

Oxford University Student Union  
Company Number: 07314850  
Charity Number: 1140687

Trustee Board Meeting, 24 June 2011 at 12.00  
at the Registered Office, 2 Worcester Street, Oxford OX1 2BX

### MINUTES

#### Present:

David Barclay (Chair), Richard Jackson, Daniel Stone, Alice Thornton, Beth Evans, Daniel Lowe, Paul Silk, Martha Mackenzie, Philip Harvey, Seb Baird, Jonny Medland, Tom Perry, David J Townsend, Yuan Yang, Alex Bulfin (from item 4), Hannah Cusworth (from item 4)

#### In Attendance:

Brona O'Toole (CEO), Karen Irving (minutes), Keith Zimmerman (University Director of Student Administration and Services)

#### 1. Apologies and welcome

Apologies received from Katharine Terrell and Jim O'Connell. The chair welcomed the new Sabbatical Trustees.

#### 2. Minutes from the previous meeting:

The minutes were agreed as a correct record. BOT explained the system of confidential and open minutes, with confidential items being boxed out.

##### a. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

- i. BOT reminded Trustees to send through thoughts on major risks facing the organisation, to feed into the risk register.
- ii. JM asked if open minutes could be posted on the OUSU website, as well as the names of the Trustees. **(ACTION BOT)**
- iii. DJT tabled a paper regarding clarifying the relationship between the Trustee Board and OUSU Council on matters of Council policy, which had also been circulated via email. This had originally been proposed as an agenda item but, due to the pressure on the day's agenda, DJT agreed to table it for the Board to note and for substantive informal discussions on the issues it raised to continue outside the formal meeting. Trustees welcomed this proposal.

#### 3. Reports

- a. The Board received and noted Paper 2, Council Reports from Sabbatical Officers. DL reported an update: that OUSU's Environment and Ethics Committee had succeeded in getting the University to agree a policy on not using sweatshops for its merchandise. This was noted as the Committee's biggest success to date.
- b. **Student Advice Service Report (Paper 3):** the Board noted the contents of this report. TP remarked that the outgoing VP Welfare produces a report on the Service annually by for the purpose of Handover to the new Officer, but also to circulate to the University to highlight issues emerging from the Service and ongoing plans for it. It had been presented to the Trustees to introduce the workings of OUSU's Student Advice Service, which runs quite differently from Advice Services run by other Unions. The Board welcomed the report and noted that it was a helpful introduction as well as clearly a useful report in itself, which the Board hoped would continue

to be produced. The figures it contained were noted as particularly useful. Some suggestions were made on presentation, with a suggestion from DJT that the start dates of casework could be mapped onto the Oxford termly cycle to see the fluctuations. BOT noted that the report echoed thoughts on the risk inherent in a student-run Advice Service that had been identified in her work on the organisational review.

It was agreed that the report should be circulated widely. KZ endorsed this view, suggesting that a wider circulation in Colleges would be productive, as Conference of Colleges had been very supportive of the Service in funding discussions as a direct result of seeing these annual reports. Suggestions for circulation included OUSU Council, All Student Mail-list, Senior Tutors list, Student Deans, as well as all College Presidents and Welfare Officers. **(ACTION VP WELFARE, Seb Baird)**

Thanks were noted to TP and all Officers involved in the Service.

- c. **OUSU Annual Report (Paper 3a, tabled):** DB tabled a draft of OUSU's Annual Report for 2010-11, noting that there were items to be added before it was sent to a design and layout process. It was noted that it was a requirement to produce an annual report as part of the Charity Commission submission with Annual Accounts, as well as being a key vehicle for communicating with Stakeholders, including the University and the wider student body. It was agreed that some information on loose objectives for the coming year should be included, and to include a 'year in numbers' with some headline figures relating to indicators and strategy. **(ACTION DB)**
4. **Strategic Planning:** BOT tabled Paper 4, an outline transition plan. She explained that it had been tabled largely for the new Sabbatical Trustees, to introduce the wide variety of governance and management work being undertaken towards a strategic plan and OUSU's compliance as a charity.

The Board noted that key workstreams underway included work on Trustee Policies, A Review of Byelaws led by RJ, the formulation of a Risk Register led by PS, an Officer and Staffing Review led by BOT which would identify gaps and highlight issues and build on the findings of the previous Strategic Review; as well as BOT's work establishing management tools such as Gantt charts and planning cycles. BOT remarked that consultation with students would be necessary on the Officer Review as well as the 'Mission Vision, Values' preface to a final plan, and she would be working with the new Sabbatical team on a communications strategy for that. BOT outlined other work underway including plans for a new Website and a review of publications. She emphasised that all the work being undertaken was essential preparatory work which would feed into and help define a Long-term 3-5 year plan.

PH remarked that having a 3-5 year plan would be very strong but noted the difficulty that the University's contribution is negotiated yearly. He raised the possibility of the Trustees reviewing this with the University, as some confidence about the trajectory of resource would be useful for both OUSU and University. BOT concurred that a 3-year rolling funding agreement against agreed objectives would be helpful. KZ remarked that most services within the University are structured on an annual funding cycle in the same way as OUSU but acknowledged the difficulty this posed for medium-term planning.

KZ also remarked that funding for OUSU had originally been discussed as a rolling agreement, and that the strategic plan was exactly the kind of document which would give University confidence in OUSU and re-open the possibility for this

discussion. He also noted that the Trustee board should be a primary focus for a relationship with the University and as such the Board should be robust in expressing its view on how that relationship should be.

## 5. Governance

### a. Trustee Relationship with University

KZ thanked the Board for inviting him to speak on ways to develop the relationship between OUSU's Trustees and the University. He expressed his intention to briefly outline some key challenges faced by the University, on which joint working and planning with OUSU would be welcome and beneficial, but indicated he would like to come back to the Board in the autumn with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Sally Mapstone) to discuss in greater detail how this might be achieved.

He identified the increasing focus in Higher Education policy on 'the student experience' as a major area of work for the University. The University have taken more responsibility for this, and are looking more holistically at the range of services offered to Oxford students. KZ indicated that there is a set of external pressures which are driving this focus, and offered the view that it is a missed opportunity not to engage students in the planning and quality assurance process.

KZ remarked he would single out OUSU's Teaching Review, for both undergraduate and taught post graduate courses, as an example of what the University is looking for in its relationship with OUSU, and the way that OUSU can help shape the University response to student needs.

He identified five specific areas of challenge which he would like to discuss in greater depth at a future meeting:

- Communicating Oxford's access agreement: why potential students should want to come to Oxford, financial benefits and nature of the experience;
- Induction and Orientation: how do we prepare students to come to Oxford; many come and struggle once they're here; there is more that can be done before students arrive, and a need to coordinate this;
- Disability support: the University's own mission, support for disabled students. Area of active review for University;
- Employability: focus for students and one of the areas where added value of Oxford is clear. Currently carrying out review of alumni to gauge value of coming to Oxford and what they have been doing next. There is value in coordinating this work with OUSU;
- Alumni relations and engagement in the life of the University: ways alumni can contribute. Internships and International internships; sense of gap struggling to meet. How alumni can work closely with students in new and innovative ways.

The Board welcomed this presentation and agreed that KZ should return for more detailed discussions. DL asked for KZ's thoughts on the relationship between the University and wider city. KZ indicated that there were challenges inherent in this relationship and in the city's view on how many students should be in Oxford and the cap on student numbers. He commented that he would like to add the means of encouraging active student engagement in the wider community to the list of areas for joint working. **(ACTION: KZ to liaise with BOT re date for returning to Board)**

### b. Byelaws Review

RJ spoke to Paper 5. He reiterated that the Review was being undertaken to ensure that OUSU's governing documents were fit for purpose and were an

opportunity to streamline and rationalise existing (sometimes contradictory) documents. He explained that the Paper was a pre-draft of a first draft of byelaws and he did not propose to go through it in depth at the meeting, but was circulating it in order to get a snapshot from Trustees to indicate whether the draft was broadly along the lines expected.

He said the teaching day and subsequent discussions with Officers and staff had been most productive and have identified areas which need careful thought and may require separate spin off projects, such as OUSU Campaigns, Council procedures and Complaints procedures.

A timetable for delivering had been drafted and was aiming for introduction in Michaelmas Term, which in RJ's view might be optimistic, but he indicated he was happy to be guided by Officers' views on this.

RJ asked all Trustees to read through the Paper (draft and commentary) and feed back to him by Tuesday 28 June, indicating their approval of the broad approach taken. **(ACTION: All Trustees)**

RJ would then aim to get a first draft and commentary out within the first week or two of July, **(ACTION: RJ)**. The Board were unanimous in recording thanks to RJ for undertaking this work.

**c. OUSU Elections**

DJT spoke to Paper 6 & 7. He explained that the Papers dealt with proposed changes to OUSU's Standing Orders regarding Elections, which had come out of the Electoral Review Group formed to address identified issues arising from the last elections in Michaelmas Term 2010. These changes had been formally approved by OUSU Council and had gone to Referendum.

DJT said it was not strictly necessary for Trustees to approve these documents but that it would be good practice for Trustees to note them, as they would be going to the University Joint Committee for formal approval in readiness for Michaelmas Term 2011. It was proposed that the Papers should be sent to the Chair of the Joint Committee asking for Chair's Action in approving them, as if it waited until the next meeting of the Committee it would be too late to implement them in time for the next elections.

The Board noted the proposed Changes.

**(ACTION DJT/ DB/BOT: Forward Papers to JSSM Chair for approval)**

**d. Student Trustees**

BOT raised a point of procedure regarding the status of Student Trustees and the cut-off point for ceasing to be a Trustee. She highlighted that two of our current Trustees would cease to be students (and therefore cease to be Trustees) in the summer, months before the statutory elections to elect their replacement. Discussion ensued and the Board agreed to discuss outside the meeting and bring options to another meeting. **(ACTION: ALL TRUSTEES/BOT)**

**6. AOB**

DJT proposed a formal vote of thanks to DB for his work as Chair and to all departing Officer Trustees. The Board passed unanimously.

**7. Date of next meeting: Friday 23 September 2011.**