

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 23 JUNE 2023

Members present: Clare Powne, Graeme Osborn, Jack Ballingham, Dhillon Shenoy, Charles Lawrence, Deborah Acheampong, Laura Curran, Joseph McGarry, Freddy Fossey-Warren, Joshua Freestone

In attendance: Gareth Hughes, Georgi Lambert, Kirsty Morrison, Martin Horrocks, Lauren Hodgson (minutes), Ben Thomas, Anna Robinson, Haf Serajee, William Brown, Dan Lonsdale, Skye Carroll, Josh Robertson

Apologies: Qiandong Zhou, Caragh Aylett-Bullock, Hannah Sketchley, Rachel Taylor

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 1 March 2023.

There were no comments on the December minutes, which are now approved.

3. Reports from Committees

RECEIVED: the draft minutes of the last meeting and **APPROVED** decisions made by a committee on behalf of the Board not otherwise appearing on the agenda.

People and Governance Committee met on 26 April 2023. The Committee approved the Health and Safety and Safeguarding policies. The Committee confirmed that the proposals for a cost-of-living award were consistent with its expectations as to the maintenance of good employment terms and conditions. The Committee discussed Strategic Risk 7: Succession Planning and agreed a succession plan. The Committee endorsed a Management of Interests Policy, with some notes, to be reported and approved by the Board.

The Committee also attended a facilitated discussion with Atkinson HR around flexible working options and future thinking. A follow up session took place on 15 June 2023 to discuss potential future options and look at the benefits and risks of each option.

Sustainability and Risk Committee met on 27 April 2023. The Committee confirmed that a 3% cost-of-living award is sustainable and should be the policy position used for budget development but, if the grant award was greater than 10%, a 6% award would be appropriate. The Committee noted progress on budgeting for the forthcoming financial year and discussed Durham SU's Data Protection Self-Assessment and data protection framework. The Committee noted the update on the management of Strategic Risks and agreed amendments to the succession planning risk assessment and Palatinate risk assessment.

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 trustees' attention.

The Chief Executive presented the report and said the Welfare and Liberation Officer has led on work with the University, Mary Foy, and landlords across the city to discuss structural issues with the private rented sector housing market. The University suggests a desire to take responsibility and make this a priority.

2123 voters agreed with the policy "Durham University should support Common Rooms' financial sustainability, including the ability for each JCR to have at least one sabbatical officer without the financial burden falling on the shoulders of the students." The President has raised the matter with the Vice-Chancellor and with Durham University Council, and they have passed responsibility for the response to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Colleges and Student Experience). The referendum vote was initiated by a petition, and this democratic innovation was a welcome development.

New student trustees were elected on 12 May 2023, and are Anna Robinson, Ben Thomas, Dylan Jones and Haf Serajee. New trustees were welcomed and had received an introduction to trustee responsibilities with Nick Smith in mid-June.

The trustees agreed a resolution, by electronic circulation, using powers under Article 79, which authorised capital expenditure from restricted funds for the use of PalTV, Durham SU's student broadcast media group.

5. Finance Report

NOTED: the Finance Report for Quarter 3, to April 2023.

The Finance Manager said there had not been much change since the last reporting period, the accounts remain very consistent and have hit the £20k surplus target. The trustees noted the report and thanked the Finance Manager.

Strategic development business

6. Durham SU Strategy

APPROVED: the final strategy document for publication, including a values statement.

The Director of Communication and Strategy presented the final strategy document and noted that Durham SU's strategy to 2027 and the priority work within the strategy to the end of 2024 have previously been agreed by the Board of Trustees.

The communications assets are the final stage in embedding the new strategy, which will translate to how Durham SU is spoken about externally.

Key audiences for written information are staff and trustees, prospective staff and trustees, University senior staff, and highly engaged student volunteers. Each audience need different detail, so a layered approach will be used:

- Layer one: a short webpage summary.
- Layer two: a more traditional PDF (which may be webpage, for flexible use).
- Layer three: articles with strategic reasoning, and annual information such as performance reports and work-plans. This third layer will provide a tool for internal communications and training, with updates that are more flexible and accessible.

The values statement will be incorporated into corporate communications, such that stakeholders understand and share Durham SU's work. The values need to be understood and translatable by the whole staff team, so a series of workshops will be scheduled over the second half of the year.

7. Durham SU Budget 2023/2024

APPROVED: the Durham SU Budget 2023/2024

The Finance Manager presented the budget, which included a £20k surplus over the next three years, to build back up reserves to three months' running costs. A designated fund would also be started, to build £25k over five years for non-capital refurbishment of Kingsgate.

There are some variables due to the grant increase from Durham University not yet being confirmed. The amount will be agreed on 16 August and will be based on RPI as of 31 July.

The budget has been based on RPI at 10%, but the trustees acknowledged that the budget would be refreshed with actual grant figures once known, to avoid artificial variances being reported in management accounts throughout the year.

The Trustees approved the Budget pending approval of the grant.

8. Memorandum of Understanding with Durham University

APPROVED: a Memorandum of Understanding with Durham University.

The MoU sets out shared expectations of the relationship between Durham SU and Durham University and provides a basis for the establishment of the Strategic Collaboration Group without troubling the regulatory aspects of the Code of Practice or the contractual aspects of the relationship set out in the Service Level Agreement.

The minutes of the Strategic Collaboration Group will be reported to the Board at future meetings in the Chief Executives' report.

The document has been endorsed by the University Governance and Nominations Committee and will be sent to Durham University Council at its next meeting for final approval.

9. Student Consultation Framework

APPROVED: the Student Consultation Framework.

The President had led on a review of the framework, which was previously approved in 2017, this year, and a refreshed version was presented for approval.

This version has been approved by Senate subject to some suggested edits and further suggestions may come from the University Executive Committee at their next meeting. The final version will be circulated once fully approved.

Good governance business

10. Management and Governance of Palatinate

APPROVED: outstanding recommendations on the management and governance of Palatinate.

11. Board of Trustees Planning

APPROVED: a schedule of business for the Board of Trustees.

The Chief Executive presented the paper and noted that the schedule was being framed around quarters of business while also working around the University term dates.

It was noted that there is a vacancy for an external trustee coming up due to Caragh Aylett-Bullock's term of office coming to an end on 31 July. Recruitment will be going out soon with the hope to have someone in post by September for the development day.

It was noted that the current date of the development day may be problematic for some of the trustees to attend due to induction week prep. It was agreed that comments should be sent to the Senior Admin Coordinator for review and a finalised date will be circulated once confirmed.

12. Student Group Regulations

APPROVED: amendments to the Standing Orders in reference to Student Group Regulations.

The Director of Services presented the paper and noted that the amendments had been approved by Assembly at their last meeting and that the amendments had been developed over the last 2 years as a way make the regulations easier to use and friendlier in tone.

Items for Information

13. Management of Interests Policy

NOTED: the Management of Interests Policy, reported from People and Governance Committee.

The Chief Executive presented the policy, previously considered by People and Culture Committee at their last meeting. The Committee endorsed the policy with a few minor amendments for approval.

JCR presidents also holding student trustees' positions on Durham SU Board is addressed in the policy, however a further paper will be presented to the Board at its next meeting in November.

14. Any Other Business

NOTED: any other urgent business.

The Opportunities Officer presented a paper on models that explore how Durham SU could be involved in the student housing market, which outlined 3 potential models and stated that SU letting agents are quite common across the country.

This proposal is only currently in the preliminary research stage and is in line with the work currently being done around housing. This has been by the PVC for Colleges and Student Experience at Durham University who was very receptive and expressed funding may be available for start-up costs etc.

