

# Board of Trustees Meeting- 21/02/18

## Board administration

### Introductions and apologies for absences

<p>Trustees present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Daisy Eyre (Chair), D.E</li><li>• Gareth Marlow, G.M</li><li>• Hannah Thackwray, H.T</li><li>• Hachimi Maiga, H.M</li><li>• Daniel Dennis, D.D</li><li>• Martha Krish, M.K</li><li>• Lola Olufemi , L.O</li><li>• Olivia Hylton- Pennant, O.HP</li></ul>	<p>Also present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mark McCormack, M.M</li><li>• Micha Frazer-Carroll, N.FC</li></ul> <p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Florence Oulds was absent and sent apologies. Helen Jennings sent apologies via email.</p>
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### Conflicts of interest

- G.M: maintained a standing conflict of interest
- M.M: employee pay, it was decided that M.M would be absent for this aspect
- O.HP: final item regarding overseas research project, it was decided that O.HP would be absent for this aspect

### Minutes from last meeting and matters arising

- Finance minutes missing (DD)
- Update on finance:
  - Reviewing mid-year review (initiated budget review)- was a successful endeavour and provided worthwhile learning opportunities e.g. regarding openness
  - How the mid-year review is undertaken was a big learning point e.g. whether we should add PR to what we do and the messaging of the review
  - Important to control the narrative in a responsible way
  - It would be helpful to know what information is needed to discuss budget, for example salaries, to sort schedule and act on board decisions on Monday in the meeting
  - Next review should consider how the information should be disseminated.

### Starring and ordering for decision and discussion; deferring of items

Decision made to move budget strategy discussion.

### Budget strategy

- D.E.: it is important that the board decide on a clear aim for the budget and focus on key questions such as the target level for deficit and surplus. This can be relatively elastic, but it is good to have a clear strategy, as seen in the agenda.
- Surplus vs deficit
  - Important to weigh up the reputational elements of the budget against sharing with the team internally – ideally would like to share with the team before the budget is

circulated, however recognise the timeframe is tight as we want the budget proposed to members earlier than in previous years.

- financial outlook: the university have approved the request for funds so far and is optimistic about the levy proposal to replace fee. This means potentially looking at a breakeven budget next year with difficult decisions, although the decisions made will not have to be so severe as previously. Whilst the funds will help, it does not remove all the problems and doesn't necessarily mean a long-term fix. Projections have previously looked pessimistic, but have improved. Cautiously, this financial year looks like a deficit of around £68K as opposed to the previously expected £75K, however more optimistic projections could be even better. Expect to know the exact financial position by mid-March, although it appears that financial pressures are being relieved. However, things are in flux still with some funding decisions on bids outstanding so this must be considered when deciding budget.
- We should think about the level of surplus/deficit acceptable for the next year and any changes wanted to be made to the budget. We should only accept a deficit for a robust reason which is part of a clear strategy and reasoned for with future gain. Decisions should be made to ensure the smallest deficit possible whilst still meeting the organisations charitable aims.
- Trustees noticed an additional decline in staffing costs
  - MM was to investigate and report back.
- Trustees wanted greater clarity on the figures and asked if management accounting procedures, currently undergoing change and improvement, could be sped up. A crisp understanding of what is driving the numbers is important. For example, the 10% increase in compliance and staffing requires clear articulation explaining the costs. It proves continuously difficult to understand if there is a huge range in variability in performance. This itself then becomes difficult to communicate to members.
- Trustees identified a need to show the university more planning and deliberate action after requesting an uplift in funds. Following the plan submitted to the University should be a priority.
- DE gave an overview of discussions that had taken place with TCS. CUSU funding supported TCS' development positively. Board discussed the support that could be provided to the paper and the support the paper needed; a TCS-led plan for managing finances would be helpful, as it was difficult to invest further without the group planning.
- Trustees decided to review the budget and a breakeven plan as a whole and then make a decision on any reductions in spending and where opportunities for those were.
- Trustee consensus was that they should aim for the smallest deficit possible unless directly linked to investment that would bring a return. Would be beneficial to develop a neutral budget next year as deficit began in 2014 and is predicted until 2020.
- Bottom line options are that we breakeven this year or next year with a deficit of no larger than £15K.
- MM introduced options for rationalising costs if required as well as the risks that might come along with any reductions.
- Other options should be considered by the finance committee. It is likely that some roles are more vulnerable than others, however, all come with risks and FinCom must prioritise within this framework. Board is content for the Finance Committee to consider changes to the personnel structure of the union if this would help meet the budget strategy.
- DE suggested a £15K deficit for 18/19 and then breakeven for the following year; trustees agreed that CUSU did not need a determined budget for too-far-ahead in

future, but a clear direction of travel; aim for surplus-generating/in-the-black in 2 years, if there is a need to dip for investment then that is something to look at later.

- There has been no real opportunity to focus on investment due to the focus on the uplift from the university which is fine considering circumstances. It would be responsible to investigate rationalisation, but this need not be permanent.
- Trustees agreed that FinCom would develop and share a budget with a clear commentary to share with students. DD: suggests that the finance circulate the budget with a clear explanation for where the money is going. This can also be share with students. The budget strategy, which would break even by second year with a maximum deficit of £15k, would incorporate:
  - Some level of cost- rationalisation
  - Separating-out any income items that did not contribute confidently to the bottom line.
- Trustees acknowledged the efforts of the CUSU team for the work put into modelling scenarios for trustees' benefit in decision-making as well as their work for levy bids and access officers.
- Trustees felt it important to think about planning the communication of the budget-how to share narrative. It would be great to come out on front foot and show managing and strategy intent. Must lead talks and take control of the budget and press.
  - FinCom to produce a document to be sent out to the students
- The university had many departments under the impression that no one would be receiving extra money but CUSU managed to do so by showing solid plans and cases for additional investment. It is a mark of appreciation that CUSU was given an uplift as the university chose to invest in CUSU.
- Board advised FinCom to consider resources towards TCS as investment with them also aiming breakeven within 2 years, only to be delayed based on solid investment reasons.

## Organisational updates

### General Manager

- Student led teaching awards, which are now open for nominations and close next week, MK has been doing a lot of work for this.
  - It was established four years ago and so is established but a lot of work nonetheless
- Shadowing scheme has now finished and there is now just the matter of travelling costs. We should be proud of the excellent progress
- Whole union supporting UCU strikes and student support in the advice service is becoming an emerging situation
- University of Cambridge now paying the living wage
- LO released an open letter about institutional sexual harassment. Staff in the advice service are feeding in from cases and a lead representative is giving the voice of the students. It is good that the union can fight on both fronts.
- Chief accountant clerk, Sri, has been on a steep introduction and is now coming up to 3 months. Last financial year is now closed, and samples of audits will be available on Monday.
- Outsourcing of payroll is delayed so may be an option for next year. There is a fundraising role open and receiving applications now.
- Ongoing strategy meetings; student feedback survey gave interesting responses.

- Council review: there is a new chair who is very enthusiastic and has been inducted.
- MM is working with the fundraising team for projections for next year and the team continue to talk about the website. MM has supported fundraising bids for next year, £240K in fundraising bids submitted over the past 2 weeks.
- Meeting new careers project prospect soon; updates to Board on this will be forthcoming.

### Review of management accounts

Mid-year management shows university owes money (due to a change in the transfer arrangements) which would lead to a surplus but must be cautious about any hidden surprises in the accounts.

### Salary amounts and cost of living contributions

Board considered the union's cost-of-living arrangements in the new budget year; as well as any merit-based increases. Trustee discussion noted the following:

- Pay less than other unions and 71% of unions have committed to matching university pay increases.
- Sources for comparative figures are from Harris Hill (who release an annual salary comparison, don't include figures for CEO, just an overview) and NUS (released a comparison of unions).
- The outsourcing of payroll should bring about a small reduction in operational staffing costs.
- Staff turnover compared to other unions: the exact figures are unknown but MM senses is high at lower grades. People perform well in these roles but there is a consensus that the roles are not well paid. Fundraising roles follow this more often than other roles.
- Fundraising is a growing field where people are desperate for staff with experience and it is hard to retain staff.
- Next year there is expected 3% contributions in auto-enrolment (statutory).
- Makes sense to retain staff with these figures although would be helpful to see impact on the bottom line of turnover changes in future.

### RESERVE ITEM

MM left the room. Summary of discussion: talks led to the decision that the Line Manager position held by the President should be reviewed due to the duty of care to the CEO and the inexperience many new Line Managers would have. It was agreed there should be a merit-based increase of 3% for newer staff alongside a 1% cost-of-living uplift.

### SCA relocation

- Decision needs to be made regarding whether to allow SCA to have a space in the building, room can be decided later
- Moving in with TCS is an option as, although they wouldn't prefer it they will accept it. Ideal as SCA don't take up much space and both organisations tend to work on timetables that wouldn't really overlap.
- Another option is sharing the office downstairs, which staff were mostly supportive of as it could mean more footfall, more collaboration, more legitimacy etc., therefore generally considered a good idea for the office. Could also give one of the meeting rooms
- A decision was originally delayed due to concerns about space and where to put them
- Important to set clear expectations to ensure good working environment for everyone. This may also mean reinforcing these expectations with existing building users.

- Any arrangement would last indefinitely.
- Important to consider security as may lead to increased risk to others/organisation. May need to re-examine how everyone uses the space.
- Decision: approve SCA relocating to the building, with clear guidelines on etiquette and room to be decided later.

### Review of officer plans of period of leave

- OH-P presents: University expressed interest in the planned work and the university are interested in a 3-year programme (more information in agenda).
- The university want to develop new Access schemes. Schemes include afterschool clubs, mentoring, symposiums at the end of the year. The report comes with a broader implementation as it is a complete report which will compare and draw parallels, resulting in the university being a pilot for the conclusions, with a focus on black students.
- Access Officer will be involved in developing the recommendations. The university wants to sign a three-year contract by October and it would involve personal consulting. It is important to do as a sabbatical officer as the university are likely to pay less attention after. It can be used on a large scale and may be the biggest thing since the shadowing scheme.
- OHP would be leaving early, as well as taking considerable time away from Cambridge to work on the project. Trustees enquired as to OHP's plans. OHP would only miss two committees and one will be regarding distribution and will ensure to submit ideas ahead of time.
- OHP would be able to take as unpaid leave, either entirely or partly, if requested.
- Report is available to be used by everyone and will happily present and share research at CUSU as well as use press to raise profile and tackle problems. Successor could put together a framework to support students from the get go. Happy to write a report directly geared towards CUSU
- Decision:
  - Very prestigious scholarship, but may lead to disruptions in work, particularly with early leave. Trustees felt that the sanction must come with clear expectations regarding the workload but couldn't be delayed as the success would likely be diminished after the officer was no longer a sabbatical officer and may also mean no benefit to CUSU. Whilst the value both nationally and locally are appreciated, there were concerns that it would take up a lot of time and the link to OH-P's role at CUSU was considered.
  - CUSU may be accountable for any risk undertaken on the project.
  - Decision made that the leave should be based on the scholarship and not the trip itself- discretionary leave.
- It was decided that discretionary leave should be granted for the scholarship, but this must include a full handover with a legacy project and the potential to work with CUSU on findings.