

Lancaster University Students' Union Trustee Board

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held **Thursday 22 August 2019**

Members Present:

George Nuttall | Officer Trustee | Chair
Ben Evans | Officer Trustee
Bee Morgan | Officer Trustee
Lewis Marriott | Officer Trustee
Hannah Prydderch | Officer Trustee
Grishma Bijukumar | Officer Trustee
Graeme Osborn | External Trustee [via Skype]
Laura Davies | External Trustee | Vice Chair
Mark Alexander | External Trustee [via phone from 3:00pm]
Jane Riley | External Trustee
Kathy New | Student Trustee
Jenna Higham | Student Trustee
Amanda Chetwynd | Observer | external trustee from 7 September 2019

In Attendance:

Claire Geddes | Chief Executive
Misbah Ashraf | Head of Marketing & Organisational Development
Veronica Longmire | Executive Administrator | Minutes
Jane Morgan Jones | Financial Controller and Company Secretary

The Chair stated that this was the first meeting of the new officer team and thanked everyone for their attendance. Each person present then introduced themselves.

The Chair informed Board that as this was an Extraordinary meeting there was one item only for discussion | the paper attached to the agenda and the proposals of the developer.

A1. Declaration of Interest | Ben Evans, Vice President Activities stated that he had worked at the Sugar House, knew Sugar House staff and was friends with a member of the team. However, he understood he was at the meeting as a Trustee of the Board.

B. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION REQUIRING FORMAL APPROVAL/ CONSENT

B1. Revised Developer Offer

The Chair thanked Claire Geddes, Chief Executive, and colleagues for putting together the paper and documentation as requested by the Trustee Board. It was noted that the matter had not been taken further to date and was dependent on the decision taken at this meeting.

The Chief Executive asked the Students' Union Head of Marketing & Organisational Development to provide a verbal report. It was noted that conversations had been held with the University regarding an alternative entertainment provision. However, feedback was it would be a low-level commitment. Advice received was to think more strategically and although some progress had been made it was not enough as solidity was required. It was asserted that in order to try and preserve the student experience, activity during Welcome Week was being explored.

In response to a question raised by the Chair, as to why the matter was 'commercial in confidence', the Chief Executive explained that it was a strategic decision, complicated and required due diligence to be exercised, and it was a medium to long-term decision. It was further stated that if the matter went out to the student body it would become difficult for Board to reach a decision for future students.

Discussion ensued regarding the belief students should have a voice regarding a future provision | the needs of students had changed | confirmation that Saturdays attendances in term 3 were substantially lower than in term 1 | improvement of the Redbrick research around the student experience to make the language accurate | the fact there would be a massive hole should other late night providers close.

It was noted that two audit companies had been approached for advice with no feedback received, that from this there had been discussion with the University Director of Finance as to how to look at due diligence.

Mark Alexander, external trustee joined the meeting and the Chair explained the position.

In response to the question 'What did commercial in confidence generally mean and why had the Board made the decision not to ask students to get involved?' it was stated that it was a commercial decision rather than legal.

Further points included that the University was fully aware of the venue and realised any decision was difficult | the University was aware of the change in students attitude | the Union did not have any space for students to hang out | the University was aware of the impact of the NSS results | the University was keen to work together with a view to resolving matters.

Other comments included: the impact of NSS was not short term; eg the Graduation Ball decision | the Students' Union reputation was at risk | the current officer team wished to bring students back to the Union | the opinion of the Union was currently low and would continue to decrease | the decision would echo through students' consciousness | it was a worry but if it could be replaced with something extra | the need to deal with difficult decisions | the venue was making money but no significant investment was forthcoming | potential use of reserves | the need to remember the Union was a Charity and looking at the longer term of the Union | taking on board comments put forward regarding a provision for students.

The Chair indicated that the merits of the proposal would now be discussed and members of staff and Observers were asked to leave the room.

It was noted that a cost could not be put on the student experience | the venue provided the perfect student atmosphere | was known as a safe space | had a Zero tolerance policy in place | had won awards | should not be taken lightly.

A vote was taken and the Board resolved to continue the negotiation around the sale.