

DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 5 October 2021

Members present: Clare Powne, Megan Wishart, Jonah Graham, Jack Ballingham, Declan Merrington, Charlie Procter, Seun Twins, Graeme Osborn, Hannah Sketchley, Jonny Snowden

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

Apologies: Robert Smith, Caragh Aylett-Bullock

Usual business items

1. OPENING OF MEETING

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

Chris Liddle, Finance Coordinator from the staff team spoke to the Trustees about his role within the organisation.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Accepted: the minutes of the meetings held on 28 July 2021.

An updated action list was provided and the Chief Executive gave an update on each of the outstanding actions.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

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

There had been no further meetings of the Board's Committees since the last Board meeting.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

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

The Chief Executive said that Durham SU is now prepared for the first term, being virus aware and responsive while operating services as well as an enhanced digital offer. Considerable work has gone into ensuring that business activities meet student need, and are sustainable in unpredictable circumstances. The Sports and Activities Fair was held in the previous week, alongside Experience Durham, at Maiden Castle which was very successful. Durham University has over recruited undergraduate students and approximately 6300 students have joined. Accommodation issues have largely been resolved but it will take a few weeks to see the full effects on teaching and learning.

The Freedom of Speech Bill is now in Committee stage, and Durham SU has engaged extensively in the public affairs work necessary to improve the Bill.

UCU, which represents academic and associated staff, has announced a national ballot for industrial action, which will open on 18 October. A response to the UCU action will likely consume a considerable proportion of the time of the Campaigns and Policy teams, and the Academic Officers and it is likely Durham SU will convene an emergency meeting of Assembly in October 2021 to consider a policy response to this issue.

Durham SU is concerned about commercial supply chain issues, of course, but understood this to be an acute short-term risk. There may be higher stock balances as we protect our ability to trade.

A number of career staff have left the organisation over the summer to move on to the next steps in their careers and recruitment to new or vacant positions has now taken place, which means that there are number of new starters joining the organisation. There a few positions still to be re-recruited, which are expected to be appointed in October, to bring the staff team up to full complement.

There are now two vacancies for student trustees on the Durham SU Board. The most appropriate way to proceed will be to align the election of a student trustee to the elections for Course Representatives in November. This will allow new members to join the Board at the November meeting.

The Board confirmed support for Peter Robertson to be Returning Officer.

5. FINANCE REPORT

Received: the Finance Report, including period 12 report for 2020/2021 financial year and an update on the audit schedule,

The draft Management Accounts for the year end were presented by the Finance Manager. These were presented as “draft” as they are unaudited accounts. The auditors will be carrying out their examinations in w/c 18 October, and are expected to report to management on 19 November with final sign off expected at the 30 November Board meeting along with approval of the draft Annual Report.

A £19000 deficit was originally budgeted for in the year to July 31 2021, which is not the case, with a £23000 surplus currently being report, a £42,000 improvement.

During the financial year 2019/2020 the trustees used one month of Durham SU's cash reserves, which left £209k in unrestricted reserves. This has now been bolstered by the current year surplus of £23k, and the year-end transfer of designated funds of £27k, and is now at £260k. This is slightly higher than our unrestricted reserves target and is a very positive position to be in following a very difficult couple of years.

Cash flow is not currently an issue and will increase further when two thirds of the block grant money is received from the University by 1 November.

Good governance items

6. COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

Agreed: Committees of the Board and members appointed.

The Board previously constituted a Fundraising Committee to review the quality of Durham SU's charitable fundraising. The work of the Committee has focussed on compliance with the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice. However there is no longer a need for a Committee with delegated power from the Board and the Fundraising Code of Practice work will be considered as a working group of Performance and Delivery Committee.

The trustees established People and Culture Committee and Performance and Delivery Committee as the two principal committees of the Board for the 2021/2022 academic year.

The membership of each committee will be two lay trustees, two officer trustees, and two student trustees. The trustees agreed appointments to committees for 2021/2022 academic year:

- **People and Culture Committee:** Clare Powne, Hannah Sketchley, Meg Wishart, Jonah Graham, Seun Twins
- **Performance and Delivery Committee:** Jonny Snowden, Caragh Aylett-Bullock, Robert Smith, Declan Merrington, Jack Ballingham

Student trustee vacancies on each committee will be elected in November 2021. The terms of reference for each Committee will be reviewed by the trustees at each of the first meetings, along with the appointment of a Chair.

The Board confirmed support for Graeme Osborn to be Chair, and Seun Twins to be Vice-Chair.

7. DELEGATION STATEMENT

Agreed: a statement of the delegation of the trustees' powers.

Delegation to committees and the staff team supports good governance and efficient and effective management by outlining responsibilities and provides clear direction for those acting on the Board's behalf. The trustees' authority is delegated in the areas of governance, risk management, people and culture, resource management, democracy, student groups, and day-to-day management.

The Chair queried if a limit could be set for the financial delegation upper approval limit for Performance and Delivery Committee sign off. This will be reviewed and updated and a reasonable limit set.

Strategic development items

8. SENIOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Agreed: development of the senior staff team.

9. DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE STRATEGY

Received: a presentation on the development of future strategy and the trustee's expectations on the year ahead.

Information items

10. SCHEDULE FOR 2021/2022

Noted: the schedule of meetings for 2021/2022.