

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 29 JULY 2020

Members present: Anthony Baker, Clare Powne, Chris Nash, Oliver Colling, Jess Madden, Kate McIntosh, Jess Dunning, Sam Johnson-Audini, David Evans, Tom Pymer, Caragh Aylett, Amelia McLoughlan,

In Attendance: Gareth Hughes, Kirsty Morrison, Martin Horrocks, Lauren Hodgson (minutes), Georgina Lambert, Laura Wilkinson, Seun Twins, Ewan Swift, Anna Marshall, Nailah Haque, Sarah McAllister

Apologies: Poppy Azmi, Ensharah Sodha

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 Items

1. OPENING OF MEETING

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

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Accepted: the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2020.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

Received: a five minute report from each of the Board's Committees.

CN provided an update for Fundraising Committee and stated Law society still have a large amount of funds remaining in their account. JC and a member of the Opportunities team have met with the Society to discuss and they have agreed to work on a plan to reduce this over the next 3 years, looking at reduction in membership fees and event/social tickets subsidises. Student grants have been now been frozen until further information has been provided from the University on the overall grant. The SU is required to report affiliations to both the University and the Student members. 6 different definitions had been drafted and the definitions included; Affiliations, Sponsorships, Donations, Grants, Memberships and Subscriptions.

A proposal was discussed which would mean that all Student Group fundraising will be disbursed through the Durham SU Fundraising arm (DUCK) once all of DUCK's fundraising activities are in line with the Code of Fundraising Practice, which is based on the action plan for the group from 19/20. The committee approved the charities DUCFS wish to support for the 2020-2021 academic cycle.

OC provided an update from the Special Performance and Delivery committee meeting to be focused around Student Group activity which did not have a quorum so advised on matter only. The Committee recommended the approval of the proposed policy to provide a framework for the situations in which student group selection can be used rather than

elections. The Committee discussed and recommended the approval of the proposed template for Association constitutions to allow them to align the governing documents with good Student Group governance, pending further consultation with student groups but agreed that it could be used in principal for registration this year.

The Committee recommended the approval of the proposed process and timelines for the creation of a Freedom of Expression Policy following on from Durham University's revision of their Freedom of Expression Code of Practice.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Received: the Chief Executive's report on Durham SU's performance since the last meeting, and to consider any urgent items requiring guidance from the trustees.

GH provided an update on Durham SU's emergent risks. The review of Durham SU's elections by the University Secretary's Office has not yet been reported. The paper has been written but is awaiting sign off.

There have been no requests for the use of emergency delegated powers, as agreed by the Board at its April meeting, The Chief Executive considers that the pressing need for these powers is most likely to have passed and it is appropriate to retire this delegation.

AMc asked how the pivot strategy which was developed as a short term plan for working through COVID-19 fed into more long term planning. GH stated that a separate paper on objectives for the year had been produced and this will be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

5. FINANCE REPORT

Received: the Finance Report.

MH presented the finance report and stated that the Job Retention Scheme would be the key thing which would see Durham SU through until the end of the year. Accounts are looking okay due to the grant from the University and spending minimal (only paying out staff wages) and claiming from the Job Retention Scheme. Holiday pay for this year needs to be account for, due to staff not being able to use holidays due to being on furlough. Durham SU will end the year with around £25000 more than expected so currently looking good.

JM asked if staff on furlough were still entitled to holidays. MH confirmed this was correct and staff were able to take holidays as they accrue them due to changes throughout the scheme.

JM asked if the amount of debtors would be paid back to the SU as this currently stands at £147000. MH clarified that the University was included in this and it can include a lot of things not just debts owed.

DE queried what the liquidity of savings and cash was. MH stated Durham SU currently has 3 savings accounts and the money can be moved around quickly.

DE asked what would happen due to the statutory accounts being submitted slightly late in the month. MH confirmed that the government have been more flexible with this and given a 3 month allowance due to Covid-19.

6. REPORT OF STUDENT TRUSTEE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Received: the report of the Student Trustee Ad-hoc Committee.

CP presented the report from the Student Trustee Ad-hoc Committee.

TP asked why co-opting had been listed as the Articles state that it only allows for 5 and already have 5 co-opted trustees.

AB stated that language is confusing as 'Co-opted' trustees in the Articles were actually full trustees. The word 'co-opted' would usually mean 'not-full'. GH added that co-opting allows people to be on Board but they are invited to attend but do not have full membership.

TP queried if current student trustees would be involved in the selection of these co-opted trustees. CP confirmed that this had not yet been decided, as the committee is waiting until the principal has been approved.

TP asked how this would be put forward and presented to student members without backlash. AMc added that there was conflict currently as student trustees are representative of a collective group and it is already a struggle to communicate what the board does and how this works.

JM stated that the recruitment panel of students and having student appoint the positions to ensure to not take away student voice. CP said this shouldn't have to be spun in anyway as this is just recognising that election process does not work and the role is a different kind of responsibility.

AMc agreed with the theory behind it and longer term plan but was concerned by the impact of the timing and to do this right now and the SU needs to have student at the heart of what is going on.

OC stated that elections have never hindered getting good trustees and it's more about the reactions of the candidates that haven't been taken well. The external perception is going to be hard to get over and any kind of appointment process is going to reduce talent pool and going to referendum will not go down well and may make things worse. Maybe looking at a cross over between election and appointment may work better.

ST said the wording of appointment sounded hostile the process needs better communication.

CA thought that this might attract a different sort of student with an application process rather than election but concerned about how this will look right now, if this doesn't go through referendum and what would happen if this didn't happen and how this would look from a democracy point of view.

KMc stated that a referendum had previously taken place for this and majority voted (65%) for the changes but it did not have a quorum, this will address a problem in the immediate, this needs to be about the strengths or the process rather than how it would be perceived and it has to be the best outcome for Durham SU. SMc said this may be a good idea for the future but not for right now especially how this may look if co-opted student trustees don't have a vote.

CP added that there could be a consultation period with students but unsure how we do this before October. GH stated that this wouldn't be possible to do over the summer to more than student leaders as they are the only ones around.

GH added that the size of what is being talked about in the current situation wouldn't be able to be done over the summer and would affect savings that have been made as this was supposed to be bigger piece of work over a longer period of time. This needs to be made priority right now and each of the big things need to be a priority and what needs to be done in the immediate.

AB agreed this was a transition year and making sure there are students on the board now and then use the next year to have a review of democracy overall. This needs to be addressed now and can't be moved to the next meeting.

The Board approved the recommendations to co-opt student members for the 2020/2021 academic year, and an appointment process for Student Trustee recruitment.

7. APPOINTMENTS

Approved: the extension of the term of office for Caragh Aylett to 31 July 2022, and to authorise appointments to Board Committees in 2020/2021.

The trustees delegated power to appoint to Committees to the Chair and Vice-Chair, for report to the next meeting of the Board.

The Board agreed to extend the appointment of Caragh Aylett to a term of office as a lay trustee ending 31 July 2022.

8. BOARD OBJECTIVES AND SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2020/2021

Discussed: the Board Objectives and Schedule of Business 2020/2021, for further development before the September meeting.

AB added that any committee meetings should to be at least 3 weeks before any board meeting to allow for papers etc. so there will be a change to pattern of board meetings to have 5 instead of 6 and having July meeting as a handover/development day but can allow for business if needed.

AMc asked how this would work with staff on furlough and unexpected things that could disrupt the schedule and what is meant by review and how will this impact workload. GH confirmed that most meetings begin after the furlough scheme ends so not worried about this and review can be very minimal and doesn't need to be full on process more of a reflection.

Strategic Development Items

9. DURHAM SU STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2020/2021

Approved: the strategic priorities for Durham SU in 2020/2021.

CP thought it was a good idea to keep revisiting mission and principals to keep in line and communications should be a priority. GH agreed this should be done and added that this hadn't been properly outlined yet and this will be detailed in the next 6 months

DE asked where the academic portfolio fits into this as it didn't stand out and seems to be missing. GH confirmed that this was included in any of the day to day work of academic work: strategic work is spending time finding out what academic interests are and finding out what is needed and what the priorities are and this will be the SU focus.

ST queried where the 6 month timeline is from and was there a method to this. GH stated that this seemed to be the most sensible as this is the start of a New Year and new term and gives a manageable period of time. Appendix b shows the priority of work, this needs to be a guide for deciding what can and can't be done.

AMa asked what the Common Room development programme was. GH confirmed this was the presidential residential and induction programme for student leaders to be delivered July 2021.

The Board agreed the strategic priorities for Durham SU in 2020/2021.

10. DURHAM SU BUDGET

Approved: the Budget for 2020/2021, noting that a more detailed breakdown of project activity against strategy will be worked up by staff in August and September.

JM asked what would be done to make the website accessibility better online. GH confirmed that this is being worked out and being looked at by JC. GL added that the current digital platform provider has brought out a new package which includes a lot of things that can help with this but staff have not had chance to do this training yet. SJA said that the University is developing a digital strategy and looking at accessibility and this being inclusive for all.

The Board agreed the Budget for 2020/2021, noting that a more detailed breakdown of project activity against strategy will be worked up by staff in August and September.

Information Items

11. OUTCOMES OF THE MEDIATION BETWEEN DURHAM SU AND DURHAM UNIVERSITY COMMON ROOMS.

Received: the outcomes report.