

Roehampton Students' Union – Minutes of the Trustee Board meeting held on 22 February 2021.

Present: Farrah Black (Chair), Lee Bird, Eleanor Wheal, Siobhan Kelly, Lauryn Fleming, Nicolo Sodaro, Danielle Chegwidden

In attendance: Mark Gillespie, Meg Mannion (Minutes), Jonathan Chien (University of Roehampton)

1) Welcome and apologies

Farrah Black (FB) welcomed Danielle Chegwidden to the Board as a new student trustee.

2) Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved. The Board reviewed the actions, which had all been completed.

4) Chair's report

FB gave a verbal update of her Chair's report, noting work on the No Detriment policy and the academic safety with the University. There was an update on work combatting sexual violence on campus and FB noted that the University had committed to £300 of yearly funding for the Period Poverty project, ensuring it could continue into future years.

5) CEO Update

Mark Gillespie (MG) presented his report, as read. He noted that due to the continued lockdown, most services were being delivered online but that there was strong engagement from student groups. The exception to online work is Growhampton, which has continued to go from strength to strength and provides support for campus residents and the local community.

He noted that there was currently an increase in demand for advice services, mainly around mitigating circumstances.

He noted that elections would be taking place online at the end of February, which was in line with what other students' unions had planned.

On income generation, the managed disruption to income generation was working quite well. The furlough scheme was being utilised and there had been some vacancy savings, as well as cost controls across the organisation. He gave an update on staffing, noting that recruitment was taking place for the Head of Membership role.

Eleanor Wheel (EW) asked if there was only one person managing the advice service. MG confirmed that this was the case although the Head of Membership role would provide additional support and some staff have been upskilled and capacity added through triaging advice cases. Trustees discussed that this could be a single point of failure and there was a need to mitigate this risk.

Lee Bird (LB) asked how the strategic planning process aligned with the budget going to the University FEC meeting in May. MG noted that there was a need to work together and work together in the planning project.

EW asked whether the summer ball would take place in line with the roadmap announced by the Government. MG replied that it would be a risk so unlikely to take place. There was a similar discussion around graduation plans, noting that there was potential for smaller events on campus but it was likely to be held virtually or delayed.

Danielle Chegwidden (DC) asked about alumni tickets for the summer ball, which had been suggested following cancellation of the 2020 event. MG added there would need to be some thinking into the best way to deliver this but it would be considered.

6) Student Union Council report

Laureyn Fleming (LF) gave the update, noting that SUC had received the accommodation survey results. The board noted changes to the BME officer role, which had been split into two roles. It was also noted that part-time officers doing some mental health drop-ins and that SUC were also doing work on academic regulations.

7) Q2 Management Accounts and reforecast

MG presented the key headlines. He noted that this quarter had been fairly quiet, due to the closure of the Hive. There had not been a lot of income generation but the Students' Union was using the furlough scheme. He discussed the possibility of using flexi-furlough to re-open the Hive but was cautious of doing this too quickly.

He noted a small underspend on payroll due to vacancy savings. There was a question about Unitemps and Jonathan Chien confirmed this was a coding error and would be renamed.

There was a discussion around block grant expectations and whether MG had received any indications of what would be allocated. He confirmed he had asked but not received confirmation.

EW asked about the accrual of holiday pay being carried forward and whether there was a risk around staff not taking annual leave. MG noted that the message was that staff were encouraged to take leave and if this needed to be enforced then it would be.

8) RSU Trustees' report

MG presented the trustees' report for review. The Board agreed to provide feedback to MG in order for the report to be completed for signing by the 30th April 2021.

9) RSU Annual Health and Safety report

MG introduced the report, which was reviewed annually as part of the cycle of business. MG took the report as read, adding that the insurance policy had been renewed at the end of January 2021. The Board added that it would be helpful for there to be a lessons learned exercise from incident reporting.

The report was noted.

10) Interim strategic plan update

The paper was taken as read, as a summary of the strategy. There were no follow-up questions on the paper.

11) Strategic planning exercise

MG introduced the paper, which outlined the rationale for the strategic planning exercise to be owned at trustee-level. The Board agreed the need to set a strong foundation to the work and that anything beyond 2-3 years of planning may be too much. MG noted that the Union had budgeted for £5k of consultancy spend and if a higher specification was required then this would need to be increased. There was a discussion about capacity to do some of this work in-house using a coaching model. MG added he felt that the Head of Membership role would free up some of his time and work could be delivered with appropriate external support.

LB added that he felt a proposed £18k spend would not be the best use of money for a three year strategy and also suggested considering using someone with expertise outside the sector. EW asked about timelines, which were confirmed as between March and May. MG agreed to circulate some options as an action for this work.

12) Relationship and Services Agreement

MG noted he had met with George Turner and tightened some of the finer points. MG went through the amendments that had been made and opened for questions. He took feedback on the amendments. There was a discussion about whether it was common to have a member of the University on the trustee board and the board agreed to challenge this point.

On point 15.6 of the agreement, the trustees asked that the word 'reasonably' was added to the clause. MG noted these changes and that the action was to take back to the University to sign.

13) Impact of meeting

The trustees felt the meeting was useful but that there was a lot of items to note, and asked for clarity on what they were being asked to do with papers.

The meeting ended.

