**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON STUDENTS’ UNION**

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MAIN BOARD**

**Thursday 31st January 2019**

**PRESENT:** R Garcia-Krailing (RGK) (Chair), R Aveling (RA), M Storr (MS), J Corbett (JC)

R Bradshaw (RB), G Lovegrove (GL), Shangyin Ji (SJ), P Henry (PH), W Irwin (WI),

P Dinsmore (PD)

**MINUTES:** K Macintyre (KM)

**APOLOGIES:** I Nagra (IN),

**ABSENT:**

**ATTENDANCE:** P Sturgeon (PS), R Weston (RW)

**90/19** **Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies received from IN. Welcome to PD, student Trustee elected in the recent bye- election, student at Law.

**91/19** **Trustee Eligibility Declaration for Charity Commission**

These were all updated at the last meeting and PD has done his at induction.

**92/19 Minutes of Previous Meeting** held on29th November 2018

Accepted as a true record.

**93/19 Action List and Matters Arising**

42 Heritage Committee

This Committee has not yet met and Minutes will be circulated as soon as they are available. **Action: KM**

76.1 Terms of Reference

Point at 1-4. To be added regarding financial viability of the Students’ Union.

**Update:** Carried forward. **Action: KM**

77.1 Appointment of Directors

Members agreed that a nomination form be prepared and sent out to assist with the process. **Action: Complete**

77.2 Appointment of Directors

PS to approach WI and prepare email vote.

**Update:** The decision has been taken to provide current directors with training and to allow them to come back and report properly. Carried forward. **Action: PS**

79.1 It was suggested that a plan that identifies aims and objectives and financial resources is brought for approval at the next meeting before a vote is taken. For the plan to work, this infrastructure would need to be in place to provide continuity as the sabbatical officers change.

**Update:** To include 80.1 (MSA representation). Longer term resolution required. Carried forward. **Action: RGK**

**DISCUSSION PAPERS**

**94/19 Bye-Election Results**

As per report.

Some issues experienced with not being able to obtain student data records from the University. The Bye election did run but was a complicated process.

**95/19 Review of Elections Planning**

As per report.

Nominations open mid-February which give an idea of how the campaign is being received. It is hoped that there will be fair amounts of engagement for students.

A question of asked on methods of engagement with particular groups of students, such as those on placement, healthcare workers etc. It was noted that contact is mainly through social media although there is a plan to resurrect the ‘all students” email facility to re-engage with some of these students.

The part time officers were asked for their thought and members were informed that the part time officers had heard of the elections via word of mouth rather than social media which tends to be too prolific and serious messages tend to be missed. It was suggested that perhaps something could be put out on NILE that all students have access to, to try and increase the coverage.

Head of Charitable Services was pleased to hear the word of mouth is working and confirmed that the Students Union had recently been given space on NILE and action was being taken to try make the most of that facility.

Some lecturers have also been proactive in speaking to students about the elections and it was noted that if the communicators and leads of the different placement groups could be identified these would be a good way of capturing placement students.

It was further noted that due to election stress experienced by some students in the last main election, the election period has been shortened to two days in the middle of a week, rather than a week of campaigning. The voting will close in the evening to ensure students get enough rest.

VP-Education also mentioned that she had put plans in place for programme leaders to announce the election dates and the positions available.

**96/19 Trustee Recruitment Update**

The Chair of Finance Committee gave an update on the recruitment of the external trustees. Two people at no cost from recruiters had come forward with another 3 identified that if recruited, a fee would become payable upon appointment. An Appointments Committee has been convened for mid-February. The quality of candidates is interesting.

With regard to the interview process, the Constitution requires an Appointments Committee to be formed that makes recommendations to Student Council. According to the Constitution, this Committee must be composed of the CEO, President, the sabbatical officers and two Student Councillors.

**97/19 BME Support and Resources Plan**

As per Action 79.1 above.

**98/19 MSA Representation**

As per Action 79.1 above.

**DECISION PAPERS**

**99/19 Approval of Independent Directors of Trading Company**

This is ow the third meeting where this has been discussed. Two people have been identified to take up the positions for University Representative and an Alumni Director. A self- nomination form has been completed and Trustees are required to vote.

The chair asked if there were any self-nominees.

MS completed his form and put himself forward.

The Chair moved to vote to accept MS as an Alumni Trustee.

**Members voted unanimously to accept MS as Alumni Director on NSUSL Board.**

WI also put himself forward, as University representative on the NSUSL Board of Directors.

The Chair moved to vote to accept WI as the University Representative on the NSUSL Board of Directors.

**Members voted unanimously to accept WI as University Representative on the NSUSL Board of Directors.**

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**100/19 Finance Sub-Committee**

The Chair of Finance Committee updated Members on the meeting held earlier. There had been a few recommendations from the Finance Manager to update the Finance Regulations. There were two important discussions held - the budget for this year and the funding for next year.

Finance Committee Chair reminded Members that last year the Students Union found itself in a difficult position looking forward to the move to Waterside and budgets had been made up of what was thought might happen. The management team undertook to re-work the budgets and the Chair is pleased to report that a robust job has been done and reports that the financial position is still tight. The financial position is that the budget is achievable and for the overall group will be showing significant change. There are no funds to channel into reserves. The Students’ Union is forecast to break even for this year.

The second point is the very difficult position of next year’s budget. The university has indicated two budget iterations of a £500k and £250k cut in funding which will have a significant impact on finances of the Students’ Union. There will be a budget review at the next meeting but the Finance Chair counselled Members that no-one should be left unaware that there will be consequences for the whole Students’ Union.

The Finance Chair reminder members he had asked to be kept apprised of the situation with the Platform and made Trustees aware that the Board of Directors of NSUSL would be required to sign off that NSUSL was a going concern at the end of the financial year. They counselled that careful consideration should be given to this and looked at in detail.

A question was raised regarding the going concern statement and surely that is part of the Board of Director’s fiduciary duties. The Finance Chair replied merely that the point had been raised for awareness rather than concern although the Board of Directors would have to discuss viability.

**101/19 HR and Remuneration Sub-Committee**

The HR Chair informed Members the HR Committee had received a report on the management restructure. There had been some discussion on the recruitment of Trustees and then looked at the HR Manager’s report regarding leavers etc.

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

**102/19 Chief Executive’s Report incl NSUSL**

As per report.

There is one main risk.

It has been a challenging year already and next year will prove even more challenging. The Engine Shed needs to change to being more about students.

There are key issues with finance already highlighted.

The Students’ Union website, at date of reporting was still not published although noted during the meeting that pages were beginning to appear throughout the day which looked promising.

There have been some changes in the management team of the Platform which have reduced their numbers from 6 full time to 3 and 2/3.

VP Union Development has done well with Student Talks.

The main discussion point has been around NUS Affiliation which currently is £56k expenditure. NUS are in a mess. They have no money, are making redundancies and selling property assets as well as potentially moving out of London. For the next year they are asking a full affiliation fee for a reduced service.

Conversations have been taking place with Lincoln Students Union (SUMS) regarding the possibility of working together to improve supplier benefits.

The decision to leave NUS must be made by Students by Referendum of which one is planned to take place shortly.

The Sabbatical Officers were invited to give their current opinions on the matter. Comments included drink prices, value added benefits and services or lack of.

It was also made apparent that there was little national representation for Students’ Union at national level. The only perceived benefit was that of networking and conferences still require delegate fees to be paid for, above the affiliation fee. It was noted that a number of larger Students’ Unions are moving away from NUS including Plymouth, Essex and potentially Lincoln, amongst others.

In mitigation, Members were counselled that the risk is that the period of change in HE is still ongoing. There is still a need for national representation based in London. This is a bad time for the NUS to be weakened and a new report is expected next month to herald a new wave of change.

There was opinion regarding the formation of a new organisation and it was suggested that instead of a slow departure from NUS over 5 years or so, organisations would be better placed to organize a new national body quickly.

VP-Education mentioned she had recently attended a conference that examined priorities for student mental health and the development of a new University Mental Health |charter that would be used hold universities to account. One of the recurrent themes was the value of Students’ Unions and the services they provide away from a drinking culture. There may be the potential for a recognition award for universities in that area.

It was noted that previously the university has always been fair with finding for the Students’ Union. The university’s own financial situation will have a bearing on what funding is available for the Students’ Union. It was further noted that if the Auger report recommends cuts to tuition fees, this will affect the university as well as the Students’ Union in turn. The focus is changing to wellbeing rather than student experience per se. Some university staff have already been tasking with working towards a Wellbeing University community focusing on early prevention and intervention.

In respect of the Engine Shed space, it was noted that everywhere else, Waterside spaces are functional, they have a purpose. The carpeted area in the Engine Shed needs to change to soft furnishings, not reserved for staff. It needs to be a non-academic pace, somewhere for students to relax. There was one observation that on entry to the Engine Shed, it is confusing because it is not clear whether is an open plan office space, a café or something else. It was noted that the staff will need to be located somewhere else – particularly those with a large voluntary staff complement that need to be easy to locate. A shop front for Membership Services is required to maintain face-to-face contact but also digital exposure needs to increase.

**103/19 Organisational KPIs**

As per report submitted.

There are two red sections. The first is related to financial performance and work is being carried out to mitigate these in the risk register.

Another point to note is the performance Development Review (PDR) process. There have been several iterations of this over the years whilst trying to adapt to the university’s own version and it has proved difficult to adapt for the size of the Students’ Union. The new HR manager is enthusiastic about the PDR process and a new version is being put in place that has behavioural elements related to the Strategy.

**104/19 Charitable Services Report**

As per report submitted.

**Cheers**

The new website is currently being uploaded as this meeting is taking place. Comments from Trustees are welcome. It is significantly better that what was produced by York St John.

With regard to marketing, some the material being produced by the external company now is excellent. They are now producing more than the old marketing department could.

The first Societies Varsity took place last week and produce a buzz around the university as it was shown on the screens all over campus.

**Challenges**

There is no accurate data on student engagement and it is important to note that whatever figures are generated this year will not be accurate.

Embedding Strategy – the first term was lost due to learning the new environment. Starting to think about Strategy language, starting to embed it to be followed by focus on the different elements going into next year.

There have been two consequent inquorate Student Council meetings which have stopped anything coming to Trustees. The \head of Charitable Services will be attending the next few meetings to try and ascertain what is going on. It is a really disengaged Executive Team. There is a lack of understanding of the powers of Student Council. The Executive normally bring the experience and knowledge but there are many new Executive members that have nowhere to learn from.

**105/19 Any Other Business**

**VP-Union Development**

**SU Talks**

The idea behind the concept was to engage speakers well known for their events. Matthew Burton was a celebrity pull and a good speaker which saw 80 people in attendance. Akala was engaged to appeal to the BME demographic and then the Students’ Union and saw 140 people at the Engine Shed. Gareth Thomas is the next speaker with the idea of engaging sports students and the LGBTQ demographic. The VC has expressed his interest in attending this event and bringing along people.

It was important to note that many people including potential acts, local community and so on now associate such events with the current VP Union Development. With people now offering to speak for free. There is follow-on business It will be important to ensure continuity at the end of their sabbatical tenure.

**VP-Education**

Being involved with the advocates allows for opportunities to nip situations in the bud before they happen. The growing partnership with the Deans and Advocates is becoming more valuable as time goes on.

The Pink Lanyards strategy is proving successful. These highlight both to staff students who the Advocates are by making them more visible in the student population.

STaR Award nominations continue to flow in. Students can nominate good practice for Lecturer of the Year by Faculty, Innovative Teaching, Support Staff, Course Advocate. The award ceremony is in March. VP-Education’s strategy of walking around and speaking to students encourages the students to think about what they are nominating for and as a result has improved the quality of the nominations.

**VP-Welfare**

Promoting a wellbeing service through National Money Saving Week next week.

SUCook with Changemaker is a series of events taking place in the Learning Hub to promote heathy eating and wellbeing.

Conversation Café move to evenings now with translators coming to translate for students.

Both the university staff and students need wellbeing. Have been working on a variety of events including monthly mental health training sessions. Next month will see a Mental Health First Aid training event take place with the NHS.

**106/19 Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday, 28th March 2019.

End