

## Students' Union Trustee Board

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 – Via MS Teams, 15:00**

**Present:**

Al Linforth (Chair and President) – AL  
Sebastian James (VP Education) – SJ  
Isobel Price (VP Student Activities) - IP  
Beky Williams (Lay Trustee Vice Chair) - BW  
Eryne Orme (Voted on as student trustee in special item 1) - EO  
Tim Young (Voted on as student trustee in special item 1) - TY

**In attendance:**

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) – SW

John Abell (Minutes)

Christian James (Knox Cropper – External Auditors)  
Stephen Anderson (Knox Cropper – External Auditors)

**1. Attendance and Apologies**

Apologies received for Mel Brittain, Erica Burke, Mattie Osborne, Erin Boddice.

**2. Student Trustee Appointments:**

EO, TY and MO voted on as student trustees.

**Outcome: EO, TY and MO approved as Student Trustees**

**3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

**4. Matters arising**

No matters arising

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

None declared.

**Action:** Board were reminded to fill in the related party declaration for the auditors and declaration of interest.

**Special Item (9 on Agenda): Approval of the Financial Accounts 2022/23**

SW introduced the item noting the new end of year report included in the papers. It was highlighted that it was a difficult year financially with a reduction in student spend due to the cost-of-living crisis. Student staff wages were raised and Board approved an additional rise in April for the lowest paid

members of staff beyond the usual end of year rise. This, combined with a freeze in the University block grant led to a difficult year.

Knox Cropper presented the end of year accounts. It was noted that these accounts followed charity guidance and therefore were not the same as usual monthly accounts. It was also noted that the accounts weren't the finalised version due to the end of year report not being included (though the overall numbers were unlikely to change). The end of year report had been included separately at this point.

It was noted that restricted funds are the funds related to the student group accounts (clubs and societies) and these needed to be reported separately. It was noted a £63K deficit for the year in unrestricted funds.

In unrestricted funds generally income had fallen by £37K – particularly in bars in income (£30K down).

Expenditure had also risen leading to the overall deficit.

The SUSS pension scheme was explained and it was noted how the deficit in the scheme was recorded on the accounts. This meant the overall funds show only £113 however this is due to the way the pension is shown. In reality, the bank position at the end of the year was strong with over £214K in current assets (excluding clubs and societies funds) before the pension scheme is included. This means the Auditors are happy that the SU is a going concern.

Knox Cropper explained the audit findings report. The audit was unqualified. There were no material adjustments (though a small number of pre-payments were found which needed to be disclosed though they weren't material). Last year the auditors recommended a VAT review and they would still suggest this due to the complicated nature of VAT in Students' Unions. They are pleased to report there were no other issues.

There were no questions from the Board to Knox Cropper. SW noted the audit felt very detailed this year due to the extra information required by auditors so thank you to Knox Cropper for supporting the SU with this. The next steps are to collate the 45-page annual report and finalised accounts. It was agreed the auditors would not need to return to a future meeting as the numbers would not change.

**Outcome: Board unanimously agreed the annual accounts 2022/23**

Knox Cropper were thanked and left the meeting.

## 6. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW presented their report presuming it was read.

- It was noted there were no management accounts due to time of year though September accounts will be presented at the next Finance and Board meetings.
- There was a good meeting with Endsleigh (SU insurers). The SU had signed up for a 3-year commitment for a reduction in cost. It was noted that Endsleigh are the experts in SU insurance. There were minimal changes to the policy due to low claims from WSU. There are likely

changes to elite sports personal accident cover around concussion and specialist treatment. Terrorism and Cyber Security cover were declined due to low risks and University support. The HR sub-committee discussed employee business accident cover and are looking at 24/7 cover for £720.

**Action: Board approved SW finding out more information and delegated authority to HR Sub Committee to decide on employee business accident cover.**

Staff sickness is still a problem in the organisation. The senior staff member has passed their 26-week probation. Warwick SU are supporting with Creative Content Coordinator interviews the following week. There had been a good level of applications.

- Although student engagement has been good, income in The Hangar has dropped. This is unlikely to change. This is due to changes in the University calendar leading to reduced trading time. The students who did attend had a good time with a good atmosphere and a more diverse student group attendance than in previous years. Finance Committee are working on plans to improve trading through working with clubs and societies.  
EO asked for clarification on how graduation and arrivals would work going forward. SW and AL explained there would likely be a week's gap between graduation and arrival which would impact courses and lead to the cancellation of the October reading week. This will be raised with the University in funding discussions.
- Advice continues to be busy and we want a flexible, bespoke, student centred service and a new advice strategy will be developed to reflect this. Advice reports have been presented to the University.
- Networks have 39 memberships (70 last year). A big drop in Women's and LGTB+ Network membership has contributed.
- Clubs and Society interest lists are positive with a 25% increase in memberships and 30% increase in members so far. Club membership is at 309. Reach bursaries and Get Involved memberships are a good part of this number.
- International student engagement is very positive following good partnerships with University staff leading to a diverse campus.
- NSS results were above sector average at 75%. Frustratingly, the general student voice questions were low, and there was some initial suggestion from parts of the institution that the SU were responsible for these scores and Officers pushed back against this. The VC congratulated the SU on the results.
- Outreach and campus chats are a key objective for SW.
- SJ updated on Nursing and Midwifery being offered from September 24 in Dudley, as well as other courses, including psychology, criminology, and sports therapy. There is an expectation by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) that students will have an equitable experience and students will be engaged in these discussions. WSU are discussing with other SUs who support satellite campuses to

develop an offer and understand costs. Board will be kept apprised of developments.

- BW and SW discussed the appraisal process for the CEO, how this was a partnership with the University and Trustee Board and the objectives were presented. These will be aligned with the Officer projects. PVC (Students) from the University has been involved and will have more contact with Board. BW noted that PVC (Students) had stated that SW was an asset both to the SU and the University and the meeting was positive. A six-month review was added to keep the University key contact engaged in the projects.
- CEO's objectives were noted in the appendices.

## 7. Strategic planning and potential KPIs

A, SW presented the strategic plan noting how the photos would be Worcester students to make sure it was relevant.

BW noted how attractive clear the plan was. There are some typos and tenses that need sorting. It was noted that the version presented was a draft and will be changed. BW also questioned the front photo design and suggested not having it as a sports photo to engage other students. SJ noted that some photos were LOCO heavy.

**Action: Board agreed to change the photo design for better representation of activities and approved the plan subject to SW making minor amends.**

B, SW presented the operational plan. This was mapped against the sustainable development goals. The KPIs were mapped against the themes and are a work in progress. Teams would work on updating the plan in terms of how they are delivering. Impact stories will be added to better evidence themes. SW would also like to apply some new physical and digital branding based on the plan if affordable.

BW noted that they were pleased the board level KPIs weren't too time consuming to report on.

**Outcome: Board approved the direction of travel and with sharing with staff.**

## 8. Board Terms of Reference

- 8.1 SW presented the ToR for approval noting no significant changes apart from membership names etc.

**Outcome: Board approved the ToR for Trustee Board**

### *Approval items*

## 10. Approve Returning Officer (RO) and Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) for Leadership Elections.

Val Yates, Director of Access and Inclusion at the University was proposed as DRO due to their knowledge of the SU. NUS were proposed as RO due to their experience.

**Outcome: Board approved Val Yates as DRO and NUS as RO**

## **11. Appointment of Lead Trustee**

Role is used if there a serious disciplinary issue to be a point of contact for staff and needs to be a lay trustee. EB was suggested as Lead Trustee.

**Action: Board approved asking EB to be Lead Trustee.**

## **Reporting items**

### **12.1 Finance Sub-committee Report**

The Audit and trading performance were discussed at the last meeting, as well as sport and society offers in the bar.

### **12.2 HR and Remuneration Sub-committee Report**

Staff probations were positive. Staff savvy implementation was difficult so the staff member involved was commended. Harmonisation of PPA (Personal Performance Appraisals) procedures were discussed. Staff forum questions/feedback were was discussed particularly for an increased annual leave amount (for birthdays/graduation) and flexibility around taking bank holidays. It was concluded that staff holiday shouldn't change due to the generous leave allowance in the organisation and organisational need as well as not wanting to introduce complications to the small HR team. The whistleblowing policy was approved. At the next meeting the safeguarding policy will be reviewed.

## **13 Officers' report**

- IP presented AL's report.  
Network funding and training will be worked on with many events. Period poverty project will be progressed by AL. International hardship funds will be worked on.
- IP presented their report.  
The year started off with committee training which was engaging, informative and well received. IP has worked hard on their summer campaigns and had a lot of support from the SU. There has been great engagement in extra-curricular activity so far and this campaign will focus on why extra-curricular activity is so beneficial and reduce barriers. Societies need to be recognised as much a part of Team Worc as Sports so activities will be progressed to help this. Consent campaign will happen in November with workshops and pop-ups to get students confident talking about this. IP will get more involved in Sports, BUCS and Varsity.
- IP presented SJs Objectives.
- AI will be worked on due to how it is changing the academic experience and has also worked with QAA and WonkHE on events and articles. 24 rep roles have been filled already. SJ has sent a letter to various MPs stressing the value of creative arts degrees as well as inviting the Universities Minister to Worcester. There will be regular student drop-in session to meet SJ to understand the VP Education role. SJ would like to thank Board and colleagues for support so far.
- All officers are very excited for the year ahead.

**14 Executive Committee Verbal Update**

IP noted the last committee was cancelled due to illness. The next meeting will be in 2 weeks.

**15 Student Council Summary**

SJ noted the first council would be 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

**16 Board of Governors summary**

AL noted the first meeting would be this week. It was noted the University received a silver in the TEF and this was expected.  
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**Action: AL to find current student numbers and update Board.**

**17 Any Other Business**

AL noted that Office for Students are hosting Free Speech round tables for students and Students' Unions to get input into the new complaints system. It was suggested that student trustees could sign-up if interested as a good opportunity to influence national policy.

SW asked whether Board wanted to move the time of the next meeting. This was discussed and it was decided to remain at 17:00.

**Date of next meeting: 28 November 23 17:00**

**Summary of Actions:**

Action	For	To be completed by
Fill in Related Party and Declarations of Interest forms if applicable and return to SW.	All	ASAP
Board approved SW finding out more information and delegated authority to HR Sub Committee to decide on employee business accident cover.	SW / HR Committee	Next meeting
Board agreed to change the Strategic Plan photo design for better representation of activities and approved the plan subject to SW making minor amends.	SW	Next meeting
Board approved asking EB to be Lead Trustee.	SW	Next meeting

Board requested current student numbers (to be updated through the group chat)	AL	Next meeting
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