

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 2025

Members present: Graeme Osborn (Chair) Dan Lonsdale, Moitreya Ganguli, Helen Cutting, Catherine Howells, Calum Cook, Oliver Davis, Emma Clarke, Josh Loan-Clarke, Dylan Jones.

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

Apologies received: Rob Drury, Liam Isaac.

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

Usual business

1. Opening of the meeting

NOTED: apologies, and no conflicts of interests.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting, and actions

APPROVED: minutes of the previous meetings on 4 December 2024.

REVIEWED: [action log 24/25](#).

3. Reports from Committees

RECEIVED: the report from Officer Committee of 12 December 2024.

RECEIVED: the report from General Purposes Committee of 5 February 2025.

The President noted that GPC has endorsed the Health and Safety Policy, but some amendments seemed not to have been made in the copy provided to the trustees. The Chief Executive will confirm version control and confirm the policy at the next meeting.

4. Chief Executive's Report

NOTED: the Chief Executive's report.

The Chief Executive gave an initial analysis of the successful Officer elections.

The recruitment campaign for the Deputy Chief Executive was making excellent progress. 10 applicants had been longlisted, and interviews would be on 25 March 2025.

The University and College Union had announced a ballot for strike action, which would close on 4 April 2025. If the ballot succeeded, it would be likely that this would add further disruption to the end of term, but Durham SU had a reasonably robust usual approach to this situation.

The Chair, the President, and the Chief Executive, had that morning met with the trustees of the Durham Union Society, at their request, supported by the Durham University Interim Director of Enrichment. The conversation had been frank, and the challenges in future work together had been explored in depth.

The Chief Executive would remain in dialogue with DUS, and there would be an opportunity to hear directly from DUS at the May meeting of the Durham SU trustees.

5. Finance Report

NOTED: the Finance Report to period 6 of 2024/2025.

Durham SU was close to expected budget for the second quarter, which was very pleasing given current challenges. An end-of-year reforecast would accommodate unbudgeted expenditure such as the recruitment campaign support, and the impact of any staffing changes.

Durham SU had a lot of cash due to income from the Durham University Charity Fashion Show, but this would be expended soon.

The trustees asked for insight on Durham SU's media sales partner, Native, given that it is a major debtor and has a record of late payments. The Finance Manager replied that there was some concern about the extent to which Native was a going concern, and the management team were chasing up the issue with Native and pursuing potential alternative options.

Strategic development business

6. Durham SU Financial Model

APPROVED: changes to Durham SU's financial model.

The Chief Executive presented a slideshow on Durham SU's financial model, in respect of the profile of income and expenditure.

It was likely that Durham SU would need to accommodate a cut to the block grant in 2025/26 and, given the tightness of the financial model, this may result in a need to restructure the staff team. The Chief Executive proposed a voluntary redundancy offer in the first instance, which would seek overall staffing expenditure to grant of around 70%.

In response to questions from the trustees, the Chief Executive confirmed that:

- No decision was being made on a reorganisation of staffing structure at this time, and therefore no decision about any compulsory redundancies.
- No decision was being made about the terms of compulsory redundancy payments.
- The impact on reserves of an enhanced redundancy payment could be mitigated by recovering budgeted salary savings to the end of the current financial year.
- Every effort would go into supporting colleagues affected by this issue, in addition to their statutory rights.

The trustees approved a voluntary redundancy offer of three months of salary as an enhancement to statutory redundancy payments. The trustees asked that the 2025/26 budget seek to accommodate additional expenditure necessary, such that costs were recovered as quickly as reasonably possible.

Good governance business

7. Strategic Risk Register

APPROVED: the Risk Policy and Strategic Risk Register.

The trustees welcomed the Risk Policy and Strategic Risk Register, but noted that:

- There were some apparent miscalculations in different sections of the paper.
- The issues considered in the Strategic Risk Register were clearly appropriate, but it wasn't clear how Durham SU intended to approach the issues because of some complex language on complex subjects.

The trustees asked that some thought go into reframing the risk statements, in order to help the communication, and therefore leadership engagement, on these important risks.

8. Trustees' Annual Report

APPROVED: the Trustees' Annual Report.

The trustees welcomed the Trustees' Annual Report but asked the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chief Executive to consider the language in the foreword, to ensure it reflected their intent.

Items for Information

9. Health and Safety Policy

APPROVED: the Health and Safety Policy.

Trustees present at the meeting of the General Purposes Committee asked the Chief Executive to confirm that the suggestions made at the meeting of the Committee had all been incorporated. The Chair of GPC was delegated authority to approve any amendments.

10. Any other urgent business

NOTED: any other urgent business.

AGREED: a regrade of the Full-Time Officer posts.

The Chair and the Chief Executive tabled a paper on Officer remuneration, further to discussion at the General Purposes Committee. Catherine Howells, Dan Lonsdale and Moitreyo Ganguli declared a conflict of interest and left the room.

GPC had considered the paper but had thought this was appropriate for the Board of Trustees to consider.

The trustees acknowledged the importance of this issue, and that the grading assessment submitted supported a regrading of the Full-Time Officer posts. They acknowledged the existing policy framework, and the importance of explaining why this decision was necessary, due to the impact of pension salary sacrifice and the National Minimum Wage.

The trustees agreed that the Full-Time Officer posts be regraded to Grade B.