

## **ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION TRUSTEE BOARD**

Minutes of meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 by Video Conferencing in Rooms MD008A, H113A, BA-02-012 and 08H09 at 4.30 p.m.

### **PRESENT**

Mr Kevin McStravock, President, (KMCS), Ms Hannah Rooney, Vice President Campaigns & Communications, (HR), Ms Meghan Downey, Vice President, Belfast, (MD), Mr Andrew McAnallen, Vice President, Coleraine/Vice President Campaigns & Communications {Elect} (AMcA), Mr Oisin Kinsella, Vice President, Jordanstown, (OK), Ms Danielle Roberts, Student Trustee Jordanstown, (DR), Ms Ashley Neill, External Trustee, (AN), Ms Emma Bonner, Sports Union President, (EB), Mr Jim Coyle, External Trustee (JCY), Mr Robert Stewart, External Trustee (RS)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr David Longstaff, Chief Executive, (DL), Ms Clodagh Kennedy, Finance Director, (CK), Mr Colin Campbell, Operations Director, (CC), Ms Avril Honan, Membership Services Director, Ms Jackie Taggart, Minute Taker.

### **APOLOGIES**

Mr James Colgan, Vice President, Magee, Mr Thomas Logue, Student Trustee, Magee.

### **WELCOME**

KMcS welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending as it is quite a busy period. He noted that this is the last meeting of the Trustee Board this academic year.

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

### **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

- 17.79** The Chair asked if anyone wanted to declare an interest in any of the items for discussion. He declared an interest in Agenda Item 10 and said that AMcA, HR, EB OK and MD also had an interest in this item.

He asked if there were any items which had not been starred for approval or discussion that anyone would like to star and noted there were no requests.

### **MINUTES**

- 17.80** Minutes of the previous meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 were approved.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

- 17.81** **17.69 Auditors' Presentation**  
CK had prepared the letter of comfort.

### **17.74 Interim Chief Executive's Presentation**

KMcS had discussed advertising and the sponsorship deal with the Marketing Manager who will draft a brief document with general outlines.

**ACTION** - Marketing Manager to draft a brief document

### **17.76 Pension Arrangements**

This will be discussed under Agenda Item 10.

## **17.82 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION**

Chief Executive

- (a) KMcS told the Board that DL will be joining the meeting shortly and advised that he will be taking up post on 2<sup>nd</sup> July but has "keeping in touch" days.

Greater Belfast Development

- (b) KMcS outlined the situation regarding Greater Belfast Development. At the last meeting, he had informed the Board of the collapse of Lagan Construction Group. He had since attended a University meeting and received private and confidential news that an agreement has been reached between the University and the Administrator acting on behalf of Lagan Construction Group. There has been considerable discussion between the University and Somaque and it is hoped that they will be able to continue with the project. There are also discussions on time limits around that. KMcS will update the Board.

**ACTION** – KMcS to update the Board.

Teaching & Learning Awards

- (c) KMcS requested that Board members respond to MM's invitations to the Learning and Teaching Awards on Friday night.

Student Trustee Recruitment

- (d) KMcS informed the Board that student trustee recruitment will be advertised on the website and circulated around social media, with disciplines in which we have an interest outlined. Closing date for applying is 8<sup>th</sup> June with interviews taking place after that. He asked that everyone should get involved in circulating this information to ensure a good response.

New Student Executive Officers

- (e) KMcS informed the Board that there will be a hand-over in mid-June with the current team and the new team, with formal residential training taking place at the end of June, and the new team taking up posts on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Board Training will be in mid-August, depending on recruitment of Student Trustees and External Trustees.

**17.83**

**STUDENT COUNCIL**

AH informed the Board that there have been four meetings this year, with one emergency meeting being held before the end of term as there was some business on bye laws that had to be progressed, but it was not quorate. Student Executive met last week and passed the business.

**17.84**

**BYE-LAWS**

AH presented a paper to the Board and advised that Sub Committees are being tidied up. The number of seats on Student Council has been reduced. Seats for the student body will be representational with sports, societies etc and there will be increased sections of representation to focus on, i.e. ethnic, disability, LGBT plus. Bye-laws were accepted, except for Bye Law 1 Section 3 Point 11, which was not passed, and we are waiting for clarification on wording for Bye-Law 2 Section 3 Point 6, The one-year term will change to two-year terms. Trustee Board is joint owner of Bye-Laws along with Student Council. KMcS recommended that Bye-Law 1, Section 2 Point 5 be updated as agreed at the last Board meeting. A discussion ensued regarding attendance at meetings with AH informing the Board that quoracy is set at twenty-five.

**ACTION** - AH to update Bye-Law 1, Section 2 Point 5 and bring it to the next Board meeting.

KMcS, AMcA, HR, EB OK and MD declared an interest in the following item.

**17.85**

**IMPACT OF INCREASING PENSION PROVISION**

CK presented and explained a table of pension contributions to the Board which she was asked to prepare. The long-term impact will be from next April. CK noted that contributions may be too much for lower paid staff, and if we should look at a more lucrative pension scheme. DL commented that more organisations are moving to a tier approach where employers will match the commitment of the employee and this is a useful method of attracting and retaining good employees. CK explained that commercial services were self-sustaining, but we need to consider the viability for the longer term. AN told the Board that as an employer, we were doing right by the employee as everyone has a pension but is not penalised if they want to continue to pay the minimum. JCY inquired what the University paid and CK replied 6% and they would have different schemes, including defined benefits schemes, in operation. KMcS summarised 6%, but if people want to pay less, we would tier it. CK explained she used two rates in her calculation, most and least affordable. DL felt that the Board agreeing is the right move, and the more we will shine as an employer. CK gave the option of looking at schemes other than Nest.

**17.86**

**FINANCIAL ADVICE**

CK reminded the Board that AB had suggested we should get a Pension Advisor to talk to staff. Endsleigh recommended a company. JCY asked why we want to change our provider and CK explained that NUSPS has

closed and NEST was a government scheme and we need professional advice. CC had inquired of the University if they had anyone who could advise us, but they hadn't. JCY reminded the Board that the nature of investment is it can go up as well as down and performance over a short period of time is not a way of assessing it. He suggested a Pensions Broker, although this will incur both time and financial expenses. CK suggested we should have an idea of what percentage we want to give into pensions. KMcS thought the External and Student Trustees could steer this, and DR commented that the rates are not good, and we should move to another scheme. A two-tier increase is preferable for staff in case they withdraw. AN said that if we are offering up to 6% for one scheme, then it is preferential to offer it to others and if they wish to pull out, that is for them to decide. RS had no objections but felt it was unfair to those who can't afford to pay more into a scheme as the lower paid need greater help and assistance from a staff retention point of view. AN said that over time, this will increase and if people cannot afford 3% then they can't come into the pension scheme no matter what we offer. RS agreed with talking to staff but not looking at other schemes for the time being which we can review in a year. JCY agreed with the two-tier approach and seeking an external professional overview. AN said there was no rationale to change the scheme currently. She raised a concern about the cost associated with pension advice and felt it was not necessarily going to be straight-forward, though someone local offering this service could be approached and CK agreed with this for an initial appointment. KMcS summarised there is a two-tier approach which offers up to 6% and CK will look at pensions advice for staff, although there is no need to investigate other schemes presently.

**ACTION** – CK to investigate acquiring a Pension Advisor to talk to staff.

**17.87            MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

CK presented the accounts and said that she had nothing further to add from the meeting of Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee. She asked if there were any questions, but none were forthcoming.

**17.88            INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROPOSAL**

CC presented a paper and explained that AB put a proposal to Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee and Trustee Board regarding the single pay spine. He proposed to pay student staff Grade 1 and commercial staff should start at Grade 2. Grade 1 is £8.12, and Grade 2 is £8.45. Catering Assistants, Dish Washers and Shop Assistants would move to Grade 2 under this proposal and she explained the cost implication for the budget. A discussion ensued and the following points were raised; the budget shows how tight commercial services are; the implications that this would have on our grade boundaries; the amount budgeted for student staff; the rate of pay and responsibility for the current student posts being advertised; and comparison of level of pay for students outside educational establishments. It was felt that the difference in rates is unworkable and the University employing students at a higher grade than the Union during welcome week is unacceptable.

CC will check the University's pay rate and the cost implication can be discussed at the next meeting. DL said he understood the rationale for differing the two and we should make sure we have a long-term model that we can sustain. The calibre of the person would depend on how many hours they would have to work. The past academic year's student marketing staffs pay and hours were discussed for comparison and it was felt that we are raising commercial services staff to Grade 2 but are trying to show that student staff play an equal role, so they should also be paid at Grade 2. CC reminded that Café/Bar and Welcome Week staff have not been evaluated. CK reminded that AB felt that career staff should be paid more for long-term commitment. AMcA suggested student staff could be on Grade 2, but career staff can work up increments, but CC queried that when we are linking it to the single pay spine, how do we distinguish between career staff and student staff? RS noted that he would like someone to bench-mark this against another organisation as some account of evidence to see what AB based his proposal on and CC replied that AB had based his opinion on his experience working in other Students' Unions. KMCS summarised that the Board thinks there is not enough information on this to make an informed decision. DL agreed that we need to look at this in more detail. RS felt that we need to understand the motivation behind this. DL felt that we need to look at this in more detail. We need to investigate market rates and fair salaries within the catering sector. Things have moved on since AB wrote the paper and we need to build more strategic plans around it. The incentives are that if they perform well, they can get more pay. A discussion will have to take place over the summer.

EB left the meeting.

KMcS suggested arranging time lines as, if this paper was to be brought back, time will be limited. CC advised that the grades for the posts advertised are at £7.38. If, after students start work in September, we tell them they are getting £8.12, there should be no issue. KMCS thanked CC for his work on this item.

**ACTION** – CC to check University wages for student staff and bring to the next meeting. Discussions to take place over the summer.

**17.89**

### **BUDGETS**

CK presented the budgets and informed the Board that these had been presented at Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee the previous week. She had emailed the budget figures to the Finance Director and these will be presented to Resource Committee and University Finance Committee in June. There is an increase in demand for salaries and wages as additional funding was pitched for new staff for Advice and Welfare and Volunteering Coordinators. She said that Commercial Services have had a very poor year and it is doubtful if it will improve and there is not enough of a profit for the effort put in to running the units.

AH left the meeting.

KMcS reminded the Board of a proposal and discussion about Magee Shop where AC is to research and discuss it with third parties, initially Mountcharles. She has not come back with a decision, but KMcS will progress this. He explained that we are going forward on the assumption that we will be running the shop next year. You will see from Commercial Services that it continues to operate on a very marginal profit. As part of AC's remit, she is overseeing a catering strategy and is putting together a report of findings. We will have a discussion, but currently there are no core proposals. DL agreed that there had been discussions and it is quite important that we wait until AC has completed her research then she can help to make our unit more viable, and we have ideas about positioning a unit on campus to bring people along. The Board approved the budgets.

**ACTION** KMcS to progress.

**17.90 RESERVES POLICY**

This item was deferred and will be presented at the next Board meeting.

**17.91 AUDITORS**

CK explained that we are presenting the budgets to Resource Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> June, so we can't tender for new Auditors until after that date. KMcS said that the issue had been noted at previous Trustee Board meetings and the Board is comfortable to take CK's steer. He asked if the Board agreed that, following the meeting with the University, we will go out to tender with new Auditors and this was approved.

**17.92 4C EXECUTIVE TRUSTEE BRIEF**

KMcS presented a paper and reminded that the Board had approved a fourth External Trustee and of the appointment of 4C as external research panel for this process. 4C had contacted himself and DL and had telephone conversations with External Trustees as to what we want to focus our search on. 4C had put together a brief for the search and one of the key points was that it would be useful to try to seek a body of experience from the third sector. There is a strong desire from the Board for good diversity. Although this is not in the document, it is being factored into the search. CC agreed that he had stressed diversity with 4C and they had agreed. KMcS agreed on gender and ethnicity diversity.

**ACTION** CC to proceed and discuss with 4C to obtain timeline and appointment panel.

**17.93 OPERATING PLAN**

KMcS informed the Board that progress has been slow due to a few factors. DL is keen to have a progress report and KMcS advised that it might be useful to bring this as a substantive item in August. DL thought it would be good to have July to start to think about prioritisation. RS asked that a date be circulated for the meeting as soon as possible.

**ACTION** KMcS to bring to the Board in August and meeting date to be circulated as soon as possible.

**17.94 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

CC re-presented the Whistleblowing Policy and advised that it had been tweaked slightly last year by the Board and was on the Cycle of Business for the last Trustee Board meeting of the year and was purely to note. He asked if anyone had questions and that no discussion was needed. JCY asked if so much detail was necessary. He felt that a one-page document with some information and a signpost to where the full document can be found would suffice. DL felt that if there is a trend, we need to do something across the board that encapsulates policies around staffing, perhaps in a staff handbook.

**Sub-Committee Reports**

1. Staffing, Finance & General Purposes Committee

KMcS presented the Minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> April and advised the Board that Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> May were not yet available but will be brought to the next meeting.

**Any Other Business**

KMcS ended the meeting and said that August training and Board meeting dates will be set as soon as possible. He thanked the outgoing Officers, HR, OK and JC for their hard work and input over their terms of office and noted that the Officers who will join him on the Board in future will have to be determined. He also thanked the Student Trustees who are ending their term, particularly DR for her contribution and experience over her two years on the Board.

AN asked if there had been an update on GDPR. DL said no, we have been let down in certain quarters but, having received guidance, we have mapped out where we are and what we intend to do. It is not going to happen overnight, but we are hoping to be compliant 80/90% by September.

## ACTION TABLE

Minute	Agenda Item	Action	
17.74	3	Marketing Manager who will draft a brief document	KMcK/KMcS
17.83	3	KMcS to update the Board	KMcS
17.84	9	Bye-Law 1, Section 2 Point 5 be updated and brought to next Board meeting	AH
17.86	11	CK to investigate acquiring a Pension Advisor to talk to staff	CK
17.88	14	CC to check University wages for student staff and bring to the next meeting.  Discussions to take place over the summer	CC  SMT
17.89	15	KMcS to progress with AC	KMcS
17.90	16	CK to bring Reserves Policy to the next Board meeting	CK
17.92	18	CC to proceed and discuss with 4C to obtain timeline and appointment panel.	CC  CC
17.93	19	KMcS to bring to the Board in August and meeting date to be circulated as soon as possible.	KMcS