

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

Held on Thursday 6th February 2025 at 4.00 p.m. – BD\_03\_019, Coleraine: H113A, and Magee: MD122 and Microsoft Teams

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Present:** | **In Attendance:**  |
| Antoinette Bradley, Lay Trustee (Chair) (AB)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)Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee (DF)Cohen Taylor, Student Trustee (CT) | 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)Conor O’Hagan, Vice President Sport and Wellbeing (CH) |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Apologies:**  |  |
| Ethan Davies, President (ED)William Atkinson, Lay Trustee (WA) |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1- Welcome**The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2- Apologies/Quorum Count**Quorum was achieved. EM and FO joined shortly after the quorum count (approx. 4.10pm).  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3- Declaration of Interest**There were no declarations of interest. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4- Minutes of last meeting**The minutes of the meeting on 28th November 2024 were approved.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5- Matters arising**There were no matters arising. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6- Chairperson’s remarks**ER gave an update in the President’s absence.ER mentioned the ongoing work with the Women’s Empowerment and Swann networks. ER is currently working with the University on the withdrawal procedures and the introduction of a new process in September 2025 for students doing undergraduate degrees to reset exams in the middle of a module. The EC1 process is to be removed and replaced with a more accessible system. ER is working with the Past President on reaching out to reps. ER, FO and DS were invited to the Business School Strategy event. In terms of campaigns the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Charter is officially launched. Politicians are attending the event which is due to take place in March. Also, the Sexual health and guidance, and Thriving Not Just Surviving campaigns are also in place. ER and DS were involved in the improvement/changes of the breastfeeding spaces which took 2 months, and ER also mentioned the work with Deputy Vice Chancellor on seats improvement. ER mentioned the new feedback system and how ER and DS got an exam board moved for a group of international students within the Business School. DS, FO, CM and ER attended London for the Lobby Day, and the Renters’ Rights Bill has been approved. The Bill is not currently implemented in Northern Ireland, but this is being worked on.DS has been working on the Blackboard and translation where students can change the platform to a different language. DS is also doing great work on the Anti Racism Policy and Anti Hate Policy. DS has also been working on equality and has gained good movement with childcare coming back onto campus. He also attended the Europe Network launch. CH has been working on the sports survey and lobbying for the students. He has interviewed a high percentage of sports teams during refreshers about what sports mean to them and is going to post this on social media. CH has established the Lighthouse Project at the Magee campus. He has helped sports teams raise over £10,000 over the past four months. He also helped with the Santa 5k run around Magee. Campus VPs have been working on the Pantry which is due to be launched in 2 weeks’ time. FO has also been working on the Swap Shop coming to UU and has supported DS with Swann so that the three campuses now have a working committee. CM has tapped into an issue with the sexual health clinic in Coleraine which has been removed from the Coleraine campus. CM is trying to find out the reason why it has been removed and is looking into the potential issues with the clinic being at the hospital, as there will be an associated cost for students as it is not within walking distance of the University.CM has another meeting with TFI to work on the area where there was a crash at the corner of the Coleraine campus.CM is also working on the issue of spiking in Coleraine, which is now a three-campus wide issue. This is an issue that UUSU needs to tackle.RA has taken on the role of Deputy President. He has been doing 1:1 with the Officers. RA is continuing to strengthen the partnership with Oddballs (Magee charity). ER also noted that UUSU is looking to update the Partnership Agreement with the University which hasn’t been updated since 2018.No further questions were asked. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7- Chief Executive Officer’s Report**The CEO referred to the format changes of the reporting in place, which is to be complemented by the working document folder. At present trying to figure out what needs to be contained within each operational area in the working document folder e.g. the risk register, Management Committee minutes, dashboard. The CEO referred to the staff meeting in December, which was a success, and feedback was obtained in respect of the reserved item.Following on from recent exit interview feedback UUSU is considering how Officers join the organisation, and whether there are opportunities for them to be integrated at an earlier stage, for example keep in touch days, as well as looking into handovers and inductions and a potential Officer handbook. UUSU is a Real Living Wage employer now and is listed on the website, and this will be updated on UUSU’s website also.Officers had their 360’s and feedback has been provided to them.The CEO referred to the suggestions from the Board regarding Anchor days. The CEO confirmed that UUSU is in the process of putting this in place, across all three campuses to compliment that current staff meetings which will mean staff all come together approximately 6 times a year. The Leadership Elections are coming up. Last year UUSU had around 25 candidates running and a turnout of roughly 17%. The Consultative Forum is being pushed forward slowly and might need a steer from the President or some of the Officers.The Volunteering Policy is being updated which might result in a subgroup/task and finish group with the Board to help UUSU to get students involved with external organisations. UUSU’s Employee Privacy Notice has been updated.The CEO mentioned a drafted letter to the University from Board and whether Board members were content that this was issued. The Chair mentioned that the sports letter needs a final proof read as she spotted a typo but otherwise the Chair is happy for the letter to be sent. The Sports letter was approved to be sent. The CEO mentioned that there is a funding gap for the Awards Program. UUSU had hoped the University would fund part of the awards, although there is some limited headroom in UUSU’s budget if needed.The lack of Director appointment means that the scope for bigger projects isn’t quite there, however it is hoped an appointment in the coming months will assist with this. The CEO also mentioned that GN, (Placement Student) who is assessing the funding and partnership opportunities, would like to be able to attend the next Trustee Board meeting and present her findings. The Board approved GN attending the next Trustee Board meeting to present her work.AN asked if there is any indication of when the document store is going to go live. AN mentioned that there was a missed opportunity this time to include HR stats, and also noted that there should not be an information overload. The CEO said that between now and the next meeting the document folder should go live. The Chair enquired why the Anchor days were taking place across all three campuses which may be more disruptive, and why individual campus anchor days have been ruled out. The CEO mentioned that they are trying to ensure equity in terms of various office environments. He also referred to the positive feedback he received from staff regarding engaging with other staff from other campuses at the December staff meeting. The first meeting is provisionally booked for 19th March.No further questions were asked.  | Letter to be sent. GN to be informed that she is to present her partnership and funding findings at the next Trustee Board meeting.Document folder to go live in advance of the next Trustee Board meeting. |  |
| **Agenda Item 8- Director of Finance and Business Support’s Report**CK referred to the Management Accounts for end of 31st December.The income is as budgeted. The two main costs are in relation to the payroll costs and Sports Union. The payroll costs are less than budgeted due to the number of vacancies at various times throughout the year (2x Student Voice and Director). UUSU has one vacant position now. There are likely to be savings in respect of payroll.The Sports costs are ahead of budget. At the end of January, £173,000 was spent out of a budget of £211,000. CK mentioned that Student Voice hasn’t spent as much as budgeted as yet but they are coming into election period which is their peak period. The other costs are pretty much as expected. There is a surplus of £43,000 against a projected deficit of £17,000.CK said that this year there is capacity to fund the awards but as a one off as it is not known what sort of block grant UUSU is going to get next year, and the effect of national insurance costs of £30,000. As we stand for this financial year CK confirmed that UUSU is in a comfortable and stable position. No further questions were asked. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 9- Director of Human Resources and Campus Operation’s Report**CC referred to the External Trustee’s suggestion of using a recruitment agency for the Director role. CC referred to his report and the costs/quotes he obtained for the agencies.The Chair asked if UUSU have used any of the agencies before. CC responded no, as there hasn’t been the capacity in the budget to use agencies previously.CC explained that each agency is keen to be the single nominated recruitment agency, rather than UUSU also advertising for the Director role. CC referred to SMT discussions where it was felt that it would be beneficial for UUSU to also advertise the job role and partner with one of the agencies.The CEO mentioned whether there might be an opportunity to negotiate on the costs/to get an enhanced rate considering the upcoming Trustee vacancies. AP enquired about refund periods. CC to confirm this. AP noted that two of the recruitment agencies provided a lot more information in their proposals and that they would provide her with a lot more confidence in terms of their experience in recruiting for the role. It was noted that one of the recruitment agencies is linked with the University.The Board agreed to come back to this discussion after the reserved matter.No further questions were asked. | CC to confirm with recruitment agency re refund period. |  |
| **Agenda Item 10- Reserved Item**  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11- Any Other Business**ER asked the Board for guidance on UUSU’s recent request of societies to ticket all events for legal reasons. The CEO discussed the background and rationale as to why this needed to be considered and how we have now put in place a system where a student would know if they were at a UUSU event or not. The only way to try and implement this within the current infrastructure is to have a process whereby every event is ticketed, even if it is a free event.ER referred to societies being informed of this new policy during Refreshers week. The Christian Union Society (CU) emailed ER to discuss the new Health and Safety Policy. ER read out a section of the email in which the CU society highlighted their concerns and mentioned that the new policy will not be feasible for their society, as well as being detrimental to their society and they do not have the time or manpower to implement the ticketing system. They cannot confirm that they will be able to check tickets at their events. ER confirmed that KP, LH and other team members have received similar emails also. Societies came back with possible alternatives e.g. unless the event is on the website it is not a UUSU event. ER asked for the External Trustees’ advice on this issue. The CEO mentioned that the website option does not give UUSU as much protection, as someone could tick the box and go along to an event some months later and then the argument in Court would be how can you expect me to remember I ticked that box.EM understands the predicament that societies are in, but if legal advice has suggested this area needs to be strengthened, then he is not comfortable with UUSU deviating from this specific advice. EM asked if there was any specific advice on how to remedy the issue or if it was left that UUSU would generally need to put something in place.CK said that the overarching notion of the legal guidance centered around how a student would know that an event wasn’t a UUSU event and currently UUSU have no answer to this.EM also highlighted that the safety of UUSU’s members is important. The CEO also mentioned that you don’t want to put members off attending events, so UUSU needs to strike a balance here.AN said if UUSU is just wanting to signpost that it is a UUSU event then are tickets actually needed, for example if someone comes through the door and doesn’t have a ticket and slips, they will still take a case. If this is the option UUSU is going for then AN enquired if there is anything UUSU can do for societies. AN asked if there is any way that UUSU can have something published/emailed/put on the website to say that any event that is not on this list is not official, and UUSU keeps a record of that.CK said that the issue is with societies having events offsite. AN’s preference is to look at an alternative option, e.g. can a QR code be presented at the event. ER noted that one of the biggest concerns for the Officer’s is that they didn’t have a robust answer when the societies came to them asking what happens if they don’t check the tickets. The Officers need a clear answer.FO mentioned having a record of the list of names. DS considered that a temporary measure could be a backdrop that is used at Society events, similar to the backdrop used at Fresher’s Fair. FO mentioned that if an event is held it must go through KP who approves and gives an estimated attendance number. CK explained that the issue with this is that the Chairperson would do the risk assessments etc. but the other attendees are not aware of anything that is going on in the background. EM apologised as he had to leave the meeting. He does not want to neglect the legal advice and potentially make not only the Trustees but also the Union as an organisation potentially liable. EM mentioned that he is sitting on the cautious side as it is about making sure that the organisation is protected. EM left the meeting at approximately 5.45pm.DF queried whether the normal way to legally realise what event you are at is by the event organiser on site, and their uniform/branding. DF asked what would stop UUSU representatives from being branded/being the clear sign that this is the event you are at.CK reiterated that the crux of the issue here is how we are very overt as to whether an event is a UUSU approved one or not.  An attendee must be able to distinguish this, particularly if it is not a UUSU sanctioned event.DF mentioned that this is something UUSU needs to address with the clubs and societies i.e. that if you are having an official event, you must be wearing official branding. On the reverse of that if you are going out with friends and it is not an official event you must not wear any branding that indicates that UUSU have signed off the risk assessment/legalities of the activity. The Chair mentioned that the ticketing doesn’t fix the issue as people could still bypass having to go through the usual procedure and noted that there is merit in publishing a list of sanctioned events. CT asked if the Health and Safety Policy is currently in effect. The CEO responded yes since the start of this semester. CT responded with that in mind he is concerned at the fact that an email has been brought to the Board that says that a society is not going to comply with UUSU Health and Safety Policy. This is an immediate issue and a decision is needed on this as it has been brought to the attention of the Trustees, and any changes to the policy can be discussed at another meeting, given that one of UUSU’s largest Societies has wrote to the VP of Education to inform UUSU that they are not going to comply with UUSU Policy. The CEO asked ER what the CU society actually said. The Society did say that they trialed the new policy, but they are unable to keep up with the new request given that they could have an event of around 200 people, and they only have a room booked for a certain period of time. The CEO noted that they are a unique case given their size and the number of events that they hold; the scale is the problem for the Society. ER responded that seven societies within 2 weeks have been in contact with the Officers. CM said that the Glitch Society have informed him that they are not going to comply.The CEO responded that the issue needs to be taken offline to think about what the least invasive option could be, as there are also technical issues to consider. ER said that they already publish details of events on the UUSU’s Instagram page and social media pages and publish on social media the events that are on the website. ER said that having spoken with societies it looks as if the only reason to have a ticketing system in place is to cover UUSU.AN noted that there are two things to consider:1. Is there an alternative system i.e. please look for your organiser at an event, and if uncomfortable ask to see the risk assessment.
2. CT has made a good point if this is a Health and Safety Policy and societies have told UUSU that they are not going to comply then as a Union we need to take a decision. The decision is either we will put a short-term fix in place (pause while we look at it) or inform the societies for a temporary period that they are not in conjunction with the rules of the Union, which is something that UUSU probably doesn’t want to do.

There is a different obligation if we are putting this out as a Health and Safety Policy compared to if we are just trying to find a way of designating a UUSU event. AP agreed with AN and that we should publish official events on UUSU’s website. AP also said that UUSU has to listen to our members. AP asked about regular meetings, and treating them differently to ad hoc meetings, and is there anything UUSU can do for society training at the beginning of next year to make sure that all the legal requirements from committee members and societies are covered, and that they are going through the appropriate procedures to get an official stamp for any meeting that is taking place.CC said that LH has built this into training each September. CC noted that it is difficult for societies to see that this is as much for their protection as it is to protect the Union. AP said that it needs to be made clear that if a meeting is held outside of the normal protocols, then there will be consequences e.g. formal investigation/losing position on committee. We need to make it really clear at training what is acceptable and what won’t be tolerated as it puts the reputation of the Union at risk.CT queried whether an appendix could be added to the policy to allow for specific scheduled events. CT also said that the Board could have a review of the Policy itself and to also review the implementation of any policies passed by the Board and the processes involved. If members have said that they have been given insufficient notice of a policy being implemented, then this needs reviewed. DF noted that this was very similar to what he was going to say. He noted that the problem is not going to be solved this meeting but that a response is needed to say that a policy is in place, and we all need to adhere to it. However, UUSU has heard the petition from clubs and societies saying that the policy does not suit their activities, but could we ask for their patience and arrange some sort of emergency consultation with them/ask clubs to uphold the policy until we can change it, with the help of our members. The Chair mentioned that the financial sustainability and technical reputation is much greater than inconvenience to a few hundred people, although she noted that UUSU does need to find a proportionate response. The CEO mentioned that there may be something in the exemption events. The CEO asked ER if UUSU could get a period of pause from the societies, to say to them that UUSU needs a couple of weeks to think about this, but that we hear them, it has been discussed at Board and we will come back with another option. In the meantime, if they could do what they can in terms of complying with the policy to keep everyone safe. ER responded that they have already been saying this and KP has been trying to keep everyone calm, but they are going to go on ahead. ER said that as Officers they are the first point of contact. The CEO said for Officers to go back and say that they have raised this issue with the Board and alternative options are being discussed. AN said that it is about weighing up the purposes of this, if it is to identify an authorised event then there are more simpler ways than ticketing events, but if it is for safety then we need to say to members that we are listening and looking at alternatives but in the interim this is what UUSU has put in place.The Chair mentioned that there is a limit of five members on the committee and therefore there should really be a limit of the number of people that can turn up to an event. Five people cannot safely manage X number of people. ER asked if UUSU can pause the policy whilst alternatives are being considered. AN said that it depends on the nature of how UUSU are going to treat this i.e. health and safety or identifying an authorised event. CK said that it did start off as authorising an event. The CEO asked CC what the comms were that went out to the societies. CC is not sure as LH led on this, and he is not sure what way LH framed it.The CEO said if it is framed as health and safety then probably UUSU cannot place a pause on it. The CEO suggested taking a “breath”. AB and CK mentioned pausing except for high-risk societies. The CEO asked ER to chat with LH to see how the wording was framed so that UUSU can decide on how to proceed. ER asked if it is framed as health and safety then do the Officers need to say to societies while UUSU reviews the process they still need to abide by the policy. The CEO said that the officers should say that UUSU hears the societies concerns, and that UUSU needs time to process the concerns and look at alternatives. CK said that this needs to be communicated by LH as well not just by ER.CT said that he would feel comfortable with the policy being paused for events held on a UU campus but to keep the policy in place for events held outside of the grounds of UU. AN said that if the CU are holding events at Churches that will impact them.AN said that UUSU’s liability is not as great as it was pre sports. She took CT’s idea as a good rule of thumb in that any event off site should be ticketed, as UUSU won’t be able to go back to see who attended the event as there will be no access to CCTV. AN referred to WA not being in attendance for the last 5-6 meetings, and that between the Chair, Vice Chair and the CEO there is a conversation that needs to be had in relation to availability and commitment. AN mentioned that UUSU needs to have a policy in place going forward to confirm what happens if an External Trustee misses x number of meetings in a row. From a governance perspective this conversation needs to be had between the Chair, AB, and the CEO and then UUSU can firm up the policy. The CEO said that it is in the articles that if two consecutive meetings are missed there will be a discussion at Board, unless prior agreement or mitigating circumstances. WA has only been to one Board meeting since he was recruited in October 2023 so this would likely apply in this case.CC mentioned organising a Board evaluation and Board induction day, and asked if 31st July would suit. AB is not in the country, and CK has year-end. DS mentioned the issues regarding the gender-neutral toilets, signage and b-day shower and asked if SMT could help escalate this to the appropriate person. The CEO directed DS to SD. CC is to look at another date over the summer for the Board evaluation. DF asked if it is going to be an in-person event. CC said yes. No further business was raised. | ER/CC to discuss with LH how the wording of the policy was phrased to allow UUSU to consider options available.Discussions to take place re External Trustee’s lack of attendance at meetings.CC to revert to the Board with a date for the Board evaluation to take place on.  |  |
| **Agenda Item 12- Date of next meeting/close of meeting**27th March 2025 |  |  |