

CAMBRIDGE SU TRUSTEE BOARD - 03.04.2024

<p>Attendance Voting Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caredig ap Tomos - CaT Access, Education and Participation Officer (AEP) • Neil Buchanan NB External Trustee (until item 7) • Myesha Jemison - MJ Student Trustee (PG) • Fergus Kirman - FK Undergraduate President (Chair) • Vareesh Pratap - VP Postgraduate President • Luke Patterson - LP Student Trustee (UG) • Chara Triantafyllidou - CT Student Trustee (PG) • Simon To - ST External Trustee (Deputy Chair) <p>Observers & Guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christina Kennedy - CK Chief Executive Officer • Gabbi Foreman - GF Director of Membership Engagement, Deputy CEO • Oli Gray - OG Director of Enterprise & Services (minute taker) • Jenny Ryall - JR Finance Manager, (for item 7 only) • Lewys Thomas - LT External Trustee (pending ratification) • Rosie Freeman - RF (Women's Officer) Observer 	<p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maroof Rafique - MR BME Officer <p>Absent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
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Item	Discussion	Actions
1. Apologies	Apologies received from MR. The chair also welcomed new members, pending ratification, to the board.	
2. Conflicts of	None declared.	

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Interest		
3. Minutes of the previous meeting	The unreserved minutes were approved. The chair noted that reserved business minutes will be approved separately.	
4. Matters arising	ST asked when trustees will expect to receive an update on the staff survey action plan, GF explained a verbal update can be provided at the May board meeting, and a more detailed report will follow this.	
5. Business since the previous meeting	<p>LP provided an update from the Finance sub-committee, including progress with the end of year audit. The deadline to file the end of year accounts has been extended to ensure this is met, the auditors are confident the new deadline can be met. LP added that the sub-committee endorsed the proposal to commence the process of opening a trading subsidiary company (see item 10).</p> <p>ST provided an update from the Appointments sub-committee, following FK's email circulated to trustees. Gemma Donaldson and Lewys Thomas have been appointed to join the Trustee Board, and their positions will be brought for ratification at Student Council later in April.</p>	
6. Campaigns update from sabbatical officers	<p>VP provided an update on sabbatical officers' campaign work.</p> <p>ST added that UCL has a long standing Rent Guarantor Scheme, with information available on the UCL website.</p>	
7. Variance Report and finance update	<p>JR provided a verbal summary of the variance report (enclosed in papers).</p> <p>GF added that the significant underspend shown on staffing is not a sustainable method of replenishing reserves, and that this has been discussed by members of the trustee board in previous years. GF suggested the board takes actionable steps to replenish the SU's reserves more sustainably.</p> <p>ST asked what the SU's current reserved position is. FK updated that the reserves are currently significantly less than the free reserves target. FK explained what the reserves are expected to be by the end of the current financial year, in comparison to the target set out in the Reserves Policy. ST queried whether the 2022-23 accounts will reflect this, and FK confirmed that the most recent draft indicates that the organisation is on course for this position.</p> <p>ST asked for clarification on the change in the total fundraising amounts reported to the board compared to January/February. JR explained this is largely due to the clarification of which financial year to attribute income relating to digital signage to (using an accruals basis,</p>	

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	<p>rather than cash basis).</p> <p>ST asked what the direct expenditure of commercial activities covered, and if Corporation Tax is included within this. JR explained that cost of sales includes all costs associated with the SU's retail operations, for example goods sold in the vending machine and gowns sold. GF added that the payment of corporation tax is an ongoing dispute between the accountants and HMRC. ST noted that NUS Charity can provide advice for SUs paying corporation tax.</p> <p>ST suggested that the finance sub-committee considers the longer term financial strategy and present a plan to board. FK agreed that this would be valuable, and the Board agreed that the Finance Sub-Committee should create a draft strategy for the financial sustainability of the Union to shape the organisation's approach over the next five years at least.</p>	<p>Finance sub-committee to meet and put forward a draft Financial Sustainability Strategy to the Board</p>
<p>8. CEO Update</p>	<p>GF provided a verbal summary of the CEO report, highlighting that the priority of the last few months have been focussed on financial planning and the end of year audit. Moving forward, GF aims to focus on student engagement specifically with colleges. GF also summarised longer-term plans to reinstate the Big Cambridge Survey to enable the SU to gather valuable data from members.</p> <p>GF explained there is a reduced open rate of all-student weekly bulletins, which the Communications and Marketing team are investigating. LP commented that the standard of all-student bulletins has varied through Lent Term, including inconsistent dates and times that students received the emails. VP added that this issue has also extended into Michaelmas term, and occasionally the layout of the email is distorted. It was noted that the Communications and Marketing team are trialling A/B testing. The Board noted the ongoing opportunity to provide operational feedback between meetings to SMT directly.</p> <p>FK added that the draft budget will be presented to student members at the upcoming annual student members meeting.</p> <p>ST asked about society member numbers, and the Board noted the difficulty of measuring these at Cambridge, compared to other universities. LP asked about the rate of acceptances/rejections of society grants, and if applicants are provided with feedback on their application. FK explained the approval rate of requests has so far been approximately one third, and this is largely due to having a</p>	

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	<p>lower amount of requirements and barriers to entry, to make applying as easy as possible. The Board notes that societies are always provided with explanation/feedback if their request is refused, offered support with improving their application, and are usually invited to apply again.</p> <p>ST queried whether the Democracy and Governance Review will look into the structure of campaign committees. It was confirmed that the governance review could impact the structure of campaign committees.</p> <p>ST commented that the updates around 'Our People' appear relatively broad, and asked if more specific actions can be presented for members of the board to review. It was noted that the board would like to see more progress on actions. LP suggested that before the survey is launched, a concerted effort is made to discuss improvements and actions with staff. GF added that these discussions are happening and CK will lead on work to improve organisational culture.</p>	
9. Motion from Student Council	<p>The Board received a summary of context regarding the plant-based catering motion, and noted that the actions mandated in the motion related to operational decisions, outside of the scope of the Student Council, over which the trustee board would have the ultimate decision.</p> <p>ST asked for clarification about potential financial and legal risks attached to this motion. CK noted that the scope of the financial impacts of the motion would be unknown, and the Board noted that it related to an unspecified range of 'internal operations'.</p> <p>The Board also recognised that the policy as written included a "[commitment] to serve fully plant-based food in any and all future catering outlets operated by the SU"; the Board noted that this was a future operational and commercial decision, the financial implications of which it was not yet in a position to evaluate in line with its members' fiduciary duties. The Board felt unable to predetermine future decisions relating to the charity's finances and commercial operations out of context, especially as the charity does not currently operate catering outlets.</p> <p>CaT reminded members of the board that Student Council is the core student-led democratic decision-making body of the SU and therefore decisions to overturn voted policy should not be taken lightly. The Board affirmed the importance of working constructively with the motion's proposers in any case, and expressed a desire that the organisation should evaluate transitioning to more plant-based catering wherever possible. CT suggested that a useful first step would be a representative of the Board</p>	

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	<p>discussing the intended scope of the motion with the proposers, to understand what areas the organisation could examine first. The Board agreed to invite CaT to seek input from the proposer and seconder about what the intended scope of current 'internal operations' was, so that the SU could best give effect to the spirit of the motion.</p> <p>The board unanimously voted to exercise its powers under Article 28, clause 3, to overturn the Policy, but for CaT to engage with the motion's proposers in the way discussed, so that operational change in the spirit of the motion could be evaluated and implemented wherever possible.</p>	
10. Enhanced security for the SU Office	VP requested this item to be deferred to the next meeting. LP left the meeting.	
11. Free Speech compliance work update	FK summarised progress with the SU's work to comply with new Freedom of Speech legislation coming into effect later this year, and noted that more detailed actions would be coming to the next Trustee Board meeting.	
12. Date of next meeting	<p>Wednesday 1st May 2024 in person meeting.</p> <p>ST asked if there is scope to move the meeting to earlier in the day to allow for travel time, FK agreed this would be sensible, and would contact External and Student Trustees about this.</p>	
13. Any other business (AOB)	None	