

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 25 SEPTEMBER 2019

Members present

Anthony Baker, Clare Powne, Chris Nash, Amie Waterman, Caragh Aylett, Jess Madden, Kate McIntosh, Amelia McLoughlan, Jess Dunning, Sam Johnson-Audini, Tom Pymer, David Evans

In attendance

Gareth Hughes, Kirsty Morrison, Georgina Lambert, Martin Horrocks, Rebecca Henderson, Dani Beckett, Kathryn Sullivan, Lauren Hodgson (minutes),

Apologies

Oliver Colling, Poppy Azmi

Notification of Any Other Business or Conflicts of Interests

None

Any underlined text is confidential and for Board members only, and will not be included in the open papers published on the website.

Meet a member of staff

Dani Beckett will join Durham SU for two days a week for the period of the Director of Campaign's secondment, to act as senior staff lead for the Welfare and Liberation Officer. Dani will report to the Director of Campaigns and has been asked to develop a Liberation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Durham SU, and to deliver a review of Durham SU's democratic framework. Dani is a campaigns consultant, and a former Deputy Chief Executive of Queen Mary SU.

Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting were approved with a small amendment to the wording of the Chief Executive Report section.

Annual declarations of eligibility to serve, and declarations of interest

AB noted the annual declarations. GH explained that he and MHo have completed additional declarations as Chief Executive and Finance Manager and reminded members to keep declarations up to date and inform AB of any changes.

JD asked if student group exec roles were included in the declarations. GH clarified that this wasn't generally necessary but should be declared for individual items.

Appointments

DE and JM had declared a conflict of interest relative to each other, as they are in a relationship. AB and KM have therefore worked to manage this conflict by ensuring that DE and JM are appointed to different Board Committees. There was one vacancy remaining on the Performance and Delivery Committee, after all student trustees had expressed an interest in their first preferences.

DE asked what training was available for new trustees. GH confirmed that a development day was planned for 9 October for all trustees and training was available throughout the year in addition to this.

KMc reported the outcomes of the competitive recruitment for lay trustees, and the recommendation of Governance and Appointments Committee that Caragh Aylett be appointed to the remaining year of Martin Parker's term of office.

The Board made appointments to Committees as in the paper, and appointed Caragh Aylett as a lay trustee, and to the position of supervising trustee.

The Board appointed Peter Robinson as Returning Officer and Gareth Hughes as Deputy Returning Officer.

Chief Executive Report

The delegation of authority approved by trustees over the summer was not required and that the delegation framework presented at this meeting will supersede the temporary arrangements.

Further to correspondence over the summer break, the Students for Life society is now ratified. The group is in the usual management framework and presents no unusual degree of risk.

GL is now on secondment with SumOfUs, an international online campaigning organisation, with DB and RH giving support to cover her role. GH thanked CP for her supporting in making these arrangements. A number of new staff have joined the team over the summer period and Laura Wilkinson is now on maternity leave, giving birth to her daughter on 26 August.

Kingsgate venue has been newly developed and the café will open for business in the new term, a full report will be made to PDC. Renovation works continue throughout Dunelm House with investment from Durham University. The stair lifts in the building have all been replaced. Social learning/casual furniture will fill the common spaces in Dunelm House. Committee rooms will also be refurbished with new furniture and digital equipment.

GH explain that Durham SU had successfully negotiated funding for two projects with Durham University. Membership subscriptions for departmental/academic societies have been funded for two years and a one-year grant has been secured to invest in officer support to engage with University Executive and senior committees.

Finance Report

The accounts were close to what was expected. Audit is due to be carried out week commencing 14 October.

Management/Statutory accounts training will be available for all trustees with MHo. AB encouraged all members to attend the training if possible.

Delegation of Authority Framework

GH presented the framework and advised that the framework is reviewed on an annual basis, reflecting good practice which supported the high turnover of members of the Board. Governance and management of student group processes have been added as a new section, after some amendments to the framework in the previous year.

CP suggested that the delegation of authority be extracted from the report for each of the committees and used as guidance for objectives for the year. CP suggested that clarification was needed on some of the wording in the document sounded like committees were responsible for approval of items listed when this was not the case and also asked if terms of reference for all committees be made accessible to trustees.

The Board approved the Delegation of Authority Framework.

Strategic Risk

The initial assessments in the paper would be discussed by the Board, and a formal assessment will be made at Performance and Delivery Committee. GH advised the Board to focus on risks which can be properly understood and where Durham SU has some control over reducing harm. For example: there is a certainty that Brexit will have some effect on Durham SU and its work, but at this stage there is too much uncertainty as to allow effective analysis or mitigation.

TP questioned what support was being given to international students regarding Brexit. KMc confirmed that she is a member of the Durham University Brexit Steering Group, which has been set up by the University, which is looking at how the University can manage the situation and eventual outcome. JM asked if it had been considered having information available for international students at the Durham SU advice service and GH explained that this was not something that would be covered by the advice service and this is something that will be looked at by the University.

The Board agreed that risks associated with staff engagement, student staff delivery model and health and safety be removed from the Strategic Risk Register, and other risks be assessed by PDC for presentation to the Board at its April meeting.

Recognition of the GMB Agreement

KM and SJA left the room during this item.

Assembly agreed a policy in Easter Term 2018 which requested Durham SU negotiate with the GMB trade union and agree a Recognition Agreement for the students of Durham University and particularly those employed at Durham SU. HR Committee have considered the proposal and requested amendments which the GMB have agreed to and are now in the final document.

CP explained that the recognition agreement had been recommended by HR committee and they had previously discussed the document and raised concerns but these were not fully resolved as these were believed to be manageable by staff at Durham SU.

CN questioned if there was a possible conflict of interest in that if the SU were paying for the fees and a dispute came up, how would this be managed. AB questioned whether there would be a separation created between those who are members and those who aren't.

GH explained that this was offered out to all student staff and was a personal choice for each staff member, whether they choose to sign up or not, only a few staff had chosen to not sign up, so there should be no divide. The potential conflict had been considered by HR Committee, and although acknowledged, the security of the Agreement meant that the GMB could be confident that their funding was not dependent on 'pulling punches'; there was every confidence the arrangement would be successful.

The Board approved the Recognition Agreement.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.