

Trustee Board

Minutes

29th October 2015, 3pm
Lady Margaret Hall

Present:

Nick Cooper (NC) *VP Graduates*, Lucy Delaney (LD) *VP Women*, Rebecca Howe (RH) *Chair*, James Hunt (JH) *External Trustee*, Harini Iyengar (HI) *External Trustee*, Richard Jackson (RJ) *External Trustee*, Catherine Jones (CJ) *VP Access and Academic Affairs*, Alasdair Lennon (AL) *VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities*, Emily Silcock (ES) *VP Charities and Community*, Eden Tanner (ET) *Student Trustee*, and Baranby Willis (BW) *Student Trustee*.

In Attendance:

Amelia Foster (AF) *CEO*, and Ami Gell (AG) *Democratic Support Officer*.

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Tom Flynn (TF) *External Trustee*.

Noted that the board had not heard from James Elliott (JE) *Student Trustee*.

2. Minutes from previous meeting (Paper 1)

The minutes were approved by the board.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

No matters arising from the minutes.

4. CEO's Report (Paper 2 & Appendices A-D)

AF presented the report. The Board noted the unaudited year-end accounts. The Board appointed BW as the student trustee who would sit on the Finance Committee. (3.1.1)

Rachel Walker (RW), OUSU's subsidiary accountant, entered the meeting.

AF asked the Board to approve the use of the reserves as set out in the three-year funding request. (3.1.2) AF highlighted that it is incredibly difficult to forecast four years into the future, in advance of any strategic work taking place, and during a period of growth for OUSU.

RJ asked how the use of the reserves tied in with the University asking us to use our reserves as part of the three-year settlement.

RW explained that when AF began, we had forecast with the University that we would use £50,000 of our reserves, and take ourselves into a deficit for the current financial year that we have just finished. As AF was new to the organisation, it was not deemed a good idea to start looking at branding and developing new projects, consequently leading to a surplus of £20,000 for the financial year that has just finished, rather than a deficit of £50,000. The planned deficit for the financial year we are entering is due to the need to spend reserves on major projects.

The Board questioned what the 'Good Lad' scheme is. AF explained that the University want to fund this scheme, and that they want to fund it through OUSU. AF summarised that the scheme works with student 'lads' from sports teams etc. to rephrase positive masculinity, and tackle lad culture within the University. Members of the Board raised concerns with the scheme and its content.

AF noted that we recognise that we are very unlikely to reach the projected level of drawdown from the reserves, as pension contributions have to be accounted for, despite the fact that not all staff members are taking their pension.

JH made clear that we need to be ready to answer questions on why we are forecasting such a big deficit. AF explained that this was necessary in order to show willing to the University to spend down our reserves. JH added that it is not timed well with discussions around strategy and AF noted that it was unlikely for the University to give OUSU additional money over and above previously agreed figures. AF added that when she sends the request, she will note that this has not matched well with our strategic process, explaining that the future of OUSU looks very different going forward.

RJ asked what would happen if the University refused to give any further money, questioning if we would dip below the advised level of reserves and eventually run out of money. AF confirmed that we have split out what we want the money for, so if we do not get the money for projects, we will not do them.

AF flagged the risk of the University charging a facility fee, as they attempted to do last year.

The Board approved the decision to reduce the reserves.

AF noted that when OUSU last set the reserves policy, a decision was made to put aside £100,000 for a capital project. The Board agreed that this fund could be 'un-designated'.

RW updated the Board that OSSL had made a very pleasing start to the year.

RW left the meeting.

AF asked the Board to approve the creation of a Membership Services Manager post (3.2.2), a role that is designed to make a huge difference to the lives of the sabbatical officers, as well as

improving the efficiency of the campaigns. BW questioned if we should approve this prior to receiving a job description. AF answered that she would be drafting a job description, but would not expect to need the trustees to look over this. Added that she planned to circulate it to the sabbs so they could have input on what would be useful. AF confirmed the intention for the post to be a senior role, which would line manage the Democratic Support Officer and the Academic Representation Officer.

The Board discussed the potential elements that the job would have. CJ raised the issue that there may be a mismatch between the type of support that the sabbs need, and the level of the job. Suggested that they need administrative support rather than managerial support.

AF explained that she envisaged a much higher level of support, as the campaigns need to be supported effectively, with someone who understands what their job is. Stated that campaigns should be capable of doing their own admin, and a manager will instead be able to write handbooks and deliver training, therefore empowering them to develop their campaigns themselves.

ES informed the Board that RAG have stopped emailing her since the introduction of a RAG coordinator, suggesting that adding staff members to look after campaigns does work, and does take work away from the sabbs.

The Board agreed to approve the Membership Services Manager role.

The Board noted that an additional member of staff would also be useful to assist with administrative and routine tasks.

AF explained the need to appoint a Deputy Chair (3.3.2), as it is not appropriate to discuss issues relating to permanent members of staff with sabbatical officers.

RJ suggested that there is nothing to stop AF talking to the external trustees as and when it is helpful, and suggested that it is part of their role description to be on hand when required. HI reiterated this, informing AF that she should be able to contact any of them when needed.

The Board agreed that Amelia would contact external trustees as suggested by RJ/HI as and when she needs them, and would review this process at the next meeting.

RJ asked if there was a conflict of interest having the President as Chair of the Board, as it slightly inhibits RH from contributing to the discussion. Added that in the new articles, the President is not named, and does not have to be the Chair of the board.

The Board agreed that RH should be able to voice opinions on subjects in her role as President, despite the fact that she is chairing the meeting. The Board decided to continue as

they are, with RH able to contribute, as some members were not comfortable with the idea of a rotating Chair.

AF asked the Board to discuss and approve the risk register (3.4.1), and reconvene and populate a Risk Committee.

RJ suggested that it is more useful for the Board to receive a recommendation from the Risk Committee, rather than have the whole Board running through the register line by line.

The Board agreed to reconvene the Risk Committee. The Board agreed that the committee would be made up of ET, LD, CJ, and that TF would be approached to sit on the committee.

5. Sabbatical Officers' Report (Paper 3)

RH noted the plan of action to move to Hilary Term elections, which will be discussed at the next meeting of JSECSM. RH to feed back to the Board at the next meeting.

Agreed that AG will circulate the council agenda to the Board prior to each meeting.

6. By-Election of student trustees (Paper 4)

RH asked the Board to confirm that they want to continue to elect the maximum number of student trustees, and agreed that they will declare two vacancies and the calling of a by-election to fill them.

The Board discussed when notice of the by-election would be given and agreed that it should be in early Hilary.

The Board confirmed that they want the maximum number of student trustees and agreed that they will declare the two vacancies.

7. 'Safer' (Paper 5)

AL summarised that the idea behind the 'Safer' proposal is to partner with the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs (ISCD) an organisation which educate drug users on how to be safer when using recreational drugs, something which has become more and more important with the increased use of legal highs. Explained the aim is to have more information available in order to safeguard our students.

HI asked if there is any existing material about what happens if you are found with illegal substances in your college that could go out with this. AL replied that this is being worked on in the University, who look like moving to a more liberal approach. AF added that different colleges treat things differently, so there is no uniformity across the University that we can distribute.

The Board questioned if this would go to OUSU council. AL explained that his plan was to disseminate this information quietly through the appropriate channels, including the Student Advice Service, and that the information will very clearly include something about substance abuse and how it affects those around you. The Board raised concerns about the public impact around this going wrong, and suggested that this information still makes clear that we are against drug use. AF stated that she is comfortable that harm reduction is a very good thing, and while we should recognise that people may give OUSU bad press, we need to be confident that we are doing a good thing, and ready to respond to any negative feedback.

The Board made observations about public relations, but agreed the plan. **Action:** To add 'Safer' to the Risk Register.

8. Review of OUSU Council (Paper 6)

NC reported that the rules of Council have not been looked at for a long time, so the sabbs mandated themselves to conduct a review before the end of this term. NC listed four key areas for the Board to discuss, including the composition of Council, whether to promote more referenda/preferenda, looking at how policy is set by OUSU and whether the Board thinks it useful to put more resources into Council, or if it would be better to allocate money in other ways.

The Board responded favourably to the idea of more referenda, particularly in relation to more use of digital platforms. They discussed the potential for incentivizing referenda, and agreed to measure the success of this during the elections. RJ pointed out that we would need to give consideration to whether or not the results of such referenda would be binding, and consider this in relation to the governance. Noted that the Articles have been changed to allow for advisory votes. The Board considered the problem with one member one vote, which would be problematic for liberation issues, and also gives people the option to flood the room, if this method were to be used within actual meetings.

The Board agreed to give referenda/preferenda a try.

9. AOB

The Board agreed that ET would report to council on behalf of the Board.

10. Date of next meetings

Action: AF to circulate potential dates for the next meetings.