declined a grant for solar panels for a primary beneficiary as exceptional circumstances were not shown.
- Case 10: The Committee were unable to make a decision on this case as the request was unclear. The Committee asked that the Support Services Team liaise with the beneficiary to establish his needs.
- Case 11: Agreed a grant of £350 towards removal costs for the mother of a dependant whose father is a deceased primary beneficiary.
- Case 12: Deferred making a decision regarding a grant towards debt assistance for a widow. The Support Services Team was asked to liaise with Jayne Bellis, Debt Counsellor to establish if the debts could be negotiated down and for the new information to be presented back to the Committee regarding property status and household income in relation to her son.
- Case 13: Agreed a grant of £446.42 towards college uniform and equipment for the daughter of a deceased primary beneficiary.
- Case 14: Agreed a contribution of £2,500 towards a replacement boiler for a widow.
- Case 15: Agreed a grant of £350 towards travelling costs for a widow to visit her terminally ill father-in-law. The balance of £350 travelling costs for her new partner was declined.
- Case 16: The Committee were unable to make a decision on this case where a primary beneficiary was requesting financial assistance due to loss of income, as they required a copy of his expenditure to have a clearer understanding of his circumstances. The Committee asked that the Support Services Team establish his needs for a request to be reconsidered at the next meeting.

593.13 Any other business

- i) The Committee requested that the layout of the background sheet for the NSSC case papers be amended to include the following:
 - Clearer financial circumstances, including totals
 - Any outstanding loans
 - All personal circumstances i.e. age, status, age and number of dependants, property status
 - Details of all Skipton Fund payments received
- ii) The Committee were asked if they would consider a request for financial assistance towards university costs for a 27 year old dependant who had not been able to start university when he was 18 due to illness. The Committee agreed that they would consider the case so long as medical confirmation was provided.
- iii) The Committee were asked if they would consider a request for financial assistance towards legal fees/solicitors fees to purchase the freehold for a primary beneficiary. The Committee did not believe that this request would meet the threshold of exceptional circumstances.
- iv) The Committee noted that there were not any Round-Robins
- v) Date of next meeting is 9 October 2013, 10:30am.