

Roehampton Students' Union Trustee Board meeting – Thursday 7th April 2022 via Microsoft Teams

Present: Farrah Black, Eleanor Wheal, Siobhan Kelly, Lee Bird, Oli Ottaway

In attendance: Megan Mannion, Mark Gillespie

Apologies: Mushtaq Ismail, Jonathan Chien

1) Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from Mushtaq Ismail and Jonathan Chien.

2) Conflicts of Interest

No new conflicts of interests were declared.

3) Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved

4) Chair's report – Verbal Update

Majority of FB's time has been focused on issues of harassment of Roehampton students, as a local man has been harassing students. There has been some police involvement and the University has put out communications about the case to keep students safe. FB has also written to the local MP and OO has developed some Active Bystander training. MG added that this has been the dominant issue that students have been reporting to the students' union. The SU put on additional security in the area and has been making referrals through the University's Report and Support system. OO discussed the work that was taking place around Sexual Violence Awareness Month. The Trustees discussed the police response and the support from the University.

FB also attended NUS National Conference and Liberation Conference in Liverpool. She noted that it was mostly positive but some frustrations with the policy-making processes.

5) Students' Union Council report

SUC have been looking at co-option process for filling roles. There is only one vacant role currently.

SUC also discussed access to technology for International Students and ensuring that International Students can use the systems they are being asked to use effectively. SUC also discussed the lack of No Detriment policy and was lobbying the University to consider re-introducing the policy in relation to Covid-19.

There was also discussion at SUC about the UCU strikes and whether there should be continued support for new strikes.

6) CEO Report

MG took the report as read and highlighted some key areas. The strategic plan has now launched and has been embedded into areas of work.

The Hive café has had a good start to the year commercially. There has been good engagement with the Summer Ball plans and 20% of the tickets have sold already. The line-up has been confirmed and there has been progress on the operational aspects of the event.

The pack has been put together for student trustee and external trustee recruitment. The Vice-Chancellor's office had also agreed the recommendations for the University-nominated trustee role, which was positive.

In terms of staffing, there had been some successful recruitment to the roles in the Hive. There has also been a pay review in the Hive café, raising the raise to the London Living Wage. There are two vacancies that are open and are about to launch a recruitment exercise.

MG is also waiting on the results of the employee engagement survey and will develop some staffing and people plans from these results.

Managers have been asked to gather feedback on the hybrid working policy and to consider how it has been working.

MG has also been supporting the officers with their funding bids for Student Senate.

EW asked about the cost of living crisis and whether students were being affected by this. MG noted that there had not been much feedback from students but that some staff had asked to come out of the pension scheme, citing the cost of living.

EW asked about the Union's work to support Ukraine and what actions were taking place around supporting Ukrainian and Russian students. OO added that the Union had run a support group for students affected by the war.

LB asked about trustee recruitment and where the advert had been posted. Additionally, LB asked about the university nominated trustee and what the appointment is. MG noted that the University had been taking expressions of interest. LB added that there should be some clarity around term limits. LB asked about the Union's pay structure being automatically linked to the University's and who has control over the pay.

7) Q2 Management Accounts

MG presented the paper, noting that there was not a lot of activity during the period covered due to the Christmas shutdown. MG showed that the accounts were being presented differently, to show the variance against budget, which will allow for much more accurate tracking.

MG noted that the Union is projecting a small surplus, noting that there was some financial risk associated with the Summer Ball. MG gave an update on the line up and some of the operational progress of the event.

8) Elections Returning Officer report

MG presented the report, noting that the elections had been a success and well run. The elections had been well contested and there had only been one complaint, which was positive given that lots of students were engaging for the first time. MG is planning to meet with the incoming officer team over the next few weeks to discuss induction and planning for the year ahead.

9) RSU Governance handbook – Policies and Procedures

MG presented the handbook, noting that he had consulted with other students' unions on their governance practices. He proposed the scheme of delegation and the establishment of subcommittees and noted that the aim was for the Trustee Board to have a wider grasp of its governance and across the organisation.

There was a discussion about which body approves the annual budget, suggesting that the Finance Committee provides scrutiny and recommend the budget for the Board to approve.

Action: MG to review wording around 'approvals'

LB noted that there were references to the Charity Code of Governance but that there is a NUS Code of Governance specifically for Students' Unions which may be useful to use as a framework. There was a discussion about whether the Chair of the Board should be on every committee, especially noting that Audit Committee. The Board also discussed the potential conflict between the Finance Committee and Remuneration Committee in relation to expenditure.

Action: Trustees to send comments to MG for circulation.

10) Any Other Business

MG noted that annual RSU awards are being held in person on campus and invited the trustees to attend.

The meeting ended.