

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 28 FEBRUARY 2024

Members present: Clare Powne, Graeme Osborn, Freddy Fossey-Warren, Rob Drury, Ben Thomas, Anna Robinson, Haf Serajee, William Brown, Dan Lonsdale, Skye Carroll, Dylan Jones, Liam Isaac.

In attendance: Gareth Hughes, Kirsty Morrison, Martin Horrocks, Georgi Lambert, Jane Whalen, Lauren Hodgson (minutes).

Apologies: Deborah Acheampong.

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

Usual business

1. Opening of the meeting

NOTED: no apologies, conflicts of interest, or any other urgent business.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and actions

APPROVED: minutes of the last meeting on 8 December 2023, with an amendment to the attendance list.

An action log is to be included with minutes going forward.

3. Chief Executive's Report

NOTED: the report from the Chief Executive on actions taken since the last meeting of the Board of Trustees and emergent issues requiring the trustees' attention.

Durham SU elections were declared on 13 February 2024. Dan Lonsdale was re-elected as Durham SU President, Moitreyo Ganguli as Community Officer, and Catherine Howells as Education Officer. The winners will take office from 1 July 2024. An analysis of voter participation will follow in due course and will inform planning for future elections. The Returning Officer report was provided to trustees.

Durham University has agreed with Durham SU's interest in aligning to the institutions Integrated Planning process, as this will help the students' union's development needs to be considered in their own planning and budgeting decisions. The Chief Executive and the President have met with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Strategic Planning and are preparing the submission document. An update will be provided to the next meeting of the trustees.

The President and Vice-Chancellor have worked together on support for students from the Middle East. This was discussed at the last meeting of University Council.

Jane Whalen joined Durham SU in February, as maternity cover for the Director of Campaigns, and was welcomed to the Board.

4. Finance Report

NOTED: the Finance Report for the second quarter of 2023/24.

The overall position shows a surplus for the year to date of £40k, which is £15k better than budgeted. This is due to an underspend in activity offsetting the underperformance in Kingsgate. Commercial activity is making a loss. Discussions will be held over Easter on how to proceed going forward for the rest of the academic year to sustain the loss. This is likely to be an amendment to opening hours and a review of products being sold.

Cash flow is good as always and there are plenty of funds across bank accounts.

Strategic development business

5. Winter Student Survey 2023/2024

NOTED: insight from the Winter Student Survey 2023/2024.

The Director of Communications and Strategy introduced the survey which an external research partner had carried out on behalf of Durham SU.

Jack Medlin from Coole Insights presented the results from the Winter Student Survey to the trustees. There were 510 respondents to the survey with a variation across demographics. This is lower engagement than had been hoped for, so reliability is limited.

Good governance business

6. Development of the Board of Trustees

APPROVED: proposals for the development of the Board of Trustees and necessary resolutions.

The Chair proposed there be no reduction in the number of lay trustees or student trustees, and appointments be made to the extent permitted by regulations, which would preserve a majority of students over lay trustees (seven to five).

This could be re-considered as part of the full Articles review in the autumn, but these changes can be put in place now within the parameters of the current Articles. Postgraduate representation on the board will also be picked up in discussions around the Articles review.

7. Standing Order C: Election Rules

APPROVED: the new Standing Order C: Election Rules.

The paper will be presented to Assembly next week, with a proposal to enable elections for Part-Time Officers by something other than a cross-campus ballot, depending on role. A proposal would also be made to remove the requirement that 'ReOpen Nominations' (RON) be a candidate in every election. A 'spoil ballot' option has been recommended as an alternative. Assembly will consider this matter separately from the rest of the paper.

It was queried if holding an event at the beginning of Easter term was a good idea, as this is a very busy time for students during the assessment period. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be a relevant consideration, but there is always something throughout the academic year that is a reason for not doing something at a certain time. The events will be done in a hybrid format so those who may not be able to attend in person can still participate, members will need to be registered to attend to vote, but they may not need to attend the physical event.

8. Trustees' Annual Report

APPROVED: the Trustees' Annual Report.

The Annual Report supports compliance with statutory requirements by Companies House and the Charity Commission, as well as helping Durham SU tell a story about its year.

The trustees asked for further reflection in the narrative about the balance between Durham SU doing activity because it helped students to have fun, compared to advancing education. The point was accepted by the Director of Communications and Strategy, who said that Durham SU's strategy sought to identify the educational value of social learning, as well

The trustees asked that the risk discussion be more clearly framed as both a forward-looking piece of work as well as reflective of past work and progress.

9. Strategic Risk

APPROVED: the Strategic Risk Register.

The Chief Executive presented the paper and said that the trustees reviewed and approved the Risk Policy at their last meeting.

An analysis of the management of strategic risk in the previous year was provided and accepted by the trustees as reflecting good risk management.

The Strategic Risk Register was last reviewed by the Board in March 2023 and, of the risks identified, four have been discharged and one, in commercial activity, has changed its nature but it remains a risk. Three remain as significant risks despite significant management action.

The February 2024 Strategic Risk Register was appended to the paper for review, and the trustees accepted the risk analyses and proposed priority responses.

The 'Risk Statements' were accepted and entered into the trustees' annual report as evidence that the trustees have engaged with the most significant risks to Durham SU.

Items for Information

10. Appointments and Resignations

APPROVED: appointments and **NOTED:** resignations.

Hannah Sketchley has unfortunately had to resign from the Board of Trustees due to extraordinary work commitments. She asked that the Chair passed on her thanks to the trustees and her regrets that she felt she needed to step down at this time.

Due to the resignation a vacancy occurred earlier than anticipated, and Rob Drury was willing to take up office as of 28 February 2024. Assembly has already ratified the appointment at the last meeting, so Rob Drury was appointed to a term of office ending in 2027.

Peridot Partners will be supporting Durham SU in finding two trustees, noting that Clare Powne was due to step down in July 2024, with adverts expect to be out by 15 March.

11. Report of the Returning Officer

NOTED: the report of the Returning Officer.

12. Any Other Business

NOTED: any other urgent business.