

## **Roehampton Students' Union**

### **Trustee Board meeting**

Meeting held on 15 December 2020 at 6pm via Zoom

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

**In attendance:** Mark Gillespie, Jonathan Chien (University of Roehampton), Baljit Kaur (University of Roehampton), Martin Bailey (Goodman Jones), Meg Mannion (Minutes)

#### **1) Welcome and apologies**

Farrah Black (FB) welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received.

#### **2) Declarations of interest**

It was noted that Baljit Kaur (BK) and Jonathan Chien (JC) work for the University of Roehampton.

#### **3) Minutes and matters arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

#### **4) RSU Transition Committee minutes**

The minutes were noted.

#### **5) Chair's Report**

FB gave her report, noting work on cuts within the Arts and Humanities department, accommodation issues and work that had taken place with the local MP Fleur Anderson and the period poverty campaign. Nicolo Sodaro (NS) added comment about his fundraising campaign for Movember and Lauryn Fleming (LF) spoke about careers and employability work.

#### **6) Annual report and financial statements**

Martin Bailey (MB) presented the financial accounts to the Board. He noted that the audit had been a smooth process and thanked JC and BK for their support, noting that there had been improvements in the quality of accounting records. He noted that there were some minor presentational changes but no major changes required. He noted a couple of issues: The first is that Mark Gillespie (MG) is the sole signatory although this point was being addressed in tandem with invoicing to ensure a segregation of duties.

MB noted a technical tax point regarding commercial trading. He noted that for students' unions, any trading to non-students would count as commercial trading and therefore may have corporation tax implications. He added that if this amount fell under the HMRC threshold, there would not be a liability for corporation tax. The Board discussed the need for a mechanism in the sales process to disaggregate

student and non-student sales. There was a question about the risk this posed to the union. MG noted that the risk was low as HMRC check on a rolling basis. The risk is currently low due to limited trading but it is on the radar as a process that requires implementation.

Eleanor Wheal (EW) asked whether there would be an opportunity for management responses to be recorded, which MG confirmed. It was suggested that actions recommended in the audit findings are added to the Board action list.

The trustees agreed to send any comments on the trustees' report to MG and would circulate the report to trustees.

BK and MB left the meeting.

## **7) CEO Update**

The report was taken as read. MG noted some highlights from the report.

- He noted that the Union advice service was at the same level of usage as last year, but expected this to increase after Christmas as students get exam results.
- There had been a big increase in participation with Growhampton this year but there was a decrease from 57 to 49 societies as many were pausing their activities due to Covid-19.
- There had been some outdoor events and planning for more in the new term, dependent on tier restrictions.
- The Union website had been re-skinned and there was a content review taking place to ensure it was clear and accessible.
- The Hive had had a challenging first term and the Union was taking advantage of flexible furlough, with the hope to re-open in the new term.
- Staff engagement with the new strategic plan was high and working groups were meeting to discuss implementation.
- The report included an update on risk. MG noted that there was a lot of fatigue from Covid-19 and that the Union was often bearing the brunt of student frustrations and the SU was trying to act as a conduit between students and the University.
- On staffing, a member of staff had left and been replaced via a recruitment process. There was still work to do on the Head of Membership Services although the delay was partially due to vacancy savings.

EW asked about what was happening with course cuts. FB responded that students were passionate about the issue and this was hard to reconcile with the University position. It was added that Students' Union Council had voted to oppose the cuts.

Lee Bird (LB) asked if there was a correlation between advice cases and Arts and Humanities students facing course closures. MG noted that this was not currently the case but it was taking up a lot of officer capacity.

Siobhan Kelly (SK) asked if society grant funding was being used. MG confirmed that most of the funding was being used for things like paid Zoom accounts as activity was not happening in person, but online.

He finished his report noting that prior to students leaving for Christmas, between 500-600 students had been tested for Covid-19 with no positive cases. He anticipated that around 50-60 students would remain on campus for Christmas.

### **8) Students' Union Council update**

An emergency meeting had taken place to oppose course cuts. This motion had passed and the Union had put a statement of support on its website. FB noted that the SU had met with the University over cladding issues and there had been an accommodation survey.

SUC had confirmed changes to the election rules so that the Postgraduate Officer would now be elected in an Autumn by-election to maximise participation. The interfaith officers had been merged into one role and the BAME role had been split into a Black Students' Officer and an ethnic minority role. Students' Union Council had also made an appointment of a student trustee.

### **9) Q1 Management Accounts**

The Block Grant had been approved and applied to the Union. It was noted that events income was down as expected. MG noted that further donated income would be recognised in Q2.

MG noted that cost controls were in place and payroll costs were slightly lower than budgeted. The primary concern for the Union is income generation and changing government advice is making this difficult to plan. The Union is negotiating outdoor space with the University in order to run events, assuming a change in tiers. The Union is adjusting how income is generated in order to diversify its income streams, such as using Growhampton to sell produce. LB asked if there was a need to reforecast. MG added that he would need to see the Christmas performance before reforecasting.

### **10) Register of Complaints**

MG tabled the paper. There had only been one complaint directed towards the Union and MG wanted to know the best mechanism for recording incidents for the Board. The Board agreed it would be useful to see a trend of issues where possible and to see any learnings where there are complaints. MG will prepare a summary.

### **11) Review Business Continuity Plan**

MG introduced the paper as read. MG will add in notification of trustees to the document.

### **12) CEO PDR Objectives**

FB, LB and MG had met to look at the process for setting objectives. There was a conversation about the appraisal process. The Board agreed that the objectives looked appropriate and ambitious.

### **13) Impact of meeting**

The Board reflected on the meeting. LB commented that as a new Board, it would take a bit of time to develop as a team and it would be helpful to meet in person when possible. It was felt that the Students' Union Council update was useful to have and that the Board was focusing on strategic issues.

### **Any Other Business**

EW asked if there had been an update on the agreement with the University. MG confirmed the University was mostly agreeable to the SU amendments, apart from one point around a University-nominated trustee sitting on the Board. The Board agreed that there was clarity required around this role and there was some further thinking required.

The meeting closed.