Board Administration

1. Apologies for absence
(as above).

2. Conflicts of Interest
None raised.

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.

Minutes of the previous meeting were to be circulated and approved via circulation/virtually. Minutes of previous Board meetings would be uploaded to the website by the July meeting.

4. Starring and ordering of items for decision/discussion: deferring of items until next board meeting.
None.

Organisation Updates

*Financial performance to-date; noting of Management Letter (appended to audited accounts)*

MM introduced the management accounts. There had been a delay in the invoicing of affiliation fees and contract fee debts were still outstanding. Clarifications were given and discussed regarding the timings of invoicing for Sky subscription fees across the Colleges and in relation to savings and lower income in services, which were as a result of service cut-backs related to the office-move.
The Board discussed the late payments outstanding from a contractor and noted that further discussion with the University needed to progress as to whether and how the University can support the union in this matter in the future.

Board discussed the process of invoicing for affiliation fees. The process was administratively complicated due to the need to source information and calculate fees manually. The Coordinator had historically performed this task in the past, but in recent years attempts had been made to transfer this to staff responsibilities annually, with the aim of initiating affiliation invoicing much earlier, such as at the start of Lent. The lack of a general process for affiliation beyond constitutions of both CUSU and affiliated college committees further complicated the task. MM informed the Board that invoices would be distributed during the present week.

Board noted that:
- affiliation invoicing was of reputational importance to the union;
- the CUSU Coordinator position would not be in place next year;
- it was inappropriate for the General Manager to be undertaking this task;
- it would be inconvenient for students to receive affiliation invoices over the summer period as well as inferring risk to CUSU’s cash-flow.

The Board agreed that affiliation invoicing should be the role of staff and not elected officers; that invoicing should occur from January each year when student statistics were released. The Board discussed the inclusion of a clearer process for member affiliation to be included in the governance review of the Constitution and Standing Orders over the summer period.

Board noted the audited accounts finalised by the union’s auditors. In considering the Management Letter, MM reported against the outstanding questions from auditors; Board were satisfied with responses. Board approved a suggestion that the ability to establish a trading subsidiary be included in the forthcoming constitution draft as a response to a recommendation by the auditors that the union consider a taxation review to establish whether a subsidiary company was appropriate. MM was to raise this with the University via the CCSSU meeting. MM was to report formally, on behalf of Board, to the auditors in response to the Management Letter.

In consideration of the discussion on management accounts regarding outstanding payments and invoicing, in combination with recommendations from the auditors in the Management Letter to the accounts, the Board registered their concern at the performance of current financial procedures as well as at the extensive role the General Manager had in the union’s financial compliance from the perspective of the role’s capacity. Best practice and effective financial
management and compliance was a core responsibility and, whilst matters were presently in-hand, Board consensus was that improvement was needed as such had the potential to cause undue risk in the future. Board noted the process for credit control at CUSU and, following discussion in regards to roles and responsibilities at CUSU, asked MM to take forward a full review of the union’s financial procedures.

ACTION: Board asked for the union’s financial systems to be reviewed and a paper addressing changes that need to be made produced by the next audit.

Staffing and operations:

A brief update on the organisation’s activities since the last meeting was heard. A paper had also been circulated. Since the last meeting the budget for 2016-17 had been approved and the University had commended CUSU on its budget, recognising the union had responded to feedback from CCSSU. Plans to defer the election of the Coordinator were approved by Council and the Disabled Students’ Officer was elected. Referendum on affiliation had taken place with 28.7% turnout (51% to remain; 47% leave). CUSU’s audited accounts had been submitted to the Charity Commission and trustee minutes had begun to be made available online. Student Trustee recruitment has been initiated and promoted.

Board heard that the Design and Communications Coordinator roleholder had left the organisation and noted their appreciation for the impact the outgoing individual had had upon and within the organisation. MM updated on recruitment efforts for three roles: Fundraising and Services Manager, Student Advisor and Design and Communications Coordinator. The appraisal of the General Manager had taken place; the review had been a positive process and MM thanked JS and the Board for their continued support with development. CUSU had registered with the People’s Pension and CUSU had so-far fulfilled its communications duties in regards to pensions legislation.

Risk and governance:

The Board noted that discussion had occurred regarding a legal complaint made towards the students’ union regarding a confidential agreement in place with an external party. Legal advice had been sought on the matter and a robust response sent to the complainant; no update had since been received from the union’s appointed advisors. Board agreed to monitor the situation and MM was to update the Board in due course.
Board noted the circulated paper on the union’s role in the EU Referendum. The paper had been distributed via circulation a week earlier due to the union’s members voting via CUSU Council to actively support a position in the referendum on behalf of students; no dissenting views had been offered.

The paper provided Board with an overview of the legislation and compliance obligations of charities and students’ unions in relation to relevant laws relative to campaigning and political involvement in the EU referendum. The paper supported the trustees to assess how and why engaging with the referendum would be an effective way of promoting the objects of the charity. The document addressed risks associated with a possible union campaign regarding the EU referendum and aimed to act as a record of due diligence to be noted by the trustees so they can feel satisfied with the union’s approach to campaigning activity of the charity in relation to the EU referendum.

The paper asserted that: “As a students’ union, the Board might defer a political stance to its members, subject to its constitution, and subject to prevailing legislation. CUSU’s constitution easily provides for this and it is common practice for the Council, and its related functions (e.g. referendum) to express a collectivist view providing this is not endorsed for political means” by the Board.

In noting the paper, the Board affirmed CUSU can likely demonstrate that EU membership, and a case for remaining, would be in the interests of Cambridge students, should their members choose to endorse a collectivist view as gathered via the union’s democratic decision-making structures. In noting the paper, the Board also affirmed that the Board held no collective view on the EU Referendum on behalf of the membership or the organisation, however it would endorse and resource the process of debate/referendum on the issue as it affected students as students at Cambridge.

For decision

5. Team Development Paper
A paper regarding training and development of the CUSU workforce was discussed. Board welcomed the paper. The Board recognised the flat structure of the organisation and that there may be limited opportunities for progression. The union had sought to improve staff turnover with increased grant funds dedicated to staffing costs, however recognised that more could be done in the area of training and development.
The paper proposed introducing paid responsibilities to foster working culture, to which questions were asked about interest and risk. MM responded that consultation with the team would help address any concerns as to take-up or approval from the team.

The Board approved the proposals contained in the paper, and mandated MM to take the proposals forward. Board further noted that MM was afforded some flexibility in implementing the spirit of the proposal depending on the consultation feedback, which may infer an amendment to the proposed budget.

For discussion (agenda items i, ii and iii)
PM commended the team on their hard work across the year and in particular since the end of Easter Term. Board noted and thanked the positive contributions from externals and student trustees during a period of difficult decisions for the union. PM, RC and HB outlined the officer’s activities over the final month of their year.

MM and PM updated Board on the University’s interest in the Disabled Students’ Officer position regarding legislation under the Equality Act.

MM introduced plans for developing the union’s second strategic plan over the summer period and into 2017. Board discussed the union’s strategy development process. Board further discussed the linking of the University’s Planning Round and the constitutional review as processes that are intertwined and could be beneficial to each project’s progress.

Any Other Business

Affiliation fees model – the University’s Grad rep review panel were willing to support efforts to change the affiliation fee model. PM explained that a College service fee model was to be explored; political affiliation will be separated from fund allocation. The Board discussed feedback regarding the recent referendum.

Board commended the work of the Students’ Unions’ Advice Service. There had been a 30+% increase in users over the year, which demonstrated value to students and bolstered the case for continuing support for the service across the Collegiate community.

PM closed the meeting at 20.00.