

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

Held on Thursday 3rd October 2024 at 1.00 p.m. – Belfast: Room BD-05-023

Trustee Training Session, followed by a Meeting of the Board.

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| **Present:** | **In Attendance:** |
| Ethan Davies, President (Chair)  Emily Roberts, Vice President, Education (ER)  Reece Armstrong, Vice President Magee (RA)  Christopher Murray, Vice President Coleraine (CM)  Eoin Millar, Student Trustee (EM)  Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee (AN)  Andrea Probets, Lay Trustee (AP) | David Longstaff, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  Clodagh Kennedy, Director of Finance & Business Support (CK)  Colin Campbell, Director of HR & Campus Operations (CC)  Favour Okpohs, Vice President Belfast (FO)  Daniel Sanusi, Vice President Equality and Belonging (DS) |
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| **Apologies:** |  |
| Conor O’Hagan, Vice President Sport and Wellbeing (CH)  Antoinette Bradley, Lay Trustee (AB)  Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee (DF)  Cohen Taylor, Student Trustee (CT) |  |

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| **Meeting notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1: Responsible Futures- \****presentation given after CEO’s remarks (agenda item 8)*  Dr Platt gave a presentation on Education for Sustainable Development detailing work undertaken over the last few years and how this feeds into the Students for Sustainability (SOS) Responsible Futures Accreditation and the audit which is taking place at the end of this month. Dr Platt also discussed the SOS UK survey which opens at the end of this month.  Action points from the presentation include mobilising the network of student representatives to support the national SOS Sustainability Survey and to encourage students to complete the survey (28th October to 17th November). Dr Platt welcomed any further ideas to help put this in place. This is the first year that Ulster University is encouraging their students to engage with the survey. The survey should not be promoted as a sustainability survey. It should be a neutral promotion to avoid biasing the results. A minimum of 100 student responses is required. Dr Platt agreed to send the papers through to the Trustee Board for further consideration. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2:** **Welcome by Chair**    The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3: Apologies/ Quorum Count**  Apologies were received from AB, DF and CT. RA left the meeting at 14.47pm. Meeting was deemed quorum until 3.17pm when AN left the meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4: Declaration of Interest**    The Chair noted that there were no declarations. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5: Minutes of Last Meeting**    The minutes from the last meeting on Thursday 25th July 2024 were approved. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6: Matters Arising**  There were no matters arising from the previous meeting. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7: Chairperson’s Remarks**  Student’s Union Training (SUT): The Chair mentioned that SUT took place in August with approximately 75 attendees from the South of Ireland. He explained that it was a good success, however there were some frustrations which they will inform USI about. The Chair thanked the officers for their feedback.  Freshers and Welcome Week: The Chair noted the great success of both Freshers and Welcome Week given the participation numbers across all three campuses and the level of engagement. The Chair noted his thanks again to the Campus VPS and to the Cross Campus VPS for making the trip. The Chair also noted his thanks to the entire team and also to the staff for their support, especially to Student Voice for organising and obtaining the majority of feedback and signing up as many potential future representatives as they did.  Joint Welcome/Freshers Period Committee: The Chair highlighted that going forward the aim is to try and establish a Joint Committee with the University and Student’s Union. This is to ensure better communication, and to also ensure that there are no overlapping events such as the petting farm which has always traditionally been a Student’s Union event. The Chair noted that whilst there were no problems raised there is a general confusion as to who manages what.  Sports: The Chair referred to the student sports funding which the CEO will provide an update to the Board during his remarks.  The Chair welcomed AP who joined via Teams and also informed RA that he could leave the meeting at 14.47pm.  SU Reform: The Chair mentioned that there have been a few changes within the Student Executive team that they plan to unveil with the Student Academic Affairs Team (SAA). The proposed changes include increased multi-Officer involvement in the complaints, appeals and disciplinary procedures of the University. The team plan to give the Officers adequate training to take on the increased responsibilities, which usually in the past were delegated to the President and one other Officer. To ensure equity in terms of experience for the Officers the Chair also noted that it was best to assign certain Officers to certain panels. This still needs to be confirmed by the SAA team, but the Chair does not anticipate much push back.  The Chair also noted the need to inform Trustee members about any potential reform and improvement of the function of the Trustee Board, including potential mentorship options for the Student Trustees to give them a bit of extra help, as well as increasing involvement both for Student Trustees and for the External Trustees.  The Chair also noted his thanks to both RA and ER for their work during student inductions, and Student Voice for their support also.  Magee expansion taskforce: The Chair explained that they are still waiting on the Executive to let them know the level of involvement they require.  A survey is being prepared for Magee based students to get their feedback as to what the expansion might look like and how it should be done. The Chair referred to the concerns raised regarding the substantial increase in students at the Magee Campus which will become a problem unless they fix the accommodation and transport issues facing Londonderry/Derry City.  The Chair welcomed any questions, with none asked. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 8: Chief Executive Officer’s Report**  The CEO provided an update on the following and referred to his reports shared in advance of the meeting:  Sports transition: The CEO confirmed that the sports transition has completed. He referred to his report for the Board and how it is anticipated that the hybrid function will work. It was confirmed that CK and her team will continue to administer the sports funding for the clubs. It was agreed that the SU would continue to control the administration aspect to ensure that both the processes and the communication flow properly, particularly in respect of how funds are allocated and spent. This will be for at least this year. The University has agreed to contribute to the costs for carrying out the administration.  Director Interviews: The CEO discussed director interviews. He mentioned that AB may have updated the External Trustees, but for those that aren't aware interviews for the Director of Membership and Communications took place back in August. There was a good level of interest in the role, however when the candidates were interviewed there was no appointment from those shortlisted. On review with SMT it was agreed that there was no benefit at this stage to go straight back out to the marketplace as it is likely that the marketplace has been exhausted for this position.  The CEO proposed to put in place an interim arrangement, which will likely look similar in some aspects to what they had previously (Head of Membership role). This is to try and let the market refresh itself and to review the particular role. In November the CEO intends to bring a paper to the Trustees looking at the specific role of the director and potential timelines/options.  AP queried whether the former director had provided any feedback on his exit from the organisation. The CEO noted that the two areas of learning were in respect of time and being drawn into the operation elements. The CEO noted that these issues may need to be considered when bringing a paper back to the Board, and whether there is a need for extra support to allow the director to focus on the strategic aspects of the job. It was also noted that the role requires someone who is open to the challenges of the unique environment within the University.  AP queried whether funding for an external recruitment agency is now warranted as a recruitment agency could assist with finding candidates that would fit the role, and also advise the challenges that may present in finding suitable candidates according to the job specification. The CEO confirmed that this has been considered, however the issue is the substantial cost of using a recruitment agency. The CEO mentioned that CC and AB could pull together indicative costs for the engagement of an outside recruitment agency that then could be considered. AP agreed that an interim arrangement for some months to ensure business as usual to support the teams was appropriate.  The CEO referred to other updates as per his report and took these as read, and referred to the ongoing Governance work and work starting on the student pantry.  Legal challenge: The CEO noted that they are trying to find a solution as to whether an event is UUSU approved or not, in order to try and close the loophole around the legal challenge. This is a project that is ongoing which CC is leading with the Digital Team.  Welcome and Freshers Period: The CEO thanked all those involved in fresher’s week. He explained that they have reached the capacity for space particularly at the Belfast Campus. He mentioned that the request for extra space on the ground floor has been denied as it is seen as a teaching space and that this may need to be challenged. He mentioned that this was challenged last year with the VC, and the Chair has touched upon it. The CEO suggested that the Board writes to UU over the next 12 months to their express disappointment that this issue has not been resolved and UUSU growth is hampered. Placed as a watching brief for the Board.  Reserved Item: Please see Reserved Minutes.  Operating Progress: The CEO noted the operating progress and that there are a few areas that cannot be actioned due to not having a director in place. Whoever takes on the interim role is going to be asked to prioritise support for the Officers and fulfilling the commencement of the planning around the operating targets to mitigate the risk.  Risk analysis overview: In terms of risk analysis it remains as it was previously, removed risk ref: M1 for now. With regards to the live concerns around the transition of sport this needs to be reassessed in terms of both what the Chair and the CEO have discussed during this meeting, and under reserved business.  The CEO referred to the SMT and the discussions which took place around the potential risk regarding the speed and flexibility for change within the Institution. The CEO referred to the example of difficulty with not having access to room booking as well as one of the core platforms, PlanOn for six months despite numerous calls to the University. It is a risk around the organisation functioning effectively and resources being exhausted. A watching brief is being kept on this issue and consideration may need to be given as to whether this needs escalated to the main register.  AN questioned whether there is a SLA in place regarding the relationship with sport during this transitionary period. The CEO noted that there is a MOU with the Sports Services Staff in terms of expectations which covers that they control the governance aspects, and how the SU administrate the monies.  Future Meeting Report: The CEO referred to the future meeting report and whether the Trustees have had a chance to read the report. It was agreed that AN would contact AB and arrange for the External Trustees to meet and then provide collective feedback. AN left the meeting at 3.17pm.  No further questions asked.  \*Agenda was re-jigged at this time to facilitate Dr Platt’s presentation. (see agenda 1). |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 9: Director of Finance & Business Support’s Report**  CK noted that the statutory audit is currently ongoing at the moment and therefore there is no paper to present, as she is awaiting feedback. The Audit Partner will present at the November Trustee Board meeting regarding the accounts.  In terms of the figures in July there was a provisional deficit of £30,000. When it was finalised for the audit the figure was around £20,000 for the year’s deficit and there were some employment allowances that were not claimed which have now been done.  No questions asked. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 10: Director of Human Resources & Campus Operation’s Report**  CC referred to his report shared in advance of the meeting.  Bann View Social (bar refurbishment): CC referred to the successful refurbishment of the bar on Coleraine Campus.  Director of Membership & Communications Recruitment: CC gave a brief background, particularly for the external trustees, regarding the interview applications and noted who was on the panel.  TUPE: CC referred to his report providing a breakdown of TUPE and how it developed in late August.  Recruitment: CC noted that the role of Governance and Personnel Support Administrator has now been filled, and that the Student Voice Co-Ordinator recruitment is ongoing for the two roles (SVC- Academic Representation and Engagement) which they anticipate a good response to.  No questions asked. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11: Future Reporting**  The CEO referred to discussions in May with the External Trustees and the Student Trustees regarding the effectiveness of the Board. Discussions took place regarding whether there was a better way to report which would take less time, and to also give the Trustees a quick overview of the general position of the organisation and allow them to question anything that might cause concern or equally praise anything that was going well. The CEO noted that this is now the opportunity to go through all of the papers to try and streamline everything.  The CEO referred to the Future Reporting paper which failed to upload. AN is to meet with the External Trustees and revert with a combined input. The CEO asked the Chair to also review the paper in regards to Officers and to revert with any comments.  The External Trustees suggested that rather than the Chair give all the reports that the Chair provides a quick update and then the other Officers give their own updates. This is something to be considered by the Officers and the Chair.  The CEO mentioned that he changed the structure of the minutes in the new reporting suggestion as he felt that it was difficult for the Chair to go through the minutes in the meeting in the way that they are currently structured. He noted that there is a need to extrapolate the actions into a separate table, so it is easier to go through at the next meeting. The Chair is to review this and provide feedback by the middle of the month. The Directors are to look at the wider reports in lieu of feedback received.  The Chair is to add this as an agenda item to the Student Executive meeting on the 8th and to also discuss Officer Reports generally as they report to Student Executive, Student Council and Trustee Board.  CC and the CEO referred to not having quorum at this stage. It was therefore agreed to bring this issue back to the next meeting as an agenda item and not adopt any changes until January, at the earliest, given the low numbers.  No questions received. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 12:** **Any Other Business**  The CEO mentioned renewal of terms of office and those wishing to continue as Trustees for second terms. The Chair noted that this is decided by the Student Council.  The Chair confirmed for information purposes only that Andrea, Darren and Eoin are happy to stay on for another term. However, this is not officially confirmed until Council votes it through at the end of October. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 13: Date of Next Meeting/Close of Meeting**  Next meeting 28th November 2024. |  |  |