



Corporate governance

The Board is committed to high standards of corporate governance and believes that it is in the interest of all its stakeholders to detail how the principles of corporate governance are applied within the Group.

Corporate governance code

The Company has adopted its own corporate governance code (GMG Code) which to a large extent reflects the structure and content of the UK Corporate Governance Code (although, as an unlisted plc, there is no requirement for the Company to comply with the UK Corporate Governance Code). The GMG Code reflects the fact that the Company is unquoted and that 100% of its share capital is held by The Scott Trust Limited (STL). The current GMG Code can be viewed [here](#).

The Board

GMG's Board currently comprises a non executive chair, Neil Berkett, three executive directors and seven independent directors. Following David Pemsel's resignation as CEO and director with effect from 2nd December 2019, Anna Bateson (Chief Customer Officer) was appointed interim CEO. Annette Thomas took up the office of chief executive in early March 2020 and was appointed as a director of the Board on 17 March 2020. Richard Kerr resigned from his role as CFO, and as a director, with effect from 27th March 2020. Following his departure, the role of CFO was filled on an interim basis by James Bishop. Keith Underwood was appointed to take up the role as CFO (CFO with an operations remit) on 22nd June with a view to being appointed to the GMG Board on 6th July.

Neil Berkett was appointed non-executive chair in September 2013. The role of the chair is distinct and separate from that of the chief executive and the division of responsibilities between the chair and the chief executive has been clearly established, set out in writing and agreed by the Board.

Baroness Gail Rebusk has been the senior independent director since April 2017.

All of the non-executive directors meet the independence criteria set out in the GMG Code. The chair, on appointment, met the independence criteria, but thereafter the test of independence is not appropriate by virtue of his position as chair.

Annette Thomas and Katharine Viner are the only STL directors who are also directors of GMG. The chair of STL attends all Board meetings and there is a reciprocal arrangement whereby the chair of the GMG Board is invited to attend all the STL meetings. All STL directors receive copies of financial reports and Board approved minutes on a regular basis. This results in a close relationship between the GMG Board and STL as its shareholder.

The directors and the company secretary have a wide range of business and other relevant experience and their details can be viewed [here](#).

Non-executive directors are appointed for terms of three years which can be renewed. Under GMG's articles of association, directors are subject to re-appointment by STL (as sole shareholder) at the first annual general meeting following their appointment. GMG's articles of association also require that the number of directors closest to, but not exceeding, one-third is subject to re-appointment at each annual general meeting.

A monthly financial report is provided to the directors. Board papers, which include regular and ad hoc reports, are circulated to the directors by the company secretary in advance of Board meetings to ensure Board members are supplied, in a timely manner, with the information they need. There is a written

schedule of specific matters reserved for Board consideration which includes setting and monitoring Group strategy, reviewing trading performance and the approval of significant contracts, capital expenditure, acquisitions and disposals. The Board delegates to management the detailed planning and implementation of Group strategic objectives in accordance with appropriate risk parameters. Board meetings are minuted and the minutes circulated to all Board members.

Led by the chair, the independent directors meet formally at intervals during each year without the executive directors being present. Gail Rebeck, as senior independent director, holds a meeting of independent directors, without the chair present, to review the chair's performance. The views of executive directors are taken into account at that meeting.

On appointment to the Board, directors receive appropriate briefings on the Group and its activities and follow a tailored induction programme. They visit the Group's operations and meet local management. It is expected that directors will continually update their skills and the knowledge and familiarity with the Company required to fulfil their role both on the Board and on Board committees and the Company provides the necessary resources for developing and updating its directors' knowledge and capabilities.

The Board undertakes, normally at intervals not exceeding two years, a formal evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees and individual directors. Evaluation may be by self-evaluation questionnaire, or external evaluation or such other means as the Board determines to be appropriate. The last evaluation exercise was undertaken in May 2019. The chair reviews and agrees with each non-executive director their training and development needs.

All directors have access to the company secretary, who is responsible for ensuring that Board procedures and applicable rules and regulations are observed. A procedure exists for directors to take independent professional advice, at the Group's expense, if necessary, in the furtherance of their duties.

The Company maintains an appropriate level of directors' and officers' insurance which was in force throughout the financial year and at the date of approval of the financial statements. In accordance with the Company's articles of association, the directors and officers of the Company are all indemnified out of the assets of the Company, to the extent permitted by law, in respect of liabilities incurred as a result of their office. In addition to this general indemnity, the Company has also put in place a specific deed of indemnity setting out in greater detail the terms and conditions of the Company's indemnity. Neither the Company's indemnities nor directors' and officers' insurance provide cover in the event that a director or officer has acted fraudulently.

The Scott Trust Limited (STL)

In October 2008 STL acquired all the ordinary share capital of GMG from The Scott Trust, which was subsequently wound up. All of the then trustees of The Scott Trust became directors of STL. The shares in STL are held in equal numbers by five of the STL directors. The terms of the articles of association of STL ensure that its shareholders can receive no personal economic benefit from their shareholdings.

STL chooses to ensure that only a minority of its directors are executive directors of GMG. Currently Katharine Viner and Annette Thomas are the only directors of STL who are also directors of GMG.

One place on the STL Board is customarily reserved for a Guardian journalist, at present Nils Pratley, who is chosen by the other STL directors in consultation with the body of Guardian journalists.

The normal tenure of all STL directors, except those in executive positions, is limited to five years, with the possibility of extension for up to a further five years following review.

Committees

The Board has a number of committees consisting of independent directors and with executive directors and senior executives in attendance. The Scott Trust investment committee comprises of independent directors of GMG as well as directors of STL, along with two external independent members.

Composition of the committees as at 29 March 2020 and frequency of meetings is set out in the table below.

Director	Audit committee	Remuneration and People committee	Nominations committee
Neil Berkett	Member		Chair
Jennifer Duvalier		Chair	Member
John Paton	Member		Member
Gail Rebuck		Member	Member
Coram Williams	Chair		
Yasmin Jetha		Member	
Anders Jensen	Member		
Frequency of meetings per financial year	4	3	2

Notes:

1. As chair, Neil Berkett normally attends meetings of the Remuneration and People Committee but is not a member.
2. The chief executive, Annette Thomas is not a member of any Committees, but normally attends their meetings.
3. The editor in chief, Katharine Viner is not a member of any Committees, but is invited to attend the Remuneration and People Committee.
4. The chief financial officer, normally attends meetings of the Audit Committee but is not a member of the Committee.
5. John Paton resigned from the GMG Board and Committees with effect from 2nd September 2019.
6. Anders Jensen joined the Audit Committee with effect from 17th March 2020.

The number of meetings of the Board and committees held in the financial year ended 29 March 2019, with details of individual attendance by directors is set out in the table below.

Director	Board meetings	Audit committee meetings	Remuneration and People committee meetings	Nominations committee meetings
Neil Berkett	5	4	2*	2
David Pemsel	4	2*	2*	2*
Katharine Viner	6		4*	
Richard Kerr	6	4*		
Jennifer Duvalier	6		4	2
Nigel Morris	5			
John Paton	2	2		1
Gail Rebuck	6		4	2
Coram Williams	6	4		
Yasmin Jetha	6		4	
Annette Thomas	1	1*		
Anders Jensen	1			
René Rechtman	1			
<i>Number of meetings held</i>	6	4	3	2

* In attendance

Notes:

1. *David Pemsel resigned with effect from the Board on 2nd December 2019*
2. *Richard Kerr resigned with effect from the Board on 27th March 2020.*
3. *Annette Thomas, René Rechtman and Anders Jensen were appointed to the GMG Board on 17th March 2020.*

Details of the purposes of the committees are set out below. All the committees have written terms of reference, which are subject to annual review and which are available on request from the company secretary.

Audit committee

The audit committee currently comprises three non-executive directors, and is chaired by Coram Williams, one of its members. In addition, the chief executive, chief financial officer, company secretary, director of finance and tax, and senior representatives of the external auditors normally attend the committee's meetings. More than one member of the committee has recent and relevant finance experience. At least once a year, the committee meets with the external auditors and separately with the outsourced internal audit function, without executive members of the Board present. The committee makes recommendations to the Board in relation to the appointment, re-appointment and removal of the external auditors and agrees their scope of work and fees prior to the commencement of the annual audit. The committee has a written policy on the engagement of the external auditor to supply non-audit services, which clearly sets out areas where the external auditor cannot provide non-audit services, for example accounting or managing internal audit work, as it could impact on their objectivity and independence. **Note** 10 to the financial statements (Auditors' remuneration) contains details of the fees payable to the external auditors for audit services, audit-related services and other non-audit services.

The committee considers issues arising from the external audit and reviews the annual financial statements and written reports from the external auditors; it monitors internal financial control procedures and reviews the operation and output of the outsourced internal audit function. The committee reviews arrangements by which Group employees may, in confidence, raise concerns about possible improprieties in matters of financial reporting or other matters. The committee has an agreed annual calendar of activities.

The committee's proceedings are minuted and circulated to all Board members by the company secretary. The audit committee chair reports to the Board on the outcome of audit committee meetings.

During the financial year ended 29 March 2020, the activities of the audit committee included:

- monitoring the integrity of the Group's financial statements and reviewing the significant and financial reporting judgements they contained
- oversight of the external audit strategy and review of the report by the external auditors
- oversight of the internal audit and tax functions
- receipt and review of periodic reports from the outsourced internal audit function
- consideration of internal and external audit issues
- oversight of risk management and consideration of risk management issues
- consideration of tender processes for the supply of the internal audit function
- consideration of issues in relation to General Data Protection Regulation
- consideration of membership and contributions processes
- consideration of issues relating to Brexit
- consideration of cyber security
- consideration of data governance principles
- consideration of IR35 regulations

Remuneration and People committee

The remuneration and people committee currently comprises three independent non-executive directors and is chaired by Jenny Duvalier. As chair of the Company, Neil Berkett normally attends the committee's meetings. In addition, on matters other than those concerning themselves, the chief executive, editor in chief and group HR director normally attend meetings.

The committee is responsible to the Board for the Group's compensation framework and for determining the remuneration packages of the executive directors and key senior managers. It retains the right to scrutinise and, if necessary, veto proposals for individuals outside this group. It advises on executive remuneration policy issues. The committee oversees talent management and the overall employee experience for all staff across the company. Deloitte LLP is retained as independent advisors to the committee and the committee has access to other professional advice where necessary.

The committee's proceedings are minuted and circulated to all Board members by the company secretary. The remuneration committee chair reports to the Board on the outcome of remuneration committee meetings.

Details of Directors' remuneration are set out in the Directors' Remuneration Report which may be viewed [here](#).

Nominations committee

The committee comprises the chair and three independent non-executive directors. It is chaired by Neil Berkett (as chair of the Board).

The committee deals with the selection of and makes recommendations to the Board on the appointment of Board members, where necessary obtaining advice and assistance from internal or external legal, accounting, or other advisors and with authority to appoint external search consultants. The committee ensures that plans are in place for an orderly succession for appointments to the Board and to senior Group management and monitors senior leadership development.

STL approval is required for the appointment of the chair of the Board, and STL has sole responsibility for the appointment of the editor-in-chief of the Guardian.

External search consultants assist in the appointment of executive and non-executive directors where necessary.

The committee's proceedings are minuted and circulated to all Board members by the company secretary. The nominations committee chair reports to the Board on the outcome of nominations committee meetings.

Internal control

The Board is responsible for the Group's system of internal control. This system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives and can only provide reasonable but not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The Board has reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control during the year.

The key features of the internal control system are:

- a clear organisation structure with defined levels of responsibility delegated to operational management
- maintenance of comprehensive risk registers, which identify and evaluate risks and document control procedures and monitoring arrangements. Regular review and update of risk registers is embedded in executive committee and operational reporting procedures including Board review

- certain key Group functions including taxation, treasury, insurance and day-to-day administration of the investment fund are handled centrally with regular reports to the Board through the chief financial officer. The treasury function operates within Board-approved limits
- a structured process for approval of capital projects and significant contracts which includes appropriate authorisation levels
- all significant acquisitions or investments are subject to detailed internal appraisal involving both Group and operating personnel and due diligence procedures, prior to being presented to the Board for approval within agreed thresholds
- comprehensive business planning procedures which include a rigorous annual budget process, culminating in the budget for the year ahead and plans for subsequent years being approved by the Board. Forecasts are updated quarterly and presented to the Board for review and comment
- monthly management accounts which report on trading performance by operation against budget and previous year, including relevant key performance indicators and latest year-end forecasts, are provided to management and the Board
- the outsourced internal audit function delivers independent review and assurance on the management of key business risks and on the effective operation of governance processes and systems of internal control
- regular review of business operations throughout the Group by operating and executive management.

During the course of its review of the system of internal control, the Board has not identified nor been advised of any failings or weaknesses which it has determined to be significant.