

Greyhound Rescue Wales. An Organisational Review

Interim Report – August 2021

Martyn Hubbard

An Introduction to Change

It is in the nature of change processes that in reality they start the moment that a germ of an idea for change begins to be discussed. Once recommendations and plans are being proposed and decided upon, the journey to change is definitely underway.

Change is very often seen as threatening, disruptive, and worrying. Until a vision of the new world is clearly seen and accepted by all stakeholders these concerns will remain. They will affect different people in different ways and to different degrees.

People who do not immediately embrace the idea of change are not negative or obstructive. They are not against change, they are very often the same people who will work to make the change successful. They are often the people who, if brought along, will inform the change process positively. They carry with them a wealth of experience, knowledge, and commitment. These people will see the vision from their own point of view and may well see things that others, leading the change, cannot see.

One of the most important aspects of any change management project is communications. Change programmes fail due to poor communications. Equally many change programmes invest heavily in communications, both in terms of finance and resources and benefit from this.

Greyhound Rescue Wales are now on a journey of change. Recommendations for change and growth are being discussed. The extent of any change will be determined by the trustees of GRW as will the new beginning, the end goal, the 'vision.

The interim review report that follows sets out some recommendations to move GRW through a process of change. Some of these recommendations are there to aid the change process and play an important part of that.

At this moment in time there are no plans, or visions to be communicated. However, the change process itself has started and this has been communicated to stakeholders around and beyond GRW. These communications have been for the most part indirect, but the idea of change has also been directly communicated. It will be beneficial for the success of the change programme, GRW and ultimately the dogs that we are here to support, to adopt the correct line of communication as the organisation moves from this very early position.

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Executive Summary

This is the Interim Report which presents the findings of the first phase of an Organisational Review of Greyhound Rescue Wales.

This Review has revealed the enormous commitment, dedication and hard work of trustees, staff and volunteers over the years and during the recent challenges of the pandemic. This can't be overemphasised. It is this effort that has allowed Greyhound Rescue Wales to become the organisation it is today, widely recognised for its success in rescuing and rehoming greyhounds in Wales.

This review has identified the need for organisational change.

Recommendations have been made which, if successfully implemented, will enable GRW to achieve sustained success in the future. These recommendations only address areas that have been reviewed closely. Arising from this process further recommendations will develop and further decisions will need to be made.

This review has been divided into two documents to clarify and emphasise the way forward. Importantly the division will allow trustees to begin the organisational change process at board level, and at membership level at the forthcoming annual general meeting.

Key Recommendations

1. Ahead of the forthcoming AGM a positive face to face communication should be undertaken with GRW managers to provide an understanding of the proposed change project.
2. To support GRW trustees through the change process and into the future, and to give appropriate purpose, drive, and direction to the start of the organisational review, a team day for the trustees should be undertaken.
3. GRW should, as a priority, review its vision and mission statements to achieve clarity of organisational purpose
4. GRW must take legal advice from their solicitors as to whether the Memorandum and Articles of Association as currently worded is (1) sufficiently clear and (2) consistent with good governance
5. GRW should fully assess and prepare for the impact of any change in operational purpose
6. To work towards its vision, GRW should produce a new organisational strategy that focuses on delivering its objectives, through its staff and volunteers
7. GRW should consider means to engage its members in contributing to the development of organisational strategy
8. During the review of vision and mission and during strategic planning, GRW should avoid embarking on new initiatives that may not align with a revised organisational purpose
9. GRW should reassign operational responsibility currently held or undertaken by trustees to appropriate members of staff and align trustee roles with strategic leadership
10. GRW should evaluate the ability and competence of existing staff as part of the reassignment exercise and in line with job description review outcomes.
11. GRW should strengthen the operational team with the appointment of a senior executive/manager with responsibility for directing operational activities of GRW
12. GRW should establish early, clear and regular communication with the staff, volunteers and members about the changes that will be taking place and how they will be affected
13. GRW must engage an expert in Human Resources in order to ensure that any changes to job descriptions comply with employment law and are introduced in a way that supports staff in understanding and adapting to the change, and to provide HR support into the future.
14. GRW should establish an appropriate procedure for reporting of operational matters to the board
15. GRW should review the maximum term a trustee may stand as a Board member. This Recommendation links with Recommendation 4.

16. GRW should review its policies and procedures with the aim of using them as dynamic tools that articulate the organisation's values and the expectations of how staff and volunteers should behave
17. GRW should review its administrative functions and support systems to ensure that they support effective delivery of GRW's operations.
18. GRW should review which personnel have responsibility for the administrative support systems, which personnel need to utilise the administrative support systems and ensure that appropriate training is provided.
19. GRW should introduce an ongoing system of support and training for trustees.
20. Definition of the structure of the trustee board and role descriptions for trustees should be developed.

Greyhound Rescue Wales

Background

Greyhound Rescue Wales (GRW) is a membership organisation, which is "dedicated to rescuing and rehoming greyhounds and lurchers" [GRW Website]. Following the efforts in 1993 of a small group of people trying to rescue greyhounds in the Swansea area, Greyhound Rescue Wales became a charity in 1996 and is now the longest established greyhound rescue charity in Wales and the only charity of its kind to serve the whole of Wales. Over the years, membership has grown to ?

Greyhound Rescue Wales in 2021

Rescue and rehoming remain the major welfare activities for GRW. The majority of dogs rescued and rehomed by GRW have been associated with greyhound racing and were passed to GRW by professional greyhound trainers.

The capacity to rescue and successfully rehome dogs has increased steadily over the years and is a key strength. In the year spanning 2019 to 2020, 106 dogs passed through GRW's dedicated Rehoming Centre – "Hillcrest" which is based in Ammanford. The return rate of dogs that have been adopted for the same period is approximately 14%. This compares favourably with rates revealed by other rescue centres (7-20%) This reflects the skill and care taken by GRW in matching rescued dogs with suitable homes.

GRW is currently on a sound financial footing with income in 2019-2020 of £499,603, expenditure of £455,760 and in excess of £600k carried forward. GRW currently operates five quality high street shops and there is a plan to open a sixth. Income from the shops provides the major source of regular funding for the organisation.

GRW employ fifteen full-time and part-time staff across a range of operational functions. Their work is supported by a significant number of volunteers. The contribution of volunteers is a critical factor in the sustainability of the organisation.

The Review

Context

This independent Review was commissioned following a recognition by the Trustees that a series of internal exercises to assess the current strategic position of GRW and plan for its future, had not been successful.

Aims

In summary, the aims of the Review were to identify:-

- what GRW currently does well and should continue to do;
- areas of risk and weakness in its operations both currently and looking forwards;
- a plan for the future that addresses the findings of this Review.

Approach

The Organisational Review of GRW has been planned to occur in two phases. The first phase (May – July) has looked at areas of potentially greatest risk that need time critical changes. It has not been possible in this time to undertake a comprehensive review. There are areas of operation and governance that have not been examined.

An initial interim report summary was considered by the Board of trustees in early July. Following comments received at that meeting and further discussion with the Chair and a co-opted trustee, the initial summary has been developed to include more detail, clarity of terminology and a number of recommendations. The timing will allow these recommendations to be considered by the trustees in August and proposals for change presented to GRW Members at their Annual General Meeting in September 2021.

Data and information have been collected through:-

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews with Trustees.

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews with staff.

Interviews, discussions and consultations with external contacts.

Visits to Hillcrest and the Merthyr and Neath shops.

Review of documents that have been made available to me.

Findings

Good governance is at the heart of successful organisations. Governance codes across sectors use slightly different language and rhetoric. However, they all share a clear view of what good governance looks like;

- Organisational purpose: values, vision, mission and strategic planning
- Leadership
- Integrity
- Structure
- Effectiveness
- Openness and accountability
- Diversity

The principles and practises of good governance have been used to organise the findings of this review.

Organisational purpose

GRW is known for its rescue and rehoming activity. Outcomes are generally very good, its reputation in this regard is strong and given the experience and expertise that exists within the organisation, it should continue.

GRW's vision, however, is not clearly worded and is inconsistently presented. As a result, it is not universally understood. This makes it difficult to maintain good governance, make strategic decisions and engage its members effectively.

A perceived ambiguity of organisational purpose has caused some division amongst trustees. There is a risk, as the organisation grows, that this will spread to staff, volunteers and members.

GRW must create a vision for itself as an organisation and its place in the wider canine rescue sector. GRW's vision must be at the heart of all GRW's communications and published where it can easily be accessed by its members.

There is a similar lack of clarity with GRW's mission statement. GRW's mission should define what the organisation is actually going to do to move towards its vision. A clear vision will affirm GRW's values and be the central guide in GRW's strategic direction.

Taken together, GRW's vision and mission must clarify its position with regard to greyhound cross-breeds and the broader category of lurcher; promotion of greyhounds (and lurchers) as pets and its stance and activity on greyhound and greyhound crossbreed welfare and greyhound racing. The impact on the organisation of clarification and change must be fully and systematically considered as part of this exercise.

RECOMMENDATION

3. GRW should, as a priority, review its vision and mission statements to achieve clarity of organisational purpose
5. GRW should fully assess and prepare for the impact of any change in organisational purpose

Organisational strategy

GRW is currently working to its Strategic Plan 2019 -2022. Once the vision and mission statements have been agreed, GRW must develop a new organisational strategy to make the organisational purpose a reality. The strategy should identify where GRW is now, where it wants to be in a defined period of time (normally 3-5 years) and a plan of how it is going to get there.

This strategy should then be translated into a series of objectives against which organisational performance is measured. This will provide direction and transparency, ensuring all staff and volunteers work efficiently and with accountability.

As with the vision, consideration should be given about how to engage with the members about the strategic direction. Seeking their views and facilitating their contribution are key to achieving openness and accountability. GRW conduct an annual member survey which is an example of good practice. This approach could be developed to secure the input of members on identifying strategic priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

6. To work towards its vision, GRW should produce a new organisational strategy that focuses on delivering its objectives, through its structure, staff and volunteers
7. GRW should consider means to engage its members in contributing to the development of organisational strategy

Careful consideration should be given to undertaking new initiatives or activity during the review of organisational purpose and the development of a new strategy. This is particularly the case for new developments that are complex or have far-reaching consequences. For GRW this includes, but is not limited to, the Hillcrest development and campaigning against greyhound racing. There is a risk that new undertakings will not fit with the revised vision and will divert both financial and human resource away from the focus on change.

Decisions on new initiatives should be taken against the backdrop of or as part of the new strategy. Trustees must ensure that they are fully informed and have taken into account all relevant factors when making decisions that have the potential to impact on GRW's interests.

RECOMMENDATION

8. During the review of vision and mission and during strategic planning, GRW should avoid embarking on new initiatives that may not align with a revised organisational purpose

Leadership, integrity and structure

Greyhound Rescue Wales is run and governed by a Board of Trustees. GRW is a successful organisation that has grown steadily over the years to the size of a recognised SME. Its current financial position is healthy. It has ambitions to grow further.

As a result of this growth, which is to be commended, a situation has arisen where the majority, if not all GRW Trustees have responsibility for day-to-day operational activities. This is reinforced through Board meetings and reporting being dominated by operational matters. It has also led to a drift in procedure that has allowed staff and non-trustees to attend and participate in trustee board meetings. If GRW is to move forward successfully, the Board of Trustees must focus entirely on strategic leadership leaving staff and volunteers to manage and deliver the operational goals.

A trustee's role through this period of change will be stretching. Covid restrictions have presented obstacles, not least the lack of face to face board meetings. Change programmes benefit from clarity of purpose and close team working. The GRW trustee board meeting together as a team to begin this change process will enhance and support work on fundamental issues such as vision, mission, and roles.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To support GRW trustees through the change process and into the future, and to give appropriate application to start the organisational review a team day for the trustees should be undertaken.
4. GRW must take legal advice from their solicitors as to whether the Memorandum and Articles of Association as currently worded is (1) sufficiently clear and (2) consistent with good governance
9. GRW should reassign operational responsibility currently held by trustees to appropriate members of staff and align trustee roles with strategic leadership
19. GRW should introduce an ongoing system of support and training for trustees.
20. Definition of the structure of the trustee board and role descriptions for trustees should be developed.

In 2019, GRW recognised the need to appoint a senior manager or executive to take responsibility for the operational duties being undertaken by the trustees. The appointment of such a person will allow for policies and processes to create an 'accountability distance' for trustees, and will provide for an escalation route or 'review space' should one ever be necessary. This Review confirms the need for an additional member of staff at managerial grade. It is critical, however, that the competence and ambitions of current staff are considered alongside the responsibilities assigned to a new post. Any staff changes must aim to improve or at least maintain staff morale. Clear and effective communication will be a key factor in achieving this.

The lack of professional HR advice on an ongoing basis for GRW creates a risk. During change especially HR considerations will need to be given a level of priority in order to mitigate any risk of dispute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ahead of the forthcoming AGM a positive face to face communication should be undertaken with GRW managers to provide an understanding of the proposed change project.
10. GRW should evaluate the ability and competence of existing staff as part of the reassignment exercise and in line with job description review outcomes.
11. GRW should strengthen the operational team with the appointment of a senior executive/manager with responsibility for directing operational activities of GRW
12. GRW should establish early, clear and regular communication with the staff, volunteers and members about the changes that will be taking place and how they will be affected
13. GRW must engage an expert in Human Resources in order to ensure that any changes to job descriptions comply with employment law and are introduced in a way that supports staff in understanding and adapting to the change, and to provide HR support into the future
14. GRW should establish an appropriate procedure for reporting of operational matters to the board

It is clear that the Board has given some thought to recruiting a range of individuals with a diverse and appropriate skill set. However, succession planning, particularly for key trustee roles, such as Treasurer, needs to be addressed. Whilst stability and continuity can benefit a Board, fresh ideas, renewed enthusiasm and an outside perspective are critical. Whilst, the Charity Commission recently rejected calls for a time limit on trusteeship, mainly for practical reasons, it is considered good practice by many organisations for a trustee to serve no longer than two terms of three years.

RECOMMENDATION

15. GRW should review the maximum term a trustee may stand as a Board member. See Recommendation 2.

Effectiveness

Policies and procedures play an important role in expressing an organisation's values. They frame expectations around staff and volunteer behaviour and help establish a positive and productive organisational culture. GRW have clearly invested time in the production of a number of policy documents. Some of these are available on the website. It is not clear, however, how well these policies are communicated to staff and volunteers and how accessible they are. It is also unclear how often they are reviewed and updated.

RECOMMENDATION

16. GRW should review its policies and procedures with the aim of using them as dynamic tools that articulate the organisation's values and the expectations of how staff and volunteers should behave

GRW utilises a number of administrative support systems. Administrative support systems mean the infrastructure and activities that support the functioning of an organisation. For GRW the infrastructure includes, but is not limited to, Animal Shelter Manager, QuickBooks Online, Google Drive. It has not been possible, as part of this Review, to examine the administrative support in great detail. However, it is clear that knowledge of administrative procedures and expertise in the data management systems used by GRW rests with too few individuals (which include trustees).

RECOMMENDATION

17. GRW should review its administrative functions and support systems to ensure that they support effective delivery of GRW's operations.

18. GRW should review which personnel have responsibility for the administrative support systems, which personnel need to utilise the administrative support systems and ensure that appropriate training is provided.

Future work

As mentioned above, this review was not comprehensive. There are key areas of GRW that have not been examined in any depth. These include the management of relationships with external partners and the role and contribution of volunteers and supporters. However, these will be addressed, at least in part, by following the recommendations outlined.

As this change project develops further recommendations and decisions will need to be worked on.

Importantly, at an early stage an 'order of play' will need to be determined. Whilst many of these recommendations can be worked up simultaneously there are also dependencies inherent in these.

Next Steps

If it is the decision of GRW to move forward with these recommendations a decision will also need to be made regarding how the organisation should proceed. It is clear that the trustees will have an increasing role developing and advancing the change project. It is also clear that the trustees should not adopt too operational a position in this work, and that they should maintain a distance to allow meaningful strategic oversight.

As individual trustees with specific areas of responsibility, engagement with detail will be necessary, whilst still allowing the trustee board as a whole to scrutinise.

This review has proposed three options to carry these recommendations forward, and to create an operational lead for the change project.

Option 1 - A 1 year program led by a newly recruited part time manager on a 12 month fixed term contract to build and lead the process top to bottom, from an administration review to supporting trustees in role reviews, vision statement reviews.

This option would aim for a 6 month review, including a break clause for the manager's position, aligned with a SGM to agree to any new GRW structure, vision and mission at that point.

A further 6 month period will then be to complete the strategic review and to put new structures into place. This work will be put to 2022 AGM.

This would be followed by the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive. (Possibly part time)

This is the recommended option

Option 2 - A 6 month programme with a full time manager to lead. This would aim for the SGM review.

At this point GRW would look to recruit a permanent Chief Executive (possibly part time) to lead the process, and who would have a greater input into the final result.

Option 3 - This follows the same pathways as options 1 & 2 but GRW recruits a permanent (possibly part time) Chief Executive to lead the whole change programme from the start.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone at GRW and beyond who has contributed to this review through giving their time and sharing their experience and views in an open and constructive way.

Helen Jenkins has been especially helpful in the building of this report along with the report detailing proposals for the 2021 annual general meeting.