

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 8 MARCH 2022

Members present: Clare Powne, Caragh Aylett-Bullock, Jonah Graham, Seun Twins, Graeme Osborn, Hannah Sketchley, Robert Smith, Megan Wishart, Christian Meadows, Denis Antor

In attendance: Gareth Hughes, Katie Shaw, Martin Horrocks, Kirsty Morrison, Rebecca Henderson, Georgi Lambert, Lauren Hodgson (minutes)

Apologies: Jack Ballingham, Jonny Snowden, Charlie Procter, Declan Merrington

Usual business

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 meetings held on 30 November 2021.

3. Reports from Committees

Received: the minutes of the last meeting from each of the Board's Committees.

Performance and Delivery Committee met on 9 February 2022. The Committee approved the approach to Durham SU's support, training and development offer for Durham University and independent common rooms.

People and Culture Committee met on 8 February 2022. The Committee approved the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Modern Slavery Statement.

4. Chief Executive's Report

Received: the Chief Executive's report on Durham SU's activity since the last meeting.

Durham SU, along with Durham University, has moved to a broadly 'normal' way of working following the relaxation of public health regulations. Personal responsibility of mask wearing, and ventilation is still being encouraged but distancing and testing are largely being phased out over the term with the expectation that almost no management frameworks remain in place after the Easter break.

The Directors of Campaigns, and of Communications and Strategy, have returned from maternity leave. Katie Shaw will end her maternity cover at the end of April.

5. Finance Report

Received: the Finance Report, on the second quarter, to January 2022.

The draft Management Accounts to 31 January 2022 were provided for the Board. The overall result for the half year shows a £49k deficit, a £50k shortfall against budget for this period. The expectation for year-end position was anticipated to be a breakeven budget rather than the £42k surplus shown in the accounts. This is because that £42k surplus was expected to be allocated to Officer priorities but, at this point, only £16k has been budgeted and none of it yet spent.

It would have been expected that half of the £42k allocation at this point (£21k) would have been used so there should have been a £20k deficit at the half-year point. This more properly suggests a mid-year deficit of only £29k; which is manageable.

The core management accounts, which including strategic activities, are underspending against budget by around £14k. Trading in Dunelm House is performing reasonably well in difficult circumstances, but overall commercial income is negatively affected by the lack of market in media sales and are £64k below budget. The £64k deficit in Commercial less the £34k underspend in core together create the £29k shortfall in budget year to date.

6. Durham SU Engagement with the Charity Governance Code

Agreed: an approach for the review and development of good governance practice, further to the refreshed NUS version of the Charity Governance Code.

Durham SU has engaged in this framework in the past, and plan to do so again following three principles, to guide engagement with the Code: a collective approach, so all trustees are engaged in the work, such that 'good governance' is clearly a shared responsibility and a shared endeavour; long-term thinking, because governance development is understood as a journey, not a destination, and engagement is therefore a form of continuous improvement; and 'something happens', so there is a good balance between reflection and action, and trustees have oversight of how desired actions result in change and further reflection.

There will be a two-year schedule for engagement, by all trustees, which will allow for the principles of the Code to be prioritised and allows meaningful development over time.

7. Delivery of Assembly

Agreed: an approach to resolve an identified strategic risk to good governance, and the face-to-face delivery of Assembly.

Assembly has met online since March 2020, and student leaders requested that Assembly returns to a face-to-face meeting. Durham SU does not have the capacity to offer Assembly as a 'hybrid' meeting due to the size and complex nature of the meeting, so this would mean the meeting would need to become inaccessible for some members who participate remotely.

The trustees noted their responsibilities under Equality Act, including the anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments. The trustees agreed that further discussion with Assembly members should take place to consider accessibility requirements and adjustments that could be made in a return to face-to-face meetings.

8. Durham SU Elections

Received: the results of the Durham SU Elections 2022.

Durham SU Officer elections concluded on 2 March 2022. There were no significant complaints received or upheld and turnout was up over the previous year, increasing to roughly 17% of the student population (14% in 2021). The successful candidates are President Joe McGarry,

Postgraduate Academic Officer Cynthia Lawson, Undergraduate Academic Officer Joshua Freestone, Welfare and Liberation Officer Laura Curran, and Opportunities Officer Jack Ballingham was re-elected.

Strategic development items

9. Vision Discussion Paper

Discussed: a headline vision and structure statement for the Durham SU strategy from 2022.

The trustees have already made a series of decisions which suggest a direction of travel for Durham SU's strategic position to 2025. A draft strategic vision statement was provided for discussion, which suggests a framework for the Durham SU statement: simply, an outline which will be 'coloured in' over the next three months..

It was suggested that the current statement read more like a mission statement than a vision statement and feels more like what Durham SU is like now rather than future ideas. Further discussion proposed that the first paragraph of the statement read better on its own as a vision statement rather than including the additional paragraphs.

10. Contextual Analysis

Approved: for consultation, a contextual analysis of strategic opportunity.

The Board of Trustees have already decided that Durham SU's strategy will have four delivery themes, advancing the student interest in their education, their social development, their everyday life, and the culture of their Durham community.

It may be useful to collaborate with other areas of the University, including Common Rooms, Student Enrichment and Departments to show how Durham SU differs from those spaces and can be a place for those that do not identify in those spaces. This needs to be something that Durham SU can say in 5 years 'we did these things' rather than saying 'this will happen' and then nothing can be measured.

The Chair asked that any additional comments be sent to the Chief Executive by the close of play on Tuesday 15 March and it was also suggested that an additional meeting would be useful to facilitate this discussion in more detail.

Information Items

11. Common Room Support

Received: a paper approved by Performance and Delivery Committee proposing Durham SU to support training, and development in Durham University and independent Common Rooms.