

Lancaster University Students' Union Trustee BoardMinutes of the Emergency meeting held **Thursday 6 August 2020****Officer Trustees present:**

Bethan Morgan | VP Education [She/her]
 Shannon McCaul | VP Societies & Media [She/her]
 Paul McCarthy | VP Activities [He/him]
 Amy Merchant | VP Welfare [She/her]
 Atree Ghosh | VP Union Development [Ge/him]
 Oliver Robinson | President of SU | Chair of Trustee Board [He/him]

External Trustees present

Graeme Osborn | External Trustee | Vice Chair of Trustee Board [He/him]
 Amanda Chetwynd | External Trustee [She/her]

Student Trustees present

Callum Slater | Student Trustee [He/him]
 Sam Maesschalck | Student Trustee [He/him]
 Eloise Frost | Student Trustee [She/her]

In Attendance

Misbah Ashraf | Interim Chief Executive [She/her]
 Jane Morgan Jones | Financial Controller [She/her]

Observing

Amy Stanning | Mature Students Officer [She/her]
 Max Kafula | BAME Officer [He/him]
 Jesse Phillips | LGBT+ Officer [Them/they]
 Molly Lawson | Students with Disabilities Officer [She/her]

The emergency meeting took place via Microsoft Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Board acknowledged the meeting would be recorded for minute-taking purposes.

Agenda Item A1 | Declaration of Interests: Oliver Robinson's declared his role as a Councillor at Lancaster City Council**Agenda Item A2 | Apologies | Veronica Longmire, Minutes-taker****Agenda Item B1 | Budget 2020/21**

Board was asked to discuss the budget for 2021. Board noted that the budget being discussed is an update and not intended for approval at this stage. The Financial Controller acknowledged the large deficit, confirming further work is required to reduce the figure. Key areas discussed included: salary costs, student activities and operating costs. Further scrutiny of the budget will be undertaken by the Financial Controller and Chief Interim Executive on Monday 10 August.

Board noted that it was unusual to receive the budget this late and was due to exceptional circumstances. A revised budget is due by September and will be monitored and updated on a regular basis thereafter. Some funding from the University is yet to be agreed, including Roses Sports Development and the Sports Lancaster contribution. Where funding has not yet been approved, the costs have been removed; though some staff costs remain e.g., maternity leave. A further review of the costs will take place before the approval of the budget.

Board noted that the University is set to review its financial position in January 2021. If it has improved there may be the opportunity to review the cut to the block grant.

Clarity was sought regarding the reduced budget for IT and printing services. These areas had been identified to further reduce the deficit, including reducing printing costs, administrative costs, and IT provision and other contracts to be reviewed in relation to the impact of C-19 restrictions. Board noted that the block grant was not expected to be reduced further.

ACTION: The Financial Controller and the Interim Chief Executive will further scrutinise budgets on Monday 10 August

Action: President to review budgets for which FTOs have delegated responsibility by Tuesday 11 / Wednesday 12 August

ACTIONS: Interim CEO to circulate a revised budget w/c 17 August

Additional Agenda Item | Central Supermarket

Board discussed efforts to reduce the costs associated with Central in the context of the pandemic. This included opening hours, staffing, and reducing the rental burden relating to Central. The Chair of the Board will discuss the situation with the Vice Chancellor on Monday 10th August.

Agenda Item B1 | Budgets Continued: Managing the deficit

The Interim Chief Executive proposed reducing the deficit through staff costs such as: freezing recruitment and redeploying staff into other positions whereby skill-sets match; revising student staff salaries; and reviewing administrative operating costs such as phonelines and contracts. Board discussed the possibility of Sugarhouse opening in January 2021 and the furlough scheme ending in October.

Board discussed the support NUS offers, including: discounted events, general support, policy and procedure guidelines, and the IT system: union cloud platform. Board discussed the amount and timing of membership payments to NUS.

The Chair of the Board commended the Financial Controller and Interim Chief Executive's hard work on the budget work so far. Board queried the increase to staff costs of around £14,000, which was explained as essential measures to cover high workload. The costs outlined are to alleviate work pressures and to prevent further high costs, such as long-term sick leave.

Board noted that a new strategic plan would need to be developed once a permanent Chief Executive had been appointed. Board raised concerns as to whether a 3-year plan is feasible. Following discussions, Board noted that recruitment of the permanent role is to begin on Wednesday 12 August.

Purple Card

Board noted that the Purple Card offered students discount local to the Lancaster area and over the last few years, has faced increased competition such as Uni Days. Board noted that difficulties in these circumstances to source competitive deals for students and, if the Board voted to close Purple Card, refunds would need to be given for the remaining years for those who had purchased multiple-year cards. Board discussed the likelihood of businesses dropping off the scheme because of financial pressures, with deals being signed annually. It noted that no new deals had recently been signed for the coming year. Board agreed the main reason students buy a Purple Card is for discounts in Sugarhouse.

Following discussions, Board agreed to discontinue the Purple Card and agreed anyone with a multi-year card would be eligible for a refund. Board agreed that this should be as soon as possible. The Financial Controller will discuss the process for refunds with the Interim Chief Executive following the meeting.

ACTION: The Interim CEO to draft the announcement for the closure of Purple Card as soon as possible and a date of announcement is to be confirmed.

ACTION: The Financial Controller to discuss the process for refunds with the Interim Chief Executive following the meeting.

ACTION: The Interim Chief Executive to confirm options for membership payments to NUS.

ACTION: The Chair and VP UD to hold discussions about Extravs later in the year.

Agenda Item B2 | Green Lancaster

This item was presented by the Students' Union Development Manager for Sustainability.

Board was asked to consider authorising funding for Green Lancaster to continue its work. The Development Manager for Sustainability discussed a reduction to their funding for 2021, down by 8% from the previous year. The Development Manager for Sustainability explained how all projects have grown significantly over time including flagship projects with national presence, such as: Eco Hub, Don't Ditch It and Forest of the Future. Board noted that the Executive Committee declared a climate emergency in which the University put additional money towards Green Lancaster. Board agreed education of environmental sustainability is paramount in addressing the climate emergency. Board noted that operating costs were cut so the Development Manager for Sustainability could deliver the core programme for students.

Following discussions, Board approved the funding for Green Lancaster to continue its work, factoring this into the 2021 budget.

Board acknowledged how the Development Manager for Sustainability had been going above and beyond during the pandemic to continue its activities for students and, as a result, has been shortlisted for a staff award. Board further thanked Green Lancaster for its work ethic during this difficult time.

ACTION: The Interim Chief Executive is to include Green Lancaster costs in the budget.

Agenda Item B3 | LUSU Housing Ltd Contractors Contracts Amendments

Board considered LUSU Housing contract amendments. Board noted that the Financial Controller and Interim Chief Executive have been liaising with solicitors to review the wording of the housing contracts. The Interim Chief Executive will share the new wording with the Chair of the Trustee Board once received.

Agenda Item C1 | LUSU Housing Ltd Rent Arrangements 2020-21

Board discussed the issues of rent rebates, the likelihood of property owners reducing rents in the context of the mortgage holiday period ending, and a number of communications from property owners to this effect. To date, no tenants have asked to cancel their contracts with the organisation. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed the deficit would continue to grow as a result of any further rent reductions. The messages coming through from the Housing team were that students are keen to return to properties.

Board noted that students were making requests for all teaching to be online. Concerns were raised surrounding rent costs if students were unable to return to properties, and that around 65% of the international intake would face difficulty in returning to the University. Board further noted this topic is to be revisited depending on Government guidance, and that it aims to support students who face difficulty in attending on a case-by-case basis.

The Interim Chief Executive commended the Financial Controller for all her hard work on the budget. The Chair of the Board also thanked the Interim Chief Executive for her work.

ACTION: The Financial Controller and Interim Chief Executive are to review the LUSU Housing contract amendments and circulate with the Chair of the Board.

ACTION: The Interim Chief Executive to circulate a revised budget by Friday 14 August

ACTION: The Interim Chief Executive to diarise a meeting for w/c 17 August for final budget approval.

Agenda Item 7 | AOB |

ACTION: The Vice Chair of the Board is to review minutes.

The Chair thanked the Financial Controller and Interim Chief Executive for dealing with the incredible amount of work this matter had taken.

The Chair thanked the trustees for attending the meeting at short notice.