

Students' Union Trustee Board

Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board
Wednesday 30th November 2022 – Via MS Teams, 18:00

Present:

Al Linforth (Chair and President) – AL
Meg Lee (VP Student Activities) - ML
Rebekah Williams (Lay Trustee) – RW
Melanie Brittain (Lay Trustee) - MB
Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) - MJ
Matthew Osborne (Student Trustee) – MO
Dylan Dudley (Student Trustee) – DD

In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW
Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF
Stephen Anderson (Knox Cropper) – SA, for item 6
Christian James (Knox Cropper) – CJ, for item 6

1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies received for Erin Boddice (Student Trustee) – EB, Matthew Payne (Student Trustee) – MP and Gemma Allcott (VP Education) – GA

Item 6 is now discussed before moving onto the other agenda items, so that SA and CJ could leave the meeting after this item. See notes below, under item 6. SA and CJ leave the meeting after item 6.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising

MJ would take on the Lead Trustee role with MB taking over when MJ leaves the board at the end of the academic year.

SW and RC to liaise on various options to support staff with the cost of living – complete.

SW and RC to include a budget for insight work in the future – not done yet but will be addressed as part of the budget process for 2023/24.

MB to contact Andrea Marshall in relation to a tax review - to be done.

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

None declared.

5a. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW updated the board on key SU activities as follows:

- Although the management accounts are stable, the Hangar has not had a good start to the year. However, the World Cup and the Winter Ball had helped to increase revenue somewhat. Takings from the World Cup had exceeded £5K and the Winter Ball takings were just above £2K, which is slightly more than last year.
- The Interim Membership Engagement Manager has settled in very well, with some excellent work already completed in areas of governance, representation, and networks. The new Academic and Welfare Advisor will be starting in January. The Help and Advice Service has seen the highest number of cases recorded in November and the current Academic and Welfare Advisor has done a fantastic job in keeping the service going on his own, in the interim.
- Sports clubs and societies are generally doing well. The basketball club have had some issues, as well as some behavioural issues within one of the sports clubs which is being investigated. Overall, behaviour seems good.
- The student networks, still have their challenges, with some faring well and others not. A Networks Week is being organised for January to promote them and to find out more about why students are not getting involved and what can be done about this.
- The student written submission is under way, with a couple of surveys currently in circulation to gain feedback from students, course reps, and School Reps, being carried out on-line and with the help of University-paid student ambassadors, which will input into the final report.
- A student is interested in setting up student media and so the Interim Membership Engagement Manager is doing an excellent job in supporting this.
- Regarding the insight work, this is progressing well and a timetable is being devised with Marianne (Student Voice and Insights Manager at Queen Mary SU), with the aim of completing the framework by May next year. SW said that she remained uncertain of the feasibility of the May completion date and that the start of Semester One 2023, may be more realistic but that she would keep the Board appraised on this and asked for understanding.

5b. Autumn Budget implications / proposed staffing restructure

- SW shared the proposed organisation restructure and explained the key proposed changes, including a new Director role (to oversee membership services) and a new Student Activities Manager position (to replace the Sport Development Coordinator), along with the reasons for the proposed changes.
- SW explained the costs involved in the proposed organisation restructure as well as the implications of the increase in the national minimum wage from April 2023 (whereby 8 staff members, including Officers and Assistants) will need to have their salaries uplifted to meet this. There was also a discussion on the implications this could have on staff in positions above Assistant level and a reduction in the salary gap between them. It will be necessary, in the 2023/24 block grant submission to request an increase to meet the extra costs at a time when the University are clear they face financial challenges. The board discuss this further, including whether the healthy SU reserves need to be utilised to

meet some of the costs, if additional block grant is not granted. In addition, the board discuss what the impact of the increased staffing costs will be on the reserves (if used) in the next few years. The board agree on the following actions:

Action: SW will liaise with the Director of Finance and Commercial to re-model the costs of staffing over the next couple of years, as per discussions and helpful input from Trustees, and the impact on the reserves over a 2-year period.

Action: SW to convene again with the University PVC Students, Tim Jones, to discuss the staffing costs.

The outcomes from the above actions will be reported back to the board who will then convene at an extraordinary meeting in a couple of weeks' time, to agree on a way forward.

Action: SF to arrange an extraordinary meeting for the board to agree a way forward regarding the costs of the organisation restructure.

6. Draft year end accounts 2021/22 and Auditors' Management Letter

- SA updated the Board on key points from the year end accounts. The SU accounts and reserves were in a healthy position.
[COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE]
- The Management Letter was presented by CJ who confirmed that the recent audit had run smoothly with the Auditors reporting sound accounting policies and a clean audit. One recommendation, as a result of the audit, was for the SU to consider undertaking a VAT review as this had not taken place in a number of years. There were no issues with VAT in the accounts, however; CJ commented that VAT was a complex area within the charity sector. The letter of representation was also included for reference at the end of the management letter.
- SW added that the Finance Subcommittee had discussed the VAT review and are happy for the SU to progress this at an appropriate time before the end of the academic year. Regarding the SUSS pension scheme, SW will meet with the Officers and Student Trustees in the new year to provide some context and history on the SUSS pension scheme.
Action: SW to update the student trustees on the SUSS pension scheme.
- SW, CJ and SA will attend the Audit committee of the University in January to present the accounts. The board formally approved the accounts.

SA and CJ are thanked for attending and updating the Board and then leave the meeting.

7. Monthly Management Accounts – October 2022

No discussion required- the accounts have been shared with the board and are healthy.

8. WSU Operational Plan 2022/23

SW has progressed work on the operational plan over the last couple of months, including aligning the plan to the sustainable development goals and KPI's. No

further discussion was needed today as the plan was covered in detail at the last Board meeting. The plan will be reviewed with staff at a meeting in December.

9. Risk Register (and Safeguarding Policy)

SW refers the board to items in the risk register which have changed from medium to high risk, mainly to Financial and Human Resources risks and briefly explains the reasons for doing so.

There are no updates to the safeguarding policy.

The board approve the changes to the risk register.

10. Annual statement of Legal Compliance

SW explained that this is shared with the board annually. The board approve the updated Statement of Legal Compliance.

11. Matrix of delegated responsibility

SW highlighted the minor changes that have been made to the matrix. The board approve the Matrix of delegated responsibility.

12. Bye Laws update

There were two small updates which SW explained to the Board. The first change was to the membership bye law, making it clear that people cannot apply for Associate membership for the express purpose of attending a group's organised social events. The second was to the name of the BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) network which has been changed to REN (Race Equality Network), after it was briefly called the REACH (Race Equity and Cultural Heritage) network which was deemed not to be clear in what it represented.

13. Draft annual Impact Report 2021/22

One of the student designers was working on creating the impact report which is currently in its draft form. SW shared the draft version of the report which is progressing well and should be a very professional piece of work once complete. The trustees are very impressed with the draft version of the report and are looking forward to the final version.

14. Board Sub-committees

- a. The finance subcommittee discussions included:
 - Costs associated with the proposed organisation restructure
 - The management accounts
 - Ideas to increase Hangar sales
 - How social media can be used more effectively to increase and improve promotion of the Hangar

- b. The HR subcommittee had convened earlier, with discussions including:
 - Staffing issues and probationary progress of new staff
 - The proposed organisation re-structure
 - Implications of the Autumn Statement

- Staff Savvy update
- Staff Consultative forum update
- AOB items

15. Officers' report

ML and AL updated the board on recent activities, as follows:

- The Officers have been focussing on supporting students with the cost-of-living issues with new initiatives as follows:
 - Two breakfast clubs have been held so far, feeding over 140 students.
 - The community cupboard has been a fantastic initiative with donations flooding in from students, staff, and local residents and is being utilised well by students.
 - The Help and Advice service is seeing students in financial hardship, some of whom who are being referred to the local foodbank. As a result, the SU has decided that half the donations for the community cupboard will now go to the foodbank. Any clothing donations will be sent to Maggs Day Centre who are a local charity supporting the homeless.
 - International students will, hopefully soon be able to apply for a version of the University Hardship fund, also known as the Access to Learning fund. This is being reviewed following a push by the Officers on the University to open this up to international students who have come from countries such as India and Nigeria this year and are already in financial hardship. They also have many accommodation issues (which is being seen nationally) and the Advisor has been speaking with University colleagues. The support for international students remain a concern for the SU and many seem to have arrived in the UK with different expectations about their experience, such as immediate access to a job as part of their course. SW added that she had recently attended NUS Strategic Conversation and this was a hot topic for all, and that international students (as well as recruitment issues in SUs) dominated the discussions..
 - Discussions are under way with the University to significantly reduce the gym membership fee for students, which the SU is very supportive of. This will likely be implemented in the next academic year and is subject to approval by University Executive Board.

16. Executive Committee summary

Main discussions included making improvements to City Campus to create more student-friendly study spaces, updates on the Women's workout hour, keeping abreast of changes to private landlord policies. Other discussions included the Teaching Excellence Framework Student written submission.

17. Student Council Summary

Student Council had convened a while ago with main discussions focussing on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission, including meeting with the sub-councils to gain student feedback, cost of living and how this was affecting students, student fees for post-graduate and PHD students, the SU's presence at City Campus

and some issues with parking permits which were also raised at the University Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships committee.

18. Board of Governors summary

An update was given on discussions at the last Board of Governors meeting. The board discussions included the teacher training reaccreditation, applications to the new medical school, the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) strikes and the potential impact on lectures. Tim Jones (PVC Students) also gave a presentation on his ideas on how to increase student engagement which is exciting news. [Commercial in confidence].

19. Any Other Business

a) Possible agenda items for January meeting:

At the January meetings of the trustee board, an SU department usually gives a presentation but this year due to staffing issues, this will not be possible. Instead, discussions around the cost of living and the impact of the Autumn Statement can be continued.

b) MJ's term of office ends in May 2023 and so discussions for a new Lay Trustee are underway.

Date of next meeting: 31st January 2022

Summary of Actions:

Action	For	To be completed by
SW will liaise with the Director of Finance and Commercial to re-model the costs of staffing over the next couple of years and the impact on the reserves.	SW	ASAP
SW to convene again with the University PVC Students, Tim Jones, to discuss the staffing costs	SW	ASAP
SF to arrange an Extraordinary meeting for the board to agree a way forward regarding the costs of the organisation restructure.	SF	ASAP
SW to update the student trustees on the SUSS pension scheme.	SW	ASAP