



TRUSTEE COUNCIL MEETINGS

Minutes for the Nineteenth Trustee Council meeting held on Thursday the 4th of February, 2016 in The Hive Cafe, Digby College.

Present Siobhan Kelly, George Cole, Marie Johansen, Tessa Willy, Brian Stewart

In Attendance Matt Wall, Kate Griffiths, Kennedy Small, Jack Wilcock

1: Apologies Adam Askew

2: Minutes: Last month's minutes stated that Ken was predicting a yearly profit for the Hive of £200,000 with the additional space, however, this was incorrect and was amended as a £20,000 profit.

3: Matters Arising:

The accounts have been signed off and have been brought to the meeting for the Trustees to sign. Ken is attending a meeting surrounding pensions on the 11th of Feb so should have more information at the next Trustee meeting about this. We are still in need of a Post Graduate Trustee, so far one person has showed interest but we've yet to hear back from them.

4: Summer Ball Budget

Steve Molyneaux – Entertainments Co-ordinator

The event itself is always very popular and last year we submitted it to an Entertainment forum for Student Union events in the category of "Best One Off Even." It was short listed and ultimately came third which was a great result that we are hugely proud of. We will be entering these awards again with thorough planning and preparation, so are hoping to do better than last year.

However, the costs for the event are going up and we do run a financial risk, however, the event has sold out every year in advance so this gives us confidence going forward.

Safety is paramount during the event so we haven't cut costs when it comes to this.

The line up for the event will be finalised by the end of the term with the promo going out over the Easter break and the tickets on sale after the students get back towards the end of April.

Steve has also sent out invitations to local organisations to see if they'd like to get on board with the event. We are taking a fresh approach to the Summer Ball this year and once we've heard back from the interested parties with quotes, we'll be able to make a final decision and assess the costs based on this.

We are saving £5,000-7,000 on production costs and in order for the event to break even we would need to sell 1,900 tickets. Last year we sold 1,800 in the first week alone so this is an achievable goal.

There has also been a slight increase on the price of the staff tickets, but for students, the price had remained at £50 for the past 8 years. Simon Dorman runs the staff event, and although they get to enjoy the perks of the Ball, we don't pay for them. We have also collaborated with Sport Roehampton on the marquee hire so it coincides with their award ceremony, thus sharing the cost.

Steve and Matt are meeting with Nando's on the possibility of sponsorship for the event, but we are cautious that we still want the event to remain ours and are only after credible sponsors.

5: Election Plans

Iain Pullar- Membership Services Manager

There has been lots of planning involved in these elections and the nomination period opens on Monday the 8th of February and will last a whole month til the 4th of March. We looked at the Bye-Laws and took these changes to SUC for approval before the top up elections in October last year and trialled online voting then in preparation for the main elections in March. Hopefully this new online platform will mean that we'll see a significant increase in voter turnout.

In the Bye-Laws it states that the Sabb roles are more rigid in what's expected from the role, whereas the officer roles can be more fluid depending on the individual in the role.

We are also making sure that these elections are fair for all candidates involved and are using the NUS Returning Officer for all other SU's – Peter Robinson. Iain has done some really positive work on these upcoming elections and hopefully we'll engage with more students as a result.

6: Sabb Update

Siobhan Kelly – SU President

We are hoping to engage more students for these elections than we did last year and we have also noticed that the percentage of Black and Ethnic Minority students putting themselves forward for these elections is very low. The Student Union is not representative of the demographic at the University and Siobhan is taking the lead on setting up a BME leaders conference with the intention to engage more students by empowering them through key note speakers. A working group of students has been formed and we currently have Maggie Alphonsi – Roehampton Alumni and England Women's Rugby Captain – on board to give a speech. If anyone knows of any speakers that could possibly attend this leadership

conference then please let Siobhan know. She is keen to let the students take the lead on this and is supporting those who want to take this on. In terms of pricing, Siobhan is keen to keep costs low and although Santander have refused to sponsor the event, they have said they'll fundraise for it.

Those in attendance wanted to stress that due to the importance of this event, costs shouldn't be an issue and that it should happen no matter the cost.

Siobhan had looked into getting Sir Trevor Macdonald to speak but it was looking like that would cost us £12,000-15,000 but Tessa mentioned that this would be a great investment for the University and would create a legacy that would hopefully carry on year after year.

David noted that he would make some enquiries for this and was totally on board and behind us to keep pushing the event.

Jo, our Marketing and Communications Manager has been great at promoting this event and we hope it will attract a lot of interest.

Siobhan, along with George and Matt, visited Calais in December and it was a really eye-opening experience. Students have been donating clothes, shoes and other items to the cause and have really got behind it.

George Cole – VP Welfare and Community

George has run a series of successful "Let's Stop...." campaigns which have focussed on a different discrimination each month. December was Let's Stop...Anti Religion, January was Let's Stop Homophobia and George worked closely with our LGBT Officer Leah on a Pride walk around campus that was well attended. There was also film nights throughout the month and it culminated with a themed Bop night. February sees the start of our Let's Stop Ablism month with a focus on Mental Health awareness and March is focussed on Sexism, with Jacqueline Wilson coming on to campus to give a talk in Digby Chapel. The Off Campus Accommodation fair was a huge success with external companies coming on to campus and around 700 students in attendance. Landlords in the local area were also invited and 11 of the 40 we recommend in the area showed up.

George has also been working on a security survey for students as he has received feedback that students don't feel safe on campus at night. He's written a report that's been sent to Paul Markham-James, our head of security and he's been really helpful and compliant with our plan to create a closed campus at night.

Tess noted that you can't go anywhere near other London Universities at night if you don't have a student card and George mentioned that the University has cut the budget in those areas so there are less patrols during the day/night.

Working on accessibility throughout Uni as older building are inaccessible to disabled students.

Creating a zen garden/safe space on Digby where students can go to relax and get away from things.

Marie Johansen – VP Education

The #FixIT campaign has been launched as a result of the constant problems students are having trying to get through to the IT department. Students will now be able to report problems directly via Twitter with the hashtag #FixIT. We are the first SU to employ this method of reporting and so far it's going well.

The NSS (National Student Survey) is taking up a lot of Marie's time as she and Matt Hurst – our Student Voice Co-ordinator – are pushing this directly to all third year students through their lectures. The survey launched two weeks ago and the average response rate after this time is 21%. Roehampton currently has a 41% response rate so we are miles above the National average. It's a credit to Marie, Matt and the Programme Reps who have been instrumental in pushing this survey too. We have also used our newly acquired camper van to promote the NSS and have decked it out with freebies to attract the students.

Marie is also planning the UR Amazing awards where students can nominate their lecturers/teachers/any member of staff who they think deserves recognition for their hard work. So far we have received 50 nominations but we are aiming for 200 nominations by the end of the academic year.

7: Audited Accounts

Ken Small – Finance Manager

These accounts were signed off by our President Siobhan on the 17th of November, 2015, however, they still need to be signed off by the external Trustees present. Andy asked if his involvement with Regenerate would compromise his ability to sign the accounts off, however, it was mentioned that because he doesn't work directly within the organisation, he will be fine to sign the accounts.

We had a turnover of over £1million last year and although our block grant from the University is quite low (£366,850), they do add a lot of additional funding throughout the year on top of this.

The NUS Green Fund funding ran out in July last year and this has contributed heavily to our income over the two years we received the funding.

We currently have a surplus of £27,377 and this is encouraging considering all the changes that happened last year.

Our events are still profitable and we have our own JustGiving page, which is not reflected in the accounts.

We were recently audited and the auditors were happy, however they did suggest that we need to improve our policies of internal controls. They needed more explanation of what the Hive Cafe was about as the accounts don't show the cafe's profit per day (usually about £1,000) and this needs to be clearly communicated. All Student Union's need an audit and as we have charity status, and audit is deemed necessary for charities with assets of over £1million. It's also useful to the University and gives them assurance that we are on track.

A suggestion was made by the trustees that the accounts show an “Executive Summary” on the front page so these things are clearly visible from the beginning.

The whole auditing period was slightly rushed so it was mentioned that the Trustees should have a discussion surrounding this for next year so they are fully involved in the process.

Matt Wall added that our Strategic Plan is out of date and our shift is distinctive, political and impactful and we need a strategic plan to reflect this. Reporting needs to be better and we also need to have more involvement with our trustees and really use their expertise to our advantage.

A report on Pensions was promised for this meeting, however, Ken is yet to meet with the University, so this report will be given at the next Trustee meeting

8: Budget 2016/2017

Matt Wall – Chief Executive

The Students’ Union didn’t get assurance from the University regarding the Block Grant until September last year which is not good enough.

We have 22 full time members of staff as well as 3 Sabbs and 6 interns and we want to make sure these roles are properly supported. The University also make us pitch for additional funding throughout the year which wastes time and prevents us from doing our jobs as we work on each individual pitch. We have a long term plan for where we’d like to be in 3-5 years time, however the University work to a more short term schedule. We have proved ourselves on many occasions and they are still reluctant to hand over more money at the start of the year. Other SU’s our size get between £600,000 and £1,2million from their Universities as their Block Grant.

The University has invested £65,000 in the Growhampton initiative, with the incentive to build more commercial avenues and a bigger staff base to insure managers aren’t run ragged.

The forecast for next academic year is to ask the University for a Block Grant of £600,000 which equates to an additional £94,000 from last academic year.

9: WISH

Matt Wall

We need to push forward our proposals now as we may not get another opportunity. This year we are looking to invest £250,000 in facilities but it has become problematic and stressful trying to ask for more money for these short term developments.

David suggested that we don’t ask for more than £600,000 from the University as it could be a risk to ask for more.

The £600,000 would provide a medium term fix for the ideal student hub and would mean that we'd be able to produce something of quality that will service many more students than our current facility can cater for.

Siobhan mentioned that the University loses £500,000 annually from unfilled rooms at the Vauxhall accommodation site – Spring Mews – however, they are very quick to grill us when we want additional money for core activities.

Matt mentioned that we don't have the necessary skills to put our proposals into writing and that it would need the support of a legal brain to make sure we are going about things properly.

Andy asked if we employ anyone who specifically focuses on fundraising and although we currently don't, we do tap into Government and local Council funding. The University of West London have done this and have secured huge amounts of money.

As part of the Funding Model Matt is working on, we aim to provide 10% of own income through fundraising. The idea of a Fundraising Consultant was floated, no win no fee if they don't raise your money, but they will take a cut if they do hit your required target.

Matt visited Royal Holloway where they have employed a Dutch company called De Boer to build them a temporary structure which is very impressive. We approached them with an idea and they came back to us with a proposal. With this structure we'll be able to make more money on our commercial services and also rent the space out for conferences etc. The beauty of the company is that they don't take long to erect the structure and it can be built on Froebel lawn in time for September and Freshers Week. It would also impact on the Summer Ball as it would mean that we would no longer have to hire out marquees for the event. It would possibly be too small for graduation but we could easily rent it out as exam space.

We are currently seeking planning permission on this but it's not a permanent structure and primarily it will be used as a short term solution. If we can attract 15 students each year by having this structure then it will pay for itself.

10: Talent Proposal

Matt Wall

We are always asking ourselves why students/staff are leaving education to go elsewhere.

David mentioned that too many people are leaving his firm too, and it's down to financial reasons, money will outweigh a lot of decisions. When asked why they left around 50% said it was a money issue and others said they felt undervalued. He also said that the appraisal process shouldn't be overcomplicated and that there is a balance between new members of staff and those who have known the RSU before working here.

We need a better working model for staff and during the next financial year we will look at a training budget and pool our resources. We are keen for good people to stay in the industry and although we realise we have a ceiling in terms of

finances, we are keen for them to stay in similar organisations. There is a £5-£10,000 investment planned for alumni development which is a step in the right direction. Brian noted that we lose too much experience each year, so keeping our retention rates up is invaluable.

11: External Speakers Policy

Matt Wall

There has been a lot in the press surrounding this but we are very diligent when it comes to external speakers and we are working with the University on this policy, however, there are conflicting views between the Education Act and the Charity Commission. We don't have to comply with the prevent agenda but in the bigger picture why wouldn't we?

It was thought that the role of vetting external speakers needs to go to someone with experience and therefore someone who we haven't employed as an intern. Our Black and Ethnic Minority students make up 55% of the student body and Muslim student amount to 24%; looking around the room of people gathered at the meeting, this isn't reflective of those people in the meeting. There is not one Muslim member of staff and Siobhan, along with Marie and George, is hoping to change this by such initiatives as the BME Leaders conference.

A.O.B

Action Point – Bring Risk Register to next meeting

Date of Next Meeting - TBC