

## Lancaster University Students' Union Trustee Board

### Minutes of the formal meeting held Thursday 10 June 2021

Present		
Oliver Robinson	SU President & Chair of Trustee Board	He/Him
Atree Ghosh	SU VP Union Development	He/Him
Shannon McCaul	SU VP Societies & Media	She/Her
Amy Merchant	SU VP Welfare	She/Her
Amanda Chetwynd	External Trustee	She/Her
Sam Maesschalck	Student Trustee	He/Him
Callum Slater	Student Trustee	He/Him
In attendance		
Misbah Ashraf	SU Chief Executive	She/Her
David Dobson	Finance & Risk Sub-Committee member	
Veronica Longmire	Minutes	
Observers		
Gayatri Shewani	VP Education-elect	She/Her
Dom Casoria	VP Societies & Media-elect	He/Him
Rhys Peploe	Student Trustee-elect	He/Him
India Ellis	VP Union Development-elect	She/Her

The meeting took place via Microsoft Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic and led by the Chair of Board. Board acknowledged the meeting would be recorded for minutes purposes.

#### **Opening Business**

Members and the newly appointed student trustee were welcomed and thanked for joining the meeting | gratitude and appreciation expressed to the retired external trustee.

**Apologies** received from an officer trustee and the Financial Controller.

**Declarations of Interests** | interests declared by the full-time officers.

**Minutes of previous meeting and Matters Arising from the minutes** | Meeting held 18 March 2021 agreed as a fair reflection of the meeting. Outstanding actions from the minutes highlighted and noted.

#### **Matters for Formal Approval / Consent**

Discussion included the impact of the delay in releasing the 2020 tenants contracts | the acknowledgement of Board the intention to market properties was always there; the changes were pertinent to timing | the proposals in an attempt to reduce the anticipated deficit noting detailed consultation had occurred | any decision made must reassure property owners | potential to introduce non-refundable deposits | importance of good marketing | need to mitigate risks. Proposals were approved.

Board noted that there was no Trustees Code of Conduct in place currently | the impact this caused in relation to governance and good practice | the need to protect trustees and the Charity. Board agreed that baseline Charity Commission guidelines be used and discussions continue between all trustees in order to adopt a finalised code as soon as possible.

Board acknowledged the status, lease lapse, opportunity to discuss the future of Central Stores | a summer rent freeze offer | required percentage of turnover in the long term | budgets, forecasts and guestimate scenarios [not able to foresee the longer term position] | main campus competitor | store location | unlikelihood of an immediate uplift in students in that location | potential appointment of a Commercial Manager [who would only be able to work with resources available] | lack of infrastructure to increase income | the significant amount of work undertaken | outcomes from conversations with the University and other organisations re partnership/franchise possibilities | skeleton budget | no current information on costs around winding down the operation and no desire to close the outlet currently.

Board accepted, resulting from discussion, the proposal to continue operations for one year with a mid-point review submitted to the Finance & Risk Sub-Committee and Board. Further considerations to be given to other points raised.

#### **Items for Discussion**

##### **Management Accounts | 30 April year to date and Cash Flow Update**

Board acknowledged the management accounts | cash-flow update which highlighted savings due to lower salaries and the recruitment gap | Covid grants received | improved commercial marketing income | potential profit currently for Housing | pursuance of bad debts | ring-fenced designate funding from the University | continued recruitment freeze within the organisation | staffing at very minimum | block grant and salaries | officers working longer hours with limited support | streamlining of student staff | that responsibilities under the Education Act 1994

were being met. Substantial thanks passed to the Chief Executive for management of operations on the tight budget and smaller staffing level. Chair echoed that placing extra work on the current staff team must be avoided.

#### **Draft Budget 21-22 and Forecasts 22-24**

Board acknowledged it was not being asked to approve the budget as the management challenge to reduce the deficit had not been reached | the submitted document as a first draft highlighting to Board and incoming officers how the organisation was now significantly different | the need for substantial changes to protect its future | broad assumptions | the lack of funds for anything other than essentials [health, safety, compliance and operating costs only] | the need to exit from all research and insight projects | the belief the budget demonstrated financial prudence | the importance for the membership to be fully informed of the position | the current Reserves position and the strict reasoning for having these in place | the main risks to the organisation | the Chair's agreement to the need to align with the University strategy, the need to demonstrate the aspirations of the Union going forward and the belief the strategic objectives should include an itemised budget line for staff salaries.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and Financial Controller for work on the budget in an attempt to reduce the deficit and to the team for work done and the work being undertaken to yield a positive outcome, cut expenditure and boost income.

#### **Items for Information**

**Chair's Report** | appreciated the level of engagement in the meeting | believed most of the Liberation & Campaigns Officers' requests had been accommodated and was confident matters could be resolved peacefully.

**External Trustees Recruitment** | seven candidates had been shortlisted for interview and recommendations for appointment would be ratified by the Executive Committee | felt it important to note disappointment in terms of the EDI aspect of the process | believed it would not be problematic that Liberation Campaigns Officers would not be present at the meeting ratifying new external trustees.

**Full-Time Officers** | incoming full-time officers formally welcomed and thanks passed to the outgoing officers for the work done during their year of office.

**Report from Chief Executive** | Board acknowledged the report and the highlights around work on the financial aspect and stability of the Union | appreciation to staff taking on extra tasks | Board's responsibilities around HR matters as staff were at exhaustion point | indications that some staff did not wish to return to campus and contacting HR directly | the need for staff presence in the Union to meet membership expectations | Trades Unions requests to HR to introduce a flexible working policy | the University's unwillingness to adopt a permanent working from home status | the need for staff presence on site to meet membership expectations | issue not just pertinent to Lancaster or sector | space implications | key and important to be a vibrant Union.

#### **Brief Update and Reflection of year from outgoing Full-time Officers**

Atree Ghosh, VP Union Development | it had been a difficult year and a tough journey which was not going to end any time soon. However, it had been a productive term of office with valuable experience to take away.

Shannon McCaul, VP Societies & Media | thanked everyone for their help and would miss everyone.

**Democracy and Governance Update/Matters** | Student trustee appointment dealt with.

**Complaints Update / Matters** | Board acknowledged that a number of complaints had been received but none threatened the integrity of the organisation.

**Safeguarding Update** | Board acknowledged that two referrals had been made through the University but did not meet safeguarding thresholds | one referral potentially met the threshold.

**Student Trustees Items for Discussion** | Board noted the oversight and apology from the Chief Executive in regards to the Graduate College Extrav budget. Confirmation was given that funding was available.

**Decisions approved electronically since previous meeting** | Decisions approved electronically were noted.

**Approved Minutes to Note** | Board noted approved minutes from Trustee Board sub-committees.

**Health & Safety / Wellbeing Group** | Board acknowledged that a review of the group was to take place.

#### **Additional and Future Business**

**Forward Schedule of Business** | contents and actions to update the document were noted.

**Date and time of next meeting** | October 2021 meeting date noted.

**Any Other Business** | clarification given that the LCOs boycott was towards the Students' Union and mediation had been arranged with a third party. The proposal for LCOs to be invited to meet with Board in the future was agreed.

The Chair then extended thanks to outgoing officers, the Chief Executive, the newly appointed student trustee, the continuing student trustees and the current external trustee for everything.