

## Students' Union Trustee Board

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board**  
**Tuesday 01 April 2025 – Via MS Teams, 17:00**

**Present:**

Ruttuja Mane (Chair and President) – RM  
Jack Lambert (VP Student Activities) – JL  
Elliot Atkinson (VP Education) - EA  
Beky Williams (Lay Trustee Vice Chair) – BW  
Erica Burke (Lay Trustee) – EB  
William Callaway (Lay Trustee - WC)  
Tim Young (Student Trustee) - TY

**In attendance:**

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) – SW  
John Abell (Minutes)

**1. Attendance and Apologies**

Apologies were received from Liv Otterwell

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

**Decision** - Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

- To bring the budget forecast to the next Board including how many months the SU would not meet the reserves target.  
Covered in Agenda Item 7.
- To bring the terms of reference for the University internal audit of the SU.  
Covered in Agenda Item 5.

**4. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest (including Register of declarations of Interest)**

WC declared that he had a working relationship with SW due to them both being on the board of the OIA, and also that he is friends with the Worcester University registrar.

**5. Chief Executive Officer Report**

SW presented their report presuming it was read. Of particular note:

- February accounts mean an end-of-year deficit forecast of c£50,000.
- Costs have been reduced as far as possible in the bar and other areas.
- Ticket sales are going well for Varsity.
- The Internal Audit undertaken by the University was a useful exercise although it showed 'Limited Assurance' over SU oversight by the University. The main outcome is to develop a Code of Practice by July 2025, between the SU and the University. SW hopes to bring a draft to the next meeting as this piece of work needs to be expedited by the University.
- The Advice service is currently short staffed due to staff absence.
- There are ongoing conversations with the University over the need for refurbishment of the SU space. The University has agreed to bring in an architect to cost up potential changes to the space. Any proposals may well not be affordable for the University.
- Leadership elections had lower than expected number of candidates (6), with 2 candidates dropping out at the point of candidate training. However, there will be a good team next year including 2 international students. Board was reminded that the visa and related costs to international students may be prohibitive for some students to run in the elections. The elections were, once again, run with a good atmosphere without the level of complaints received in many other SUs.
- The popularity of the 3 full-time officer model at Worcester SU may need to be investigated, as numbers of candidates has dropped over recent years, albeit there will be many factors at play. This will be a difficult thing to determine, and it is certainly not practical that any new model could be suggested with appropriate student feedback before the constitution needs to be reviewed in June 2025. More work will need to be done to review if our model is still relevant to current and future Worcester students, and initial questions will be posed in the upcoming, annual insights survey where we test our strategic progress with students.
- There is increased optimism for University student recruitment next year.
- The University is changing the Academic Year next year which will result in a shorter semester before Easter and a longer Easter holiday. This may well have an effect on commercial income and attendance.

WC agreed that the SU needed a proper review of the constitution and suggested the University are asked to agree it 'as is' for a 1-year extension to allow a full year to review it properly.

TY noted that the SU does well to represent students but the model could do with a review and possible change.

WC noted that Bates Wells Solicitors have worked with NUS to develop a model constitution.

SW agreed the SU would use Wrigley's Solicitors or Bates Wells Solicitors in a constitution review due to their expertise in the SU sector.

**Action:** SW to approach the University re: 1 year extension of the SU's constitution 'as is' to allow time for its review.

## **6. SUSS AGM 2025**

SW delivered a presentation showing the highlights of the recent SUSS meeting:

- The position is improving with the deficit set at £63M and the next valuation at June 2025. The recovery plan is still until 2037. If finances improve, it is likely the length of the recovery plan will reduce rather than a reduction in annual contributions.
- 9 SUs have left the scheme and many more are in discussion with their Universities about how to exit. No current plans for NUS to leave.
- The trustees of the scheme are monitoring the finances of members and aware that many SUs are facing challenges.
- The cost to WSU of leaving the scheme would currently be £326K plus costs. This has been presented to the University but it is felt unlikely that this will lead to an offer to support us to leave.

RM noted that this had been raised multiple times with the University. EB asked whether the risk was likely to rise or fall over time? SW noted that this depends on how many SUs leave as this injects extra cash into the scheme. If the markets went badly, however, then this could lead to a worse position if we are left in.

WC noted that the current financial situation meant that there was little the SU could do unless the University agreed to provide the funds to buy out from the scheme.

**Action** SW to forward the SUSS Presentation to members.

## ***Approval Items***

### **7. Monthly Management Accounts – Feb 2024**

**Decision** – The monthly accounts were approved.

### **8. Appointment of Auditors for 2025-28**

It was noted that Knox Cropper had won the recent audit tender process and were felt to be by far the best proposition for WSU, with a new audit partner for the SU.

**Decision** – Knox Cropper were ratified as WSU Auditors for a 3-year period.

## **9. 2025/26 Draft Budget Submission**

Initial budget shows a need for a £700,000 block grant for next year in order to break even. Bar income next year is budgeted to break even.  
The SU hopes to hear initial feedback from the University on the block grant in June 2025.

WC suggested that management worked on scenarios in case of not receiving the required uplift in grant – **Action** for SW.

## **10. Finance Procedures Manual (FPM)**

SW noted the issues with the current financial procedures which had been discussed at the recent Finance Committee – particularly over-reliance on the CEO for financial approvals. More investigation was needed into this with the bank around alternative options. Following this, the FPM will go again to the next finance meeting in May 2025 and come to May's full board meeting.

## **11. Honorary Life Memberships to the Union**

Five students (Amy Shadbolt, Carolina Furtado, Lauren Frankland, Alice Hopkins, and Lydia Joy) were approved as Lifetime Honorary Members of the SU, following a paper presented by the Officers.

## **Reporting Items**

### **12. Annual report of external speakers**

The report was noted.

### **13. Board Sub-Committees**

RM noted the trading performance (with lower-than-expected bar turnover), the budget for 2025/26, financial procedures manual, and terms of reference were covered in the finance meeting that had happened earlier that day.

EA noted the highlights from the previous HR committee noting that BW had joined the committee. [Commercial in Confidence].

### **14. Officers' Report**

JL noted RMs activities highlighting that they have been working on Race Equality Week which was a great success as well as organising Holi. RM has also been lobbying on reducing University accommodation prices and is hoping that now there will be lower price option - students will be able to

choose either a 42 week or a 52-week let at reduced prices. Students will also get a reduction if they return to University accommodation in years 2 and 3.

EA has been working on the accessibility on the website with student councillors. Other highlights include representing students at the Dudley campus and supporting students with neurodiversity. Reps Development workshops will be run throughout semester 2.

JL highlights include working on Holi, developing new student societies, and supporting committee elections. They have also been working on improving atmosphere and information on open days, which was very busy, as well as planning for Varsity.

### **15. Executive Committee Summary**

JL noted the highlights of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March. These included work on cost-of-living, 2 new society approvals, and debating current student issues. The constitution review was also raised.

### **16. Student Council Summary**

EA noted the highlights of the Student Council meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March. Unfortunately, it wasn't quorate, although policies were ratified by email after the meeting. Highlights include:

- A discussion on campus parking
- The unreliability and high cost of public transport
- The ongoing financial struggle due to cost-of-living
- The extension to Easter break next year which had a mixed response.

### **17. Board of Governors Summary**

RM noted the highlights from the Board of Governors meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February. [Commercial in Confidence].

### **18. Any Other Business**

1. SW noted Kidderminster College had recently been hosted by WSU on campus to train their reps and we had received a really positive thank you message from college staff.
2. All Student Meeting wasn't quorate for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row. However, the meeting was very good and allowed the University to receive direct feedback from students on their new strategic plan. Questions to the SU included querying why spend on SU staff was the highest proportion in the overall budget, the value of BUCS, as well as several valuable pieces of feedback which the officers will be taking forward. Minutes would be forwarded to Board.
3. There is a strong lead for the Finance Trustee who would, hopefully apply and be interviewed soon. The recruitment for BW's position will begin after Easter. There are 2 applicants for the student trustee positions.

4. It was noted that the Student Activities Manager would present at the next meeting.
5. It was noted that the Autumn Board meeting would be moved before the 2<sup>nd</sup> October to allow BW to attend before their term of office finished – **Action for SW.**
6. It was noted that Knox Cropper (Auditors) would be offering finance training later in the year.

**Meeting closed 18:40**

**Summary of Actions:**

Action	For	To be completed by
SW to approach the University re: 1 year extension of the SU's constitution 'as is' to allow time for its review.	SW	Next meeting
Forward the SUSS Presentation to members.	SW	Next meeting
Management work on scenarios in case of not receiving the required uplift in grant	SW	Next meeting
SW look at dates for first meeting of 25/26 to ensure BW can attend	SW	Next meeting

**Next Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 5pm - Teams**