

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF A MEETING ON 19 July 2022

Members present: Clare Powne, Jonah Graham, Seun Twins, Graeme Osborn, Jack Ballingham, Declan Merrington, Jonny Snowden, Charlie Procter, Denis Antor

In attendance: Gareth Hughes, Rebecca Henderson, Georgi Lambert, Kirsty Morrison, Martin Horrocks, Dhillon Shenoy, Charles Lawrence, Deborah Acheampong, Laura Curran, Joshua Freestone, Joe McGarry, Lauren Hodgson (minutes)

Apologies: Hannah Sketchley, Robert Smith, Caragh Aylett-Bullock, Megan Wishart, Christian Meadows,

Usual business

1. Opening of the meeting

NOTED: apologies, conflicts of interests, and any other urgent business requested for the trustees to consider at this meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, and actions

APPROVED: minutes of the last meeting on 31 May 2022.

The Chair noted that the minutes of the meeting on 8 March 2022 had been approved via electronic vote along with the outstanding items from the last meeting.

3. Reports from Committees

RECEIVED: the draft minutes of the last meeting from each of the Board's Committees and **CONSIDERED** decisions made by the Committee on behalf of the Board not otherwise appearing on the agenda.

Performance and Delivery Committee met on 23 June 2022. The Committee agreed a designation of £10k of funds for the development of Dunelm House and approved the action plan and amendment to the Data Protection and Information Security Policy. The Committee approved the charity partnership proposed by DUCFS in 2023. There was discussion on the development of space in Dunelm House for Wider Student Experience (WSE) and the committee approved the Health and Safety Policy.

People and Culture Committee met on 23 June 2022. The Committee approved a proposal to develop staffing in the Services team and discussed the Staff Engagement Survey results. The Committee resolved that the terms of reference for the Committee be developed to include a defined responsibility for settling matters relating to the governance of Assembly on behalf of the Board, in a change to the current delegated power to the Chair and Vice-Chair and proposed that the Chief Executive's authority as Secretary to Assembly be to manage risk on behalf of the trustees, and to advise where risk tolerance or regulatory authority is unclear. The Committee approved the Flexible Working Policy and Eye Test Policy.

4. 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 attention of the trustees.

The current Officers will leave Durham SU at the end of July and the new Officer team started on 18 July for a handover period before officially beginning their term on office on 1 August. The Postgraduate Officer-elect, had to resign from her position so a by-election is currently happening to elect a replacement, 11 nominations have been received and voting opens next week. Email confirmation will be sent of the winner and September has been planned for a start date.

The National Student Survey results were issued on 6 July 2022. Nationally, many Russell Group students' unions saw declines in their overall NSS result, with the agreement of students that their students' union represents their academic interests also declining. The results were unsurprising as perception of Durham SU has been shaped by the political stances taken, and there was something to be said about maintaining score given significant malign misrepresentations of Durham SU's work. The University Executive have good confidence in the work done by the students' union, but understand and wish that the organisation's reputation would be based on that positive work instead.

Jamie Caress has now been announced as the Deputy Director of Services, his current role as Opportunities Manager will be filled in the interim from within the staff team.

The Chair and Vice-Chair conducted the annual review of the Chief Executive on 29 June 2022. Priorities are being developed, and a report will follow to People and Governance once the Chair approves.

5. Finance Report

NOTED: the Finance Report for period 10.

The Management Accounts to 31 May 2022 were presented to the Board and there had been little movement since the last meeting; the April accounts showed an overall deficit of £63k and May shows an expansion to £74k. Commercial losses are £83k, which had originally budgeted for a £40k surplus, largely due to Covid-19 restrictions imposed early on in the year. Work on updates to commercial services will begin this week with the new Deputy Director of Services and Duty Manager.

Restricted funds are higher than usual with DUCK funds high at £252k, but most of this awaits disbursement to Teenage Cancer Trust, donated by the Charity Fashion Show. Student Group funds are also high, with many tickets being sold, and expenses disbursed through June.

The reserves policy will be revisited in autumn 2022 as reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic shows that three months running costs is likely to be unnecessarily high as a minimum reserve necessary to withstand future adverse circumstances and two months seems more realistic. The review will begin ahead of audit in October.

Strategic development business

6. Durham SU Strategy 2022 to 2025

APPROVED: the Durham SU strategy 2022 to 2027.

A proposal was presented to the Board as to the strategy to 2027, and a framework for day-to-day operations, based on previous discussions by the trustees on Durham SU's strategic positioning.

The trustees have agreed that Durham SU will have three strategic goals to 2027:

- Build confidence in the purpose and the value of the students' union at Durham University.
- Bring students together to spend good time with other.
- Tackle the big issues in education and everyday life that hold students back.

There was a query on student induction being included in the five-year strategy and whether or not this would become a priority for the Academic Officer as well as their own manifesto priorities. The Chief Executive explained that priorities are now going to be looked at over five years rather than trying to tackle something in one year.

The trustees asked how the strategy would be shared and communicated to students. The Chief Executive stated that audio/video are more preferred by students so it is likely to be digital in some way but this is still currently work in progress and not yet complete. Any thoughts on this would be welcome and can be passed on after the meeting to the Director of Communications and Strategy.

7. Budget 2022/2023

APPROVED: the Budget for 2022/2023

The budget proposal for 2022/2023 was provided for the Board.

Durham University has agreed to a grant of £1m, inflated by RPI. The working assumption, is that grant income will be £1.1m. RPI is currently at 11.7% and will likely be more by July. If grant income is higher, this will be welcome, but the current assumptions will be £1.1m.

After fixed costs and salaries, there is roughly £100k left to allocate and the management team have developed budgets for their areas for work, including day-to-day functional activity and some developmental expenditure. Roughly £20k has been allocated for student activity grants, comprised of £15k carried forward from 2021/2022 and a £5k allocation from core grant, as there is now no specific allocation for student group grants.

The budget leaves a £15k surplus at the end of the year but this is variable as things will change throughout the year. It's currently unsure how commercial activity will go at this point with moving venues and offering to Kingsgate, which will be developed over the summer.

The current budget is separate to any recommendation to reduce the reserves level current set out in the reserves policy. The current policy position is three months' running costs and the current figure is less than required, so a surplus budget is a sensible decision.

It was queried if there would be an impact on grant allocations this year due to the significant increase in activity likely to occur and if it will be possible to top up the allocation of £20k. The Finance Manager said that the allocation could be potentially topped up in January if income has increased and commercial activity is performing well.

Durham SU currently receive retrospective discount payments relating to University purchasing for College bars through NUS Services. Durham University procurement intends to undertake an exercise in the year, and the potential impact full-year impact of a decision to switch suppliers would have an impact of around 35k.

Good governance business

8. Amendments to the Standing Orders

APPROVED: amendments to the Standing Orders passed by Assembly on 26 May 2022.

Joe McGarry declared a conflict of interest related to 4.2 of the paper due to being a current trustee and employee of a St Aidan's JCR, an independent charity.

Charles Lawrence declared a conflict of interest with 4.2 due to being the current JCR President of Stephenson College.

The amendments to the standing orders were approved by Assembly on 26 May 2022 in a meeting which did not maintain a quorum. With minor amendments, an electronic vote confirmed on 24 June 2022 that Assembly supported the new Standing Orders.

Items for Information

9. Any other urgent business

None

10. Health and Safety Policy

APPROVED: the Health and Safety Policy.

11. Data Protection and Information Security Policy

NOTED: the Data Protection and Information Security Policy.