



TRUSTEE MEETINGS

Minutes for the Twenty-first Trustee Council meeting held on Monday the 12th of September, 2016 in The Olive Garnett Building, Froebel College.

Present Jack De France, George Cole, Marie Johansen, Adam Askew, David Martin, Brian Stewart.

In Attendance Matt Wall, Kate Griffiths, Kennedy Small

1: Apologies Tessa Willy, Andy Smith

2: Minutes: Jack was moved from “In Attendance” to “Present” and the Minutes from the last Trustee Meeting were approved.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

3: Chief Executive Update **Matt Wall**

We have a new strategy in place that is due to be discussed later on in the meeting.

The away day planning was really productive and everyone at the meeting agreed that it proved fruitful as attendees had longer to discuss ideas etc.

The RSU was originally due to have a temporary structure in place for the start of the new academic term, however these plans were shelved in favour of redeveloping the rooms on the first floor of the Olive Garnett building, the lower floor of which is occupied by the gym. £50,000 had been put into this regeneration and it'll be a really useful space for both ourselves and societies to hold meetings, as well as providing us with much needed storage space.

Monte Hall has also been given a makeover and this includes painting the entire hall, sorting out the DJ and sound system and also making sure the lighting is functioning properly. We hope that these refurbishments will lead to a higher footfall and larger commercial revenue in the long run. The University are picking up the cost for this.

We receive a £389,000 block grant from the University this year and although our finances are in a really strong position, we are still underfunded compared to other Student Unions.

Our new website and membership programme (MSL) was launched on the 17th of August and this will now enable us to provide online services such as ticket sales, election voting, room booking and membership purchase to name a few. RSU pay

£7,000 a year for this but it does give us an accurate reading of how many people are engaging with us.

The National Student Survey (NSS) happens every year and the results of which count towards the league tables. The Uni struggled to see strong improvement on performance this year, however there were promising results for the IT, Disability and BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) departments, helped by the Student Union's commitment to raising these issues and lobbying the University to make changes. There was however a significant rise in Student Union satisfaction having jumped 9 places from last year. This will be the last time we'll be ranked on this survey as they are removing the question relating to the Student Union next year to focus on the academic side of the survey. We will be working to try and keep the question within the survey as it's a useful metric.

In regards to representation, more money has been put aside for the development of the BME conference, planned for the end of October to wrap up Black History Month.

Jack has been working on developing the Student Mentor scheme to really engage with those students who perhaps live off campus or who need more help in their first year. This has proved really strong results and engagement initially.

George has been working on implementing Gender Neutral toilets across campus to cater for our 70+ students who don't identify as either gender.

50 students signed up for the Mental Health Network which is really positive and we have also re-branded the "Let's Stop...." campaign that we ran last year as "Let's Celebrate" this academic year.

Marie's role as VP Education has really allowed us to become closer to the University and involved in academic decision making. We have also secured £15 printing credit for every student.

Our events are also going well which is great as we are hugely reliant on their income and with the additional 394 students on campus, we hope this will continue through the coming academic year. At present, the WISH plans are still being developed, but we've been able to make some changes to the overall appearance of certain areas and with the addition of Olive Garnett we hope to still give students a great experience.

Growhampton is in a tricky position with funding as a result of Brexit. The University have provided us with £38,000 which is £12,000 less than what we initially asked for. Joel Williams – our "Grower" – has also gone down to part time, but this is unrelated to the Brexit vote. The Hive broke £200,000 in terms of turnover this year and we are running a £5,000 surplus with encouraging sales, but we are always looking for ways in which to increase the surplus. We have also noticed that the out-sourced catering outlets on campus have copied our design ethos in the Hive. David mentioned that it's always good to have competition as it makes you strive for more and it's a compliment that they see The Hive as the ideal model on which to base their design on.

As in house staff go, we've employed a really good group of interns this year and they have some exciting projects in the pipeline. We have also had a shake around in the Comms team as our Marketing and Communications manager, Jo, left us in

the Summer. We now have a bigger team within communications and are hoping this will mean we can churn out more information on a regular basis.

Celia (an ex Roehampton Graduate) has also been employed on a full term contract with the Growhampton team and it's a part of the SU she has been heavily involved with all throughout her student life so it's encouraging that we can further her career here.

Brian, our undergraduate Trustee, has also been selected to lead the Welcome Crew for Freshers' Week. This will be made up of 60+ student volunteers who'll be there to lend an extra hand in the first week of the new term.

All in all we are in a really good place for the start of term.

Adam felt that the notes handed around we formatted really well and wanted to extend his congratulations to Matt and the Sabbs for all their hard work leading up to Freshers' Week. He was, however, worried about the future of Growhampton and what the implications are if it were to go under.

Action Point – Provide a business forecast for the The Hive as well as a plan for Growhampton funding

He also asked how much more we would want on the block grant before we felt we had "enough."

Matt answered that although we can't compete size-wise with those Universities who are provided with a much larger block grant, we asked for what we considered a reasonable amount (£595,000) back in February and the block grant we received was well under this figure.

David wanted to know who was involved in these meetings with the University in which the block grant was discussed and Matt answered that it was himself, Ken and Jack present. David then expressed his desire to be included in these meetings in future and also to approach them with a proper proposal next time, which will be supported by the Trustees.

Adam pointed out that we now have a good track record and have proved that we are maintaining a good income, so the University should take this into account when deciding a block grant figure.

It was also agreed that the grant proposal needs to be decided much earlier.

Action Point – To have the draft Block Grant Proposal ready for November

4: Budget 2016/2017

Ken Small

We had a turnover of over £1million last year for the first time so this was very encouraging.

Our block grant is £389,000 but we also receive additional money throughout the year from things like NUS membership and societies.

The £38,000 from the University earmarked for Growhampton will only be given once a business plan has been drawn up.

We have also received £15,000 from Wandsworth Council to take our Growhampton knowledge into schools in the local community so we purchased 2 vans which will act as mobile Hives and which will also bring us commercial income.

We have a projected income of £1,095,388, however we do spend nearly all of this throughout the year giving us a surplus of £3,669. Our reserves of £227,000 go into this too and this equates to around 3 months operating costs.

David pointed out that he doesn't see the pressure around reserves and he would recommend that we don't hold too much.

Matt mentioned that the money we used to improve our events resources came from these reserves. He also said that the University have asked him why we're asking for more money if we have a £30,000 surplus last year. David replied that running a tighter budget with smaller surplus would be a good bargaining tool to be used as leverage when asking for more money.

We are also now part of the University pension scheme. It works on an auto enrol basis and employees can then opt out if they'd prefer. Unfortunately we are still not getting the 15.5% the rest of the University staff are getting and it's becoming harder to have these conversations with the University as they are looking to save £2million in salaries this year and are restructuring every department as a result.

The University has also borrowed £80million for the planned development across the whole site and this is via a bank return on the investment for student halls.

A couple of questions were raised surrounding the bar agreement and it was noted that as part of the old agreement we used to get capped at £13,333 with all other profit going to the University. We now have a new agreement which states that the SU will get a third of all the bar profits. However, since this agreement was made, the bar have actually made less money in the last academic year. Our Entertainments Coordinator's salary is also part funded by the Bar as he does a lot of additional work in collaboration with them. This contribution accounts to 20% of Steve's salary.

David was keen for a more in-depth breakdown of the budget, especially in those areas where there are large amounts of money. He was also keen for us to have business plans in place for these significant financial contributions so we have a good grounding if the University wants to interrogate us on anything.

**Action Point – Schedule a meeting with Matt, Ken and David before
November**

Those present were happy to approve the budget pending any tweaks arising from the aforementioned meeting.

**5: RSU Strategic Plan
Matt Wall**

Our strategic plan is now on posters around the Student Union so everyone is reminded of our aims and principals every day.

Adam mentioned that a strategic plan should live and not be left in a drawer and forgotten. It is also key to build this into our documents and link information back to it so everything can be accounted for. Matt noted that this was key in the value-based appraisal process now in place for staff.

Action Point – Bring forward operating plan for 2016/17

6: Matrix of Responsibility

Matt Wall

Matt discussed that it was very beneficial to have student trustees on board as they give an insight from an internal perspective.

David also wanted it known that everyone should be aware of their individual responsibilities within the Trustee board and it would also be beneficial for them to have knowledge of the Student Union Council (SUC), as well as the SUC being aware of them and what they do for us as an SU.

A suggestion was made that the Trustees tag on to the Officer Residential that takes place in the Summer as this would be a great way for everyone to meet.

Marie mentioned that she had met up with Tess outside of the Trustee board and gained some invaluable advice in her area of work which was really beneficial and she suggested should occur more often with the Sabbs and Trustees.

There was also a point highlighted that there should be a risk register if we ever have a situation where the Sabbs and the Chief Executive don't have the positive relationship that the current people in those roles have. Matt stressed that he wants to see RSU succeed as a whole and that he is there to provide support to the Sabbs if needed.

7: Development of the Board of Trustees and appointments

Matt Wall

Jack discussed that there will be a proposed training day for Trustees and he is hoping that this will be in early November. Anyone is welcome.

George hopes to see a more diverse Trustee Board in order to fit in with our demographic.

When comparing us to other Trustee Boards, Marie thought it would be good for us to meet before the meeting to discuss various things off the record.

Adam agreed that it was time to move to the next level and a consistent co-chair would help to do this. Shorter, sharper meeting were also suggested and it was advised that we identify what skills are missing in our Trustee Board to push us forward.

We should formalise the mentoring and each Trustee should take responsibility for a staff member.

Adam is stepping down after 6 years of great service and we need to make sure that his commitment and passion for the student union is matched in his replacement. It would be ideal to have an ex-Roehampton student or staff member to step into the role as they would have more of an understanding of how Roehampton works and how we arrived in the position we're in today. Matt mentioned that we should be working with the Alumni department on this too. We need to find a replacement for Adam immediately, but with Andy leaving soon too, steps must be put in place for a replacement for Andy at some point too. Moving forward, the Sabbs are to take the lead on this, with the guidance of Matt.

Action Point – Work to ensure we fill External (lay) trustee, Part Time Officer Trustee and Postgraduate Trustee vacancies for next meeting

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

8: Brexit – Planning for the Future

Matt Wall

Jack noted that a message was put out to all International students to keep them in the loop and inform them that nothing will change immediately so not to panic. Adam asked if we get any EU funding as a Student Union and if this affects our block grant. More research needs to be done surrounding block grants in the wake of Brexit.

The Higher Education Bill is more of an impact at the moment and Universities now have no cap on how many students they can recruit so it may mean we get pressure from the bigger establishments.

Justine Greening, our local MP and the Secretary of State for Education, understands Roehampton, so it's no bad thing having her on our doorstep.

David pointed out that it was far too early to tell what the implications of Brexit will have on our country, but at the moment, the forecast is not as bad as people were initially thinking. The University will always need a Student Union, so we are in a good position.

A.O.B

Jack had been approached by Sue McKinney, a member of staff regarding our involvement with the Roehampton Voice newsletter that we help publish. All we do is design the magazine so it's not something that we can have a huge say over, but Adam wasn't keen on staff members trying to tell us what to do and that we should carry on the design it.

A big thank you to Adam for all his hard work and dedication over the last 6 years. Your presence on the Trustee Board has been invaluable.

Date of Next Meeting - TBC

Kate Griffiths
Secretary
October 2016