

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

**Held on 9th September 2021 at 4.00 p.m. by Microsoft Teams**

**Present: In Attendance:**

Owen McCloskey, President (Chair) David Longstaff, Chief Executive

Aaron Ward, Lay Trustee Colin Campbell, Operations Director

Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee Clodagh Kennedy, Finance Director

Kirsten Watters, Lay Trustee Avril Honan, Membership Director

Grace Boyle, Vice President Education Fintan Darragh, VP Sports & Wellbeing

Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee Robert Millar, Vice President, Belfast

Ryan Harling, Vice President (Magee) Curtis Donnan, Vice President Coleraine

Andrea Probets Lay Trustee Sophie Hilditch, Student Trustee

Rebecca Allen, Vice President Jordanstown Gayle Alexander Boardroom Apprentice

Jackie Taggart, Note Taker

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| **Meeting Notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1: Introduction:**  New Officers and Board Members had joined and a brief introduction was given by everyone. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2: Welcome:**  The Chairwelcomed everyone, particularly the Student Trustee who was attending her first meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3: Apologies:**  There were no apologies. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4:** **Declaration of Interest:**  There were no declarations. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5: Starred Items:**  There were no starred items. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6: Minutes/ Actions from Minutes:**  Minutes of 27th May 2021 were approved at the meeting of 7th June 2021. Minutes from the 7th June and 19th August meetings are Reserved so as per Trustees’ previous decision are not tabled. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7: Matters Arising:**  The Operations Director advised that work on membership had paused although the work carried out by the Task & Finish Group will be discussed later in the meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 8: Chair’s Communication:**  The Chair updated that the new Student Officer Team had attended training over the summer and are looking forward to re-boarding students on campus. The SU Activities Team will assist ResLife and will be on campus to welcome students back in the safest manner, and some students will be staying in student built accommodation. Excitement will start with the Freshers’ Fortnight and we will follow this up for the remainder of the first semester. The new team will require agility and flexibility to ensure we can manage whatever the year will bring. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 9: Chief Executive Officer’s Update:**  The CEO welcomed the new Student Trustee as a critical part of the Board and gave the following summary of key points of his paper:   1. Covid-19 Status: The Executive removed social distancing from the classroom, although malls, offices, catering and sports facilities remained as social-distancing areas so it has been difficult to realise a return to campus to support the student community. The University is re-boarding student-facing staff only. As we are a small organisation, regardless of posts, we will reboard in bubbles. 25% of staff will be on campus each day per week, in a bubble approach, so in the event of any self-isolation we should only be down a few staff. Freshers’ Fortnight is more high-risk but the Membership Director requires a critical mass of staff and student volunteers to deliver services throughout that integration period for students. It is hoped that the Executive will provide more information soon. 2. Belfast Relocation: This has been delayed for a further 6 months thus postponing the move until December. The interior appears to be watertight but can’t be used currently. We have secured a space in BB, like a student common room facility, which should be ready by next week. In Jordanstown, our space is centred around catering so there is a ready meals vending option and a kitchenette fitted. It is covered by an entertainments licence so AV can be installed for vibrancy. 3. Catering Tender: This was won by the Compass Group. The Operations Director will manage this on a daily basis with Vice Presidents taking a strategic role in working with the Operations Director and Compass to plan events. Compass wants to act as a partner which will be dually advantageous as the SU owns the spaces and Compass will manage the services. 4. Mental Health Fund: The DfE have written with permission for the SU to extend the distribution of the £250,000 over the next 12 months with the Here for You Campaign running to the end of May. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 10: Key Metrics Report:**  The Membership Director shared her screen and updated:   1. The Advice Bureau is in its 4th year and has over 300 new cases. 2. Satisfaction Survey has given us high approval rates but we have low take-ups so a system has been implemented into the Advice Bureau so we can text students with a link to the survey. 3. Student Voice numbers are based on last year’s so there is nothing to report. The new PVC Academic Quality & Student Experience has met with the Student Voice Team which will help us with the representation system. 4. Student Council has moved to having 2 year terms. We have 10 seats vacant but have people interested. 5. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion will keep developing with input from the VPs Education and Jordanstown. 6. UUSU Sport will return this year with training already having started although Covid-19 may disrupt away matches or coaching. 7. Jordanstown/Belfast transition delay will mean students get used to travelling from the city centre. 8. Societies have attracted more members despite meeting online and we have been able to stream-line this. 9. Volunteering has not picked up traction and needs to be focused on this year, with the SACs taking the lead. 10. The Mental Health Project will kick off this year. 11. Student Development Programme has been moved online with modules ready to go.      1. Website Update is ready and should pick up in the next 12 months. 2. Freshers Fortnight events are delivered as a hybrid including online opportunities, with daily varied activities in conjunction with Campus Life and the SU will have a presence on campus. A survey will be circulated on that.   The Board commented that no one had expected to be in the position we have been in during the last 18 months. It is good to see these results in what is a hugely challenging time for membership. Students will have varying expectations and ‘dynamic’ and ‘changeable’ is our response.  Trustees noted that it was difficult to arouse students’ interest in volunteering. Volunteer Now or another external organisation could be brought in, and students could volunteer online or by phone. The Membership Director advised that Volunteer Now have helped with the Mental Health Committee and this is progressing. We have the EDGE award, but don’t provide volunteering placements but will try to link with projects that are of interest to UUSU. Litter picks will be held over Freshers’ Fortnight and we can keep groups on our books as they could form Societies. Trustees suggested that working with particular faculties could reveal a specific study-related interest group. The Membership Director advised that clubs and societies had not been approached for volunteers. She thanked the Trustees for their suggestions.ad  Trustees also commented that students are eager to return on campus. This is the start of normality for a lot of them and it is good to keep focused in the safest way.  The Board deemed this as a useful report for Trustees to see what engagement is going on. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11: Management Accounts:**  The Finance Director presented the accounts which related to the 12 months ending 31st July 2021 with the surplus added to the Reserves. The audit is currently being carried out. There had been various savings and specific costs in relation to the closure of commercial services and significant variances with the block grant and the increased pension and general costs. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 12: Operating Plan Update:**  The CEO shared his screen to show the Strategic Operating Table and advised that different priorities have arisen:   1. Campus Operations with Jordanstown Closure and Belfast transition have been lengthened due to the Contractor so our time-line has altered. 2. Closure of Coleraine Club has been completed with the bad debt being paid off although we have kept the legal status because currently there is a significant backlog of licence applications going through local Councils so if our provider can’t get a licence, we can provide one. 3. Extended review of various roles in the organisation is progressing as a Task & Finish Group. 4. Commercial Services – Profit sharing that we hoped to set up is looking problematic at present. The provider came in under contracted cost plus model so if it does not meet its costs, the University will cover the shortfall but equally that means there is no profit share in place now.   The VP Coleraine left the meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 13: Central Risk Register:**  The CEO shared his screen and reported as follows:   1. The new CFO was to start work at the beginning of August but has not yet taken up the post. It was hoped that some written confirmation of the pension deficit and ongoing support would be forthcoming, but this will be pursued once in place. 2. Covid-19 has shown a significant lessening of general access to funding. We have advised on sports funds and have not received an objection. We expect to require this to cover legal costs so extra funds will be needed for this. We are waiting on the budget level for this year and will request the new CFO for a three year budget as a matter of urgency. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 14: Future Hybrid Working:**  The CEO shared his screen and advised that it was agreed by Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee that we follow up on the initial wellbeing survey. This survey showed there was a good level of communication and staff were content with the support offered during the pandemic period. Part of this new survey looked at the notion for a blended approach to home/office working. When polled, most staff asked for 3 days working from home and 2 days from the office which when modelling we immediately realised would not be attainable as we needed to have 50% of staff on campus per day. We wrote to staff and extended the offer of working from home from 1 to 2 days and asked for their preferences. The numbers of staff on Jordanstown/Belfast campuses are higher so it was easier to factor in. Magee and Coleraine specified certain days and everyone’s first and 2nd choices were unsustainable so to make it work, we had to go to some third choices. This will be trialled for a year when back on campus. This has been well received by staff. We have acknowledged the fact that staff have shown that they can work from home well. We don’t have much in terms of staff benefits and this is a benefit of work/life balance. The University has not decided on what a full return to campus might look like as yet, but it is unlikely that we could not follow them with such a small team.  The Board advised that a lot of employers have over-committed and staff will feel that perks are being taken away from them. In a year we will be in a better position to see if business has increased or decreased. Staff have been well engaged with.  The work on this was commended by the Board who felt it would make them an attractive employer who recognises that we are a student membership body, so we need presence on the ground for students also. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 15: Operations & Resources Working Group:**  The CEO presented a paper and reported that a Task & Finish Group will be set up on operations and resources to ascertain how we make UUSU stronger and more relevant to students and to fill gaps in the business. We could have a plan sense-checked by an external consultant to bring back to the Board in February for robust discussion and set of recommendations to take forward. Monthly meetings could be held to be concluded in January in time for recommendations for the February meeting. AP agreed to support on this. The Vice Chair offered that he was more than happy to help, but as he had chaired a Task & Finish Group previously, and had been involved with other Committees, he asked that if anyone else is interested in getting involved, to please speak to him or email him. In the meantime, he provisionally agreed and he will step aside if anyone else is interested.  This was approved. | Trustees requested that any operating plan deep dive session was scheduled prior to monthly Task & Finish meetings commencing. |  |
| **Agenda Item 16: Committees of the Board:**  The CEO advised that there were 2 main Committees that sit under Trustee Board, Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee and Staffing Committee. Management Committee is operational with Officers and SMT. He proposed CD as Chair of Risk, Audit & Compliance Committee and RA as Chair of Staffing Committee.  This was approved.  A question was raised on Board Membership relating to Sub-Committees and it was explained that we had to have a core with voting rights, but it is open to all Officers to attend Trustee Board as in attendance or by membership. CD is not a Trustee, but this can be constituted because these are Sub-Committees of the Board and there is no requirement to be Trustees. The Board will have the final decision.  OM left the meeting. | OM to meet with CD regarding Chairing meeting |  |
| **Agenda Item 17: Any Other Business:**  The CEO expressed disappointment that we had to have this meeting online but hoped that we may be able to meet in person in November.  OM returned to the meeting  The Board thanked the Membership Director who was leaving UUSU at the end of the month for all her work on membership and how it had evolved. saying she will be missed and wishing her good luck.  The Chair added his thanks. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 18: Date of Next Meeting:**  Thursday 25th November 2021 |  |  |