

Board of Trustees Minutes

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16:30 PM, 22 April 2020 | via MS Teams

Members	Initials	Meeting 1 08.10.19	Meeting 2 03.12.19	Meeting 3 04.02.20	Meeting 4 22.04.20	Meeting 5 tbc
Tuna Kunt (President) (Chair)	TK	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Saqlain Riaz (VP Education)	SR	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rania Salim (VP Community and Wellbeing)	RS	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Nick Ratcliffe (Lay Trustee and Deputy Chair)	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Edward Pearson (Lay Trustee)	EP	✓	✓	NM	NM	
Janet Legrand (Lay Trustee)	JL	✓	A	✓	✓	
Alan Latham (Lay Trustee)	AL	✓	A	✓	✓	
Clare Searle (Lay Trustee)	CS	✓	✓	A	✓	
Rumnique Gill (Lay Trustee)	RG	NM	NM	✓	✓	
Katherine Higgins (Student Trustee)	KH	✓	A	✓	A	
Emmanuel Pobee (Student Trustee)	EP	✓	N/M	NM	NM	
Ghayathri Sivakumar (Student Trustee)	GS	NM	✓	✓	✓	

Key: "✓" = Present, "A" = Apologies given, "N/M" = Non-member, "P" = Partial attendance, 'X' = Non-attendance

Included in the circulation	Initials	Reason and Meeting Section
Philip Gilks	PG	Chief Executive (Committee Secretary)
Margaret O'Donnell	MOD	Interim SU Head of Finance
Hannah Roberts	HR	Deputy Chief Executive
Katharyn Kingwill	KK	Governance Administrator (Minute Taker)

Formal

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from KH. The Chair provided some guidelines for using MS Teams to conduct the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees 04 February 2020

(Paper: BT1942M)

The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 04 February 2020.

3.2 Actions Arising

(Paper: BT1943A)

The Board noted the actions, as follows:

- A revised Data Sharing Policy was recently received from City. PG would review this with colleagues and bring to a future meeting. **[Action]**
- MOD is developing a Finance Procedures Manual now that the Financial Regulations have been revised. This will come to the Board in due course.
- Action on the Mental Health Charter will continue during the coming months.
- The proposal for the Union to have a presence in Bunhill Row is paused whilst City considers its estates investment plans in light of the impact of Covid-19.

4. Decisions taken between meetings

The Board noted its decision on 15 March that PG become the Deputy Returning Officer on a temporary basis.

5. Items brought forward by the Chair

The Board agreed to discuss item 9 before items 7 & 8.

6. Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings

(Paper: BT1944)

The Board noted the minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings held on 13 February, 04 March, and 01 April.

Strategy

7. Strategy Update Report

(Paper: BT1945)

The Board considered an update report on the four Strategic Operational Plan priorities. A number of activities were paused due to the impact of the pandemic however some progress had been made: a training review was underway and there had been some positive sessions with staff and officers; a bid had been submitted to City with regard to the micro-placement project; the Union was considering bringing forward the proposal to establish a short term loan scheme in 2020/21, if finances permitted; good progress had been made with the development of a Jobs Board on the CULSU website which should be ready for launch in September. In discussion the following points were made:

- City had indicated that it was considering the introduction of the financial guidance tool 'blackbullion' for students which was a welcome development.
- 'Drop in' Sessions in Schools were being established for student feedback and the union was collating commentary via the Executive Committee. GS offered to assist with advice on feedback on postgraduate taught programmes.
- JL noted that the University was also concerned about students in need so anything the Union could do to assist with initiatives would be welcomed.

8. Revised Strategic Operational Plan

(Paper: BT1946)

The Board considered the Revised Strategic Operational Plan, proposed by the SMT in light of the impact of Covid-19. A number of priorities had been re-evaluated. HR highlighted key changes and revisions to key performance indicators. In discussion the following points were made:

- The Strategic Operational Plan was normally reviewed on a six monthly basis but in light of the pandemic it might be useful to revisit it more often as the situation was so dynamic. Some activities would be paused if Union staff were furloughed, but other activities could be brought forward as there were fewer student facing activities and therefore more time for desk-based projects.

Decision

The Board **approved** the revised Strategic Operational Plan and would review it again in the Autumn Term.

Executive

9. Coronavirus Update (Paper: BT1947)

The Board considered the Coronavirus update from the Chief Executive, including the Covid-19 Risk Log and a report on the City staff furlough scheme. PG highlighted the following:

- The Senior Team was supporting staff members who were working remotely, with lots of contact points and team meetings held on MS Teams. There were concerns however regarding morale and mental health, particularly for those people who lived alone.
- Workload had lessened for some staff and sabbatical officer roles where activities were face-to-face on campus.
- All in-person events had been cancelled for the remainder of the year.
- The Advice Service caseload had reduced, with the academic caseload which was down by 50%. This was mainly due to changes to extenuating circumstances arrangements which were now simpler for students to navigate.
- City had revised its Annual Leave Policy so that staff could now 'carry over' up to ten days into the next year, but the Union was encouraging staff to take all their leave this year if possible for their wellbeing and in part because next year was likely to be very busy as activities returned to campus.
- PG was meeting London SU CEOs weekly and sharing best practice.
- PC and TK attended the City Business Continuity Management (BCM) committee which was meeting twice weekly, however PG noted that key strategic decisions were taken by the Executive Team where the Union was not represented.
- There had been no confirmed cases of Union staff diagnosed with Covid-19, although some had reported as unwell. No members of staff were classed as 'vulnerable' however some lived in households where people were 'shielding'.
- It was unclear what the arrangements would be for next year as City had not yet published its plans, although others in the sector had done so. Planning was underway for the return to campus when permitted. This would be phased over a number of weeks and the Union might opt to maintain remote working over the summer as no students would be onsite.
- The Government has developed a furlough scheme and there were a number of staff in the Union who would be eligible as their workload had reduced. If the Scheme went ahead staff would be furloughed for at least May and June. PG was in conversation with City about whether the Union would be able to furlough any staff and the process for doing so, including appropriate consultation.
- PG noted that the Union was in a good position in comparison to some other unions as City was financially very stable.

Decision

The Board **endorsed** the approach to the Staff Furlough Scheme. PG would take this forward with City HR colleagues and update the Board in a month's time. **[Action]**

10. Chief Executive's Report (Paper: BT1948)

The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report. PG highlighted the following:

- The Union was very pleased that MOD had now been appointed to a permanent position as Head of Finance.
- Other appointments had been paused until the Union returned to campus.
- The Race Equality Working Group had been established and was working well. It had been agreed to use the term 'people of colour' rather than BAME, subject to further consultation with students, and to ensure that there was at least one person of colour on recruitment panels.

- There had been discussion with City colleagues regarding the oversight of the City Buddies Scheme, although this was now paused.
- Work was continuing on the redesign of the website. This would become more important to the Union's activities if remote working was long term.
- The refurbishment of the Common Room was on hold but it was no longer necessary to provide funds from Reserves as it had been agreed not to install IT and reducing the overall expenditure.
- The annual student survey launched on 21st April; 1,100 responses had been received to date.
- Study Well activities were now online.
- Elections had taken place with increased membership and candidates, however, the turnout was lower than last year which was disappointing.
- The Union was planning a live YouTube event for the Awards ceremony.
- The Sabbatical Officer Induction programme would be challenging to deliver but SR was working with the new officers already and HR was also supporting them.
- The Board noted the analysis of Advice provision. PG noted that the Union's provision was adequate for the moment.

Finance, Risk and Audit

11. March Management Accounts and Reforecast (Paper: BT1949)

The Board **noted** the March management accounts and reforecast. MOD highlighted that spend was reduced as activities had now been cancelled. It was planned to review advertising and shop income next year as there was work to be done to make both more profitable. The effect of the Staff Furlough Scheme would be significant and budget surplus from this year would be carried forward to next year. MOD had now moved some monies into interest-bearing accounts.

12. Budget 2020/21 (Paper: BT1950)

The Board received an update on the preparation of the budget for 2020/21 and was asked to advise on planning scenarios. City had notified the Union in February that the Union's Block Grant for 2020/21 would be £985,000. The budget had been prepared based on this, however, it was possible that the Grant would now be reduced, as current forecasting for student intake indicated significant financial challenges for next year, therefore City was reviewing its budgets. In discussion the following points were made:

- It was hoped that there would be more information available in May when the Block Grant should be confirmed.
- PG requested guidance from the Board whether to use Reserves to maintain planned activity should the Block Grant be reduced. The Board advised that some Reserves could be released without exceeding the three month's expenditure in reserves, required by policy.
- NR commented that it was challenging to prioritise activities and therefore to plan expenditure for next year whilst there was still such uncertainty regarding campus-based activities and the student experience. It was possible that the Union would need to develop new priorities and activities to address this, but hard to judge whether these would be long term.
- PG suggested that the Board could agree a short term budget until November, then build in other review points during the year.

Decision

The Board **agreed** that PG, HR and MOD would review budgets and build in regular review points. PG would arrange an extraordinary meeting of the Board to agree the budget for 2020/21 once City had confirmed the Block Grant. **[Action]**

Governance and Related

- 13. Returning Officer's Report** (Paper: BT1951)
The Board **noted** the Returning Officer's Report for March 2020 and congratulated the incoming Sabbatical Officers. There had been one GDPR issue regarding the use of an image so the Union would be reviewing its processes to ensure consent was given.
- 14. Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer Appointment** (Paper: BT1952)
The Board **approved** the appointment of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer for 2020/21.
- 15. Board of Trustees Dates and Business Plan for 2020/21** (Paper: BT1953)
The Board **approved** the dates and business plan for meetings to be held in the next academic year, as follows:
5 October 2020.
1 December 2020,
2 February 2021
29 March 2021.
24 May 2021.
This year's 'Away Day' meeting would be a half day in the morning of 7 July.
- 16. Appointment / Reappointment of the Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees** (Paper: BT1954)
The Board **approved** the reappointment of Nick Ratcliffe (NR) to the post of Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees and **agreed** that the appointment should be for a two year period.
- 17. Lay Trustee Recruitment** (Paper: BT1955)
The Board agreed the process for the appointment of a new lay member as Janet Legrand (JL) was leaving City's Council on 31st July to take up a role at Edinburgh University. AL would join the Appointments Committee. The Board would send any further comments on the skills mix to PG. **[Action]**

Other

- 18. Any Other Business**
The Board thanked JL for her valuable contribution to the Union and congratulated her on her new role. The Board also thanked TK and RS for their excellent work as Sabbatical Officers during 2019/20.
- NR noted that PG's email updates to the Board had been very useful during the last few weeks.