Trustee Meeting, 10/05/2016

Present: Tariq Pasha, Nick Smith, Edward Pearson, Umar Chaudhery, Issy Cooke (Chair)

Apologies: Janet Legrand

In Attendance: Yemi Gbajobi (Secretary), Dr Craig Stewart (Clerk), Donna Niccolls (Business Operations Manager), Imogen Adie (Communications and Marketing Coordinator), Andy Sayers (Auditor)

1. The meeting began at 6.05pm
2. Minutes of previous meeting.

CS explained that due to electronic error, the minutes of the previous meeting had been lost and the minutes which the Board has were reconstructed from memory. The Board was invited to look at the minutes and send to CS anything which they feel had not been included so that the minutes could be brought back to the Board for approval at the next meeting.

1. Matters arising: It was noted that most of the outstanding Matters Arising had been completed. The Board noted that it was still relevant to check which version of SORP accounting Finance had used for the accounts.

1. Annual Accounts

AS outlined his role as representing the external auditors who:

* Look at the numbers in the University and in this case the Students’ Union. They didn’t find any error.
* Look at the narratives that go with the accounts, to make sure that this is consistent with general knowledge of operations.
* Ensure charity commission compliance in financial issues.

He outlined that the accounts are prepared on an ongoing basis due to the assumption that the University will continue to support the Union: the Auditors will ask for a letter confirming this. They will also ask for a ‘representation’ letter, confirming that the Trustee Board is satisfied that the accounts are accurate. They also do a post-balance sheet check.

AS highlighted that currently the Union is consolidated into the University’s accounts, and that this is not financial ‘control’ except in accounting terms.

NS noted that the issue of control comes up in percentage terms as most Universities and SUs have a relationship. He highlighted that different constitutions and what is allowed in different places make a difference to the accounts relationship. NS highlighted that in in the University, the Students’ Union is often seen through a financial perspective.

AS highlighted a trustee could sign the accounts. TP highlighted that the signee is often someone more linked to finance than the Chair. TP questioned if an audit trail is necessary. AS noted this was the case.

AS offered a short letter of the outcome of the audit to the board, and indicated that he was willing to come to the board.

AS highlighted that KPMG is also independent. AS noted that the audit for the next year will begin in September.

NS highlighted a few minor corrections to the narrative. The Chair will ask Finance if there is any reason not to sign.

Action: The date for Auditors in January to be put in the agenda for that meeting.

Subject to the Trustees questions being subsequently answered, the Trustees approved the accounts.

1. Management Accounts

DN noted that there were no areas of concern but that the SU is trending to be underspent. Student and Society spending hasn’t happened as predicted. OKB noted this may be due to lack of knowledge that spending by the SU is possible. DN also noted that most of the requests received are for social activities which the SU cannot support.

DN also indicated that shop sales income is over target, and that there is some additional money which had not been transferred from old budget lines.

NS noted that the briefing note was helpful. He asked if NUS cards are concerning as they are mostly bought at the start of the year. DN noted that NUS cards are sold in a different way which changes the profile, and that an increase in NUS cards is expected.

EP asked why no income on Media Sales had been received from Freshers. DN noted that this was to do with both a monopoly contract CULSU had with BAM, and an ongoing conversation with BAM. This is likely to be resolved shortly, and approximately £8000 will be received. NS asked if the arrangements were in place with BAM for Freshers Fair. DN noted that there was no current contrast with BAM, and the aim is to construct a marketing strategy to organise this.

IC noted that options for the Freshers’ Fair this year will likely be held in the Barbican. She noted that CULSU has proposed to the University that they pay the cost. It was highlighted that the University had implied that if the decision to hold the Fair externally was made by the University they should pay the cost, but this has been brought into doubt. IC noted that the University thought that this should come from CULSU underspend. IC noted that it will have to be justified why this can’t happen. DN expressed the view that the University can’t direct the Board to spend its reserved, as long as there is a policy which outlines reserves policy and how they will be managed.

NS agreed that the University cannot direct spending. He also indicated that the University seems to be giving different messages from different areas.

1. Reappointment of Student Trustee

The Board discussed whether to reappoint Om-Kalthoom Bushamailah as student trustee for a further year. The Board agreed to reappoint.

It was highlighted that there were a number of Trustee positions which need to be filled and these should be done as soon as possible. EP highlighted the need to be specific in terms of what the Board is looking for. IC highlighted that the skills audit had noted some skills gaps which played part in shortlisting.

1. Society Fee Membership

CS presented the operations team’s recommendations, made in response to a request from the Board at a previous meeting. The Board agreed that the recommendations were good, but there should not be a set minimum. They agreed that the Operations team should provide recommendations and set Society memberships in light of proposed activity and past experience in future, and the Board was happy to devolve this responsibility to them. They directed IC by Chairs action to approve an amendment to the Society regulations to reflect this decision.

1. Draft Strategic Plan

The Board agreed the draft strategic plan with some comments:

* TP noted that ‘connected community’ is redundant. It was agreed that ‘connected communities’ or ‘strong community’, and ‘where students can grow’ were better.
* JL had sent in comments that much of this is broad and could be said by many departments, such as opportunity and employability, and wants advocacy for students to come out stronger.
* IC noted that self-discovery came through in the segmentation research. She also highlighted that as our constituency of City students so there will be some overlap inevitably.

The Draft was approved and will be brought back in a fuller form.

1. Rebrand.

IA outlined progress with the rebrand, and that Holdens has been retained to carry out this work. The total cost is £9884, and the Board was shown the tendering document. Holdens will shortly be holding some focus groups with key stakeholders, and the process would be complete by the 24th June. Holdens has also been asked to quote to renew the website to bring this into line with the new brand, but this has not come back yet. Additionally, the University has agreed to pay Holdens to design the interior of the new Union space. IC highlighted that this would provide a very distinct identity from the rest of the University. She also highlighted that the website redesign will be an additional cost.

NS clarified whether the rebranding can happen by clearing day on the 18th August. IA outlined that this is possible. She noted that the website tender will come with a separate timeline to make sure that this is done.

It was highlighted that the final decision will lie with the Trustee Board.

OKB asked what advantages are currently missing from the website. IA highlighted interactive digital contents, ideas lists and additional things concerning functionality.

1. Change of Name

IC highlighted that the University is changing its name to City, University of London. The comma will only be in the official name, but not in the brand. The University has asked if the Students’ Union will mirror this. IC proposed that the Students’ Union should follow the University and use a comma in the official name but not the brand. NS clarified that the name change should be changed with the Constitution when CULSU incorporates in July next year, rather than separately. The Board agreed with this.

1. Disciplinary Panel

DN highlighted that current regulations suggest a disciplinary panel will be called in line with a complaint and not when else. The proposal clarifies this and for who it applies.

The Board approved the new Disciplinary Regulation.

1. AOB

NS noted that the Governance Committee had asked for some actions to be done, and that these had not been done yet. IC highlighted that there would likely another meeting in June to discuss the Strategic Plan before its official launch.