Students’ Union

Trustee Board

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board**

**Thursday 28th May 2020 – Via Zoom, 12:00**

**Present:**

Megan Price (VP Education) – MP

Harry Lonsdale (Chair and President) – HL

Michael Harris (VP Student Activities) - MH

Margaret Jolley (External Trustee) – MJ

Rebekah Williams (External Trustee) – RW

Deborah Andrews (Student Trustee) – DA

Isobel Lines (Student Trustee) – IL

Ivan Steblyuk (Student Trustee) – IS

Melanie Brittain (External Trustee) – MB

**In attendance:**

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW

Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF

Tish Manning (VPSA Elect)

Harry South (VPE Elect)

1. **Attendance and Apologies**

No apologies

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

1. **Matters arising**

Both actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

1. **Declarations or conflicts of interest/ Register of declarations of interest**

None

1. **Chief Executive Officer Report**

SW updated the board on the continued lockdown and key activities the SU had been involved in, as follows:

* 1. SU staff continued to work from home and were now much more settled in their routines.
  2. Some staff were attending regular online meetings with University staff, including the Pro Vice Chancellor Students.
  3. The Officer team had done a fabulous job for students in improving their student experience by helping with accommodation issues, student staff issues etc.
  4. The Academic and Welfare Advisor had been working really hard with the Officers to address the range of issues students had faced since lockdown, from academic issues to accommodation and helping international students.
  5. The SU were in liaison with the University in relation to plans for Welcome Week and it was still hoped that as many students as possible will be on campus in September, further details of which will be finalised over the summer.
  6. Some of the plans for events which can be held whilst respecting social distancing include an outdoor marquee for City Campus for student group stalls and holding virtual activities which students can attend from home. The University are expected to support the activities on City Campus, which will come with not insignificant additional costs.
  7. It was unlikely that campuses would open for staff until mid-July, although this had not been agreed and staff had not yet been informed.
  8. The Finance and Commercial Manager had been working very hard liaising with the insurers and had now submitted a claim.
  9. Planning for the new officers’ induction had progressed well with most induction meetings taking place online.
  10. The All Student Meeting went very well with good engagement and attendance of over 170 students.
  11. BUCS fixtures were still on hold and likely to be for the rest of the year, potentially re-commencing in January but then there were concerns about fixtures clashing with exams as well as only leaving a small window of opportunity between January and April.
  12. SW, TM and MH had recently attended a Sport Development Board meeting with University staff which included a sport strategy review. SW gave an overview of a proposed way forward that had been presented by University Sport, unexpectedly, at the meeting, and some of the concerns the SU had with it. The SU were now awaiting a copy of the presentation in order to discuss internally before responding to the University. SW was very keen that the Board was involved in these discussions and that the response came from the. The Board agreed and for a meeting to be arranged.

**Action:** SW to arrange a meeting with her, MH, TM, MB and RW to coordinate a response to the proposed sport model.

* 1. Approximately 360 responses had been received so far to the annual Big Worc Survey which is less than was hoped for with engagement being somewhat lower than last year. The results would be analysed in due course.
  2. SW would be working on the new strategic plan over the summer in conjunction with the new Officer team. This would be somewhat challenging due to uncertainty as a result of the impact of Covid-19.
  3. SW commended the Officer team who had had an amazing year, with many achievements and a very positive impact on students and the University, making a noticeable national difference, their work had been second to none.

1. **Sustainability Motion from Student Council**
   1. The University have declared a climate emergency as have many other local organisations. The university have pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030 and a motion had been submitted to Student Council for the Union to follow suit, which would feed into its sustainability goals too. The motion has been agreed by student council but needed to be approved by the board too due to potential financial implications of achieving the motion.

The board approved the motion and felt it important that the Union committed to such an important cause.

1. **Code of Conduct (for members/officers/trustees)**

As part of the governance review, it was suggested by the solicitors that codes of conduct be removed from the Byelaws as they were not a matter for democratic debate but a matter for the trustee board. A code of conduct has been drawn up and circulated in advance.

The board approved the code of conduct.

1. **Monthly management accounts – April 2020**
   1. Profits had been up prior to lockdown and reserves were healthy.
   2. Savings had been made on salaries due to the furlough scheme.
   3. 30k more funds were being held in clubs and societies
   4. £9k worth of Varsity tickets had been sold prior to lockdown and £6k had been refunded to students so far.
   5. The accounts were looking healthy.
   6. The board approved the accounts.
2. **Draft Budget 2020/21**

A budget had been drawn up based on the block grant of £529 k, not taking into account any potential increase in budget.

There is still enough funding for the new Student Development Assistant role but a close eye would be kept on the budget and a final decision regarding this position would be made over the summer.

Some concerns were raised about income from the Tramps contract due to the closure of many such venues as a result of the pandemic. SW confirmed that she and RC were holding regular meetings with Tramps management and would keep the Board updated on the situation there.

The draft budget is approved by the Board.

1. **Schedule of Agenda Items 2020/21**

SW had amended the schedule of agenda items and gave an update on the key changes.

The board approved the new schedule of agenda items.

1. **Ratification of Bank Mandate signatories & Companies House Directors**

The Trustee board approved that HL and MH would be removed as bank mandate signatories and TM and HS would be added.

Directors are also updated annually so RW would be added as a Companies House Director.

The board approved the amendments.

IS also reminded the board that he would need to be removed as a trustee on the Charity commission website.

**Action:** SF to remove IS as trustee on charity commission website (as well as MH and HL).

1. **Appointment of Deputy Chair of Trustee Board**

MJ volunteered to be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board and the Board agreed.

1. **Annual report of complaints**

No complaints received via the formal complaints process on the website.

1. **Elections report**

There were a lower number of candidates this year and one candidate for the VPE position. Candidate briefings were held at both St John’s Campus as well as City Campus and over 1000 voters placed over 4000 votes.

90% of voters voted online and voting numbers were lower than last year. The vote was held during March when anxieties and concerns over coronavirus were beginning to take hold and many students were keeping away from campus. This was felt to be a factor in the downturn in numbers voting. Voters across study years were approximately equal, with c.20% of votes from 1st year students, 20% from 2nd year students and 18% from 3rd years.

1. **Board Sub-committees**
   1. MP updated the board on key discussions from the HR subcommittee which included:

* Changes to the employee handbook
* Update on recruitment of the Student Sport Administrator and the Venue and Events Supervisor
* Student staff furlough and student staff recruitment
* Staff probationary reviews
* Student staff survey
  1. HL updated the board on discussions at the Finance subcommittee, which included:
* The re-forecasted budget, with projections on the potential financial impact of Covid-19.
* The plans for the wellbeing garden by the Hangar, work on which had been postponed until 1st July.
* Communications with Endsleigh insurers regarding any potential claim due to the impact of Covid-19
* Annual review of the Financial Procedures Manual
* SUSS contributions

1. **Officers’ report**

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

* Graduation ceremonies going forward will be routinely live-streamed on the University website which is a positive move and will be free to view.
* To improve on student communication and consultation, the university have issued their first ever student newsletter. Students will receive a bi-weekly newsletter by email which would detail lots of information in one communication instead of multiple emails as was previously the case. This would change to weekly or remain bi-weekly from September onwards. Different departments would feed information into the newsletter. However, the feedback received to date was that the newsletter needed more colour, and pictures to make it more visually appealing and consisted mainly of a set of links to web pages. HL stated that MP would work with the University Communications department to ensure that improvements are made as it was early days in the production of the newsletter. The trustees felt it was be important to get the newsletter right early on to ensure students remained engaged.

**Action:** DA to forward a copy of the newsletter to the Officers as well as a copy of a newsletter produced by her children’s school which is an example of an eye-catching and engaging newsletter.

* RAG total had reached £20k which was less than last year, which had been affected in part by he floods and then coronavirus. There was a commitment to work to increase the RAG total next year. It was noted that Covid-19.
* Accommodation issues had been arising between landlords and students due to the pandemic with many students having to leave their accommodation early with no reduction in rent. A joint statement between the SU and University, in the form of a letter of recommendation, would be issued in the coming weeks to students and landlords requesting landlords to consider measures such as reducing the length of tenancy contracts, ending contracts early, and support with utility bills etc. should a second wave of Covid-19 occur. The local MP had been notified about the letter but a response had yet to be received from them.

Updates from MP included:

* An academic survey had been emailed to students regarding their experience of online learning during the lockdown.
* There are still 7 positions left in School Rep recruitment, 3 of which are in the same department so targeted work will try and increase engagement there.
* A lot of work had been put into making exams and assessments fair. There had been some issues with academic misconduct during lockdown, which the Academic and Welfare Advisor had been handling well to support students.
* The Student Choice Awards was very well received and felt by staff to be a very positive experience during challenging times.

Updates from MH included:

* Virtual Colours Ball and Union Awards had gone very well. Union awards included half and full colours for the first time and had been very well received. Engagement with Colours Ball was excellent as usual. Engagement with Team Worc points had been really good throughout the year and the point system ended in April. The committee handovers had also been successful. It was noted that the core staff support had been very valuable in the delivery of the awards.

1. **Executive Committee minutes**

The Executive Committee have not convened but, following approval of the new governance structure (expected in June), will meet monthly in a different capacity.

1. **Student Council Summary**

Student Council had convened virtually for their last meeting of the year, with key discussions as follows:

* Discussions on various policy motions, including climate change motion and a Fit to Study policy.
* An update on what the SU was doing for students in response to the coronavirus pandemic.
* A social quiz at the end of the meeting.

HL added that engagement and diversity on Student Council this year had been very good by some committed part-time Officers. The next academic year should prove even better with the introduction of the Student Networks.

1. **Board of Governors summary**

The university Business Continuity group had been meeting regularly with main discussions as follows:

* Approximately 240 university student staff had been furloughed
* Decisions regarding the return to campus for students in September with arrangements likely to include student bubbles.
* Communication with prospective students.
* Discussions in relation to international students, with numbers reduced due to travel restrictions. Talks focussed on accommodating and integrating them when they arrive, in a safe manner, including quarantine where necessary.
* The Vice Chancellor had had some media coverage with his opinion on the impact of university closures during the pandemic as well as the rebuilding Britain initiative and City Campus becoming a health and wellbeing hub.

1. **Any Other Business**
   1. SF informed the Board that one application had been received for the role of Student Trustee.
   2. MP is on the HESA trustee board which incorporates an informal mentorship for new trustees. MP suggested whether the trustee board would like to run something similar for new trustees, with them being able to contact trustees and core staff for advice on an informal basis. DA mentioned that she was already doing this. The board discussed the idea.
   3. IS was at the end of his trustee term. HL thanked him, highlighting his invaluable contribution to the trustee board and HR subcommittee over the past 2 years.

**Date of next meeting:** To be confirmed, early October 2020.

Extraordinary meeting to be held in August (in light of the continuing impact of Covid-19)

**Action:** SF to arrange extraordinary meeting

**Summary of Actions:**

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| **Action** | **For** | **To be completed by** |
| SW to arrange a meeting with TM, MB and RW to coordinate a response to the proposed sport model. | MH | ASAP |
| DA to forward a copy of the newsletter to the Officers as well as a copy of a newsletter produced by her children’s school which is an example of an eye-catching and engaging newsletter. | DA | ASAP |
| SF to arrange extraordinary meeting for August | SF | ASAP |
| SF to remove IS as trustee on charity commission website (as well as MH and HL). | SF | ASAP |