



Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 4th March 2024, 18:00 – 20:00
Hybrid – Online/Mandela Room, Guild of Students

Present

Ruth Pipkin, External Trustee **(RP)** (Chair)
 Amira Campbell, Guild President **(President)**
 Joseph Hill, Education Officer **(EO)**
 Catherine Hardiman, Sports Officer **(SO)**
 Tianjie (Alice) Liu, International Officer **(IO)**
 Dean Turner, Welfare & Community Officer **(WCO)**
 Harry Brooks, Activities & Employability Officer **(AEO)**
 Benjamin Lockley, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
 Simone Hawley, BAME Student Trustee **(SH)**
 Dionne Enam Williams, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(DW)**
 Mikey Brown, Postgraduate Student Trustee **(MB)**
 Johnny Davis, External Trustee **(JD)** (left at 20:30)
 Helen Stone, External Trustee **(HS)**
 Shruti Kohinkar, International Student Trustee **(SK)**
 Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
 Erica Conway, University Representative Trustee **(EC)** (left at 20:30)
 Yinbo Yu, External Trustee **(YY)** (left at 20:00)
 Mitali Gohel, External Trustee **(MG)** (online) (left at 20:00)

In attendance

Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
 Emily Badger, Director of Operations **(EB)**
 Nick Bailey, Director of Finance & Systems **(NB)**
 James Lindsay, Director of Community & Representation **(JL)**
 Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)**
 Sam Jones, Executive Assistant **(SJ)** (note taker)
 Lee Mogridge, Facilities Manager (LM) (left the meeting at 18:45)

Apologies

None.

The Chair welcomed attendees and the meeting began at 18:10.

No	Item for Discussion	Notes	Action
1	Minutes of Previous Meeting (08.01.2024)	The Chair presented the minutes of the previous meetings, dated 8 th January 2024, for the Board's approval. The Board approved the Trustee Board minutes.	Noted Noted
2a	Matters Arising	The Chair presented the Trustee Board action tracker, for the Board's Information. The President suggested adding in the Good Governance Group as an action from the previous meeting.	Noted SJ

2b	Declarations of Interest	The Chair asked Trustees to declare any possible conflict of interest relating to the items on the meeting's agenda. No Trustees declared a conflict of interest for the meeting's agenda items.	Noted Noted
3	HR Committee Minutes (01.02.24)	The WCO presented the HR Committee minutes, dated 1st February 2024, for the Board's Approval. The Board approved the HR Committee Minutes.	Noted Approved
4	Finance Committee Minutes (22.01.24)	The President presented the Finance Committee Minutes, dated 22nd January 2024, for the Board's Approval. The Board approved the Finance Committee Minutes. The President noted that JD had moved to HR Committee and thanked JD for their contribution to Finance Committee.	Noted Approved Noted
5	Audit & Risk Committee Minutes (07.02.24)	The EO presented the Audit & Risk Committee Minutes, dated the 7th February 2024, for the Board's Approval. The Board approved the Audit & Risk Committee Minutes. The President asked about the discussions regarding the Redbrick Committee Proofing process. The EO noted that they had raised concerns about the training for the Redbrick Committee, and the allocation of workload for the proofing process.	Noted Approved Noted
6	CEO Report	JT presented the CEO Report, for the Board's information. JT invited the President to update the Board on recent developments on the upcoming West Midlands Mayoral Election. The President noted that they were working on a joint hustings event with other Birmingham Students' Union, as well as plans on a joint Birmingham Students Manifesto, to be published and seek support from the candidates. The President noted plans for a large voter registration campaign for the Mayoral and local elections in Birmingham in May 2024. JT updated the Board on recent incidents on campus related to the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict. The President noted challenges working with the University as instances of protest on campus had unfolded, as well as the media coverage of protest. The President highlighted that some students had been interviewed by West Midlands Police, due to their presence at a protest with a controversial banner. The President thanked the Guild staff for their support in aiding student protestors who needed welfare and academic support. The President also noted that the Guild and University had worked closely with J-Soc	Noted Noted Noted

		representatives to support students affected by the Israel/Palestine conflict and how important this work had been. The EO asked about recruitment for a Communications & Marketing Manager. JT noted that recruitment for the post was now progressing. YY noted the positive candidate numbers and demographics for the Officer Elections 2024. The PGO asked about recruitment for several vacancies in the Student Voice team, noting limited staff capacity at the present time. JL noted that the vacancies had given the opportunity to review the current team structure, which had now been completed. JL noted that the revised roles would be put out for recruitment shortly. The Board noted the CEO Report.	Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted
7	Serious Incident (11.11.23) Root Cause Analysis Report	Item 7 was taken out of order, between agenda items 1 and 2. LM joined the meeting at 18:00. LM and JT presented the Serious Incident Root Cause Analysis Report, for the Board's approval. Noting the paper, LM updated the Board on the timeline of events since the incident had taken place on the 11th November 2023, including a number of initial steps taken by Guild Emergency Management group (GEMT) in November 2023, and the subsequent action plan. The Board discussed the report and its findings. HS suggested recording the risk of a similar event on the Guild's Risk Register. NB to review. The Board approved the Serious Incident Root Cause Analysis Report. LM left the meeting at 18:45.	Noted Noted Noted NB Approved Noted
8	Freedom of Speech Code of Practice	AS presented the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, for the Board's approval. AS noted, that following the passing of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act in 2023, the Government had announced that the new requirements for University's and Students' Unions with respect to Freedom of Speech would come into force on the 1st August 2024. AS noted that, to date, no government guidance on the new legislation had been published, however conversations within the HE sector was ongoing between the Office for Students, NUS and other sector bodies. AS noted, that an official consultation was currently live, however it was expected that the final guidance would not be specific and may be refined over time based on legal test cases.	Noted Noted

	AS noted that, in line with the new legislation, the Guild would now also regulated by the Office for Students in addition to the Charity Commission, and would be required to have a code of practice on Freedom of Speech, would be responsible for any loss of earning of a speaker due to a breach of the new law, and in general security costs for an external speaker event should not be passed onto the organising group.	Noted
	AS noted, that the new law and code of practice proposed would affect the Guild's Student Groups, which made up over 97% of the University's external speaker requests. AS noted, that the new code of practice had been developed in consultation with the University in absence of the published government guidance and was likely to require further revision.	Noted
	Noting the Guild and University's different codes of practice, EW asked about any foreseeable conflicts between the two documents. AS noted, the rationale of the Guild maintaining its own code and processes, as Students' Unions were granted new specific responsibilities in the legislation, which were different from the University's responsibilities.	Noted
	EW asked about the Guild's current refusal rate for speakers. AS noted, that the Guild and University had a zero rate of refusing speakers in recent history where speaker requests had been submitted on time.	Noted
	EW asked about responses to the legislation from groups seeking to prevent providing a platform to hate or terror speakers. AS noted, that limited guidance from these groups had come to light to date, however this also was expected to develop over time. YY noted that the Government had recently committed to strengthen the 'Prevent' programme.	Noted
	The IO asked about the Guild's approach to the Dubai Student's Association. AS noted, that the legislation did not cover the Dubai campus, so if an event physically took place in Dubai the new legislation did not apply, however cross-campus events between Edgbaston and Dubai may fall under the legislation.	Noted
	The AEO suggested several amendments to the Code of Conduct. AS noted, that the Guild's proposed Code of Conduct mirrored the University's own timelines to seek to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible. AS noted that the Code of Conduct sought to keep the Officer Team separate to the process due to the personal attitudes, they may have. AS noted plans to review the Code of Conduct over time, and welcomed Officer input for future drafts.	Noted
	RP suggested arranging a specific briefing for the Trustee Board on the new legislation and guidance when published. AS noted, a requirement for Trustees to receive training on Freedom of Speech. SH suggested including examples of how the new legislation may play out. AS to review.	AS

		MB asked about regulations related to ‘invitations’ and ‘dis-invitations’, and what represented an official invitation from the Guild. MB asked if an invitation from a Student Group to attend an event on campus would constitute a formal invitation from the organisation. AS noted, what constituted a formal invitation under the legislation remained unclear, however the Guild had taken the view that invitations from student societies did not constitute a formal invitation from the organisation. The Board approved the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.	Noted Approved
9a	Budget Forecast 2 2023/24	NB presented the Budget Forecast 2 2023/24, for the Board’s approval. NB noted that since the Trustee Board meeting in January 2024, the Guild had revised its net budget position positively to a net forecast impact on the Guild’s free unrestricted reserves of -£93.5k at year-end, with savings identified through the utilities budget, additional staff vacancy savings and an improvement to the income generation revenues. NB noted that despite the difficult in-year position, the Guild’s long-term finances remained significantly above its planned level of reserves which had been agreed with the University in 2022, and at the point that the current 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan had been set. NB noted that the Guild’s Budget for 2024/25 was scheduled to be presented to Finance Committee in April, to be followed by presentation to the next Trustee Board meeting in May 2024. NB updated the Board on planned Compact meeting with the University in the coming weeks, which would be focusing on increases in the Guild’s operating costs and lower-than-expected commercial revenues. MB asked about the Guild’s plans for the allocation of the planned growth in its block-grant. NB noted that calculations for the block grant increase had been based on the University’s planned student body growth in 2022, which had moved slightly over time. JT noted that some of the growth funding had been used to improve the Guild’s strategic communications work, an improvement plan for the Student Rep System and additional work required to address Freedom of Speech legislation changes. JT noted the approach of the Guild in utilising growth funding for targeted spend on strategic priorities. JT noted that the current focus for additional spending would be on Student-Engagement related communications. JD noted the logic of seeking to use funding available to invest in the strategic aims. The Board approved the Budget Forecast 2 2023/24.	Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted Approved

9b	Income Generation	AS presented the Income Generation paper, for the Board's approval.	Noted
		AS noted the difficult trading environment in the hospitality sector, with very high inflation in costs across the sector and large numbers of clubs and bars closing. AS noted that the Guild work to manage costs focused on these issues to meet or exceed the sales and profit targets until the end of the academic year. AS updated the Board on an additional planned eleven events in the current academic year where management was confident that the club night would be profitable, and for new promotional schemes to increase student footfall in the Guild's venues.	Noted
		AS noted that the Guild was working with Berry Consulting who were reviewing the current business model, and recommendations on how the Guild can maximise profitability in the short, medium and long-term. AS noted that the Consultant view was that the Venues operation was being run efficiently, and the decline in commercial revenues which the Guild was seeing was in line with the wider hospitality sector.	Noted
		YY and MG left the meeting at 20:05.	Noted
		AS noted that a large number of ideas for new commercial opportunities generated at the recent Trustee Board and Management Team away days were being reviewed by the Senior Management Team, noting limited capacity at the present time for new projects. AS noted plans to share a range of options moving forwards at a future Finance Committee meeting.	Noted
10	Reception Hub Project	EC asked about the impact of sales improvement work in recent weeks. AS noted that impacts had not been seen so far, however Venues staff were ambitious and committed to improving the commercial figures and implementing new projects. The AEO noted their concern on having the staff capacity to expand and redevelop the Guild's commercial services. AS noted that staff capacity was an issue currently, and something which the Guild was looking to address.	Noted
		The Board approved the Income Generation paper.	Approved
		JT presented the Reception Hub Project paper, for the Board's approval.	Noted
		JT noted that initially the project had been focused on student engagement and community building in a heavily used space after 14 years of operation, however the project had now moved towards the commercial opportunities and the possibilities a refreshed reception space would bring through conference bookings, rental opportunities and retail offerings in the space.	Noted
		The AEO noted that they would not be supporting the refurbishment of the reception space without further consultation. DW noted that student consultation was key to any major investments in the Guild building. The PGO and AEO noted that they would support additional investment in the ground floor of the building, however the project's	Noted

		expected costs were too high. The PGO suggested exploring a smaller refresh of the ground-floor. JT noted that no expenditure had taken place to date apart from staff resource. JT noted that student consultation that had been planned for January 2024 had been paused following discussions with Finance Committee. JT noted that a less ambitious refresh project may cost almost as much as the full refresh as outlined in the proposed plan. JT noted that the Guild currently did not own the intellectual property of the design. EC noted that the costs of a less ambitious refurbishment were not clear and may amount to a similar amount. EW noted their view that the Guild was right to be looking to invest in the student experience and student engagement. The SO noted their expectation that the view of the student body would be to prioritise refurbishment of club and venues spaces. The President noted the Guild should be prioritising investment in its venue spaces, however it also required updates to ground floor rooms, gender-neutral toilets on the ground floor and staff spaces. HB noted their view that the reception project would deliver the requirements for students which the Officer Team identified. EC noted that a good quality refurbishment project would require adequate funding and capital project costs may be higher than the Officer Team envisaged. MB noted that the Board in general was in agreement in supporting capital investment, however the information was not available at the moment to understand the opportunity cost of investing in the Reception Refresh project over other projects. JT noted the risk of the Guild not keeping pace with the investments that the University was making in its buildings through its Campus Masterplan process, and subsequent impacts on student engagement and commercial income. The AEO noted their view that the project was not right for the current time, when the Guild was financial pressures. The PGO noted that in their view, the project's aims could be addressed on a much smaller budget. The Board approved the Reception Hub Project paper, agreeing to move ahead to the next stage as outlined in the paper. The AEO and PGO noted their opposition to the project. JD and EC left the meeting at 20:30.	Noted Noted Noted Noted Approved Noted
11	Strategic Communications Update	EB presented the Strategic Communications Update, for the Board's information. The EO asked about progress in behaviour change in the organisation on communications. EB noted that the Guild had been working at pace across the organisation to implement the long-term change that the Board had sought to achieve, however challenges remained. EB noted that the Guild's external Communications Consultant, who had been in post for 12-months, was due to leave the organisation in June. EW asked about the potential for funding an overlap period between the Communications Consultant and a newly recruited	Noted

		Communications & Marketing Manager. RP noted the value in investing in a successful handover. EB to review. MB asked about the potential for the Guild to outsource its media sales functions, as outlined in the Communications Strategy. EB noted that no firm decisions had been made, however confirmed that exploratory discussions were taking place and would be reported back. The Board noted the Strategic Communications Update.	EB Noted Noted
12	National Student Survey Update	JL presented the National Student Survey Update, for the Board's information. The Board noted the National Student Survey Update.	Noted Noted
13	Annual Survey & Strategy Update	EB presented the Annual Survey & Strategy Update, for the Board's information. The President asked about progress on the review of the recommendations of the survey. EB noted that the Senior Management Team were working with departmental managers to ensure that data from the survey would be used to improve and develop the Guild's services. The Board noted the Annual Survey & Strategy Update.	Noted Noted Noted
14	Guild Health & Safety Policy	EB presented the Guild Health & Safety Policy, for the Board's approval. The policy was taken as read, with no questions asked. The Board approved the Guild Health & Safety Policy.	Noted Noted Approved
15	Delegation of Authority	NB presented the Delegation of Authority, for the Board's approval. The document was taken as read, with no questions asked. The Board approved the Delegation of Authority.	Noted Noted Approved
16	Student Voice Report Update	JL presented the Student Voice Report Update, for the Board's information. The paper was taken as read, with no questions asked. The Board noted the Student Voice Report Update.	Noted Noted Noted
17	Democracy Operations Update	JL presented the Democracy Operations Update, for the Board's information. The AEO asked about plans to review the All-Student Vote processes, noting that often these votes were not quorate. JL noted that the Guild	Noted

		was not looking at amending the level of quoracy, instead focusing on increasing student engagement. The Board noted the Democracy Operations Update.	Noted Noted
18	AOB (Any Other Business)	The AEO noted their concern that some Trustee Board papers had been circulated late. JT noted that some recent incidents and complex areas of work had unfortunately delayed the circulation of final papers. The President suggested the Abrahart vs Bristol case as a topic of discussion at a future Trustee Board.	Noted Noted
19	Meeting Reflection	No items noted.	Noted

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:45.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 13th May 2024, 18:00 – 20:00, Mandela Room (Guild of Students)