

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

**Held on Thursday 28th September 2023 by videoconferencing in Rooms BD-03-019 Belfast, H113A Coleraine and MD008A, Magee**

**and Microsoft Teams**

**Present: In Attendance:**

Rebecca Allen President (Chair) David Longstaff, Chief Executive Officer

Finola Quigg, Vice President, Education Colin Campbell, Director of HR & Campus Operations

Oscar Kelly, Vice President Equality & Belonging Clodagh Kennedy, Director of Finance & Business

Dónall Hegarty, Vice President Magee Support

Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee Gavin Boyd, Director of Membership & Comms

Andrea Probets Lay Trustee Oluwaseyi Kushimo, Vice President Belfast

Antoinette Bradley, Lay Trustee Philip Maguire, Vice President Coleraine

Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee

Eoin Millar, Student Trustee

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting Notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1:** Welcome by Chair:  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2:** Apologies: RArrm  DF will join the meeting at 4.30 p.m. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3:** Declaration of Interest:  The Chair noted that there were no declarations. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4:** Minutes  Minutes of the previous meeting of 3rd August 2023 were approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5:** Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes were:  Item 9: F&BS Report: Life Cover Option paper to be presented at next meeting: This will be presented at Agenda Item 8.  Item No 10: DM&C Report: The DM&C to circulate itinerary of events when available and list of Exhibitors: The DM&C apologised for not submitting the list of Exhibitors yet and would soon share.  Item No 14: AOB: The Chair to follow up on Vice Chair appointment: The Chair asked if any of the Lay Trustees were interested in taking up the post. AN declined but offered her advice and guidance if any issues arose where she could assist. The Chair will contact the Lay Trustees by email and give time for consideration to take up the post to have someone in place by the next meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6:** Chair’s Remarks:  The Chair reported that SUTs were held in Kerry where Officers obtained some good training and enjoyed the event. SUT+, a follow up event, was held in Queens this year and is a more practical and hands on event which proved to be useful for Officers.  The University has established new Committees and allocations for UUSU Reps have been assigned.  Freshers has been fantastic with a good turn-out and lots of sign-ups to other events. Further events will be held over the next couple of nights.  Officers had an introduction to University Council where the team is invited annually to give a presentation of our key events and campaigns for the year. The Lay Trustee Council members were excited about our plans and Council members will now be able to recognise Officers around the campus.  The Board commended and congratulated the Team on the engagement over Freshers’ Week as there is competition from other providers which proved that our comms are working well. The Chair added that there had been a great response from students regarding the next couple of events and a big turn-out was expected. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7:** Chief Executive Officer’s Report:  The CEO asked for it to be minuted that the DM&C gave invaluable support to the Officers during Freshers’ Week when we linked up with providers and set up relationships. Trustees asked about the link up between the campus and the PBA providers. The CEO explained that activities existed in the PBAs with an example of a stand and freebies in 123 York Street this week. In addition, the University’s own built accommodation which is almost finalised will bring footfall on campus and provide further opportunities for links with students off it too.  Sustainability:   * CC has been liaising with Hazaar, a company similar to Ebay in premise, which deals with upcycling of assets, e.g. books, clothing, kitchenware etc. We have agreed a one-year trial and hope that a lot of students sign up to the app and positively engage. * We had received £10,000 from the Lottery Community Fund which we have stretched as far as possible to provide as many breakfast products spread over 24 weeks of the first two semesters. It will run weekly and commenced from this Wednesday. Students can pick items up at any time and take them away or eat immediately in our space. * The University, Compass and UUSU have provided fridges on which we will have graphics at the front for branding at act as a food bank of sorts. These will be used for chilled items from Compass with a short fridge life and which otherwise would be discarded and further covers UUSU’s sustainability brief.   Please see Reserved Minutes.  Operating Process: We have paused our old Operating Plan and the elements currently in progress will filter into the new Plan. We have discussed various ways to ensure our annual plan is meaningful and when the strategic document is agreed, and presented at Student Council in November, we will adopt an initial slightly elongated Operation Plan which will last from January 2024 to July 2025. Standard annual planning will then commence, and forums will be held twice annually to see how the Plan is progressing. Quarterly sessions will also be held with Managers and Officers to get clear synergy as to how every part of the organisation feeds in to enable us to positively inform members as to how we have adapted and met our promises. This will give us the best feedback loop going forward. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 8:** Director of Finance & Business Support’s Report:  The DF&BS had submitted two papers.  Firstly, she summarised the Draft Year-End Accounts which are currently being audited so may be adjusted. There is a Surplus at year-end of £137,000.   * Income is fairly on budget with Salaries & Wages being lower due to two positions not being filled. * The credit which we were due on Cleaning at Jordanstown has just come through this year. * £24,000 Consultancy fees have been paid to Solicitors and another £6,000 has been accrued.   The Balance Sheet shows:   * Fixed Assets: We currently don’t have many fixed assets. * Current Assets are £1.1m * Current Liabilities are £428,000 with most being self-explanatory, apart from money that we are holding for Clubs and Societies.   Reserves are £699,000 which is becoming in and around the top level for the scale of the organisation. The Charity Commission has no set policy for Reserves, but it might impact on funding from the University. It has been critical to build reserves to meet our policy of three months of costs and safeguard against some liabilities that may be seen in the coming months.  She concluded that 2023/24 started with a lot of activity and we can afford to take some risks with an event and extra pieces for Welcome Week.  Her second paper relates to Life Cover which was deferred from the previous meeting. She gave a summary of events relating to employees’ pensions since closure of SUSS in 2011 and explained that only some staff members currently receive Life Cover Benefit. She asked the Board to decide whether those staff who don’t have life cover benefit should be offered the same benefit, and if it should only be offered to permanent staff members. Last year’s policy was £2,600 and was deferred. This year’s costs would be £7,000 for all UUSU employees. The F&BS requires a decision before payment is due on 1st October for former SUSS members.  The Board inquired if the £7,000 covered all employees and were advised that Student Employees and Coaches would not be included although there was cover provided for Senior Managers and Officers if they were permanently disabled while at work.  The Board felt that if agreed, it should cover permanent employees only as there is cover in place for Officers.  The Board raised if it would be important to employees to have cover and if it would be considered a significant recruitment strategy. The CEO thought that critical illness cover would be more beneficial to the demographic range of employees we had but would be likely significantly more expensive.  The Board felt that it is not a decision for it, and it is content to support the decision of the majority with the impact on morale and recruitment strategy being taken into consideration. It is worth researching policies with minimum cost but of real benefit to staff, e.g. Dental Insurance to which employees sign up at no cost to the organisation. The CEO agreed that there are flexible benefits packages out there whereby staff can have choice although research would take a year. Staff should be able to withdraw from a policy if they wished. The Board felt that, given that it is something we are providing, then we should consider offering it to all permanent staff although we ought to be cautious in considering the long-term costs. After discussion, it was agreed that Life Assurance should not be linked to a pension contribution but should be available for all permanent staff.  The CEO summarised that we should isolate the life insurance element and progress it now, then return with a different set of affordable benefits when the HR Advisor starts work and sources packages that are of benefit to staff. The Board approved.  The Board requested information on recruitment of the two roles. The DHR&CO informed that we have recruited for the HR Advisor post and will interview next week. He explained that no-one applied at the last two recruitments which were advertised for Coleraine Campus, but when opened out to the other campuses, there were six applicants. The Business Development post will be finalised shortly, and External and Student Trustee posts will be recruited in the next two weeks.  The CEO added that we are lobbying the University for extra funding for a staff member to support Student Voice in the future post Sports Restructure and hopefully this will be furthered in the next few weeks. |  | . |
| **Agenda Item 9:** Director of Membership & Communication’s Report:  The DM&C reported that most of his recent work evolved around preparation and organisation for the Freshers Fayres for the three campuses which was supported by lots of people, especially the SET Team whom he thanked, along with the Coleraine and Magee Site SDOs. There were good reports from Coleraine and Magee, but he was particularly pleased as to how the Belfast Fayre came together. He felt we were learning as an organisation how to plan, execute and engage with many members at the first opportunity, and this can be improved upon for next year.  Some things coming up:-   * Student Council passed policy in March to change approach to responding to industrial action ballots by UCU. Now there will be a process for consideration for holding a referendum of SU membership as to whether it will support strike action. Officers and Student Voice are working to identify what the referendum will be in practice with questions, answers, and clarity with membership as to what their decision means. A motion to hold a Referendum will go to Student Council with referendum held in early November which will be fair and comprehensive and where the electorate is aware of the options, and they have the ability to shape the Union’s position on something that is central to their student experience. Trustees will be updated. * Refurbishment of the Cathedral Quarter Social Bar. Coleraine’s Social Space refurbishment has been postponed. In Belfast, work is ongoing with artwork sourced for the walls which will be fully installed on Monday. The Bar was busy with a very successful event last night and is a more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing space for students to sit. * BBC covered the change of name at Magee Campus in recent weeks. UUSU had not been consulted and the VPM had requested information. It was identified that no stakeholders had been consulted either and we feel that students should be able to give their view as to how their campus should be described and whether they support the name change. We will engage with membership to collect opinion and if required find a way forward on this issue. * Officers filmed an induction video with information that our new members need. Course Directors will share it so all students will have opportunities to learn about UUSU services, support and activities. * There has been an issue in recent weeks of a particular course having a high failure rate resulting in an unprecedented number of appeals for the Advice Bureau.   The Chair thanked the DM&C and SET Team on the success of Freshers Fayres. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 10:** Director of Human Resources & Campus Operation’s Report:  The DHR&CO reminded that between 2021/22, the Resources Working Group was formed, and it decided that UUSU needed a Campaigns Coordinator and a Graphic Designer to support the Marketing Team. Recruitment commenced with fixed contracts for the two posts which expire in July 2024. Both staff members have been employed for a year and are under the Membership and Comms remit. They have proved to be invaluable members of staff and we are keen to offer them permanent contracts as soon as possible, as they may seek other employment in the next few months if they feel their contract will expire in July.  The Board agreed with the offer of permanent contracts.  The Limelight has agreed to host a Freshers Fest for Belfast Campus on Tuesday night. UUSU is having a Prize Draw for free tickets to promote this event on our socials, and student staff are advertising it around Halls. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11**: Strategic Direction Update:  The CEO took the document as read and outlined how it will satisfy stakeholders. It is being designed for our membership showing a clear plan as to how we are going to portray ourselves to members, our promises and values and how they fit into core pillars and commitments in line with our consultation. SMT had discussions on it, and it was reviewed by the Chair/President. The Web & Content Manager received the amendments. AW provided invaluable help with the document from his own journey he had outlined to Board previously. Now that Trustees have seen it, it will be circulated to staff, then to Student Council in November. The organisation will become aligned behind it. The CEO had advised the Chief Finance & Strategy Officer that we were developing an explanatory piece for stakeholders to compliment this plan and show the breadth of work that we are doing.  The Board deemed it to be fantastic and those involved were complimented on their work. The Chair asked for a QR code to be made available to scan to have information to hand. It can be used to click on the links in the document, so it is easily updated. The CEO agreed to incorporate some codes. The document is intended to be read digitally, by stakeholders and members and will contain Hyperlinks and videos to be interactive with QR codes which would make it more interesting and fast-paced for students to consume as we need a snap-shot for them to follow through.  The Student Trustee agreed it explains the breadth of work we do and services that we provide.  The Board agreed that the document was suitable to proceed for Student Council comments. | The Web & Content Manager to look at QR codes and hyperlinks. |  |
| **Agenda Item 12:** Any Other Business:  The DM&C shared his screen and advised that the Governance & Policy Coordinator had drafted a paper on amendments to the Bye-Laws. It has gone through SMT and is going through Student Executive also. He asked for the Board’s approval today and advised that most of the changes were cosmetic.  He explained the changes to the Bye-Laws individually.  All were agreed. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 13:** Date of Next Meeting: 30th November 2023 |  |  |