

From provocative questions to climate scenarios, Trust Horizon Chair David Glover CFInstD is helping the board think more deeply about its purpose, people and the future it is shaping.

When David Glover CFInstD became Chair of Trust Horizon – a perpetual community trust with substantial investments and a social mission – his focus was clear: help the board look further ahead and think more deeply about the future it is shaping.

“We’re not measuring return on investment the way a listed company might,” says Glover. “As a community funder, success for us is not measured by a percentage return – it is measured by impact. It is about how many jobs we have created, whether we’re improving education outcomes, or helping whānau stay connected to energy services. That

“We used climate change as a lens and projected ourselves into different futures. What does a 3-degree future mean for our region? No more kiwifruit in the Bay of Plenty? A pivot to bananas or coffee? These were not easy questions with obvious answers, but they helped us think long term – and differently,” says Glover, who also serves on the Institute of Directors’ Board.

As a chair, Glover is a firm believer in the power of provocative questions to unlock meaningful boardroom dialogue. “We don’t just need better answers – we need better questions,” he says. “What would it take to double our impact with the same resources?” or ‘How does Te Tiriti

An eye on the Horizon

difference shapes everything, especially how we govern.”

Time management, in his view, is one of the most underrated skills a chair can cultivate. “It is incredibly underrated. I don’t just mean ending on time. I mean spending the right amount of time in the right areas. And often, that means more time looking out the front window than the rear-view mirror. It is one of my biggest ongoing challenges: making sure there’s enough oxygen at the right moments, though ideally no one even notices.”

That mindset was on full display during the board’s recent scenario planning session, where the team explored different climate futures and their potential impact on the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

shape the way we show up in education or housing?’ These are the kinds of questions that provoke the kind of thinking boards are here for.”

He adds: “It is dangerous for a board to think it has all the answers. It should have all the questions.”

To get that kind of thinking, the conditions must be right. “You don’t do that at the end of a meeting – everyone’s tired,” he says. “You need to manage the agenda so there is enough time up front for open thinking while still getting through everything we need to. It should feel like the meeting just flowed well.”

Glover’s own style as chair emphasises participation and inclusion. “I try to speak less and listen more,” he says. “Often, the quietest person at the table,

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who is the last to speak, makes the most important contribution."

He quotes a favourite saying: *"If you don't know what an extrovert is thinking, you haven't been listening. If you don't know what an introvert is thinking, you haven't asked."*

"As chair, I talk less than I do as a director on my other boards," he says. "I focus on drawing out or clarifying people's positions, rather than giving mine. I try to avoid voting, unless it is a gnarly issue. If you are forced to a vote, you want to be sure everyone had their say – or felt they could. We aim to move forward by consensus, not headcounts."

For him, true board performance means every voice has space. "Seniority doesn't matter around the table. Everyone there has an equal right to talk to any item – from legal to finance to health and safety. It is the diversity of thinking that matters most."

That clarity around culture, he believes, is what separates a high-performing chair from the rest. "You can have the same people around the table with two different chairs, and the meetings will feel entirely different," he says.

"If you ask me what sets a great chair apart, it's not technical knowledge – it is the ability to shape culture. It is not just about running the agenda, it's about noticing when something's not right. If the ship is off course, the chair needs to step in – not just to steer it in the right direction, but to make sure it's sailing well."

At Trust Horizon, Glover and his fellow directors have embraced professional development as a collective responsibility. The board has joined the Institute of Directors together, not just as individuals, and conducts a board review every year. They also end each board meeting with a rotating peer review – light-touch but consistently reinforcing shared accountability. "We do it so the chair is not the only voice in the room," he says. "It keeps things open."



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Succession planning, he notes, is an ongoing conversation, especially in a trust structure with a mix of elected and appointed members. "We've been fortunate to have long-serving, re-elected members and we talk about succession often," he says.

Recently, the board brought on a Future Director through the IoD, formally mentored as a board observer. "There's not a lot of governance depth in the Eastern Bay, so we're framing this as a development opportunity – and it's already shifting the dynamic in a positive way," says Glover. "New perspectives are invaluable."

Trust Horizon may not face the same pressures as a corporate board, but its responsibilities are no less significant. "We're accountable to 55,000 people in the Eastern Bay of Plenty," says Glover. "We don't think of them as a market, but we do have to understand what matters to them."

And while the context may differ, the fundamentals of good governance hold true. "Whether it's a charity, a listed company or a government board, it's all about respect, trust and shared purpose," he says. "Culture is everything. And it's the chair who sets the tone."

THE CHAIR'S TOOLS FOR FORWARD THINKING

- **Provocative Questions**
Use bold, open-ended, future-focused questions early in the agenda to drive deeper thinking.
- **Scenario Planning**
Apply themes such as climate change to provoke long-range discussion beyond business as usual.
- **Rotating Peer Reviews**
End meetings with director-led feedback, reinforcing shared ownership and tone.
- **Shared Professional Development**
Join the Institute of Directors as a board – not just individually – to build common context and board culture.