Cambridge University Students’ Union Trustee Board

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<th>Meeting of:</th>
<th>CUSU Trustee Board</th>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>CUSU Offices, 17 Mill Lane</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date/Time:</td>
<td>6th December 2016, 18:00-20:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Attendance:</td>
<td>Trustees: Chair, Amatey Doku (AD); Page Nyame-Satterthwaite (PNS); Audrey Sebatindira (AS); Roberta Huldisch (RH); Éireann Attridge (EA); Alex Bols (AB).</td>
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<td>Apologies:</td>
<td>Péter Juhász (PJ); Gareth Marlow (GM).</td>
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<td>Invitees in attendance:</td>
<td>Mark McCormack (MM).</td>
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A. Board Administration

A1. Apologies – PJ and GM.

A2. Conflicts of interest – PNS made the Board aware of an association to item D(iii). Board resolved that the association was indirect and relatively minor and that no conflict was at that stage foreseen.

A3. Minutes of the last meeting

Matters Arising: Minutes of November meeting were not considered as they were not presented; MM explained the short-turnaround between meetings had meant minutes were not able to be prepared.

Matters Arising: External Trustee Recruitment.

- AB asked about background and of plans related to promoting applications from all backgrounds in recruitment process.
- MM updated: period of office of External Trustees has come to an end; since previous meeting documentation has been completed and preparations made. Applications expect to be open until mid-January and therefore open for approximately one month. MM was awaiting support from NUS, who were coordinating a collective, national trustee recruitment drive; and from the University’s alumni development office.
- AD enquired as to how CUSU could attract applications from groups less represented within the Union or at trustee level.
- MM responded: CUSU follows CUSU’s Race Matters guidance on recruiting to positions in the Union. MM gave examples of how the guidance was employed in practice and efforts made historically to attract applications from those less represented in the Union.

ACTION: MM will circulate a skills matrix to the current members of the Board and a self-evaluation form for Board members.
A4. Starring and ordering or items for decision/discussion; deferring of items until next Board.
None

B. Organisation Updates

B(i). Organisational and Staffing Developments

MM provided an overview of the Union’s organisational affairs; of note were:

- Shadowing Scheme was well under way; more volunteers than previously recorded resulting in more DBS checks. EA and Hannah Sketchley have been working extremely hard on the project and were to be congratulated on their work so far.
- Big Cambridge Survey analysis and design in the finishing stages and will soon be ready to launch. We have additional data this year including information relating to students’ university choices prior to Carrying at Cambridge; data set will become increasingly important to the way CUSU works; has been particularly useful in CUSU’s funding bid to the University. E.g. data shows strong correlation between the extent to which students are satisfied with the teaching and pastoral aspects of their course and the extent they feel well-represented.
- CUSU Conference is planned to take place mid-January with session submission deadline this-coming week. Promotion is now the central activity ahead of the Christmas break.
- Media Pack for fundraising activity is also in final stages of development ahead of early-Lent launch.
- Recruitment currently taking place for new Receptionists; CUSU is moving to more casual reception staffing model to increase opening hours and improve service-level.
- Office Administrator post doing very well. Working closely on IT review: from mid-January computers should transfer to a University support infrastructure so that logging on, maintenance and repairs can occur more quickly and smoothly.
- Security – looking at security cameras; looking at making offices more accessible yet more secure on account of break-in to the offices; looking at procedures for investigating incidents.
- Looking at flexible working and the potential to cease the core hours and instead introduce a more flexible, but accountable way of working. Communication in the organisation is much better (e.g. use of #Slack), which would facilitate accountable working in an era of non-core hours.
• Trying to introduce card payments at Reception, however this has stalled due to the non-merging of back-end finances between the shared CUSU-GU shop facility. Hope to resolve this in the ensuing term.
• Online training platform for staff is nearly ready, however is yet to be launched.
• MM is spending a lot of time working on CUSU’s governance, in particular drafting of Constitution and Standing Orders, and the required liaison between different bodies that forms part of this work (e.g. UD Team, University stakeholders, legal representatives, etc.).

MM reported that RAG have expressed interest in becoming a part of CUSU somehow. MM has met with RAG, who are considering charitable status, to discuss whether they would instead incorporate into CUSU (or otherwise). MM makes clear that correspondence is only at a ‘discussion’ stage. Would incur costs to CUSU to support RAG if it were to go ahead, however RAG may be in a position to mitigate this if on account of a long-term administrative advantage.
• RH asked if any ‘coming together’ of RAG would involve an ‘RAG sabbatical role. MM responded that this would not necessarily be required and RAG may not want this due to their desire for autonomy; MM clarified RAG would likely want to be independent of CUSU’s ‘political’ character, however matters such as this had only been discussed in a cursory manner; discussion could not continue until CUSU make

AD reported on a meeting regarding the building and space for the unions in future years. CUSU expects to move further down Silver Street.

MM updated on NUS affiliation fee increase and issue. Board felt this should be disputed. NUS gave us an advertised fee and so this is grounds for dispute.

**ACTION:** MM to continue to engage NUS and report back to next Board meeting.

*Students’ Union policies at Board level*

CUSU’s Board of Trustees would be individually liable if any policy passed at CUSU Council represented decisions that were beyond the powers of Council or beyond those of the Board of Trustees (as defined either in CUSU’s Constitution or in law). AD commented that it would be good practice to know what policies are passed at CUSU Council at Board level. More info will be passed from Council in future; AD was meeting with Chair and Democratic Support Assistant to make sure of this. AD updated on policies passed in Michaelmas Term; policies passed were:
• NUS Delegate elections to Mich term;
  o opposing changes to Uni bus route;
  o limiting CUSU’s promotion of external events that aren’t accessible to all students;
support for Giulio Regeni campaign (supplementary motion to one passed last year);
• funding for refugee action in Calais budget; national demo;
• opposed teaching excellence framework;
• appointed student trustees;
• passed policy to bring in board of policy scrutiny to improve policy oversight and accountability’ motion following on from class lists referendum setting out campaign strategy;
• motion to create new access sub-committee; and,
• changes to CUSU affiliation fee model.

• MM provided assurance on Calais funds in regards to CUSU’s ability to commit funds to this cause in-line with their charitable status.
• RH asked about the processes governing approvals of Free Budget expenditure at Council.

**ACTION:** to provide draft guidelines to UD Team based upon charity rules and regs.

**B(ii). Financial Performance To-Date (Management Accounts)**

MM presented accounts to November (July to November, 2016-17).

- AD: Glossary and commentary were very helpful; these should always be included.
- MM explained a variance in website costs; invoice for the annual platform fee had arrived earlier than usual.
- AD asked about 'shared activities income; MM explained this referred to shared GU-CUSU endeavours and provided context to the budgeted amounts relating to these areas; MM outlined the key areas this happens: SUAS, shared shop and shared Welfare and Rights Officer.
- A number of variances showed on the accounts, however most of these were addressed by income occurring later or earlier than they had been budgeted for within the year. MM explained that the in-year, month-by-month budget had been set based upon average transaction entries over the past seven years; MM suggested these were revised and updated by the end of the financial year in order to be more accurate.

**B(iii). Risk and Legal Matters (not covered in decision- or discussion- matters)**

MM - gave update and context on a long-standing complaint CUSU had received dating back to 2012. A former employee had been harassed by a former complainant, whose issue had been resolved; complaints from this complainant were vexatious and had been heard and resolved many times over at considerable expense to the organisation.
DECISION: In concern for the former employee’s wellbeing, the Board resolved to enquire as to whether the former employee required further support from CUSU and sought the former employee’s direction on resolving any future incidents.

C. Items For Decision

C (i). Management of expected loss in financial year in 2015-16

MM presented the item, which concerned CUSU’s Careers Guide and its associated income, which would then impact upon the year-end balance of the financial year 2015-16. The publication dates had slipped and the schedule for publications had extended beyond the current funding terms. The result would have an impact on the funding expected in the previous financial year and therefore would further deepen an expected loss for the financial year. It was possible that the loss need to be accounted to an alternative financial year.

The Board considered three scenarios: i) splitting income across financial years where the licence is in effect and make adjustments to grant funds underspent by allocating them to the year the funding commitment relates to (instead of the year funds were received); ii) readjusting payment terms so that all publication monies relate to the financial year of publication (instead of period of licencing) and allocating underspent grant funds to the year in which funding was actually received; or, iii) splitting income across financial years where the licence is in effect, however allocate underspent grant funds to the year in which funding was actually received.

The Board discussed the history of the publication at CUSU; the extent to which the publication affected CUSU’s income portfolio; and the extent to which the project offered value to students and CUSU’s aims. AD led a discussion into the extent to which income from external publications affected other political matters in the union’s conversations with the University regarding income.

Board resolved to proceed with scenario 2 as presented in the paper, however asserted that new contractual terms should introduce interest payments for delayed fees, should they occur and added support to continuing efforts to persuade the University to provide financial assistance.

ACTION: MM to discuss the Board resolution with CUSU’s auditors.
D. Items For Discussion

D(i). Commercial Relationships

MM introduced the item, which concerned CUSU relationships with commercial clients: CUSU had a number of contracts that provided needed and valued funds to the union; these funds enabled the union’s charitable work, which was insufficiently funded by a central University source for the union to advance its core aims and objectives. Problems occurred from time-to-time with clients, with power dynamics at play between commercial funders and CUSU concerning expectations related to commitments. MM noted that CUSU had relatively positive relations with nearly all suppliers and clients, had a good reputation among clients for delivering impactful opportunities for their needs, whilst managing to prioritise the needs of the union. These positive interactions with clients often meant clients were forthcoming with further opportunities for collaboration.

The Board discussed that CUSU may need to be careful about the extent to which CUSU became dependent upon individual clients; there was an element of risk associated with CUSU having a small set of clients they always worked with and therefore became reliant on for funding. PNS referred to experiences in the wider charity sector that indicated it may not be strategically sensible to reduce income sources to a small few.

Board resolved to approach collaboration positively, however were wary about extending existing collaborations too much further so that CUSU’s income portfolio may become unbalanced by a small number of stakeholders; such could limit future opportunities available to CUSU.

DECISION: further collaborations beyond existing contracts should be brought to the Board of Trustees.

ACTION: The Board of Trustees should have a risk register which, in particular, would incorporate risks associated with over-reliance on existing or historical funding sources. Such would assist the Board in ensuring any decisions are based-upon organisation-wide rationale.

D(ii). Elected Representatives within the Students’ Unions’ Advice Service (SUAS)

MM introduced the item, which referred to the cessation of the Sabbatical Officer requirement (for some officers) to undertake casework in the Students’ Unions’ Advice Service (SUAS) as part of their duties.

Board discussed the history of sabbatical officers in SUAS as well as general perceptions of SUAS within the Collegiate University, noting the service as a
success story. Board considered the benefits to the student-run service of having elected representatives as part of the delivery team. Board also considered areas of concern. Advice-work is commonly considered a professional practice requiring extensive training and, usually, appointment to that role based upon the individuals’ capability as demonstrated in a recruitment process. SUAS spent extensive resource training and supporting elected officials to become advisors. Welfare concerns were also discussed (e.g. pressure upon in-coming officers to support vulnerable individuals whilst having limited experience in advice-work).

Board also noted that the involvement of elected representatives was extremely rare in the students’ union sector, but also that there were no immediate concerns or complaints from users or external stakeholders that had brought-about the discussion. Main concerns arose from the distractions casework could have upon representative duties.

The Board had no objections to the removal of sabbatical officers from casework duties, as a principle, and commended the suggestion in recognition of the risk attached to sabbs’ involvement in the service. It was recognised, however that sabbs could benefit from close interactions with the Service in their wider representative duties and in their personal development within their roles throughout the year.

**DECISION:** Board agreement to endorse officers’ desire to remove officers from the service, subject to ensuing discussions with the Graduate Union and further discussion from within the Sabbatical team and SUAS. Any resolution should be subject to a review at a later point once the unions had heard from the University regarding their funding proposal for the forthcoming year; such would allow the Board to understand more fully any capacity issues that may arise and consider the level of casework currently being supported by the Service.

**D(iii). Premises access, security and incident management protocols**

AD introduced the item, which referred to an incident of damage by a student and a complaint regarding student behaviour in relation to a booking at the unions’ building by a society. Due diligence efforts took place prior to the unions agreeing the bookings, however at that point there were no grounds to prevent the booking.

AD felt Board should be aware. CUSU have offered support to the institution dealing with the matter and had signposted students to SUAS. AD was reviewing lounge booking procedures with the GU and Reception staff.
D(iv). Media presence of Student Trustees

PNS introduced the item, which referred to a proposal for the Student Trustees to establish a public presence on social media so that Members were aware of who they were and the Board seemed approachable. Board approved the proposal, noting that it was positive to promote wider public accountability and confidence to the membership, however further noted that it important students knew their student trustees are not representatives.

**ACTION:** MM to signpost PNS and PJ to staff at CUSU who could assist. AD to promote the student trustee profiles in a Bulletin in Lent Term.

E. Any Other Business

E(i). Future meetings. MM would circulate next meeting dates in the following week.

E(ii). Thank you to External Trustees. AB and GM were thanked for their contribution to the student’s union over the previous three years, during which the Union had experienced considerable change and improvement; and welcomed their engagement in any future recruitment process.

*End of meeting.*