Board Administration

1. Apologies for absence
Priscilla Mensah, Alex Bols, Poppy Ellis-Logan.

2. Conflicts of Interest
MM - as an employee (General Manager) re: cost of living increases for employees.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting
Decision: The Board approved the minutes of the last meeting. Future minutes should be written in a non-verbatim style suitable for publication online.

4. Starring and ordering of items for decision/discussion: deferring of items until next board meeting.

Governance: Board Membership. (Agenda Item 9). As there was a delay in appointing AB and GM, it was decided that their terms should run for the maximum allowed. JS said there was a need to offer training to all new board members to ensure continuity. MM said training would help maintain institutional memory. The process for recruiting new members would be discussed at the next meeting to ensure it was fit for purpose. The new external members could start in Jan 2017.
Organisation Updates

Financial performance to-date and commercial performance (Report presented):

MM reported that there was a major fall in generated income to budget, as predicted at the last meeting, but savings had been made. There were few opportunities for generating extra income through fundraising and local activities after January, so the focus was on savings.

Re income: Local competition and outstanding debtors compounded CUSU’s current financial situation.

Staffing and operations:

A brief update on the organisation’s activities since the last meeting was heard. There was agreement that the student media had seemingly been receptive to CUSU’s press guidelines.

For decision

5. Disabled Students’ Officer (DSO), update and decision on funds (Report presented)

Summary:

92% of voting members had supported a DSO post in a referendum. The Board now needed to look at how and when to fund the post. There was also the possibility of a constitutional issue about the post being a major office of the union. The latter issue had been resolved in advance of the meeting, as reported in the paperwork.

a) The referendum had been the most successful election held by CUSU.
b) The Board considered the likelihood that other minority or underrepresented groups may seek an additional full-time sabbatical officer to represent them in future.
c) It was recognised that a DSO would be more likely to require additional funding to provide any support needed to carry out the role.
d) No funding had been allocated for the post in this year’s budget and around £30k would be needed annually. In recognition of resource constraints, should significant resource not be able to be allocated, CUSU may struggle to be the good employer it strived to be.
e) The Graduate Union may be able to part-fund a DSO and the Disability Resource Centre had been encouraging about the new role.

f) Part of the elected Co-ordinator role could be reviewed and any savings used to support the DSO.

g) The Disabled Students’ Campaign had amended its constitution in anticipation of the new role.

h) Board acknowledged there would be disappointment if a DSO was not appointed by July but that with the financial situation, the Board were stuck between a rock and a hard place in their efforts to manage resource responsibly and meet students’ expectations and hopes.

i) There were several areas of potential financial stress including the cost of constitutional reform, pay/pension increases and any staff/workload changes. It was considered that it would be difficult to raise affiliation fees to cover the amount needed for a DSO.

j) A constitutional review had been on the horizon for some time but not carried out. A review could look at all the roles and establish core activities. A constitutional review would involve the Charity Commission.

k) Three options were identified re a DSO - i) delay the appointment; ii) fund it permanently and make changes to the Union’s funding structure, seeking to raise additional income or cut expenditure to afford it; or, iii) fund it for one year with a condition that meant funding was subject to sourcing funds.

l) **There was agreement that the DSO should not be delayed** as there had been such strong support for the role but there were concerns about creating a financial problem for next year’s team.

m) There was concern that the DSO could spend the year trying to both establish and justify the position.

n) **It was decided to revisit the issue of funding and its wider impact at an Extraordinary Meeting in mid-April.** The date is to be arranged.

**6. Cost of living increases for employees 2016-17 (Report presented)**

*Summary:*

MM gave an overview of the cost implications of a 2% rise or an annual wage rise, subject to receiving University funds, before offering to leave. The paper presented indicated a range of thresholds to consider for cost of living increases from 1% to 3%, including a distinction between planned merit-based increments and basic cost-of-living included within the analysis. Analysis included an overview of basic rises occurring across different sectors currently so the wider UK
economic and labour markets could be factored into any decision. The analysis allowed Board to see the impact upon CUSU’s budget for each scenario.

- Board agreed that, as any increase would not apply before July, the Board should revisit this matter at its next extraordinary meeting when a fuller consideration of the Union’s funding position could be made. This would allow the Board to have a clearer picture of potential financial demands from the appointment of a DSO.

7. Pensions Auto-enrolment at CUSU (Report presented)

Summary:
MM said that a decision on auto-enrolment was needed, by law. Papers had been supplied, which provided information on the changes to pensions legislation the charity needed to respond to. The paperwork provided financial models on contribution scenarios for the forthcoming phased introduction of the legislation over three years. The paperwork also included an overview of workforce consultation undertaken and a range of providers considered. A recommendation had been made to Board.

The Board agreed to pay the minimum statutory pensions contribution in order to meet legal requirements. A decision on selecting a provider and the financial implications, based upon information already provided regarding auto-enrolment providers and workforce feedback, was delegated to the General Manager to take forward. The Board accepted the recommended provider and alternatives presented, and noted sufficient due diligence had been taken.

8. Board’s final approval of 2014-15 Trustees’ Annual Report

Approved with minor typos corrected. MM was thanked for putting together the report for Board.

For discussion

Update on review of Graduate Representation:
The Review Committee report recommended that CUSU and the Graduate Union should operate as separate bodies but continue to be co-located. Work and
discussion was required to fully understand the report’s recommendations of an integrated administrative structure between the unions, as well as wider consideration required before discussion took place on more joint services.

- The Board expressed a commitment to maintaining a positive dialogue with the Graduate Union, moving forward and working together.
- Board recognised that it was important to not view any change as one organisation absorbing the other.
- There was some concern that CUSU was considered to be privileged by its size when it had operated soundly, within its means and in advance of its objects, recognising also that the Union experienced considerable resource challenges in affording the support structure it sought to provide for members and elected officers.
- A meeting would be held in April involving the Unions and the Chair of the University’s Graduate Review Panel.

Any Other Business

None.

RC closed the meeting at 19.55.