

Minutes

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17 September 2024 | City St George's Student Union

Members	Initials	Meeting 1 17.09.24	Meeting 2 10.12.24	Meeting 3 11.03.25	Meeting 4 03.06.25	Meeting 5 22.07.25
Ayla Hamzayeva (President) (Chair)	AH	✓				
Nasir Mohammed (Deputy President)	NM	✓				
Ashton Shepherd (Deputy President)	AS	✓				
Joseph Kenwright (Deputy President)	JK	✓				
Nick Ratcliffe (Lay Trustee and Deputy Chair)	NR	✓				
Alan Latham (Lay Trustee)	AL	✓				
Jas Ahluwalia (Lay Trustee)	JA	✓				
Rachel Brown (Lay Trustee)	RB	✓				
Leila Ratnani (Lay Trustee)	LR	✓				
Jeffery Wiltshire (Lay Trustee)	JW	A				
Eva O'Neill (Student Trustee)	EO	A				
Prachi Barache (Student Trustee)	PB	✓				

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

Included in the circulation / In attendance	Initials	Reason and Meeting Section
Evelyn Harwood	EH	Sabbatical Officer (Deputy President)
Philip Gilks	PG	Chief Executive (Company Secretary)
Hannah Roberts	HR	Deputy Chief Executive
Tim Sice	TS	Chief Operating Officer - Tooting
Jeni Turner	JT	Head of Finance
Chris Moore	CM	Head of Communications and Business Development
Kany Lee	KL	Operations and Projects Manager
Kathy Kingwill	KK	Clerk

Informal

The Board meeting followed an Away Day for the Trustee Board. Topics covered were: a tour of the new Students' Union space; an ice-breaker for the Board; a report from the Sports Management Team after a year's activities on the Clerkenwell campus; an update on the merger from the Chief Executive; and a session with the University's President, Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein.

Formal

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair (AH) welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Jeffery Wiltshire (JS) and Eva O'Neill (EO).

2. Declarations of Interest

(Paper: BT2401)

The Board noted the Conflicts of Interest Register updated on 13th September 2024.

3. Minutes and Actions

3.1 The Board approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2024

(Paper: BT2402M))

3.2 The Board noted the Matters Arising (Paper: BT2403A), noting the following:

- Senate Student Members Appointment This action would be addressed now that the merger had taken place.
- Actions on Microsoft Copilot, the Strategy Implementation Plan and the development of a credit card policy were still in progress.

4. CSGSU Trading Limited Board of Directors Minutes

(Paper BT2404)

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of CSGSU Trading Limited held on 20th August 2024. The Board was now responsible for the company, the purpose of which was trading activities on the Tooting campus, specifically the bar and the shop, with half of Tooting campus Union staff employed in this activity. Tim Sice (TS) explained that income for the shop in 23/24 was £800k with the bar taking £250k.

In discussion:

- The team were introducing a food service in the bar to enhance provision in that space.
- The shop did not sell drinks if the bar was open, opening hours of which were based on the number of likely users.
- Financial reporting should be much easier now that Implicit had been implemented across both sites.
- Meetings of CSGSU Trading Ltd would be held at least quarterly and minutes would be reported to the Trustee Board. The Board would also receive any papers for decision and annual performance reporting. **[Action]**

5. Decisions taken between meetings

The Board noted the agreement by circulation of the appointment of Lay Trustee, Jeffery Wiltshire (JW), appointed for a period of four years, commencing on 10th September 2024. The Board also noted that as JW had been a member of the Trustee Board for St George's Students' Union for four years previously, he would serve a single period of office for the CSGSU Trustee Board, giving a total of eight years across both boards.

6. Items brought forward by the Chair

There were none.

Section A – Update from the Chief Executive and Strategic Progress

7. Chief Executive Report

(Paper: BT2405)

Phil Gilks (PG) provided an update on activities since the last meeting. There had been a significant degree of change for staff but the completion of the merger and the move on 16th September to the new space should mean less disruption going forward. The new office space was one aspect of the revised operating model but this was also about how to engage with students with a 'one-stop' concept. The reception was now open for longer, and there was

more bookable space in the University which the Union could access. An Employee of the Month initiative had been introduced to recognise outstanding contributions of people in the Union, to be trialled for a year. The team had been preparing for Welcome Week in both Clerkenwell and Tooting campuses, but students were able to attend events on both sites. The Rob Lowe Sports Centre was currently closed but in part due to successful campaigning from the Union Sabbatical Officers the University was committed to ensuring that it reopened. There had been some reorganisation of the Sabbatical Officer portfolios following the resignation of Emine Kosey in August. In discussion:

- Student feedback. Joe Kenwright (JK) noted that consultations with students in Tooting were taking place to make sure they felt involved with the changes to the Union as feedback indicated that not everyone was happy. The Unitu initiative was also used to gather feedback.
- There had been less feedback received from students based in Clerkenwell, mainly from students in the School of Health and Psychological Sciences (SHPS). The Sabbatical Officers had met the Dean of that School, Professor Debra Salmon, to discuss the direction of travel for the next couple of years.
- The new office space had been arranged with Sabbatical Officers and student-facing staff in the 'front office' so that students can find them easily.
- Measures of success were being developed for the new operating model, for example, tracking contact data for the reception desk to evaluate extended opening hours; it was hoped to see an increase in contacts as students realised they could just 'pop in' to the Union. These changes were in line with the Student Hub model being introduced by the University, based in the same building. The key message was that students should only tell their story once so this would be considered as part of the student experience feedback gathered later in the year.
- Hannah Roberts (HR) was working with managers to set targets within the team, particularly around democracy and student feedback.
- TS noted that at Tooting campus, efforts were more focused on short term operational issues but by December the Union would be in a better position.
- Leila Ratnani (LR) suggested students could be asked to complete a quick generic survey to see whether their questions had been answered in order to gather early data. This would be considered by the Union team but care would need to be taken over the questions asked. **[Action]**

The Board thanked PG and colleagues for the update.

8. Strategy Update Report

(Paper: BT2406)

The Board considered minor amendments to the Strategy to reflect the change of name to City St George's Student Union, along with some additional narrative to reflect changes to sports management, the retail offer, and the three sites, Clerkenwell, Tooting and Moorgate. The team would bring an updated implementation plan to a future meeting, to include projects identified for students based in Tooting. **[Action]**

- PG reminded the Board that the Strategy and other key documents were available on a Sharepoint Site for the Board.

Decision

The Board **approved** minor amendments to the Strategy.

9. Merger Update

(Paper: BT2407)

The Board received an update on the merger. The Union Merger Board continued to meet and monitor the task schedule with 50% tasks now completed. The governance structure for the Union was now in place and published online, the new legal entity was registered with Companies House and all other name change filing completed. Tooting staff had been TUPE'd across and finances were now unified with the introduction of Ipllicit accounting software to be

used on all sites. The Sports Club Model had been agreed. Next steps were: to agree two Lay Trustees to become Directors of CSGSU Trading Limited; to continue to work with the University IT departments to set up Single Sign-On and to review data sharing agreements between the Union and the University; continued consolidation of operations; and the development of internal communications across both sites. It would be helpful to understand what the Board wished to see in terms of success measures. In discussion:

- It would be helpful if the Lay Trustees appointed to the CSGSU Trading Ltd Board had commercial experience. Alan Latham (AL) and Jas Ahluwalia (JA) volunteered for the role.
- It was proposed that the period of office should be for two years initially.
- The Board suggested that it would also be useful to have student representation on the CSGSU Trading Ltd Board; Eve Harwood (EH) volunteered to become a member for the duration of her Sabbatical role.
- Rebranding to remove 'City' was underway; the merger communications plans were available on the Sharepoint site.
- There were significant challenges around student data, currently on two SITS systems, as well as website access.
- Terms and conditions were unchanged for staff TUPE'd from St George's Students' Union, but there would be some realignment of roles and job titles in the Union over the coming months. These changes would be reliant on the availability of the University HR team however, and as there were still a significant volume of work to be undertaken in order to complete the TUPE of other staff groups, this could mean delays.

Decisions

The Board **approved** the appointment of Alan Latham and Jas Ahluwalia to be Directors of the Board of CSGSU Trading Limited for an initial term of office of two years, and Evelyn Harwood to become a Director of the Board of Directors of CSGSU Trading Limited for the duration of her sabbatical office. The three appointments commenced on 17th September 2024.

10. Trustee Appointments and Recruitment

(Paper: BT2408)

The Board received an update on Trustee appointments and was asked to nominate members of the Appointments Panel. Jeffery Wiltshire had been appointed during the summer as a Lay Trustee. Emine Kosey, who had been elected as a Sabbatical Officer, resigned on 5th August leaving a vacancy, so the Board was asked to consider next steps. Finally, Prachi Barache would complete her studies in December and therefore would be stepping down from the Board, and so the Board were asked to consider the approach to recruitment for a new Student Trustee.

- It was proposed not to run a by-election in November as students were unlikely to run for office now that fees had been paid for the year. In addition there were some capacity issues with the Representation and Democracy Team.
- This proposal would not impact on Board effectiveness as the Articles of Association permitted 'up to five' Sabbatical Officers. There were in effect five Sabbatical Officers in total, although one was not a Trustee, so it had been possible to reallocate roles and responsibilities in an equitable way.
- It was recommended to focus recruitment of the Student Trustee on students based on the Tooting campus as this would help to alleviate concerns regarding the student voice following the merger, noted above.
- It was proposed that Sabbatical Officers Joe Kenwright (JK) and Nasir Mohammed (NM) join the Appointments Panel. Ayla Hamzayeva (AH) was Chair.
- Rachel Brown (RB) and Leila Ratnani (LR) volunteered to be the Lay Trustees on the Panel.

Decision

The Board **approved** membership of the Appointments Panel to be; Ayla Hamzayeva (Chair), Rachel Brown, Leila Ratnani, Joe Kenwright and Nasir Mohammed.

The Board **approved** the recommendation for the recruitment of the Student Trustee to be restricted to students based on the Tooting campus.

Section B - Student Insight

11. Sabbatical Spotlight

(Presentation: BT2409)

The Sabbatical Officers provided updates on activities, as follows:

- Ayla (AH) was working on; actions to improve mental health support undertaking research into provision at other universities to see how our support could be improved; an international culture festival which it was proposed could take place in Finsbury Town Hall with discussions including the Chaplaincy Team; and working with SUxINTO.
- Joe (JK) was focussing on the operational aspects of the merger on the Tooting Campus. Main concerns were the integration of sports groups and the closure of the Rob Lowe space. Going forward there would be focus on the Student Voice to ensure all were heard. TS noted that the Rob Lowe space had been needing refurbishment for a long time, but the due diligence undertaken as part of the merger had found that it was now unsafe so closed; remedial work was not yet underway.
- Ashton (AS) was working on Black Futures Month with events planned on the Clerkenwell and Tooting sites, and a project to provide free gym membership for a number of black students. He was preparing a series of Finance Friday newsletters to students with content on personal finance; work was underway to develop a financial module with CSG academic Deborah Rafelin. He was also working with companies on Freshers Fair and helping AH and EH with their projects.
- Eve (EH) was working on the implementation of the merger with a main focus on representation and addressing concerns voiced by Tooting based students. Sessions were being prepared to discuss issues. She was also updating the Welfare Handbook, firstly for Tooting students and then for all CSG students. There would be welfare training in October.
- Nasir (NM) noted that Sabb Officer priorities were interlinked. He was also focussing on mental health to improve the offer to students such as campaigning to extend the Student Check In for all years and for a longer period of time. He was working with the Careers and Employability Team to improve promotion of the service, focussing on comms and social media. Other projects were; working with the Vice-President (Enterprise, Engagement & Employability) on a festival of professions, compiling a register of job vacancies around the campus,

The Board thanked the Sabbatical Officers for their updates and would send any further questions via email.

12. NSS 2024 Report

(Paper: BT2410)

The Board noted the report on NSS 2024, in relation to Question 25, 'How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?'. Outcomes were reported for City and St George's separately as this was pre-merger, but NSS 2025 would be CSG. Both entities had seen improved performance for 2024 with City ranked as 4th in London and St George's also seeing a positive uplift in score of 7%. The Union was also very pleased that Question 25 was the highest scoring question for City.

Section C – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

13. Approach to EDI Engagement

HR provided a verbal update on a new approach to EDI engagement. Previously there had been some conflict of interest on feedback channels so the new approach was aiming to avoid this. The EDI Board would be advised by the Student Assembly and Staff Forum with further networks for students and staff. The action plan would be updated to reflect the new approach and there would be some revisions to policies as a result of the new reporting lines which would come to the Board for approval. **[Action]**.

The Board welcomed the changes.

Decision

The Board **endorsed** the revised structure.

Section D – Finance

14. Draft Year End Accounts

(Paper: BT2411)

The Board considered the Draft Year End Accounts for 2023/24 for City Students' Union, including balance sheet and cashflow reports. Jeni Turner (JT) noted that the final quarter report (Q4) was unusual as there had been an uplift of £95k to the Block Grant to cover some staff and merger costs. The finance department merged on 1st August– enabling the Union to run as one charity across two sites with a trading subsidiary. Audits for the financial year 2023/24 for both companies, City Students' Union and St George's Students' Union, would be finalised in the coming months and reported to the Board.

- AL suggested that financial reporting should be higher on the agenda in future. **[Action]**
- Not all year end work had been completed so there could be some changes to the next iteration of the accounts.
- The Block Grant uplift of £95k was noted in accruals as it had not been received until after year end on 31st July.
- Iplc software was now in place on both sites and seemed to be working well to date. Next steps were to ensure systems and flows worked well, for example, harmonising expenditure authority. Iplc would also enable in-year reforecasting which was a big improvement.
- Budgets for 2024/25 had been approved by the Board at its last meeting.
- There had been some savings in staff costs due to delays in recruitment to vacancies, and also some underspend in activities as some planned events did not take place.
- There had been expenditure for activities covered in the sports budget in order to maintain future budget allocation and an increase in cash flow as societies were not spending their income.
- Accounts were currently showing a net deficit of £14.5k against a forecast surplus of £19k but this was still draft so may change.
- Discussions were taking place with CSG's Director of Property & Facilities regarding the location of Freshers Fair as the cost of the Design Centre was so high.
- Fully audited accounts for City Students' Union would come to the next meeting.

Decision

The Board noted the Draft Year End Accounts for 2023/24 for City Students' Union,

15. VAT Review City Students' Union and St George's Students' Union

(Paper: BT2412)

The Board noted the outcomes of the VAT Reviews for City Students' Union and St George's Students' Union, undertaken by Knox Cropper Chartered Accountants. During 2023/24 City Students' Union had taken on the sports club management from the University leading to a partial exempt calculation being required. The Review of St George's Students' Union found that the majority of VAT was being treated correctly in the parent company and the subsidiary for the current year. In discussion:

- JT explained that the partial exemption for Clerkenwell campus was 7%.

Section E - Starred items for information

(Starred items for information. Not discussed unless unstarred by a Board member)

16. *Micro-placements Evaluation (Short version)

(Paper: BT2413)

Noted.

Section G - Other

17. Any Other Business

AH reported that she had met with Nick Smith, an external advisor to the Union, and would bring a discussion paper to the next meeting with some suggestions around board effectiveness after first discussing with PG and HR. **(Action)**