

O2Board of the Trustees

3-12-20

Action

6 ATTENDANCE

6.1 Present

Tanya Curry (Lay trustee), Richard Halderthay (Lay trustee), Teresa Jordan (Lay trustee), Fatima Lakhani (Officer trustee), Emily Long (Officer trustee), Erin Nazeraj (Student trustee), Avinash Miriyam (Officer trustee and Chair), Omkar Singh (Officer trustee), Jason Snowdon (Officer trustee), Nick Worrall (Lay trustee)

In Attendance

Linda Collett (Minute taker), Bethan Dudas (Avocacy & Engagement Director), Jo Harbrow-Harris (Activities & Operations Director), John Valerkou (CEO)

6.2 Apologies

Riya Gadhavi (Officer trustee)

6.3 Absent

Palak Jain (Student trustee)

6.4 Declaration of interest

None

7 ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

7.1 Accuracy

The previous Minutes were accepted as a true record.

7.2 Matters Arising

3.2 – Implications of the new strategy on the Board – This would be discussed as part of the board effectiveness review which would be on the agenda for the next Appointments and Governance meeting. It was noted that trustees would be encouraged to adhere to input at a governance level.

4.2 – ARU London additional funding – The ARU London staffing structure was being considered in order to justify a bit for additional funding for next year's budget – this was part of the ARU London five year plan.

4.4 – Access to commitments ledger – Currently awaiting a response from the consultants (Unit 4). It was hoped that this would be received before Christmas.

4.4 – Incomplete officer campaigns – Officers had decided against taking the drug harm awareness campaign forward, but the VP S&E would be taking forward the accessibility campaign. The other officer campaigns from last year were complete. The mental health campaign would be an ongoing one.

5.1 – Campaigns budgets – Attendance at Exec meetings was currently good so penalties were not necessary.

8 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/DISCUSSION

8.1 Volunteering spotlight

The volunteering manager presented his spotlight session and took questions from the Board.

- Any face to face opportunities and those in health related settings had reduced considerably due to the lack of the organisations' staff to support or train volunteers. Students had also been less inclined to volunteer during the pandemic.
- The Student Volunteering Network existed to support students who were studying online in locating opportunities at different locations around the country. It was noted that further collaboration could be undertaken with this network to build better partnerships.

Volunteering was a core part of the strategy, but resources were limited, so the volunteer hero plan had been created to encourage students to plan and run events which would expand the scope of the service. This would also enable students to experience skills and project manage in the real world.

8.2 Projects update

The strategic projects manager introduced herself and her role. She then presented her session and took questions and comments from the Board.

The Board extended their thanks to the strategic projects manager and commended her for her passion and for embedding a values-led culture into the organisation.

8.3 Strategic update

Measuring strategy had been discussed at the Appointments and Governance (A&G) committee. It would need to measure whether the values were being delivered well and it would be important to match the spend profile with the time profile. Spend on the score cards would relate solely to strategy costs, so unrelated costs should also be considered.

It was noted that the values focussed on staff as it was felt important that the staff voice was heard at Board level as well as the senior management input.

There would be a post implementation review on each project to evaluate both qualitative and quantitative outcomes and staff would be encouraged to include more than one student in impact stories wherever possible.

The Board noted their approval of the balance scorecard proposal and the plan was AGREED.

8.4 Young Street and Compass House proposal

The original proposal had come from the University COO and offered an opportunity to increase the Union's stretch.

The proposal had been discussed by the Finance and Risk (F&R) committee on 26 November who had recommended actions from that meeting. The proposal had been broadly agreed on a cost plus, no risk basis, with one-off set up costs being covered by the University, but the

proposal would be dependent on University agreement to these terms, and no movement would be made without Board approval.

It was agreed that it was important to reach out to those students in these buildings, provided there was no risk for the Union.

It was noted that the University had not looked at taking on these outlets as their catering service was already overstretched, particularly as they were currently providing meals to students who were isolating.

The Board AGREED the proposal in principle, provided there was no risk or cost to the Union. The Board delegated responsibility for agreeing the proposal to the F&R committee, provided the University agreed the cost plus terms. If the University did not agree the terms, the proposal would need to be brought back to the Board.

8.5 ARU London project update

The update was due to be taken to the ARU London Board. It was agreed that although the document was eye catching, there was a preference for a more reflective piece on the challenges faced: what had gone really well, and what could have been done better. It was agreed that these would be included in the next round of reporting.

BD

8.6 Policy updates

This item was removed from the agenda.

9 STANDING ITEMS

9.1 Office campaigns update

VP S&E highlights

- Collaboration with Team ARU
- SU Town hall – all University and SU staff had been invited
- Regular communications channels to help engage with students, including weekly meetings with the faculty
- Policy updates were almost complete and should make a long-term impact
- Community challenge – anything which everyone could join in with
- Sustainability strategy – aiming to make ARU SU a leader on sustainability. The Board requested that the VP S&E share some thoughts on this. It was noted that the University sustainability strategy had appeared on a local news TV item.

EL

VP AHSS highlights

- Weekly “study with me” sessions in collaboration with peer mentors.
- AHSS newsletter including competitions, quizzes and updates.

VP B&L highlights

- Progress made on business incubation centre including set up of leadership board.
- Employment opportunities created for both MBA and non-MBA students.

President highlights

- Working on setting up BAME students’ committee
- Working on mental health campaign

VP HEMS

There was no update as the VP HEMS was on leave but the President reported that she had been working closely with the faculty and had built good relationships with them. She had also been working with placement students.

9.2 Chief Executive's report

- 400 students had booked for covid testing before leaving campus.
- The activities team would be distributing goodie boxes and Christmas cards to students who were leaving campus, and the VP S&E had been working on supplying holiday boxes for those students who would be staying on campus over Christmas.
- It was unclear how many students would be staying in accommodation over Christmas.
- Government guidelines had just been released regarding students returning to campus – this would be done in phases over a five-week period, starting on 4 January. The first students to return would be those studying lab-based courses, followed by first and third years, and finally second years.
- 30-40 students would be arriving from Europe from 30-31 December to ensure that they received settled status.
- Up to 700 international students were due to arrive in January.
- Staff were still in the main working from home, although there was a rota to ensure that the offices remain open and accessible to students.

The Board expressed concern over the lack of certainty of the number of students in halls and noted that this was a Health and Safety concern.

9.3 Financial report

It was noted that once again the block grant had not been paid on time. However, the cash balance was now quite healthy.

- The predicted loss of £28k did not include the income from the extended furlough scheme.
- Costs had been stripped back to reflect the level of business.
- It was noted that the lack of accruals information meant that the figures were misleading.
- Black Friday sales had generated 45 transactions and £1k income, which was pleasing, although less than had been hoped. A comms team member had worked with their commercial counterpart on each campus, which had resulted in much improved marketing.

9.4 To receive minutes of the sub committees

• Appointments and Governance

The main points of discussion at the last meeting were KPIs, how the committee can support trustees in their governance role and trustees' tenures. The possibility of setting up a digital sub-committee was also discussed but it was felt that the Union was not in a position to take this forward, so it had been agreed that a conversation would be held with Richard Halderthay, which would be reported back to the committee.

Contracts and the scheme of delegated authority had been discussed and it was noted that only large contracts would need to be brought to the Board.

The Board effectiveness review would form part of the agenda for the next meeting.

- **Finance and Risk**

The main points of discussion at the last meeting were access to the University accounting system, management accounts, risk and the draft accounts.

Progress had been made on gaining access to Business World but the next step was for work to be done by Unit4, the contractors. There was currently no date for completion but the CEO had been asked to keep pressure on both Unit4 and the University.

Income from the extended furlough scheme would have a positive effect on the predicted deficit. The committee had requested that figures be supplied with the impact of government support extracted in order that any trends could be identified and remedial action taken if necessary.

The online platform, which had been reinvigorated by the new shop manager, had seen sales in six weeks that had equalled sales in the last six years.

Commercial trading was forecast to be adversely impacted by covid. Despite extending opening hours to match teaching, this had proved unprofitable, as there was no pattern to trade, so the hours had been cut back again.

Progress continued to be made on the risk register, including the Finance Manager taking over the admin. The risk appetite statement had been published on the website. Covid risks feature quite heavily in the current top ten risks, but no risks were at a level to require immediate attention. Work was continuing to identify strategic risks, which would be reported upon to the Board.

Work was continuing on the draft accounts: the final version would be brought to the Board meeting in February for approval. HMRC were challenging VAT exemptions regarding the sale of alcohol with food, but there had been no challenge locally yet. NUS had asked unions to join together in undertaking a judicial review, but as there would be no right of appeal after such a review, it had been decided that ARU SU would not take part. It had also been agreed that the Union would not make a self-declaration, as it had not broken any of the rules. The situation would be taken into consideration during the development of the new Cambridge bar.

- **HR and Employee Engagement**

The main items for discussion at the last meeting had been reviewing contracts and the home working policy, the staff engagement survey and the mental wellness group.

The HR& people operations manager would be reviewing staff contracts and the home

working policy in the light of covid and increased home working.

The next staff engagement survey would take place in January/February next year, and would be the full national NUS census. Results would be available in April.

The mental wellbeing group had been reinstated and would be working with staff on completing individual mental wellness action plans. It was noted that the Union had been an exemplar in handling staff mental health issues.

10 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION OR TO NOTE

10.1 To note report from interim Executive meetings

It was noted that attendance at Executive meetings had greatly improved and had started to make a difference. Unfilled positions had been well contested in the recent bye election and most had now been filled.

The first Executive meeting had passed the changes to the mental health rep and Board sub-committee members bye laws. It was noted that the University had now adopted the hidden disabilities campaign.

10.2 Buddying update

Meetings were taking place according to the needs of each member. It was agreed that in the event of a potential problem, lay trustees should raise these with the CEO in the first instance.

The A&ED would arrange for a buddy for the new student trustees.

BD

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Student trustee update

It was suggested that the student trustees should give their feedback at each Board meeting.

JV

EN observed that many students on campus were mature and could be feeling lonely and isolated. It was noted that the University were running workshops for students and that the SU was also providing support in a variety of different ways.

11.2 Trustee video

The VP S&E noted that she was planning a regular video update for trustees. It was also suggested that lay trustees could receive up to date information on the officers' activities via their social media accounts.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 25 February 2021 – 2.00-5.00 pm

Signature

Position

Date: