

Board Minutes

Date: 20 October 2017

Time: 13:00

Location: Upper Kingsgate, Dunelm House

Present:

Anthony Baker	Co-opted Trustee (Chair)	AB
Beth Watling	Co-opted Trustee	BW
Martin Parker	Co-opted Trustee	MP
Louise Shillinglaw	Co-opted Trustee	LS
Megan Croll	President	MC
Laura Tidd	UG Academic Officer	LT
Sabrina Seel	PG Academic Officer	SS
Charles Walker	Opportunities Officer	CW
Rosa Tallack	Welfare & Liberation Officer	RT
David Evans	Student Trustee	DE
James Creer	Student Trustee	JC
Ted Lavis Coward	Student Trustee	TLC

In Attendance:

Gary Hughes	Chief Executive	GH
Esther Green	Commercial Staff (minutes)	EG
Kirsty Morrison	Director of Services	KM
Shelley McCormack	Director of Campaigns	SM
Georgi Lambert	Marketing Manager (Item C)	GL
Martin Horrocks	Finance Manager (Item E)	MH

A. Apologies:

Oliver Colling	Co-opted Trustee	OC
Joshua Barker	Student Trustee	JB

Conflicts of Interest

None

B. Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising

MP noted spelling of Bond Dickenson/Dickenson Bond was inconsistent.

Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

GH updated on the situation regarding the Charity Commission to ensure all trustees were up to date.

GH was asked for a briefing on NSS results - Durham SU has comparatively low satisfaction scores. GH acknowledged that a boycott of the survey affected some students' union results, and that there is work to be done ensuring our students understand nature of the survey.

GH noted that a discussion was had with a student member who proposed changes to the Standing Orders, any such changes would first go through to Assembly and then to the Board.

C. Meet a member of staff

Georgi Lambert attended the meeting to give an overview of her role as Marketing Manager. GH has been with the organisation for two years. GL gave a brief overview of the wide work of the marketing team, which covers generating student content; data protection; student group memberships within the website system. GL outlined the significant role that marketing has previously played in elections. GL also spoke of her relationship with the University Communications department and the oversight she has for our student media including legal checks. GL informed members of her role as a manager, and covered the diverse team of roles she manages. GL spoke of the challenges of developing a thematic approach year-on-year to account for turnover of students and their changing needs which still allows for longer term strategic planning.

AB asked what had changed over the last 2 years. GL stated that when she first started she was among a new team, a lot of time was spent finding a way forward. One of her key projects was leading on elections which will now be managed elsewhere. The work remains familiar but frames are changing.

MP asked whether GL has the right tech and equipment to do the role. GL suggested that there are significant problems with the website, but that not having worked at another SU it's hard to compare. MP asks GH how we compare. GH stated that Unions that have a smooth system have spent a huge amount of money on something bespoke. He ran through the benefits of UnionCloud in that there's a central team.

AB thanked GL for her time and her comments, and GL left the meeting.

D. Report from Chief Executive

GH presented his report

With regards to the tender for support in brand development - the Students' Union is in conversation with two consultants.

A tender for HR services was taken to HR Committee and was approved. The People Forum is meeting on Wednesday (25th) and tender will now be sent out following that. **When selection is made GH will notify board.**

GH updated that further to the noted staffing reorganisation Christine Stretesky has found a role elsewhere and leaves at the end of December. The Information and Systems Coordinator has recently put in notice having found a more suitable position elsewhere - this will be a like for like recruitment process.

There are currently 4 roles out for applications - Policy Manager; Opportunities Manager; Communications Assistant; Welfare Policy Coordinator, and a high level of interest is being received.

AB extended the Board's congratulations to all those moving into new roles.

DE asked if there is much further risk of staff members who are due to move into new roles finding positions elsewhere. GH advised that whilst he cannot give a definitive answer he has every confidence in the team and structure at present.

LS asked about the nature of the training plan for those moving to new areas and GH informed that the objective-setting process during trial periods involve training and development with a budget to support this.

MP asked who will have responsibility for governance within the new structure and GH noted that a governance tender is going to Governance Committee.

BW highlighted ongoing evaluation as crucial, and asked about the reflection process and flexibility of the new structure. GH answered that any tweaking will be through objectives rather than through structure, and agreed that evaluation is important.

AB asked about the feeling and morale in the staff and officer team. GH answered that although it is difficult for the staff team to lose members he has sat with all teams to discuss the reasoning behind the restructure and from his understanding this was well received. He has overseen development sessions on understanding the contextual environment.

GH updated that Governance committee and Audit & Risk committee jointly approved a programme of work to ensure we comply with Commission and their work. Every student group will be rated against criteria to seek those which need focus on governing documents. Solicitors are helping to draw up a constitution and ratification process which is compliant. By June 2018 all groups will be compliant and meeting regulations.

AB asked who will direct this work - this role lies with KM.

AB added that there has to be an expectation that sorting out regulations will have a cost attached, will start to see appearing in the budget.

JC asked for clarification on student groups that have support from external groups - GH explained that this relates to joint governance rather than affiliation, which only applies to a small number of groups. However we still wish to declare affiliations.

LS asked whether on the next agenda the board could have an update on what has come out of A&R and Governance Committees.

AB asked of the likely outcome to building motion going to Assembly? GH - proposed motion is to not house SU in this building. RT - it is likely that will be outcome.

JC asked will university want to use other areas of building given expansion? GH - already have understanding to access of lecture theatre, no expectation that will expand, they already hire rooms on a basis where needed.

RT asked about the university approach to accessibility to that space - GH explained that any investment that the university makes in the building has to accommodate reasonable access requirements.

MC asked about the timeline of University review of articles - GH confirmed will be in 18/19

E. Finance Report

MH presented his report. 12k redundancy figures were included at agreement of auditors

AB overall look better at end of the year than what budgeted for - MH confirmed

AB asked for clarification of why in Commercial figures are under - MH explained that was due to spend on till systems being accounted from this section.

GH noted that in future management reporting format the restricted funds will be pulled out separately.

CW asked how will Board know student groups are well developed under strategy. MH - new structure of reporting should make it clearer. A separate analysis of certain societies could be done easily.

AB spoke around the next steps for Charity Commission - needs to be clear who is monitoring fine detail level of expenditure to ensure they align with charitable beliefs. MH explained the proposal is above any small level of expenditure societies will go through SM or GH - this is to go through finance committee as an update to financial regulations.

AB thanked MH for his report and he left.

F. Strategic planning framework

Proposing establishment of one management committee with all theme groups. Chairing shared between GH, SM and KM.

Proposing greater political direction and staff support to officer group. Using this architecture to report on strategy delivery.

RT asked what was being done to excite the team in addition to peoples forum - GH answered that cross-organisation teams mean every team has people involved in all aspects of strategy delivery. All staff meetings will continue and refocus on how we're achieving strategy. Want to spend more time with staff members.

AB asked if there is opportunity beyond meetings with staff to have conversations about how new structure is going - GH recognising success and achievements, team lunches and breakfasts, leading up to exciting strategy launch in Jan.

LS proposed there could be a Board sponsor for each themed group so there's a connection to the Board - SM noted that staff would appreciate that. Agreed that GH to suggest to Board who is most appropriate member for that.

G. Chief Executive Objectives

AB met with GH (MC not in attendance but was notified later). AB invited questions.

JC asked about the direction of grant funding agreement. GH answered that this is Year 2 in 4 year agreement, strategy will identify whether the SU has ambitions that require increased grant and finance committee will then discuss whether a request is compiled for more funding.

AB clarifying cost of being part of staff survey - GH £3k, the survey allows for benchmarking to other SUs and charities.

AB noted the ambitious target, and asked whether every 2 years is frequent enough. RT asked if there is any scope for collecting data in the interim? AB answered that we can collect it, but can't benchmark.

MP asked if there is there engagement plan underneath the survey. GH spoke of the appointment of HR partner, acknowledgement that some areas are significantly stronger than others.

LS proposed conducting a pulse survey in next month. GH - will chat with staff about this. BW noted it would be good to have that knowledge before new staff arrive. GH noted importance of exit interviews (conducted by SM)

H. Appointment of Senior and Deputy Returning Officers

GH spoke through the proposal.

CW asked whether the name of a specific person could be given, otherwise the decision is giving the power to appoint someone within NUS. GH suggested that it is not unusual practice to appoint position rather than individual.

AB asked further how NUS experience relates to SU? GH - ultimate authority on elections is Student Gov & Grants Comm. Act of appointing someone external but unknown - NUS provides full report of what can be expected from the SRO.

AB asked what the alternatives to this arrangement are - GH explained the limitations of University staff or own SU staff conducting the role. Other possibility is using another SU.

CW suggested it would make Board feel more comfortable to know the name and specifications of the candidate - AB proposed asking NUS for a named individual and then have confirmation by email. Board would require a designated person, if this can't be provided by NUS then look towards other options. GH to take forward.

I. Assurance Statement

GH talked through the returns, asked for Board approval of the documentation to allow AB to sign and issue to the university.

AOB

CW asked for a discussion on when it is appropriate to share closed sub-committee minutes and details of them to the whole Board. GH - Minutes are kept, do need to consider a way to make minutes more accessible and this will be addressed - next governance meeting.

TLC asked if plan remains to go to Assembly with report on officer campaigning in elections. GH - is preparing for Board whether it presents a governance & employment issue, if it's a political issue that is a matter for students to take to Assembly. AB added it would be useful to have absolute clarity.