

University of Derby Students' Union

Trustee Board Summary Sheet

Agenda Reference:	TB/2021/
Title of Report:	Minutes of the last meeting – 25.01.2021
Written By:	Sally Cunningham – HR & Admin Manager
Presented By:	Chris Hughes, Chair
Action Requested:	Approval

Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 25th January 2021– 5 p.m. Via Microsoft Teams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Hughes (CH) Chair

Trustee Board:

Joel Boulter (JB) Student Trustee
Helen Roberts (HR) External Trustee
Michael Spencer (MS) External Trustee
Nicola Hartley (NH) External Trustee

Officer Trustees:

Corey Beck (CB) President
Josh Williams (JW) VP Activities
Nina Cupric (NC) VP Education
Emily Lane (EL) VP Welfare

Union of Students:

Vicky Hossack (VH) Chief Executive
Martin Beaumont (MB) Head of Operations
Suzy Stevenson (SS) Head of Membership
Steve Taylor (ST) Finance Manager
Sally Cunningham HR & Admin Manager (Minutes)

APOLOGIES:

Tony Atherton (TA) External Trustee

Absent:

No one

1. Welcome and Apologies - CH

Chair welcomed all to this meeting. Duly noting we are a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Charity.

Apologies noted above.

2. To approve the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 03.11.20

TB/2021/001

Minutes from the last meeting **agreed** as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising from: 03.11.202

- Budget 2020-2021 - to document what is agreed and regularly update the Board on any changes – **completed**.
- To promote the Annual Report incorporating scenario 2 following final approval at the full Board meeting in January 2021 – **agenda item 5**.

4. University Covid-19 Update – CB

TB/2021/002

CB gave an overview of the changes to the teaching and learning model as a result of the latest lockdown and the rising student concerns in particular. The general feeling is of a lack of support by the Government that has been entrusted to individual providers to look at ways to find concessions for students with little financial assistance.

The Union and University are looking at a number of areas of student concerns examples:

- Waiver for accommodation fees.
- Financial Hardship - student fees.
- The 'no detriment' to student assessments.
- Replicating the student community online.
- Access to opportunities.
- Student life as it is at this current time - including the impact on students during this prolonged period off campus.
- Student parents – trying to balance homeschooling and their own academia.

The Union has committed to weekly updates to students, acknowledging these areas of concern that are progressing at high rate on a daily basis.

The Union will send a letter to the local MP regarding student fees and will request a comprehensive approach to student support. Derby University have received additional support in terms of financial hardship in the region of **[Redacted]**, consequently ringfenced into a system that is bureaucratic and niche in terms of how students are able to gain access. The Union will push for a wider criterion around tangible support mechanisms for our students.

In terms of engagement figures for the Union COVID Hub, as of 25/01/2021 are as follows:

Since launch we have logged 2,045 unique page views. Top 10 pages in order of popularity are:

1. COVID Hub Homepage
2. Competitions
3. Entertainment (activities to pass the time)
4. Wellbeing

5. Shopping & Supplies
6. Further Support
7. Staying Social
8. FAQs
9. Recipes
10. Chocolate Tiffin Recipe

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- The Union utilises the website for student opinion polls and surveys and by doing so we are able to engage with a steady number of students who do respond and choose to connect with us in terms of the support and information we are able to give.

The Board duly **receive** University Covid-19 Update

FOR DECISION

5. Annual Accounts and Letter of Representation – 2019-2020 – VH/ST

TB/2021/003

The updated copy of the final accounts, with an adjustment to remove reference to use of the Job Support Scheme and furlough bonus on page 18 of the report was emailed to Board members prior to this meeting. The Board are asked to reference this version when considering approval.

The figures were presented to our Audit & Risk Sub-Committee meeting in December, where the auditors were present. Since that meeting, we have finalised the Audit Finding Report and the management response to those findings.

Today we are looking for minuted approval of our Annual Accounts and for the Letter of Representation (LOR) - once approved to be electronically signed by Chair of the Board.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- Despite logistics proving to be a challenge in terms of homeworking, the audit was a positive one. The online auditing system BHP initiated (trialled last year), has worked extremely well.
- It is particularly impressive to note that the final forecast figure came very close to the final achievement.
- Results are very good considering the current circumstances.
- Following Trustee Board approval, the accounts will be presented to our members (the students) at the online Annual General Meeting in April for ratification and then submitted to Companies House and the Charity Commission ahead of the May deadline.

Chair acknowledged the great work and expressed his appreciation to those Union employees involved in this process.

The Board duly **approve** Annual Accounts 2019-2020 and Letter of Representation (LOR).

6. HMRC Catering VAT review - MB

TB/2021/004

HMRC are currently auditing all Student Unions' and issuing bills on determining all Union bars that sell alcohol and food, and that the food side should no longer be VAT exempt and should not ever have been.

The National Students' Union (NUS) are asking Unions' to pledge up to £5K to fund the action to complete judicial review - NUS Charity will match this amount.

The Board is asked to determine whether they would be *for* or *against* this Union supporting and contributing towards the legal challenge and if so, to what financial amount.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- **[Redacted]**.
- All Unions' should be in support of this, £5k is a no regrets activity, however, agreement in the fact that unfortunately Unions' are unlikely to win.
- £5k is just under a 12% premium on this Unions' exposure, which in those terms is a reasonable insurance.
- **[Redacted]**.

Agreement to look at an accrual figure (that will potentially impact our accounts), around June/July when we will know more in terms of an outcome from HMRC.

The Board duly **approve** funding £5k towards the action to complete a judicial review.

7. Budget Timetable – ST

TB/2021/005

The Board are asked to approve Budget Timetable.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- We understand the University are hoping for a normal budget cycle for the next academic year. Subject to change we will be presenting a final budget for the full Board meeting in July.
- In terms of the 10% uplift the University gave the Union in 2018/19, this was based on a detailed business plan of all the additional areas the Union were going to invest in with specific targets attached to that.

The Board duly **approve** Budget Timetable.

FOR DISCUSSION

8. Financial Update (Nov) & Reforecast update – ST/VH

TB/2021/006

Both November and December results (still in draft), shows we are ahead of budget; predominantly the University subsidy and the Union has been reacting with furloughing employees and taking advantage of the financial support. For December where we budgeted the bottom line a deficit of £5k, we are coming in at approximately £47k surplus. We are entering our reforecast process where we hope we can confirm that trend, currently in terms of expenditure we are able to spend on student resources where we need to, this will remain our prime focus. We constantly continue to review budgeted expenditure.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- Once the reforecast is complete, we will be able to see where we will be at the end of this academic year. We do not want to be posting a large surplus - whilst we have not cut back to

the bear minimum there have been some concessions that we have made to budget areas. Other areas have impacted on savings for example the sports competitions being cancelled that have saved us a substantial sum.

- At the start of the pandemic the majority of the Unions' commercial outlets did have to close, with only Blends and Keddies operating on reduced opening hours at the main campus.
- Last week saw the closure of Blends - albeit temporary this will have an impact on the reforecast process that was completed last year that saw Blends budgeted to provide some income at that time.

The Board duly **note** Financial Update (Nov) & Reforecast Update.

9. Strategic Plan 2022 onwards – SS

Presentation

Following a review we looked to extend our current strategy to take us through to the summer period of 2022. The presentation is an outline of an approach we would like to take pending a discussion today. Our aim would be to utilise an external research company, for the quality and depth of information we would gain would justify the cost involved in pursuing this approach. This would then form the basis of how we would move forward with a new strategy launched in July 2022, with implementation beginning thereafter. Should the Board approve this approach, we will gather different options and costs involved, to note at this point in 2016 when an exercise such as this was implemented the cost was approximately £12k. The cost for this year will be written within the Block Grant application for 2021/2022.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- Research companies will allow the Union to define the scope of what we would want our research to be. There are a multitude of expert providers within the HE sector who are able to fully understand what Unions' want, particularly those having worked with various organisations and Student Unions' before.
- We would want as much support from an external company in terms of what the questions would be, and not honed down by ourselves, thus avoiding the risk of the Union persuading students to answer in a particular way. By allowing for a true student response and opinion, this provides students with as much freedom as possible to tell us what is important to them about their student experience.
- The process will be very in-depth and will attribute to writing our strategic plan.

The Board duly **note** Strategic Plan 2022 onwards – with the **approval** of utilising an external research company along with associated costs that will be incorporated within the Block Grant application.

10. Pay Progression Framework – VH

TB/2021/007

As discussed at the last Finance & HR Sub Committee meeting, we agreed to commit to undertake a review of our pay system and framework. The paper shows the increases to the national minimum and national living hourly rate from 1st April 2021 and the lowering of the living wage to those aged 23 years and over. Those increases will certainly have a consequence to the Union as we look to our budgets for next year, where we are hopeful to bring back our student staff members.

The timeline within the papers will support VH with a project as part of the PG diploma in HR management and will involve some primary research with our staff members and managers, this will be presented back at the next Finance & HR Sub Committee in February. A revised proposal on what that pay framework looks like will be discussed at the full Board meeting in March to allow some time to communicate those changes to the staff team.

We are in the middle of a pay freeze, so did not have any increments in September 2020, and are not due to award any cost-of-living increase to staff in April 2021, we have maintained the approach we took when the budget was set at the start of the year.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- It is important to consult and be clear to employees any potential changes to the pay progression, by following the process sensitively and to being conscious that this will affect some people more than others.
- It is critical to the Unions' future to remove increment pay scales; it is an anachronistic system, based in the times when Universities were run by local authorities. So, to manage this with staff will be paramount to the process.
- Until the reforecast is completed it is difficult to consider whether to remove the pay freeze. The Union is very aware employees are working under difficult circumstances and the increase in the cost-of-living – the senior management team could potentially look at an increase and bring further discussion and recommendations to the Board.
- Potential to look at a cost-of-living enveloped within the pay progression process - not necessarily seen as an increase, but rather linked to performance related pay.
- We need to acknowledge staff have been through a tough period, the Union needs to safeguard employees and maintain employment – to encourage the process ensuring staff realise this is a positive opportunity and by accepting the Unions' pay scales do need to be fit for purpose for the future.
- We do have other areas we can review, such as the benefits package, and by combining those changes to pay scales and/or potential cost of living increases could be perceived as rewards from the organisation.

The Board acknowledge the CEO's work will require primary research with members of staff and access to secondary data collected through previous staff surveys.

The Board duly **notes** Pay Progression Framework process and timeline along with **approval** for CEO's independent study exploring the evaluation of pay and rewards at the Union.

11. Academy Bar – Future options – MB

Presentation

A comprehensive presentation covering:

1. Background –Unions' largest venue

- Approximately 106 covers (daytime)
- Event capacity 1,500

The venues main uses:

- Daytime food and drink trade.

- Occasional evening events.
- Hospitality bookings.
- Union led events.
- Last updated approximately 14 years ago.

2. Academy Bars appearance

- How it is perceived with two different areas a bar downstairs and an extension of Blends, mainly used as a study area all on the mezzanine level increasing student engagement.

3. Financial Performance

- Total surplus 14/15 - 18/19 - £160,574
- 2019/20 (February) – (£10,345)
- Wet Sales – (£18,663)
- Food Sales – (£6,318)
- 20/21 budget exercise – (£14,258)
- 75% students on-campus
- Included some in person Freshers' events.
- Potential VAT bill - £41,835

4. Impacting Factors

- Loss of University Hospitality income.
- 41% decline in freshers bar income.
- 49% of trade during 11 am – 2 pm period.
- Location impacting evening footfall.
- Lack of comfort within space.
- No flexibility to support additional activities.
- Catering trailer could saturate trade.
- Potential COVID implications.

5. Proposal requesting the Boards approval of business plan creation outlining:

- Low, medium, and high-level investment options.
- Models for potential full changes of provision.
- Impact analysis of any changes.
- Include student focus group feedback.

Transparency:

- Changes are unlikely to equal return on investment financially.
- Focus on meeting student needs firstly.

6. Initial Recommendation:

Explore changing provision into café/study space:

- Provide an additional space to relax and study.
- Encourage students to remain on campus.
- Secure staff areas to make space more accessible.

Blends, but better:

- Full café food menu to replace bar menu.
- Additional in-house baked items.
- Table service.
- Digital ordering system.

Retain ability to run casual events:

- Union events e.g., Union Elections
- Hospitality bookings.
- Possible alcohol serving events.

Timescale:

- Unions' Business Plan to be taken to the Universities Capital Expenditure meeting held in April 2021 for approval. The University are looking at changes to the atrium area - where if approved will alter the route to the Academy Bar, the Union may need to fall in line with those changes.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- Presentation outlines initial discussions in terms of the area not utilised to the full potential due to the changes in student demographics. Now is a good time to begin to consider changes that can be made – all for the better for our student engagement.
- Good point on the size of the space and balance of use, to explore options presented with recommendations is the right approach – MB should be commended. The focus on technical and changing behaviours is the right way forward.
- Derby city has changed over the last five years, it would be interesting to track those changes in terms of bars and clubs being closer to Student Halls of Residence compared to the University campus situated out of the centre.
- Gentrification of the student population has altered particularly over the last two years for example, students would rather spend on average £6 for a cocktail in the city centre compared to the promotion of £1 a pint in a student bar.
- Currently the Union has a lack of space for students for example, Societies struggle to book adequate space whether during study time or evenings. For students able to book regular space would have a positive impact in terms of student engagement.
- The decking outside the Academy bar is a fantastic area to be able to utilise, particularly in the warmer months.
- Safety issues are paramount in terms of venues closer to Halls of Residence in the city centre.
- If the University do move towards two-year study degrees, this would have a huge impact on the campus at Kedleston Road in terms of all year study rather than termly. Currently the Union can miss the spring/summer period.
- MB and ST will be working together with the University in terms of an investment proposal to side alongside the Unions' budget, which form a large capital investment for the Boards consideration at the next Board meeting.
- Trial, flexibility and facilitating student needs are vital to success.

The Board duly **receive** Academy Bar presentation along with **approval** for a business plan - potential capital investment in Future Options for the Academy Bar.

Action: The business plan for Future Options for the Academy Bar to be taken to the full Board meeting in March for Board approval, in time for the Universities Capital Expenditure meeting in April.

FOR NOTING

12. CEO Report – VH

TB/2021/008

It has been an interesting few months in terms of what is happening across the sector. Main area to highlight is the communication from the Universities Minister. This resulted in a great deal of dialogue between the Government and Universities as to where responsibility for any refund of tuition fee may lie - with the Government putting that very much back to Universities. Within the background of that, 10 Tory MP's are writing directly to the Prime Minister asking for an urgent review into how Students' Union's are funded, all of which is a result of inaccurate and negative press around Students' Unions' suppressing freedom of speech, for example negative stories of some Unions' banning certain speakers from attending and giving talks.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:
None raised.

The Board duly **receive** CEO Report.

13. Commercial Services Report – MB

TB/2021/009

We are roughly on track in terms of income; however, we are aware this will drop as the year progresses with the closure of multiple outlets and fortunately, we received the increase subsidy agreed prior to Christmas closure. Currently we have not furloughed all of the commercial team and will focus on the strategic side of the business for example, arranging for the catering trailer to be up and running for the end of February and finalising the loyalty scheme to run in conjunction with student ID cards.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:
None raised.

Chair noted a superb piece of budgeting.

The Board duly **receive** Commercial Services Report.

14. Officer Scrutiny Reports – All Officers

TB/2021/010

Main highlights from Officer Reports:

CB – President:

Constantly maintaining contact with students in terms of; study, accessibility, mental health and communication, while bearing in mind appealing to everyone and ensuring inclusivity is the key for success.

EL – VP Welfare:

Really proud of pushing forward manifestos points particularly the EDI Campaign events held on a monthly basis, by being able to maintain that delivery ensures important connections with students.

NC – VP Education:

The Representation Conference held in November proved a highlight in terms of students debate and discussions around how their ideas manage to inform what to do and how to approach education issues, by holding drop- in sessions has supported this role.

JW – VP Activities:

Despite face-to-face activity being suspended and not being entered into a BUCS league due to Covid-19, being able to cultivate a digital space has supported both societies and sports immensely. It may appear by going virtual activity is limited, but despite that we have seen an increase in student engagement and collaboration for example, we have had the highest number of students joining societies compared to previous years. Certainly, looking forward to resuming physical activity for sport and societies.

Additional comments/clarification/recommendations:

- In terms of this year’s Elections, it is a struggle to decide what and when is the right time to push via social media considering the current climate.
- CEO noted the Officers resilience throughout the start of their time in Office, a key skill they have all developed since being in post. By representing themselves and students at University meetings has ensured a clear message is being made. It has been fantastic working with the Officers, we are looking forward to seeing lots more.

Chair expressed thanks to the Officers, duly noting their remarkable pieces of work considering the current Covid-19 situation.

The Board duly **receive** Officer Scrutiny Reports.

12. Any Other Business - CH

None raised.

Chair thanked everyone for today’s meeting, reminding members to make contact should anyone require additional support.

Date of next meeting –Tuesday 30th March 2021 - 5-7 pm - Microsoft Teams.

Trustee Board Meeting Action Summary 25.01.2021

No	ACTION	ACTION OWNER	DUE DATE	STATUS OF THIS ACTION
1.	Future of Academy Bar - business plan presented for Board approval.	MB/ST	March 2020	

✓ COMPLETED OVERDUE OUTSTANDING ONGOING

DRAFT