

Students' Union Trustee Board

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board
Tuesday 06th February 2023 – Via MS Teams, 17:00**

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present:

Al Linforth (Chair and President) – AL
Isobel Price (VP Student Activities) - IP
Beky Williams (Lay Trustee Vice Chair) – BW
Erica Burke (Lay trustee) - EB
Eryn Orme (Student Trustee) - EO
Erin Boddice (Student Trustee) – Ebo
Mel Brittain (Lay Trustee) Joined at Item 5 - MB

In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) – SW
John Abell (Minutes)
Tim Jones (PVC Students - University Observer) - TJ

Apologies

Tim Young (Student Trustee)

Absent

Mattie Osborne (Student Trustee)

5. Pro Vice Chancellor Items.

Item 5 was moved up the agenda.

TJ thanked SW and the SU Leadership team as well as AL and IP for increasing the partnership between the SU and the University over the last year.

TJ explained the hostile political approach to universities by the current government and the unlikelihood of much to change quickly in the event of a Labour government. Also noted was the unhelpful approach of OfS as a hostile regulator. Other problems include inflationary and cost of living pressures [Commercial in Confidence].

The University recognises that many of its students are facing hardship and working outside of their degree. It's tough to be a student now.

The University is looking at both recruiting more students as well as retaining students once they arrive. The University is looking at improving the number of apprenticeships, CPD, and postgraduate taught, as well as refreshing its course pages and partner colleges. Dudley will be a priority as there is an HE blackspot in that area.

The University will review its international partnerships (20% of students are international) and average student age is rising.

Mel Brittain joined the Meeting.

Good news is that the University has been awarded a TEF Silver whilst many in the sector have dropped their ranking. The University hopes to achieve Gold in the next round.

Initial Teacher Training received an Outstanding rating from Ofsted and the University welcomed its first medical students.

The University has re-written its Access and Participation Plan to support groups most at risk and was the first University to have this approved.

There will also be a new teaching plan and crucially a new working group has been developed to improve the attractiveness and dynamism on campus.

The University also has a very strong and supportive Governors Board.

Main priorities are:

- Recruitment to grow to 12,000 students in 18 months and then 15,000 after that.
- Retention through a plan of initiatives.
- Delivering the Access and Participation Plan and closing attainment gaps
- Going for TEF Gold
- Representation and responding to student voice and closing the feedback loop. The University wants to work with the SU networks in particular.
- Student Engagement – in democracy and events. What does engagement mean to students?
- Looking at Student Services to use technology to provide a better service.

SW explained the joint priority around race equity and the initiatives that had been introduced – particularly around Race Equality Week.

BW asked how we maintain the good relationship between the SU and the University after TJ's departure in April – particularly with the financial situation that may impact the block grant.

TJ answered the University was committed to the good relationship between the SU and the University and that they were meeting the VC tomorrow to discuss arrangements after his departure.

In terms of the block grant, **TJ** noted that the SU need to continue to look for opportunities in the event that the block grant cannot be increased. **SW** noted that she was meeting the VC later in the week to discuss TJ's departure and highlight the importance of the SU.

EB asked how growth in Dudley could be done to ensure that the students can feel like UoW students? **TJ** noted that this was being discussed in depth though there were no definitive answers yet.

MB noted that Dudley College has its own Students' Union and this needs to be taken into account.

AL thanked TJ for his report.

TJ left the meeting.

Discussions were had in relation to University recruitment, the relationship with the University following TJ's departure, and the Dudley project [Commercial in Confidence].

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved (with minor corrections)

3. Matters arising

SW to update on fundraising bids – will be covered in CE Report.

SW to remove requirement for PVC Students to input into CEO evaluation in Matrix of Delegated Responsibility. **COMPLETED**

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

None declared.

5. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW presented their report presuming it was read.

- A tight eye is being kept on expenditure in order to meet budgets.
- Although a cost of living lottery bid was not put into the last round, there will be a general lottery bid for c£4K in the coming months. SW conducted research in the sector and other SUs have received funding but this was generally successful when proving high levels of community involvement.
- Staffing matters were discussed [Commercial in confidence].

CEO Objectives:

SW noted:

- The Strategic Framework has helped the development of the organisation.
- Outreach is difficult to resource (and needs more senior staff direction) but going well.
- Key Political Wins – A refurb of Jenny Lind building might still be possible.
- AL noted that International Student Hardship had been taken up by the Director of International but still needed VC approval.
- SW has had to be very operationally involved in Advice in recent weeks and notes that complex housing issues are taking up time within the

department. The University has been asked by the SU to lower accommodation prices as a benchmarking exercise shows they are higher than competitors.

- The SU is working with the University on recreational sport which seems to be growing well (up to 700 students from 280 last year). **EBo** noted that they hadn't seen much publicity for the Rec offer. **SW** agreed and said they would relaunch the comms for this and, whilst the SU is trying to promote, the University needed to do much more around this.
- Next main project is elections which will be beginning soon and seems to have good engagement. It is hoped there will be a diverse range of candidates.
- The All Student Meeting went well though despite not being quorate again and there was one student who took up a lot of the meeting and was met with afterwards to discuss their concerns.

6. Monthly Management Accounts

There were no questions.
The accounts were approved.

7. Operational Plan

SW noted the plan was helpful to track progress. SW picked out:

- The need to work more closely with the Uni residential Life team.
- SW is pleased with the Cost-of-Living campaign and what it has achieved.
- The Hangar loyalty card would be implemented in September 2024.
- There is still work to be done in Academic Representation around processes and procedures.
- There will be a student voice conference in April.
- Although the SU is improving, there will still be many students who feel that the SU is not relevant to them so there is always more to do. There have been more diverse events in The Hangar but the SU is always looking to improve this.
- Work is being done to evaluate the impact of The Networks as this goes beyond number of members (many students engage but do not become members).
- Work is being done to improve knowledge of the SU amongst University staff at all levels.
- Social Media is improving and is more engaging.

EO asked whether the University website had up-to-date information regarding the SU as many new students will not be aware of what an SU is?

SW noted that they and **AL** had asked the University to address but would revisit this in University Welcome Week meetings.

The Operational Plan was Approved.

Reporting items

9. HR and Remuneration Sub-committee Report

IP summarised the key points of the meeting including staffing matters, a minor change to the Terms of Reference of the Committee, approval of the revised Safeguarding Policy, and a discussion on the current HR software.

10. Finance Committee Report

AL explained the key points of the meeting including looking at attendance monitoring in the Hangar, a site survey for more SubTV Screens which could increase advertising revenue. A revised staff travel expense policy was approved.

12 Officers' report

IP presented AL's report, including:

- Education Council went well with discussions around timetabling and Chartwells with 3 policies submitted to SU Council.
- A Rep Conference will be organised in April.
- A Tea Dance was arranged in December which was a lovely event.
- Welfare and Inclusion Council is better attended (probably due to the bursary). Policies are being developed and this is very positive.

IP presented their report, including:

- Cost of Living is a joint project between IP and AL.
- Community Cupboard is popular but there is a drop in donations and it is very hard to keep up with demand. Breakfast Club has been relaunched.
- Sustainability Committee has 2 new members and is going well with Go Green Week starting this week.
- Refreshers took place in January and had diverse events but attendance was poor, causing us to look at the value of the week going forward.

Objectives have stayed the same for AL and IP though SJs objectives have been discussed and split between them. The Officers have really enjoyed their first semester and it has flown by.

13 Executive Committee Verbal Update

IP noted further discussions regarding Chartwells and prayer space. More policies have been developed by students. Recently IP's Consent Campaign article has been written for WonkHE with good coverage and reach.

More campaigns are in process including Varsity.

Club and society committee recruitment is being reviewed to discuss potential of recruitment rather than elections, following a discussion at BUCS. Students will be consulted on this and there appear to be pros and cons.

14 Student Council Summary

AL noted that the Financial Accounts were presented at Council and approved. Four policies were approved including University References for Accommodation and Lecture Recording.

15 Board of Governors summary

AL noted that TJ had covered many of the items earlier that had been discussed at Board. [Commercial in Confidence].

16 Any Other Business

SW noted that the meeting scheduled for 26th May might need to be moved due to absences and asked members to respond quickly to a new date suggestion.

SW noted that there would need to be student trustee recruitment soon for new trustees to observe the May meeting. **AL** noted that elections were a good opportunity to discover potential trustees. **BW** asked the current student trustees to speak to their peers. SW noted that they seek non-final year students for longevity. **EB** suggested engaging the current student trustees' experiences in the recruitment. SW was very happy to do this and noted that the recruitment pack includes information from student trustees.

Meeting closed 18:40

Summary of Actions:

Action	For	To be completed by
No Actions at this meeting.		