

**Minutes of the OBFA Members' Meeting held at the residence of Shawqi Sultan  
on January 22nd 2018 at 4:30 pm**

**Present**

Maqbool A Sultan (MAS) – Chairman  
Shawqi A Sultan (SAS) – Secretary General  
Ahmed Al Araimi (AA) – Board Member  
Saleh Taleb Al Zakwani (STZ) – Board Member  
Khalil Al Khonji (KK) – Board Member  
Andrew Long (AL) – Board Member  
Nick Pattison (NP) – Board Member  
Aflah Al Rawahi (AR) – Member  
Qais al Yousef (QY) – Member  
Mohamed Habib (MHH) – Member  
Abdul Hussain Jaffer (AHJ) – Member  
Mukhtar Hasan (MH) – Member  
Paul Sheridan (PS) – Member  
Sarika Breeze (SB)  
Apologies – Chris Breeze, Pankaj Khimji, Yousuf al Harthy, Hani Zubair,  
Maqbool Hameed, Majid Al Toky, David Graham, Abdulredha Mustafa Sultan,  
Kiran Asher, HH Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib bin Taimur al Said

**Agenda**

1. The July 2017 reception and meetings held in London
2. The creation of the Omani British Business Council (OBBC)
3. The OBFA Talks held in May and December
4. Future OBFA Talks
5. London 2018
6. Accounts

**1. July 7 2017 London Breakfast Meeting and evening Reception**

The Chairman MAS opened the meeting by thanking those who were present for their attendance. He also mentioned that apologies for not being able to attend were received from those listed above.

MAS then gave an account of the Breakfast Meeting at the HSBC offices at St. James's in London, where presentations were given by Ismail al Balushi and Saleh Al Hasni from SEZAD about Duqm, and H.E. Talal al Rahbi about Tanfeedh. These went very well.

The evening reception was held at Buckingham Palace. Prince Andrew, OBFA's UK patron, gave a very good speech, but unfortunately H.H. Sayyed Haitham bin Tarik Al Said was unable to attend. In his place HE Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Sa'adi, the Minister of Health attended.

PS inquired whether there had been an analysis done on the invitees. MAS had spoken to Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles and Rob O'Halloran of the Omani British Business Council (OBBC) who agreed to do follow-up as this is more conveniently done from London. We will investigate further when Sir Sherard is in Oman in February.

## **2. The Omani British Business Council (OBBC)**

The name Oman British Business Council was proposed as OBFA's UK counterpart by Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles. He had said the term "Friendship Association" as used in OBFA would not be understood by the City as connected with Business, hence the change. OBBC will act as OBFA's UK equivalent. The July receptions henceforth will be held by OBFA and OBBC together.

## **3. OBFA Talks**

OBFA suggested having three Talks each year in addition to the July reception. 2017 was the first year when this was tried and thus two were held, one in May and the other in December. Both concentrated on training.

May's talk on Training and Work Experience included speakers from PDO and other organisations. It was held in Bait al Zubair with OBFA member Hani Zubair acting as an extremely successful moderator. Sadly just 35 people attended of the over 100 that were invited.

December's talk was at Muscat University and was moderated by Professor Yusra with panellists Mark Evans of Outward Bound and General Albert Whitley of Oman Sail who were also later joined by Abdulrahman Khalfan Al-Wahibi, a student who had undergone Oman Sail's training. Because of the past experience with attendees, OBFA made sure this time to call those invited and remind them of the Talk and as a result 90 guests attended. In the coming weeks OBFA will sit with the panellists to determine what the next steps in approaching the government should be, and in helping set up a training academy.

## **4. Future OBFA Talks**

The next OBFA Talks will be held in March. Future energies had been a popular talk topic among many organisations, so if this is the subject of the next OBFA Talks then it should stand out for its originality and be specific. However, regardless of the topic, we should focus on what our aim is, and ensure we achieve it by carrying out a follow-up after the Talks.

NP suggested sticking to a common theme, such as training or tourism, as we should build on what we've done. For example, our last Talks have been about motivating young people, so we should build on that by holding talks with the relevant people, meet UK companies so they commit to taking a certain number of interns, and find Omanis to fill those internships.

Those present agreed to let the Board know of ideas for the next subject for OBFA Talks. One of the topics MAS would like to suggest and he will discuss this with Sir Sherard when he visits Oman next, is Tourism.

## **5. London 2018**

2018's July Reception will be discussed with Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles when he visits Oman for OBFA's next Board Meeting, to be held either on the 27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> January, or the 7<sup>th</sup> February.

MHH suggested we work with the government to draw up a concrete proposal that could be offered to UK investors in the tourism industry. For example, Oman has an abundance of land and the UK has expertise and investors. The government could sell the land to companies to set up tourist resorts and bring clients, thus creating employment for Omanis. KK suggested OMRAN give a talk at the reception. AHJ emphasised that the Ministry of Tourism should be involved, as they have allocated areas where they are looking for investment.

Another idea was that we meet with the decision makers of companies who have invested in Oman (HSBC, Babcock, etc.) and discuss what OBFA could do to help them. QY suggested spending the morning of the July event in a large company to discuss what they can offer, and in the evening, to make the most of the larger crowd, do presentations and follow it up with a reception.

Additionally, if there are specific projects which are ready to start but need investors, perhaps these should be the focus of July's event.

We will also hold the usual reception in the AOS headquarters, and perhaps invite more potential investors to this event. By March we should know the date so attendees can book flights.

AL suggested going out of London for the July reception, as perhaps we are not getting investment because we are looking for investors in the wrong places. SAS said OBBC will have a better idea of where potential investors are. NP pointed out that most tourists are from London, so if tourism is the topic then London should be the location. We should conduct research into where tourists are coming from.

Research could also be done through the Oman Embassy in London to see where investment inquiries are coming from, and finding out, in the event companies decide not to invest, the reasons why. PS said to look at the last 50 companies that set up in Oman and ask what drew them here. Oman is increasingly publicised in the UK, and we should use this.

## **6. Accounts and Membership**

OBFA's balance is currently 24,000 OMR, having spent only 2,000 OMR. We will be collecting the Membership fees for 2018 soon. KK urged that OBFA increase its membership. SB has received several membership inquiries, and will follow up with names. MAS suggested all banks be included.

## **7. Sir Laurence Freedman**

Sir Laurence is a well-known author who has written many books and his latest one is on the strategy of war. He will be visiting Oman in February and Maggie Jeans suggested that OBFA hold a talk at which he speaks about Strategy, but MAS pointed out that OBFA's mandate is restricted to trade, economy and investments. SAS involved the British Ambassador, who suggested holding a talk at his residence during Sir Laurence Freedman's visit.

## **8. OBFA Website**

The OBFA website [www.obfaoman.com](http://www.obfaoman.com) is currently being updated. SAS asks that members make suggestions and consider how to make it user-friendly and interesting. This is an area we could potentially spend money on. Several members commented that they did not know how to login, so SB will resend login details.