



## TRUSTEE BOARD

MINUTES FOR THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021  
VENUE: SUB ZERO

The quorum for this meeting shall be 50% +1 (quorum must include at least four Sabbaticals and at least one External Trustee and at least 1 student trustee (if in post)).

<b>Trustees:</b>	
Samira-Caterina Monteleone - Chair	President
Callum Broadbent	VP Education
Dorothy Akuamo	VP Welfare
Isabella Ciuta	VP Community & Engagement
Nashwa Alsakka	VP International
Liv Matthews	VP Student Experience
Hannah Akhalu	VP Southend
Barry Van Eupen	Lay trustee
Lee Rodwell - Deputy Chair	Lay Trustee
Verneicia Handfield	Student Trustee (Colchester)
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Craig Stephens	Chief Executive
Steve Haugh	Director Marketing & Strategy
Reeves Watson	Director Services Activities & Support
Barbara Reynolds	Director of Finance & HR
Caron Moor	Governance Coordinator
<b>Invited:</b>	
Keith Rowland	Deputy Director of Engagement and Development

<b>Apologies:</b>	
Rebecca Fisher	Lay Trustee
Gerardo Palmieri	Student Trustee (Colchester)

<b>1. *ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b>				
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Conduct and removal for Trustee	It was agreed that the Procedure for Trustee removal and conduct reviews (for non – engagement) would be addressed as part of the Trustee Paper.	MP (2020/21) S-CM	<del>Sep 2019</del> 21/1/2021 4/3/2021 29/4/2021 24/6/2021 23/9/2021 25/11/2021	Move to next meeting

	Update 24/6/2021: Paper will be ready for the next Audit & Risk meeting			
SCO payment	<p><b>Agenda item 1. Student Community Officers Report:</b> Feedback to next SU Parliament and open up dialogue to agree on how this could be implemented. Work with SCO to see what this would look like.</p> <p>Update 4/3/2021: Move to next financial year in August/September for 22/23 budget</p>	SABBS (2020/21) KH/HR	<del>19<sup>th</sup> May</del> <del>21/1/2021</del> <del>4/3/2021</del> <del>23/9/2021</del> 25/11/2021	Move to next meeting
NSS support or boycott	<p><b>Agenda item 5. Chair Report:</b> Board discussion on SU's stance to support NSS or to boycott</p>	MP (2020/21) S-CM	23/9/2021	Agenda item 10
External speakers Policy	<p><b>Agenda Item 15: External Speakers:</b> Check that the Policy for External Speakers includes online speakers</p> <p>Update 24/6/2021: Policy being reviewed in line with University and ready for September Board Meeting</p>	CS	<del>24/6/2021</del> 23/9/2021	Complete Policy does include online speakers
Information Sharing Agreement: Should External Trustees be excluded?	<p><b>Agenda item 8: Information Sharing Agreement:</b> BR to check that it is appropriate for External Trustees to be excluded</p>	BR	23/9/2021	Complete Confirmed that we do not share external Trustee data with the University, so they are excluded from the Information Sharing Agreement
Front sheet for Agenda	<p><b>Agenda item 10: Action Log-Governance Review:</b> Create front sheet to trial for September meeting</p>	CM	23/9/2021	Complete Front sheet created for this meeting
Information within Agenda and agree final approach	<p><b>Agenda item 10: Action Log-Governance Review:</b> Add information within Agenda for November meeting and make decision on preferred approach</p>	CM	25/11/2021	Not due for update
Joint meeting with University	<p><b>Agenda item 10: Action Log-Governance Review:</b></p>	CM	23/9/2021	In progress

Council	Add date into diaries for joint meeting with University Council and the SU Board			
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**2. \* APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2021 AND MATTERS ARISING/ACTION LOG- (10 mins)**

- Minutes approved

**3. \* CEO REPORT (20 mins)**

- The CEO written report was circulated prior to the meeting, update given was:
- Students arriving in larger numbers next week, student numbers have struggled at the start, but numbers are improving and accommodation take up has started to improve, we are hoping students get more confident and we have around 650 2/3rd year students which is improving
- SU homes are behind on the number of accommodations taken up. Students are cautious about coming to University. University have said studying is on campus but have given students permission to start from home
- The University moved to targeted protection status last week, which is the lowest status, there is support for those most at risk but are still not encouraging staff to come to campus unless they are front facing roles, all other staff will be back around Christmas, this could impact student experience especially regarding feed-back on courses
- There has been no introduction of vaccine passports
- There has been quite a lot of staff who have left the SU but probably no more than normal, some key roles have been lost, we have recruited internally for one key role (Pete Brizio replacement) with Sam Male taking the position, handover took place before Pete left. Nickho has moved into the Finance team
- Bounce back: everything we are doing is about being better than we were pre COVID, some things we wanted to do we have been unable to, mostly due to staff issues. Plans were put on rails so that they could move forward or backwards depending on circumstances
- Financial position: we received our University grant and on time and as agreed, cash flow looks positive at the moment
- Pension update: notification from pension provider for USS regarding 31.4% joint contribution 21.6% employer and 9.8% employee contribution but expect that this will increase again, this is an interim agreement until April as final position has not been agreed. Valuation of 2020 will be looked at again. It is likely that there will be strike action this year as well as COVID mitigation this year. SAUL pension scheme is in a much better place and is in a positive position
- Greenhouse Starbucks: unfortunately, we expected to open takeaway service at the start of term with the rest opening in December, very unlikely we will be able to open anything until 1<sup>st</sup> December as we may need to agree building regulations with the council, it will have financial impact on us and will cost us about £33k in lost contribution from Starbucks
- Question raised: is there anywhere else we could put Starbucks as a counter service in the short term? Response: no, unfortunately we will have to wait and launch in December. We did consider MOA, but it will be used for a very different purpose, we can look at it against but unlikely to be able to do this
- Question raised: who's responsibility is it to secure the building regulations? Response: a mixture of the company we are using who should have informed us and financial responsibility would be us.
- Question raised: what else can we do to make sure it does not happen in the future and that it does open on 1<sup>st</sup> December? Response: we are looking to expand on the vacant

role with someone with project manager skills to mitigate this happening in the future

- Question raised: could we do a “pop-up” Starbucks? Response: installation is expensive and cannot be done in the short term and training would also be needed
- Question raised? have we submitted the building regulation request? Response: not at the moment as it only came up today, but it is likely to take 6/8 weeks
- We expect the building regulations to be passed but in the worst case if we continue with the build and then it is not approved, we will have to remove all the work that has been done
- Question raised: have staff been recruited for Starbucks? Response: yes, staff will be relocated and student staff will move into other departments until Starbucks is ready

#### **Additional update: Health & Safety/Risk Assessments (CS)**

- CS gave an update on current health and safety and risk assessments

#### **Additional Update: Air Circulation (SH)**

- University have asked that we apply the same level of evaluation to our venues in line with what the University have done with their teaching spaces, which is to lower capacity. We have not used this as a restriction before and over the last week we have been looking at the impact of this
- On first review it looks to reduce Sub Zero from 1200 to 950, SU Bar down to 93 with significant reductions in Top Bar and Base due to air circulation limitations
- This has been flagged with the University Registrar to try to understand what steps we can take to move this forward. Samira-Caterina did put the Registrar “on the spot” during the meeting regarding potential impact to student experience. This seems to be linked to not putting vaccine passports in place and pressure from the unions. He was clear that we do need to follow this guidance
- SH then went through the capacity for each venue and potential impact and what they were working towards to achieve:
- Next steps are support from University Estates and Director of Finance and Bryn who has ultimate sign off on this
- We may put an external bar in the Square with counting in / counting out in marquee
- Bryn feels that these stipulations could be removed quite quickly once they can prove there are no COVID outbreaks on campus
- The worst-case scenario financial forecasts have been done, which will be fine-tuned over the next few days once we understand more about Starbucks and ongoing support from the University
- We have University members of staff who believe we should be at full capacity and some are more risk adverse
- Question raised: could the SU Bar be temporary located to Sub Zero? Response: this would be considered, most of the events in SU Bar are things like quizzes so functions could be moved to this area
- Question raised: re SU Bar how will we monitor? Response: could be wrist bands but will use click in/click out so one in one out policy
- Question raised: is air flow restrictions from the Government or University? Response: it is from the University

#### **4. CHAIR REPORT VERBAL UPDATE (10 Mins)**

- Ahead of the meeting starting, the Chair introduced the newly appointed Sabbatical Officers and Student Trustees and they were welcomed to their first Trustee Board meeting
- S-CM had been in discussion with the University registrar, Bryn Morris, around the capacity restrictions the SU had been given by the University. This included vocalising how detrimental the capacity restrictions will be if not resolved to the student's experience of our members. She expressed the need alongside other SU directors of mitigations we can put in place to help increase the numbers in our SU Venues. S-CM remains concerned about SU Bar
- It was also reported that with the help from our external trustees, Lee and Barry, three

candidates for student trustees had been interviewed. Two being successful and one of them attending the first trustee board meeting. Furthermore, there are another two candidates to interview with the hope they will be successful

- Reindorf: it was explained that the recommendations from the reviews have gone from senate to council after special/emergency meetings had been scheduled. Senate had made many recommendations in which one of them concerning the equality, diversity and inclusion policy/statement was endorsed by the Chair in her capacity as President of the Students Union. The Board were made aware that there is a new community space for liberation groups on campus that will be opening as of this new academic year. This was a result of the consultation the University had with members of the community with the support of three sabbatical officers, VP Community and engagement, VP Welfare and President

## 5. MINUTES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

- Union Performance – No meeting since last Trustee Board
- Human Resources – No meeting since last Trustee Board
- Audit & Risk – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Tackling Racism – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021
- Essex Student Lets – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- UESU – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021

### **\*Resolution of Changes for Committees:**

- Please see schedule of Committee/Sub-Committee Attendees 21-22 which shows new attendees for sub-committees

## 6. FINANCE UPDATE – BR

- Year-end Accounts
- Gift Aid and Management Charge Proposal 20/21
- Forecast

### **Year-end Accounts and Forecast:**

- BR gave an update on Period 12 Year-end accounts of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021
- We closed with deficit of -£137.7k against a target deficit -£237.4k which is much better than forecast
- This is net of £715k Furlough grant of which £388k related to Services Staff; received £203k Core Grant from the University's contingent funds; £100k prevention of access insurance claim; and have provided for the Catering VAT assessment of £100k +£8k interest that might be payable but awaiting confirmation of that
- Services: Trading for the whole year was The Store, The Kitchen and SU Homes: Trading 1<sup>st</sup> term only was Nightingale Arms, MOA and The Mini Store: In terms 1 and 3 was SU Bar and Loughton Café: Sub Zero, Top Bar, The Extra Store, SU Lounge and Post Office and Southend did not open all year: The Salon and SU Food are no longer trading
- Catering VAT Assessment: we have received assessment of £100k worth of VAT for a full year period but HMRC are still not enforcing this as a complaint has been filed on behalf of a number of SU's by NUS and there have been continued delays by HMRC on this response, but we need to ensure that we have this provision in place. Some recent good news is that 3 specific cases where HMRC have agreed that they don't have to pay the VAT that they were assessed for and we are hoping for a positive impact on the wider case. This case is being dealt with centrally by HMRC and we await answers and clarity in the next few weeks
- Student Activities and Support: have made a saving of £158k against budget which is due to deferred placement of leavers, student staff posts limited to representative roles only and severe restrictions on activities and events. £180 received from University to support online events, and the departments still delivered a wide range of activities
- Enablers: Savings of £210k due to deferred recruitment of leavers, lower irrecoverable VAT, pension opt outs and generally departments working hard to restrict their spending

- Solvency and Free Cash Reserves: 176% of the reserves target was met, we set ourselves for this year, much better performance than predictions which is due to us making a lower loss. We did receive contingent grant funding from the University and they also gave us £160k capital grant for Starbucks, which is in our accounts at the year-end, but we had not yet spent the money, this money is now being spent. Cash perspective all of the above is due to a positive cash position, assumed pay out to HMRC but have not physically paid out the money, in addition each year we get a bill for rent and the University give us a grant with a net impact of nil, but we are not paying the invoice until we receive our core grant for next year which means we have a stronger cash position at year end which is a temporary position
- Overall a good position to be in against what has been a very difficult year across the board
- Question raised: 2019/20 was it surplus or deficit? Response: we ended with deficit, but we have positive reserves going forward
- Restricted funds: not our money to spend, those are restricted for specific purpose like clubs and society money which is not our money to use, hardship funds, grant from the university (would normally be returned), Essex Sport Board funding: being spent on preseason where 60 club have been back for 2 weeks and others coming back next week, equipment updates, workshops for execs for 1,000 students, colour dash which is free for students of which about 110 signed up with free t-shirts, glasses etc. with other events planned for next week which includes quizzes and networking events
- Question raised: re management accounts, why did it lose so much money? Response: stock write-off, staff cost to pay, licences
- Question raised: Re the capital grant of 160k for Starbucks, have we spent more money? Response: we did not know we would get a grant so the capital expenditure was put in before that, given challenges we have had with flooring, waste and piping had to be rerouted there will be an overspend against capital grant but within the budget that we had agreed, final costs are not yet fully known, we are unlikely to have any money spare
- Question raised: how much have we budgeted? Response: was £86k as well as lease costs
- Question raised: how did we get to agree the reserves? Response: policy was agreed at the last meeting and we agreed a 3-year recovery plan. To put into context there were some points where we expected to go bankrupt, credit was given to BR and the team for ending up in such a strong position

#### **Gift Aid and Management Charge:**

- The Gift Aid and Management Charges was circulated for approval via email after the meeting ended
- Subsequently all Trustees approved the Gift Aid and Management charge via email which was completed on Tuesday 28th September

#### **7. \*WELCOME EVENTS – SH**

- There is an SU Welcome across all three campus, Freshers Fair is centre piece and we have a good number of sign-ups, 938 tickets have been sold so far, daytime activities happening on both Campuses. Colchester has 6 different areas, giant games area campaign work, mixers etc.

#### **8. \*20/21 YEAR END DRAFT TRUSTEE REPORT – BR**

Deferred until after draft Account are available

## 9. \*ROTATION OF DEPUTY CHAIR – BVH

- A paper was circulated prior to the meeting outlining the proposal for a 2-year rotation of Lay Trustees as Deputy Chair of the Trustees Board
- The Lay Trustee should be in position for at least one year prior to taking up a Deputy Chair position
- It was discussed that the rotation should be mid academic year to allow time for the Chair to be supported by the existing Deputy Chair before the change takes place
- Decision: This proposal was agreed but will need to have Article of Governance updated and approved by the University
- Action: Article of Governance to be updated and approved with this change and procedure to be put in place for a review every 2 years

## 10. \*NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) FEEDBACK – KR

- KR gave an overview of the NSS process and shared graphs on screen that demonstrated the movement over the past few years
- The presentation and written summary are saved in the Box folder
- Question raised: what is the role of VP education in this? Response: he is lobbying to make sure we get student voice correct and talking to senior staff at the University to put pressure on making changes
- Item added to Action: VP Education to give feedback/progress update in future Board meeting
- Item added to Action: Keith to give a written document regarding the main points of the NSS Survey for circulation to the Board

## 11. \* CONFIRMATION OF BY-ELECTION DATES – SH

- Agreed via email

- The by-election dates were circulated on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 which was after the last Trustee Board meeting held in June but required approval during August
- Trustees were asked to provide email approval of the proposed dates which was provided
- It was noted that there is more work planned at the Fresher's Fair to promote the SCO roles that are not currently filled

## 12. \* POLICIES PASSED BY PARLIAMENT – CS

- Nothing to report

## 13. \* BOARD DISCUSSION (TRUSTEES ONLY)

### Next Meeting

25<sup>th</sup> November 2021

### Actions arising from this meeting and Cfwd

Topic	Action	Who	Due Date	Outcome
Conduct and removal for Trustee	It was agreed that the Procedure for Trustee removal and conduct reviews (for non – engagement) would be addressed as part of the Trustee Paper.	MP (2020/21) S-CM	<del>Sep 2019</del> <del>21/1/2021</del> <del>4/3/2021</del> <del>29/4/2021</del> <del>24/6/2021</del> <del>23/9/2021</del> <del>25/11/2021</del>	

	Update 24/6/2021: Paper will be ready for the next Audit & Risk meeting			
SCO payment	<p><b>Agenda item 1. Student Community Officers Report:</b> Feedback to next SU Parliament and open up dialogue to agree on how this could be implemented. Work with SCO to see what this would look like.</p> <p>Update 4/3/2021: Move to next financial year in August/September for 22/23 budget</p>	SABBS (2020/21) KH/HR	<del>19<sup>th</sup> May</del> <del>21/1/2021</del> <del>4/3/2021</del> <del>23/9/2021</del> 25/11/2021	
NSS support or boycott	<p><b>Agenda item 5. Chair Report:</b> Board discussion on SU's stance to support NSS or to boycott</p>	MP (2020/21) S-CM	<del>23/9/2021</del> 25/11/2021	
Information within Agenda and agree final approach	<p><b>Agenda item 10: Action Log-Governance Review:</b> Add information within Agenda for November meeting and make decision on preferred approach</p>	CM	25/11/2021	
Joint meeting with University Council	<p><b>Agenda item 10: Action Log-Governance Review:</b> Add date into diaries for joint meeting with University Council and the SU Board</p>	CM	<del>23/9/2021</del> 25/11/2021	
Risk Assessments	<p><b>Agenda item 3: CEO Report:</b> Confirm if there were any incidents during that month when opened (possible evacuation of Sub Zero may have taken place) and understand any risks</p>	CS	25/11/2021	
Health & Safety Committee to be established	<p><b>Agenda item 3: CEO Report:</b> Health &amp; Safety Committee meetings to be set up to run ahead of the Audit &amp; Risk Committee</p>	CM	29/9/2021	Complete
Health & Safety Action Plan	<p><b>Agenda item 3: CEO Report:</b> Provide Trustees with an action plan on how the Health &amp; Safety issue will be addressed</p>	CS	25/11/2021	
Outcome of risk assessment	<p><b>Agenda item 3: CEO Report:</b> Update Trustees on risk assessment outcome or if it is not done by Wednesday 29th</p>	CS	29/9/2021	Complete

	September 2021				
Update Article of Governance with rotation of deputy chair	<b>Agenda item 9: Rotation of Deputy Chair:</b> Article of Governance to be updated and approved with the change to Deputy Chair rotation and procedure to be put in place for a review every 2 years	CM	25/11/2021		
NSS Feedback	<b>Agenda item 10: National Student Survey (NSS) Feedback:</b> VP Education to give feedback/progress update in future Board meeting	CB	25/11/2021		
NSS Survey Update	<b>Agenda item 10: National Student Survey (NSS):</b> Keith to give a written document regarding the main points of the NSS Survey for circulation to the Board	KR	29/9/2021	Complete	