

## Students' Union Trustee Board

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Via MS Teams, 18:00 (meeting postponed from 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022)

#### Present:

Liam Lees (Chair and President) – LL  
Ragnar Mularczyk (VP Education) – RM  
Neve Ricketts (VP Student Activities) – NR  
Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) – MJ  
Melanie Brittain (Lay Trustee) – MB  
Rebekah Williams (Lay Trustee) – RW  
Andrew Humphry (Student Trustee) – AH  
Dylan Dudley (Student Trustee) – DD  
Matthew Payne (Student Trustee) - MP

#### In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW  
Robert Cox (Finance & Commercial Manager), RC for items 6 and 9

#### 1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies received for:

Matthew Osborne (Student Trustee) – MO  
Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF

#### 1.a Ratification of new Student Trustees

DD and MP are ratified as new Student Trustees.

#### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

#### 3. Matters arising

No actions from previous meeting.

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

None declared.

#### 5. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW updated the board on key SU matters as follows:

- 5.1 Staffing changes reported – four staff will be leaving the SU (one has already left) in the coming months. Their roles and job descriptions have been reviewed and amendments made to ensure that the new JDs are reflective of the needs of the organisation and represent a slight restructuring within the Student Engagement

Team. SW confirms the amended job titles and the changes in their remit. Due to the changes taking place, it is anticipated a student staff member will support the Student Engagement Team in the interim, over the summer. SW confirmed that staff in their probationary periods are doing well and are expected to be confirmed in post imminently.

- 5.2 The headline Employee Engagement Survey results were shared with the board, with an overview of the student staff and core staff results respectively. A more in-depth analysis will be given at the May meeting of the Board.
- 5.3 The Help and Advice Service continues to be very busy and so the Assistant role will be reviewed to ensure that the service can continue to operate effectively, especially with the upcoming changes in staffing.
- 5.4 An update was given on University matters, including student recruitment and senior management appointments.

## **6. SUSS AGM 2022**

RC gave the board an update on the SUSS scheme historically (for the benefit of the new trustees) and also explained the key headlines from the recent AGM and future expectations of the scheme. Concerns remain around the SUSS scheme and its future affordability.

## **7. Pay and Reward review**

The Pay and Reward review had been completed and SW updated the board on key findings as follows:

- Initial findings of the review
- Benchmarking findings
- Recommendations of the review (including new salary bands, benefits, timeline of actions to implement the findings etc)
- Two roles identified as requiring an uplift in remuneration

The board discussed the review and agreed that the budget needed to be approved before approving the pay review so agenda item 11 is discussed next.

The Pay and Reward review and suggested outcomes were approved by the Board and immediate implementation of uplifts (backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022) agreed for the Officers, the Student Sport Administrator, and the Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator. A discussion was had around the remuneration of the Chief Executive and it was agreed that this could be dealt with through separate discussions involving the HR and Remunerations Sub Committee of the Board.

MJ was thanked for her invaluable contribution during the pay and reward review process as the input was valued by both the SMT and Atkinson HR.

## **8. Trustee Term of Office - Margaret Jolley**

MJ's term of office was coming to an end after the May meeting but due to it being a time of much change at the SU, including the recent pay and reward review and its implementation in the coming months, as well as a significant changes in staffing across the SU, SW proposed that the board consider having MJ on the board for

another year. SW confirmed she had consulted with NUS and understood Charity Commission guidance (maximum 9 years for a Trustee) and it was felt this was an appropriate way forward as long as the reason was clearly justifiable and important for the strategic sustainability and of the organisation.

The Board were happy to approve this.

In addition, MJ is currently Deputy Chair of the Board and whilst she will remain on the board for another year, has decided to step down from this role. This will give another Lay Trustee the opportunity to take over the role, starting in the next academic year. RW and MB agree to consider this opportunity and will report back at the next Board meeting in May.

**Action:** RW and MB to confer and agree on Deputy Chair role.

## **9. Monthly Management Accounts (February 2022)**

9.1 RC updated the board on the March accounts which look very healthy. RC also explained some of the key sources of current income for the SU and also that discussions were being held with sports clubs to encourage them to spend some of their funds (which are very healthy) on kit and other initiatives, to ensure they are as inclusive as possible and attract more students.

RC confirmed that the accounts were discussed and approved at the Finance committee.

9.2 The board approved the accounts.

## **10. Finance Procedures Manual and Reserves policy**

The policy had been shared with and discussed at the Finance Subcommittee in detail. A couple of additions had been made to ensure a high level of protection continued for the SU in their finance procedures. More information had also been added this time around in relation to protecting the organisation against fraud.

The board approved the policy.

## **11. Draft Budget and submission 2022-23**

RC updated the board on the proposed budget submitted to the University and explained that while the University had indicated that the additional 1.3% requested in the block grant (for 2022/23) would unlikely be delivered, the SU had already sourced additional income to cover that eventuality, which means overall, that the SU hoped to at least break even in the next financial year even if the same block grant was secured as last year.

## **12. Strategic/Operational Planning 2022-23**

12.1 SW talked through the proposed timeline for the strategic and operational plan, through to the end of the next academic year, highlighting the key stages.

12.2 The board approved the timeline for the plan.

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

The board were happy with the report, which was not discussed as the information was supplied via a paper under reporting items.

#### **14. Board Sub-committees**

- 14.1 The finance subcommittee had convened, with discussions mainly focussed on the management accounts, changes to the Marketing and Communications team, the new contract with Native (ticket and event platform), Tramps, and the implications of the Pay and Reward review.
- 14.2 The HR subcommittee had convened earlier in the month. RM updated the board on discussions which included:
- The Employee Engagement Survey
  - Current staffing issues and probationary periods for four new staff members
  - Staff Savvy update
  - The Pay and Reward review
  - Potential rewards platform – HEKA
  - Handbook update – student/staff relationships policy, new pay and reward policy, menopause policy, right to work updates.
  - Staff Consultative Forum

#### **15. Officers' report**

- RM, LL and NR updated the board on activities to date, as follows:
- Lobbying the University for gender neutral toilets at the SU.
  - Lobbying the University for a mental health room at the University, with additional facilities to help those students with sensory impairments.
  - A visit by the Officers to London for the NUS March / Teach In event
  - Course Rep forum which was focussed on Personal Academic Tutoring and students' experiences
  - Varsity – Gloucester won the trophy back this year but the SU had done a great job in promoting and increasing students' awareness and participation in the event. Staff worked really hard and students played well in their various events- the final result resting on the last event. The competition was a great experience for students with 100s getting involved and the #NeverOK was a successful running theme throughout the competition. It was felt to be key that the University recognised how important Varsity was to the student experience.
  - Volunteering hours continue to be logged (currently at 3000) and the RAG total had now reached £30K.
  - The current Officers were looking forward to welcoming the new Officer team into post in due course.

#### **16. Executive Committee summary**

The annual RAG charity is currently Student Minds but as they are a large charity with national support, the committee no longer sees the value in supporting them and there was not much support in return so it was agreed that students would soon vote on a local charity to support.

A new business society had been approved. The SU was negotiating a 'women's only workout hour' at the gym and also working on a student led podcast.

A course rep had come forward on behalf of Muslim students who were currently fasting in the Islamic month of Ramadan. Their concerns were that whilst the assessment period falls after Ramadan and Eid, their study and preparation for assessments was taking place during Ramadan and many were struggling to cope with the demands of both fasting and studying. The University directed students to complete a form for observance of religious festivals but it had been established that the form doesn't exist. However, following discussions with the - now substantive - Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students), he is keen that the University introduce a Religious Observance policy (like many other higher education institutes have). In the short term, the committee is working on other arrangements to support this group of students.

### **17. Student Council Summary**

Student Council had convened prior to the Easter break. Discussions included Honorary Life Memberships for selected students and the Officers – all were granted and would be presented at Team Worcs Awards. The incoming VPE highlighted issues with multiple exams on one day with a new policy for this in the pipeline. The Disabled Students network had raised concerns about access to student housing and whether provisions could be made to support them when visiting friends (such as having a ramp in place). In addition, Student Council had covered the leadership elections, and student issues, including religious festivals and mitigating circumstances.

### **18. Board of Governors summary**

The Board of Governors had convened with the agenda discussions including the annual report for the remuneration committee, verbal report from the Chair and an update on the research integrity paper. Other reports included the VC's, Academic Governance, Academic board, Audit committee, Finance and Development committee as well as the Worcester Wolves impact report.  
[Commercial in confidence].

### **19. Any Other Business**

- 15.1 The new Officers will be attending the next Board meeting.
- 15.2 SW informed the board, that having looked at the timeline for the operational plan (which was originally devised in February) and current HR/staffing priorities at the SU, the detailed plan may not be supplied to the Board until September but SW will endeavour to provide as much information as she can at the May meeting.

End

**Date of next meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Summary of Actions:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
RW and MB to consider if they would like to assume the Deputy Chair role.	RW and MB	May