

## **Governance Task Force (GTF)**

### **Consultation, Communications and Transparency: Sub-group 4**

#### **Report to GTF 17 May 2014**

(Sub-group members: Clive Briscoe, Eilidh Douglas, Hannah Perry, Chris Ramsey)

#### **Remit:**

1. To review the means by which the Board ensures that it is in touch with and responsive to the views of the membership.
2. To review the transparency and accessibility of the AIUK governance structure, documentation and membership consultation processes to ensure that there is effective information sharing and communication with the UK membership especially prior to significant strategic decisions being made by the Board or Annual General Meeting.
3. To review the role and membership of Board Sub-Committees and other governance related groups in respect of consultation, communications and transparency.
4. To make recommendations on how AIUK responds to and engages with members on the ICM agenda. To review how AIUK communicates implications for AIUK to the membership.

#### **Summary**

Since the GTF meeting on 08 March the sub-group has focussed on the following:

1. Continuing to have interviews carried out to explore the views of AI UK members about the performance of the organisation with regard to communications and consultation.
2. Reviewing the information gathered from staff at AI UK about:
  - a. The range of methods used to communicate with members
  - b. The involvement of members in governance issues
  - c. The methods and effectiveness of consultations carried out by AI UK in recent years
  - d. Governance documentation impacting on the transparency of the organisation
3. Considering feedback from the AGM GTF workshop
4. Reviewing progress in fulfilling our remit (including GTF cross cutting themes) and producing recommendations in respect of this remit.

#### **Recommendations**

Below are set out a series of recommendations (in bold) to the Governance Task Force followed by a brief explanatory statement.

1. **Recommendation on the format of the Chair's email : It is recommended that a specific template is designed for the Chair's email so that it can be more easily identified and be more user friendly.**

Feedback from the AGM workshop indicated that a clearer format is needed for any email communications going out to members from Amnesty UK. The Chair's email, the Director's email and then regular emails from staff are easily confused, particularly because of the different formats with some being easier to read than others. A longer term improvement could be the inclusion of a short 2 minute video from the Chair summarising her main points.

2. **The terms of reference of Board subcommittees should be reviewed and include the following information:**
  - a. **The role of the subcommittee and relationship with the Board, other representative bodies and the wider membership**
  - b. **The method of appointment of members**
  - c. **Any permanent features of its composition**
  - d. **Method of communication (if any) with the Board, other representative bodies and the wider membership**

This recommendation is based on the observation that the Board subcommittees have different approaches to drawing up their terms of reference which could infer they are different types of body. Often the approach to describing certain key bits of information is inconsistent. For transparency, the above information must be included across all subcommittees and made available on the AIUK website.

This recommendation is also made to facilitate clear communication between members, representative bodies and the Board throughout the year.

3. **Each representative body (STAN committee, Country Coordinator Steering committee, Regional Reps Forum, Trade Union Network Committee, Youth Advisory Group ) should have terms of reference and these must include the following information:**
  - a. **The role of the representative body and its relationship with the Board, other representative bodies and the members it represents**
  - b. **The method of appointment of members to the representative body**
  - c. **Any permanent features of its composition**
  - d. **Method of communication (if any) with the Board, other representative bodies and the members it represents**

This recommendation is based on the observation that the existing representative bodies have different approaches to drawing up terms of reference (if they have them at all) which could infer they are different types of body. Often the approach to describing certain key bits of information is inconsistent. For transparency, the above information must be included for all representative bodies and made available on the AIUK website. This recommendation is also made to facilitate clear communication between members, representative bodies and the Board throughout the year.

4. **A consistent procedure should be designed and agreed for the “sign-off” of the terms of reference for Board subcommittees and all representative bodies and this procedure should be set out in the terms of reference themselves**

Should a Board subcommittee or representative body wish to redefine its terms of reference, there does not appear to be a clear and agreed procedure for doing so. The GTF sub-group is not agreed on whether this should be by the Board and/or the subcommittee itself, but it does however agree that a consistent procedure is applied and recognised across all Board subcommittees.

5. **The following representative bodies should be re-designated as “forums”:** STAN committee, Country Coordinator Steering committee, Regional Reps Forum, Trade Union Network Committee, Youth Advisory Group. For example: the Student Action Network Forum, the Country Coordinator

**Forum, the Regional Reps Forum, the Trade Union Network Forum and the Youth Advisory Forum.**

The phrase “forums” is used in the articles for some representative bodies and should be applied consistently across all representative bodies at Amnesty UK. Should “forum” be rejected as a term then an alternative term should be selected, applied consistently across all representative bodies and updated in the articles.

**6. Current AI UK e-mail circulation lists should be reviewed and clear criteria agreed for the purpose of each list and the membership.**

There is confusion over which list you need to be on to receive emails among the membership. This needs to be clarified internally and made clear on the website so that members can register to be on different lists, know which list they are on and/or remove themselves should they wish to.

**7. Each representative body (see recommendation 5) must always consider some reports from the Board at its regular meetings ( eg could be Board agenda, minutes and/or supporting papers).**

If there is a standing item on the agenda of each representative body when it meets for them to review and discuss Board related topics then it ensures that the members are more likely to be up to date with key AIUK issues and provide the opportunity to raise questions and/or concerns should they wish to in a timely fashion.

**8. Each representative group should be given the explicit right to submit a report to the Board for its consideration and be entitled to receive a response from the Board.**

By enabling representative groups to submit reports to Board meetings (either verbally or in written form), members have the opportunity to raise concerns formally and transparently, but also relatively quickly without having to resort to the AGM to raise their concerns. This is an additional means of ensuring frequent communication between the membership and the Board should the representative bodies wish to take advantage of it.

**9. There should be a standing item on every Board agenda “Reports from forums”**

This standing item formalises the opportunity for forums to submit their reports and ensures there is sufficient time for the Board to discuss them.

**10. The Board should be required to make these reports and their response to them available for the wider membership e.g. on the website**

This will demonstrate the communication between the different representative bodies and the Board and allow those who may not sit on either body to review the comments and see their ideas/ concerns being raised and discussed outside of an AGM/ being physically present

**11. A representative of the Board should come to a minimum of one representative forum meeting a year and to each one of the regional conferences each year**

This recommendation is founded on the view that the Board needs to make itself available for members to raise questions in person, for the Board to hear the discussions and needs of members in these forums and for the forum members to familiarise themselves with Board members. This recommendation does not suggest that every single Board member needs to do so but would hope that there is a variation in who attends different meetings. The point is that “a Board member” is present rather than a specific person over their term.

**12. Sub-group 1 should review the terms of reference and “sign-off” arrangements for the committees of the AGM.**

This would ensure that the terms of reference of all AIUK governance related committees and representative bodies are thus being reviewed as part of this GTF process.

**13. Sub-group 1 should review the current approach taken to recording decisions taken at the AGM.**

This reflects concerns about the current arrangements where the use of such expressions as “comfortably carried” is extremely subjective and lacks the transparency one would expect in an organization committed to democracy.