

Students' Union Trustee Board

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board
Wednesday 26th May 2021 – Via Zoom, 10:00**

Present:

Megan Price (Chair and President) – MP
Harry South (VP Education) – HS
Tish Manning (VP Student Activities) - TM
Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) – MJ
Rebekah Williams (Lay Trustee) – RW
Deborah Andrews (Student Trustee) – DA
Andrew Humphry (Student Trustee) – AH

In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW
Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF
Liam Lees (President elect), LL
Melanie Brittain (Lay Trustee) – MB, for item 6 only due to other commitments

Apologies:

Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) – MJ
Neve Ricketts (VPSA elect) – NR
Ragnar Mularczyk (VPE elect) - RM

1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies received from MJ.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Declarations or conflicts of interest/ Register of declarations of interest

None declared.

Agenda item 6 is discussed now, in the presence of MB who leaves the meeting at 10:30 (see notes below under item 6). Core staff members, SW and SF leave the meeting for this agenda item.

5. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW updated the board on key SU activities as follows:

- 5.1 There was still no news on the Block Grant allocation for this year. The Board noted how frustrating this was for the Union in that it makes it very difficult to plan effectively, particularly in light of the resourcing challenges the Union is facing. SW reported that the University has said the Union can expect to be given more of an idea around July, when the University Board approve the budget but she had hoped to receive an initial indication in May, which had not been forthcoming.
- 5.2 The HR Subcommittee was unable to go ahead this morning but SW informed the board of the key points that would have been discussed when the meeting was rearranged, such as probationary progress, staff performance management, recruitment, and the results of the employee engagement survey.
- 5.3 SW gave an update on the headline results of the first commissioned Employee Engagement Survey and the next steps. The results were mixed, with some very positive indications, including team work, service to students, and flexibility - and the student staff results were highly positive across the board - but also some areas where staff felt the organisation needed to improve, such as cross-team communication/knowledge sharing, reward and pay, organisation, planning, and high workloads. SW explained how the senior team intended to address these with the teams and, also, reported that many SUs (33 in total were involved in the survey) had reported similar results this year.
- 5.4 The Student Engagement Team have worked very hard on this year's Green Impact submission and we are anticipating receiving at least another 'Very Good' accreditation score.
- 5.5 The Advice Service has been extremely busy but quietened down this month, which is a welcome relief for the Academic and Welfare Advisor who has had a very busy year, with some complex cases. Her line manager and the Student Engagement Co-ordinator continue to assist her with caseload.
- 5.6 HS and the Student Engagement Manager were commended for their work on the student submission to the Office for Students around the University's progress against its the Access and Participation Plan. The plan is the means by which the University commits itself to widen participation from a diverse range of students through various initiatives and actions. HS and the SEM had consulted with University academics and staff, as well as students, to produce an excellent report when many SUs had not produced a submission.
- 5.7 Planning for committee handovers for societies, networks, and clubs will go ahead in the coming weeks, as well as designing the September training program for new committee members.
- 5.8 Work was progressing to administer training refunds for club members, for those whose club had limited training over the academic year.
- 5.9 The EDI working group have continued to meet and have finalised an EDI policy. The first area that the SU will look at in terms of improving EDI practices is Marketing and Comms. Due to it being the first anniversary of the death of George Floyd, the SU will publish on the website what they have done since then to improve their EDI processes.
- 5.10 The University was in the process of revising their policy on staff/student relationships following the recent article in the Telegraph. The SU will also need

to revisit and, likely, revise its policy on this in response and this will be discussed with the HR Sub Committee of the Board when it meets.

- 5.11 The results of the Big Worc Survey have come back and they are back to 2018-19 levels in terms of satisfaction, at 68%. It has been a difficult year due to the pandemic, particularly for first year students, who formed one third of the responses. Awareness of the advice services continues to be high, which is excellent. A full report of the results will be available in due course.
- 5.12 Regarding the Course Experience Survey (CES) results – they remained mostly good with the score for the 2 questions on the academic representation system having improved (by 2% and 6%) but the satisfaction level dropping somewhat from 79% to 70%.
The results of both the CE and the Big Worc surveys will be analysed further and actions for improvement developed, which will feed into the operational plan for next year.
- 5.13 Once the new Officers start and they have agreed their objectives, and attended various training courses, then work would commence on agreeing an operational plan for the next year, which is expected to be in place by early September, prior to Welcome Week.
- 5.14 SW congratulated a brilliant team of Officers this year, who have consistently amazed, continued to remain motivated, used their initiative and remained positive and driven despite the challenges. They have had an incredible year and we wish them all very well in their next pursuits.
- 5.15 MP added that, although she would not be here to see it, she would love for the SU to evolve with the changing demographic of students at Worcester SU, whilst continuing to invest in initiatives covering sustainability and equality and diversity, which would ultimately lead to greater student satisfaction. RW added that the needs of students in the coming years would be different too as a result of the pandemic, affecting the amount of time students have had at school and college prior to arriving at University. The SU would need to adapt accordingly to support the changing needs of students.

6. Pay Award 2020/21

Following discussions at the extraordinary HR Subcommittee regarding a potential pay award for staff (given there was no cost of living rise in August 2020 due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and uncertainty around the Union's finance for the rest of the year), the board have agreed that all staff will receive a £300 net payment in their June salary payment, and that the decision will be communicated via the Trustee Board to all core staff, including pro rata details for part-time staff.

Action: MP and RW to write a letter to staff with details of the pay award, with input from MB and MJ.

7. Monthly Management Accounts – Mar/April 2021

- 7.1 The SU finances are in good order, considering the year it has been, largely due to cost efficiencies and use of the furlough scheme. The reserves also remain healthy.
- 7.2 A new contract has yet to be agreed with Tramps for the coming year.

8. Schedule of Agenda items 2021/22

There were two changes that SW proposed in the amended schedule of agenda items and informed the board of these.

The board approved the new schedule of agenda items.

9. Ratification of bank mandate signatories & Companies House Directors

Bank mandate signatories usually consist of the current Officers and are updated annually, when Officers change. This is a lengthy process and on reflection, the only instance when a bank mandate signatory would need to sign something would be when writing a cheque, and this now rarely happens, if ever. SW proposed that, instead of the Officers being added on each year, that the Finance & Commercial Manager and SW could be approved as bank mandate signatories, removing the need to update these annually. The board approved this, agreeing that it was a sound alternative.

Company Directors are also updated annually, and these are always the three lay trustees so MJ, MB and RW who would remain as Companies House Directors.

The board approved the amendments.

Action: SW to ensure RW's details with Company House are changed to register her with the Union's address.

10. Appointment of Deputy Chair of Trustee Board

MJ was appointed as Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board last year but is absent from the meeting today. The board agreed that MJ would be contacted to ask if she would be willing to continue as Deputy Chair and if not, other Lay Trustees would be approached.

Action: MP to contact MJ regarding appointment of Deputy Chair of Trustee Board.

11. Trustee Board Skills and Experience Grid

SW explained the rationale of having a skills grid so that trustee skills are documented and can be called upon if required. It is also useful to refer to and identify gaps in skills across the board when recruiting new trustees.

The skills and experience grid would be circulated to student and lay trustees for them to complete and a central record would then be retained by the SU. The skills grid would be reviewed when new trustees join the Board.

The board agree that it would be good practice to introduce this and could potentially be helpful to the senior management team, knowing what skills are held by board members.

Action: SW to circulate skills grid to lay and student trustees for completion.

12. Honorary Life Membership Awards

A discussion was held at Student Council regarding the nominations for honorary life membership for former students. These would be offered to outgoing Officer Trustees and four other students each year. Student Council had agreed the criteria for the award and who should make the awards.

For approval, recommendations for awards this year go to the Outgoing Officers and also all previous Officers from the last five years, in recognition of their work for the SU. Nominees for the exceptional awards are also announced and the board approved all awards.

13. Bye Law Amendments

MP informed the Board of the amendments to Bye Law 4, relating to policy motions and ideas being submitted which are materially the same as existing policy or ideas. The board approved the amendments.

14. Annual report of complaints

No complaints received via the formal complaints process (contained on the SU website).

15. Elections Report

MP updated the board on key points from the March Leadership Elections:

- In-person polling stations would be welcomed again in the future, subject to Covid restrictions, as they are an opportunity to engage with and encourage those students to vote who would not necessarily.
- In-person polling stations also provide an opportunity to engage with students across the demographic, particularly nurses and paramedics (who make up large numbers of students).

16. Board Sub-committees

16.1 HS confirmed that the HR subcommittee did not go ahead this morning due to apologies received and so an update would be sent to the board once the meeting has gone ahead.

16.2 MP updated the board on key discussions from the finance subcommittee which included:

- The latest management accounts
- Future sponsorship/income opportunities
- The block grant (awaiting feedback from the University)
- Approved the terms of reference
- Discussion on finances for Varsity and Celebration week

17. Officers' report

TM updated the board on various recent SU activities, as follows:

- The networks were new this year and MP had done an incredible job working with them. The networks had integrated very well into the SU and had collaborated with various events and initiatives, becoming an asset for the SU.
- Welfare and Inclusion Council have approved two policy motions via Student Council – to lobby the University to sign the Gypsy Traveller Roma pledge and, also, for the revival of the night bus scheme for the safety of women.
- Students Choice Award yesterday went well, with many University staff and academics in attendance.

- TeamWorc awards evening will go ahead this evening to celebrate the achievements of clubs, societies and networks.
- On Friday, a paid event will be held for students to get together and celebrate the end of the year, showcasing student achievements.
- Varsity has not concluded yet as cricket was unable to go ahead due to poor weather. The SU staff worked incredibly hard running the Covid-safe fan zone at the Arena, with around 250 students in attendance. The feedback from students had been wonderful, thanking the SU and stating how much they had enjoyed the events. Currently Worcester are in a draw with Gloucester so the final result will be announced after cricket which has been rescheduled for next week.
- The ideas forum has slowed down somewhat so the Officers will be looking to revive this through promotion.
- School rep interviews are going ahead currently.
- A canal clean went ahead last week as a TeamWorc action day, which was a positive experience for those involved after lockdown.
- The current RAG total for the year now stands at over £30K, which is an incredible achievement.
- HS had worked hard on employability week to support students facing a difficult graduate job market, with a range of speakers and webinars, as well as information and resources.
- HS continued to work on the national BetterByU campaign which he has spearheaded with a couple of other officers and which is gaining more and more traction, to increase awareness of Academic Integrity and ban essay mills. HS will continue to support this campaign when he returns to his third year of study.
- MP thanked the board and also the SU Senior Management team for their support throughout the year.

18. Executive Committee minutes

An update from the last meeting included:

- Discussions regarding associate memberships, and some of the issues with that relating to involvement with student groups, hence consultations with students would continue to decide how best to move forward.
- Approval of the Nigerian Society and the Criminology Society.
- Discussions on where employability work sits within the officer roles and how this can be better supported more by the organisation, as it had tended to be deprioritised in the face of other commitments.

19. Student Council Summary

Student Council was not quorate for the first time this year, which was disappointing but not necessarily unexpected due to the time of year and students having other commitments such as assessments. Policies requiring approval were, therefore, dealt with after the meeting via email. The IT provision in Peirson was discussed, with mixed responses received and an IT survey had been sent to students to gather further feedback.

Covid related matters were discussed as well as the NUS National conference and the OfS student submission. Overall, it was felt Student Council had had a successful year, with this meeting being the only one which was not quorate.

HS leaves the meeting for another urgent commitment.

20. Board of Governors summary

HS did a very good job in the HR Sub Committee of the Board of Governors where a prohibition of staff/student relationships was discussed and a zero-tolerance approach agreed from hereon regarding relationships that were not pre-existing. The SU is involved in a working group to implement this policy change.

The University HR Subcommittee will change its name to 'People and Culture', with a view to conduct more work in the area of EDI. The SU is looking to take a similar approach and will discuss with the HR Sub Committee.

21. Any Other Business

MP and TM thank the Board for all the opportunities it has availed. DA is thanked for her valuable contributions on the board, as this is also her last meeting as Student Trustee. SW commended DA for her input and approach and stated that she had been an excellent member of the Board. All members wished DA a very happy and successful future. SW asked DA to send her a small paragraph for the impact report and recruitment material on her experience as a trustee.

Action: DA to send SW a few lines on her experience as a trustee

Date of next meeting: October 2021, TBC

Summary of Actions:

Action	For	To be completed by
MP and RW to write a letter to staff with details of the pay award, with input from MB and MJ.	MP and RW	ASAP
SW to ensure RW's details with Company House are changed to register her with the Union's address.	SW	ASAP
MP to contact MJ regarding appointment of Deputy Chair of Trustee Board.	MP	ASAP
SW to circulate skills grid to lay and student trustees for completion.	SW	ASAP

DA to send SW a few lines on her experience as a trustee	DA	ASAP
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