

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

**Held on 8th September 2022 in the Boardroom BD-07-004, Belfast Campus and Microsoft Teams**

**Present: In Attendance:**

Grace Boyle, President (Chair) David Longstaff, Chief Executive Officer

Rebecca Allen, Vice President, Education Colin Campbell, Operations Director

Finola Quigg, Vice President Sports & Wellbeing Jackie Taggart, Note Taker

Chaudhary Hamza Riaz, Vice President Equality & Belonging

Robert Millar, Vice President Belfast

Ethan Davies, Vice President Coleraine

Dónall Hegarty, Vice President Magee

Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee

Aaron Ward, Lay Trustee

Kirsten Watters, Lay Trustee

Andrea Probets Lay Trustee

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| **Meeting Notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1:** Welcome by Chair:The Chair welcomed the new Student Officer team and Trustees to the meeting, and all introduced themselves. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2:** Apologies**:** CK, SH and DF |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3:** Declaration of Interest:  The Chair noted there were no declarations. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4:** Starred Items:  Sub-Committee Minutes presented in Items 16 and 17 are now incorporated in Trustee Board.  The Chair raised that this was KW’s last meeting and thanked her for her contribution on behalf of the Board. KW replied that she had come to the end of her 4-year term and thanked UUSU for the opportunity of joining a unique Board with membership changing on an annual basis. She will maintain an interest and offered her services to support where it would be useful, particularly with the housing project. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5:** Minutes/ Actions from Minutes of 26th May 2022:  The Chair announced that the only Action under Agenda Item 13 from Minutes of 26th May 2022 had been covered.  Minutes of 26th May 2022 were approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6:** Matters Arising:  The Chair thanked the Board Member for the training that she had provided and informed the meeting of the Officers who were elected members, namely the Vice President Education, the Vice President Belfast, the Vice President Coleraine, and herself as President. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7:** Chair’s Communication:The Chair reported a lot of work was in progress around Welcome and Freshers’ Weeks. Belfast is hosting self-guided tours with signage and maps and are having a digital treasure hunt. A full list of events has been calendared from move-in week through to Freshers’ Week which includes Freshers Fayres on Monday 26th September in Coleraine and Magee, and Tuesday 27th in Belfast. A Further and Higher Education Group has been established to campaign on planning interventions on the cost-of-living crisis. We have met with NUS/USI to collaborate “Access to Survival” and messaging has been agreed with representatives. During the last year, the School of Health Sciences moved from Jordanstown to Magee. We conducted surveys and collected data and student testimonies on hardship fund information etc to take to the Transition Board to consider a bursary for students involved. We came to an agreement with the Vice Chancellor that the School of Health Sciences students could have appropriate financial compensation for the most disadvantaged students. UUSU launched a big campaign on period poverty and the University is now providing poverty period products in 22 bathrooms across the 4 campuses. The Chair and VPB are working with NUS/USI and the Co-Operative Steering Group to explore housing Co-Operatives for students because of accommodation costs. This process is expected to run over the next couple of years.  The Board commended the Chair on the work that had been carried out and getting recognition from the Assembly for the Period Poverty work. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 8:** Chief Executive’s Report:The CEO presented a paper which was taken as read and gave an update on the Belfast relocation and that the University had received keys yesterday and all statutory checks had been signed off. Staff will be on campus from Monday, and this only leaves us a couple of weeks to familiarise ourselves before students come on campus. We can only ask staff to do as much as they can to provide a welcoming experience. The Activities Team has worked hard to ensure there is a good core of events over campuses, particularly Belfast. We are trying to have a showcase event for students to come together in large numbers on each campus. Hybrid working arrangements will start from Monday. After a year we will evaluate with staff to ensure it is working for them and ourselves. The Board had agreed on our application for a grant of £100,000 for the new roles identified. We would like to be successful to fund some other areas of potential growth. Dormont Accounts gave us points for consideration and we expect a decision by the end of the year. Gavin Boyd has been appointed as Director of Membership & Communications. He has previously worked on campaigning and advocacy and developed comms strategies. Marketing and Communications resources will follow on from his appointment. The Business Development and HR posts were advertised in July and August but no-one of the correct calibre applied, and we will review this in September/October. We have secured £30,000 to have a free bus running between Belfast and Jordanstown 4 days per week at varying times to ensure students are not bringing their cars on campus and to avoid a decline in numbers of Club Sports. The Board asked, from a safety perspective, that students who drive cars need to have the message reinforced that they must park in designated areas, particularly if dressed for sport, as the wrong football shirt in the wrong area could lead to attack on their person or vehicle. UUSU needs to be ready to respond to this. The CEO noted this but felt due to the community outreach work that there is less risk of this scenario, and a message of a free bus service, together with clear directions, will help avoid crime. We have been supportive on a sustainability basis. The VPB added that several streets will be pedestrianised and long-term parking won’t be available. The CEO will give information to the University. We are also finalising a bid of £100,000 for Special Projects Funding to cover supporting upcoming resource requirements in line with future UU strategies. There is no update on the legal case. Our legal representatives are going through the process of discovery. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 9:** Finance & Budget Update:TheCEO presented the budget on the FBD’s behalf. The application of the new pay scale and confirmation of our block grant created a positive differential, and these can now be added to the budget. Freshers’ Fayres might generate some income.  Admin Salaries and Wages: The FBD had added the prospective new roles and we are making savings from those that are unfilled.  Training & Recruitment: We spent more on Officer Training, Media Training and Skills Analysis which we hope will be useful.  Sport has had its usual inflationary rise.  Membership Services has a slight increase and when we return on campus, there will be more of a need to invest in events to get students interested.  We have a healthy surplus of £60,000 currently budgeted for.  Re-Appointment of Auditors: 3 companies were approached and 2 responded, one of whom was GMcG who were successful.  The VPB raised a query on NUS affiliation fees and NUS/USI. The CEO explained that we don’t pay affiliation fees to USI as they are a different jurisdiction. As they have joint projects with NUS, money can be shared on a formula basis from the central NUS budgeting. The Chair added that a training opportunity had arisen from NUS “Lead the Change” campaign.  The budget was approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 10:** Central Risk Register:The CEO reported on a few additions to the Risk Register**.**  Pension Scheme: This remains an ongoing concern, but the pension contribution requirement has been built into our block grant allocation from the University for this year. The risk has been minimised as far as possible.  Sports Services: Remains crucial that sports are simplified for students and access is made easy given the transition from Jordanstown.  Lack of Effective Means for Internal Communication: The Board agreed on significant investment in Marketing and Comms and with the appointment of the new DMC this should be further minimised when he develops a comms strategy. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11:** Operating Plan Update**:**  The CEO reported that progress has been made around transitional elements and Jordanstown campus is now closed. Catering equipment may be gifted to the University or sold for a nominal amount to a 2nd hand dealer. The offices have been stripped and closed. In terms of the Belfast transition, staff had received amended Terms and Conditions. Impact on staff will be rewarded with a slight transitory figure that we agreed. Over the course of the next 6 months, we will have regular meetings with staff in Belfast and relay appropriate repairs/alterations to the University.  Reserves: We don’t have a written Reserves Policy, but the FBD has been clear that it needs to be around 3 months operating costs and it is still to be defined when Reserves become too high.  HR Admin Review: This process has been finalised by the OHRD to use skills to align certain areas of the business. There was a need for some support on governance, marketing, and activities.  The Board commented that it was good to see the organisation in its current situation. It had made difficult decisions and presented options to the Board. The CEO agreed that to have more ability to spend outside the block grant in different, more innovative ways, was to generate income. The Board was pleased at having 3 months reserves which is acceptable for the charitable sector. It inquired if the Solicitors have a notion as to payment in terms of the legal matter that is ongoing so that it can be deducted from Reserves, but no amount had been proffered. It also warned of a smaller grant in future if this year’s is not fully spent, but the CEO pointed out the need to justify the budget through the annual business plan now which negates this risk slightly. | The FBD to benchmark other reserves limits in the sector and provide information on a possible reserves celling. |  |
| **Agenda Item 12:** Terms of Reference**:** The CEO reported that he had reviewed the Terms of Reference including making a commitment that there will be 6 meetings this year.  This was approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 13:** Whistleblowing Policy**:** The CEO reported that there was no change except in staff associated with the policy. The Acting DM raised that Jordanstown address had not been changed.  This was approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 14:** UUSU Complaints & Member Code of Conduct: AN reported that UUSU had a complaint through the Complaints Process and some Board members had taken the opportunity to compile a list of lessons learned to further enhance the process. The 4 recommendations are:   1. Review Policy – A Leeway Extending Period or completed in 90 days to allow for summer leave, with a sense check annually. 2. Potential for an External Trustee as Appeals Chairperson so this is pre-defined. That person will have HR experience and will provide training. Charities have benefits to access free training through the Charities Commission. 3. Reinforce the notion of a designated staff member as Secretariat. Anyone involved in the process can go to this person who will be outside the decision-making process. 4. Charity training is available for free or at a minimum cost. Inclusive and awareness training can be sought, as can team-work and effective challenge. This could be opened up to members.   The Board reiterated the time element, and that the Investigatory Officer was external, given the lack of resources within the organisation and this is a huge responsibility of the Committee. An HR person can administer the process and maintain the documents.  Recommendations were approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 15:** Strategic Planning Process 2023+**:** The CEO sought approval for a Task & Finish Group as the private sector appears to be moving away from traditional Strategic Plans to a more Adaptive Strategy that can move as situations change. This stipulates the goal, but not the method to achieve it. Willing participants are needed to get involved to ascertain direction of travel and gain a method of gathering opinions with staff and external support. Planning will take place in 2023/24, reporting back to the Board on process, and presenting the final decision in July 2023. 3 x 3-hour meetings once every couple of months should suffice comprising of CEO, 3 senior staff, the Chair of Board, and 2 External Trustees, two Student Trustees and two Student Officers. The Board felt that External Trustees raising questions about strategy and future development presents a fantastic opportunity. The VPE raised a query on 2 student officers and the CEO noted he didn’t have any issues if this was increased to say 3 if the demand for participation was there.  This was approved. | The CEO to put a preliminary meeting into calendars.  The Chair to raise this as a vote at Student Executive.  AW to coordinate membership with External Trustees |  |
| **Agenda Item 16:** Minutes from Staffing Sub-Committee on 10th June 2021:  These were read and noted. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 17:** Minutes from Audit, Risk & Compliance Sub-Committee of 28th October 2021:  These were read and noted. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 18:** Any Other Business**:**  The Board put forward that succession is important for when Board members move on and having access to specialist skills is critical. Trustees wondered whether a skills audit may be useful to look at where Board gaps may be evident and fill on this basis. The CEO agreed that it is good practice to have a broad range of skills aligned to the right calibre for the Board. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 19:** Date of Next Meeting:  24th November 2022 by Videoconferencing |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 20: RESERVED ITEM.** |  |  |