

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
ROEHAMPTON STUDENTS' UNION TRANSITION COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the 16th meeting of the RSU Transition Committee held on
22 May 2020 remotely via Zoom**

Present: Dan O'Donoghue (Chair), George Turner, George Walker

In attendance: Mark Gillespie, Bal Kaur

Notes: Elaine Lentell

Apologies: Reggie Blennerhassett, Jonathan Chien, Levi Mbiya

RSUTC16.1 Welcomes, introductions, apologies, and conflicts of interest

Apologies were noted.

RSUTC16.2 Minutes of the 15th meeting of the RSU Transition Committee

Approved: The minutes of the 15th meeting of the RSU Transition Committee held on 24 April 2020 (Paper RSUTC16/1).

Noted: The matters arising from the previous minutes (Paper RSUTC16/2).

RSUTC16.3 Coronavirus update

Received: A verbal update from the Union's CEO.

Noted: That 'RSU@Home' had been live for eight weeks and was going well.

That the Union's advice caseload was marginally higher than previous years due to coronavirus-related cases.

That Growthampton had been providing fruit and vegetables to local families through the community box scheme. The scheme had been very well-received, with 257 boxes delivered to date.

Work on a phased return to campus and service delivery was being progressed. Twenty-five members of staff from the HIVE and events team were currently on furlough and additional staff could be furloughed in future.

That Jonathan Chien from the University's Finance department had been working with the Union on its expenditure for the rest of the academic year. It was suggested that a small portion of the Union's budget should be set aside for the remainder of 2019-20 to cover any unforeseen expenditure around coronavirus.

RSUTC16.4 Review update on financial management and action plan

Received: A verbal update from the Union's CEO.

Noted: That KCG, the University's Internal Auditors, had requested an update on the action plan. Three items remained outstanding:

1. Trustee Board recruitment – on the agenda at item 7
2. Counter Fraud Response policy. The policy would be looked at over the summer
3. Fixed assets. Once the campus was reopened the Union would arrange for a walk-through to itemise assets.

It was agreed that the Acting University Secretary would follow up the outstanding actions with KCG outside of the Committee.

That that 3rd quarter accounts had been received and would be presented at a future meeting once they were finalised. The Union was on track to achieve a small surplus due to the current recruitment freeze.

The Committee **approved** the deferral of the RSU Summer Ball budget, of approximately £10k, to the 2021 budget.

Actions: Union's CEO, Acting University Secretary

RSUTC16.5 Progress update on Turnaround Plan CONFIDENTIAL

Received:

1. RSU Professional Service Department Business Plan 2020/21: Roehampton Students' Union (Paper RSUTC16/3 – Appendix 1)
2. Draft RSU Organisation, Financial and Strategic Planning document for 2020/21 (Paper RSUTC16/3 – Appendix 2)

Noted: That the documents were intended to provide operational direction. In the strategic planning document, model projections were based on 2019/20 figures. A summary of efficiency-making scenarios was detailed on p. 8 and three efficiency-making principles were proposed:

- Operational (non-pay) savings first
- Job retention
- Maintain service delivery

In the worse-case scenario of a 10% reduction or more staffing costs may need to be reviewed, e.g. not recruiting for the two intern positions and delay filling the Membership Services Manager position. That any income reduction and reduction in the block grant would be offset by a reduction in expenditure.

The business plan was based on four strategic principles, centred around Digital Acceleration, People Matters, Core Activity and Commercial Resilience. These principles would be instrumental in

guiding the RSU through the next 12 months.

That the RSU would look at alternative ways to generate income in anticipation of the ongoing impact of the coronavirus epidemic on events in 2020/21.

RSUTC16.6 Update on appointment of new trustees

Received: A verbal update from the Chair.

Noted: That the Union, including the incoming 2020/21 Sabbatical Officers, had met with the four shortlisted candidates for a preliminary conversation. Two candidates had come across as particularly strong and possessed the necessary skills and experience:

- Eleanor Wheal
- Lee Bird (Letter of interest provided in Paper RSUTC16/4)

It was therefore recommended that the two candidates' applications should be progressed, which would leave one trustee position vacant. It was agreed that recruiting a trustee with sound financial knowledge was desirable as the trustees would be required to scrutinise the Union's finances in detail. If it was not possible to appoint someone with the desired financial acumen, it was suggested that the University's Deputy Director of Finance could do a run-through of the accounts with new trustees. Alternatively, there could be a standing finance item on the Trustee Board agenda, to keep trustees abreast of the University's financial processes.

The Union's CEO and RSU President had also met with a candidate for the Clerk to Committee position and it was felt that they would be suitable for the role.

The following actions were agreed:

- Arrange for the Deputy Director of Finance and Acting University Secretary to speak with the two recommended candidates
- Look to recruit for the third vacancy
- Once the trustees have been appointed, carry out a new skills audit, and consider the University trustee and what skills would be desirable
- Have a further conversation with the Clerk to Committees candidate

Actions: Union's CEO, Chair

RSUTC16.7 Update on ongoing investigation CONFIDENTIAL

Received: A verbal update on the investigation from the Union's CEO.

Noted: That the Union's CEO had met with the University's solicitors and recommended counsel to consider the next steps. It was suggested

that an asset search should be carried out on the ex-employee to confirm they have assets to sue for. The Committee agreed that a search would be prudent before pursuing this course of action. That there was also potential to sue for fraudulent misrepresentation.

That the consultation with counsel had increased legal costs to circa £8,000 to date, although the final costs may be higher depending on the course of action taken.

It was agreed that a recommendation would be presented at the next meeting of the RSUTC and that litigation funding would be explored.

Actions: Union's CEO

RSUTC16.8 Update on RSU elections

Received: The RSU Elections 2020 Report from the Returning Officer (Paper RSUTC16/5)

Noted: That the turnout for the election had been relatively low, but that this had been expected given the ongoing coronavirus situation and having to run the election online. It was acknowledged that the election process could be further improved, and to this end a 'democracy review' would be carried out over the next two years.

That the feedback from candidates had been positive. Three complaints had been lodged about one specific incident, but this had been resolved informally. A post-election workshop, covering employment skills for candidates, was scheduled in the near future.

That two quotes from consultants for onboarding training for incoming Sabbatical Officers had been obtained. NUS training would also need to be arranged. It was agreed that a plan setting out Sabbatical Officer training for 2020-21 would be brought to the next meeting.

It was further agreed that the next meeting of the RSUTC should be moved to 19 June 2020 and an invite extended to the incoming Sabbatical Officers.

Actions: Union's CEO, Secretariat

RSUTC16.9 Any Other Business

Noted: The following actions were agreed in preparation for the 2020-21 academic year:

- Bring a draft cycle of business for 2020-21 to the next meeting
- Bring an updated risk register to the next meeting
- Arrange for a finance presentation for the incoming Sabbatical Officers

Actions: Union's CEO, Clerk

Date of next meeting: 19 June 2020

Elaine Lentell
Secretariat
May 2020

Unconfirmed