

Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 7th March 2022,
Hybrid (Mandela Room/Online), 18:00 – 20:00

Present

Robert Smeath, External Trustee **(RS)** (Chair)
 Mikey Brown, President **(President)** (Vice-chair)
 Jules Singh, Education Officer **(EO)**
 Aaliyah Simms, Welfare and Community Officer **(WCO)**
 Wei-Lun Chen, International Officer **(IO)**
 Danielle Murinas, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
 Tom Goodman, Student Trustee (Postgraduate) **(TG)** (left at 20:00)
 Serabi Opiyo, BAME Student Trustee **(SEO)**
 Johnny Davis, External Trustee **(JD)**
 Yinbo Yu, External Trustee **(YY)**
 Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)** (via Zoom)
 Ian Pain, External Trustee **(IP)**

In attendance

Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
 Nick Bailey, Head of Finance **(NB)**
 Claire Maitland, Student Community Welfare Manager **(CM)** (Agenda Item 0 only)
 Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)** (Agenda Items 0-9 only)
 Sam Jones, Executive Assistant **(SJ)** (note taker)

Apologies

Erica Conway, University Representative Trustee **(EC)**
 Henrietta Brealey, External Trustee **(HB)**
 Josephine Conway, Activities and Employability Officer **(AEO)**
 George Christian, Sports Officer **(SO)**
 Sarah Aray, International Student Trustee **(SA)**
 Jake Poulton, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(JP)**

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

No	Item For Discussion	Notes	Action
0	Residence Life Update	<p>CM joined meeting at 18:10.</p> <p>CM gave a presentation on recent developments to the Residence Life Review, for the Board's information. CM noted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both the Hall Reps and Student Mentors Scheme have been operating for 10+ years, in partnership between the Guild and University. In October 2021 the Guild and University jointly commissioned research into the Schemes current offering, with the aim to assess the schemes in relation to other UK and overseas Institutions. The report concluded that the peer-led nature of both schemes was important and sector leading. As both are peer-led and student input is key, the report concluded that the Guild was best placed to continue delivering the schemes for the benefit of students. 	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users reported good experiences with both schemes, but there was a lack of awareness amongst the student body, and improvements could be made to communicate the offer to students. • Both the Guild and University had the ambition to jointly formulate a new strategy moving forwards in the long-term, moving out of the COVID-19 pandemic. <p>CM noted ongoing discussions with the University on next steps including improved joint marketing to students in halls of residence. CM noted significant feedback from students on a 'hierarchy of needs' in accommodation.</p> <p>CM noted that the Guild's restructure in 2020 had brought the schemes together into one department, which had brought immediate benefits to collaboration and resource sharing.</p> <p>CM noted a number of planned activities to support students who remained in University Halls outside of term time. CM noted a possible re-brand to improve communications to service users. CM noted plans to establish a Residence Life Task & Finish Group to oversee planned changes to the schemes offerings going forwards.</p> <p>CM noted plans for a series of internal workshops with the staff team to develop and detail the planned changes, the outcomes of which would then be shared with the University.</p> <p>CM updated the Board on the Guild's ongoing appeal with HMRC in relation to VAT and the grant funding of the schemes historically.</p> <p>The WCO asked about the University's response to the review. JT noted that the University had broadly accepted the recommendations of the report. JT noted turnover in senior staff in the University's Campus Service Team over the last several years, with some new members of staff bringing previous experience where significant investments had been made in Residence Life offerings.</p> <p>JD noted the importance of retaining the peer-led model of both schemes. JD suggested focusing more on digital engagement and awareness moving forwards. JD noted the importance of having a clear vision for Birmingham's Residence life offering for the next 10 years and bringing staff along with that vision.</p> <p>The IO noted the importance of engaging with International and Postgraduate students in the Residence Life offering. The IO suggested closer engagement with UB sport offerings to integrate all aspects of student life on campus. YY noted the value of diversity in the student staff team in relation to having the cultural competence to deal with wellbeing issues across all student backgrounds. CM noted efforts to recruit postgraduate and international students onto the student staff team.</p> <p>YY asked about possibilities for better signposting for students to University led and local wellbeing services. CM noted that there was</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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		<p>work to do to improve communications and signposting in partnership with the University.</p> <p>YY asked about the demographics of the students surveyed in the report. JT noted that a longer-form report included more information about the demographics of the students surveyed.</p> <p>The President noted the importance of clarifying the University's willingness to fund an expanded scheme. The President noted that the schemes' new strategic direction would need to be shaped by the availability of additional funding. JT noted that as part of the Guild's recently approved 5-year budget, funding for the schemes had been set at the status quo to avoid delays to approving the whole budget, but the Campus Services team were open to proposals for expanded funding in future.</p> <p>RS noted the importance of the Guild retaining ownership over the branding of both schemes.</p> <p>The Board noted the Residence Life Update.</p> <p>CM left the meeting at 18:30.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
1	Minutes of Previous Meetings (10.01.22) & (08.02.22)	<p>The Chair presented previous Trustee Board minutes, dated 10th January 2022 and the 8th February 2022 for the Board's approval</p> <p>RS noted a minor typographical error. SJ to update.</p> <p>The Board approved both sets of minutes as an accurate record of the meetings</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>SJ</p> <p>Approved</p>
2	Matters Arising	<p>The Chair noted that no actions were outstanding from the previous minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
3	HR Committee Minutes (03.02.22)	<p>The WCO presented the HR Committee minutes, dated 3rd February 2022 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The WCO noted that the Guild's roll-out of the Staff Savvy HR management platform continued to yield positive results.</p> <p>The WCO noted positive feedback from the Full-Time Officer Team on professional coaching recently arranged for them.</p> <p>YY asked about demographic information on student staff applicants at each stage of the interview process in recent rounds of student staff recruitment. This would be shared at HR Committee.</p> <p>The Board approved the HR Committee minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>LC/SJ</p> <p>Approved</p>
4	Finance Committee Minutes (08.02.22)	<p>The President presented the Finance Committee Minutes, dated 2nd February 2022 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The President noted that conversations at the meeting had focused on the implementation and approval of the Guild's Budget for 2022/23.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		The Board approved the Finance Committee Minutes.	Approved
5	Audit & Risk Committee Minutes (17.02.22)	<p>The EO presented the Audit & Risk Committee Minutes, dated 17th February 2022 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The EO noted that an external charity, the Nightline Association had requested a statement from A&R committee in relation to the recent de-recognition of Birmingham Nightline as an affiliated Guild Student Group. JT noted that work was ongoing to finalise a response.</p> <p>RS noted that the Committee would be further reviewing the revised Complaints Process, subject to suggested amendments.</p> <p>The Board approved the Audit & Risk Committee Minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
6	EDI Committee Minutes (18.01.22)	<p>The WCO presented the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee Minutes, dated 18th January 2022 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The WCO noted discussions from the meeting including an agreement to remove the Guild's current definition of 'Islamophobia' from the Zero Tolerance Policy, at the request of the Islamic Society. The WCO noted that the Committee would be working with the society to draft a new definition.</p> <p>The Board approved the EDI Committee Minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
7	CEO Report	<p>JT presented the CEO Report and the draft Engagement Committee Terms of Reference, for the Board's approval.</p> <p>JT noted that the Guild's financial request to the University had recently been approved at Strategic Planning and Resource Committee (SPRC), which with the IT Transition funding already secured amounted to circa £8m additional funding for the organisation over the next 5 years. JT noted plans to now move forward with operational planning for the new strategy.</p> <p>RS noted that additional the funding would now allow a significant growth in the Guild's services for students and was a testament to the hard work of the Guild's Senior Management Team and Officer Teams over several years.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on planned removal of COVID-19 signage across campus from the Easter vacation onwards. JT noted that numbers of COVID-19 cases had continued to fall since Christmas and the University were continuing to offer vaccination pop-up hubs on campus.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on plans for the Guild's IT transition, the implementation of which was likely to require significant building work and some short-term relocation of staff teams when works began.</p> <p>JT noted that levels of student footfall across campus were beginning to return to normal, with large numbers of students returning to campus for the UOBE Festival in January 2022 and participating in a growing number of student group and sports team events.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>JT updated the Board on plans for a trial of a new 'Engagement Committee'. A number of Trustees put themselves forward for membership. TG suggested including 'communications' in the terms of reference. The EO suggested including reference to 'commuter students' in the terms of reference. RS noted the importance of limiting the scope of the terms of reference.</p> <p>JT noted several recent staff absences. The Board discussed staff wellbeing in relation to increases in sickness levels. The WCO noted the Guild's Employee Assistance Programme. YY asked about wellbeing support for student staff. JT noted that the Guild's new Staff Savvy platform would allow for better communications on wellbeing to student staff.</p> <p>The Board noted the CEO Report, and approved the Engagement Committee Terms of Reference on a trial basis for the remainder of the current academic year.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted Approved</p>
8	HMRC Update	<p>NB presented the HMRC Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>NB noted that following the previous Board Meeting, the Guild had submitted an amended Notice of Appeal which had been accepted by HMRC. HMRC would now be issuing an amended Statement of Case, and were due to respond by the 18th March 2022.</p> <p>NB noted that the Guild had agreed a revised timeline for the tribunal, now expected to conclude between July and September 2022 depending on available court time. RS noted the possibility of a court case in September impacting on staffing for the Guild's Welcome activities. NB noted that most staff would be contributing via witness statement only. RS suggested communicating some dates where the Guild staff would not be available to attend.</p> <p>NB noted that the Guild was working on witness statements for submission, as was the University, a total of six, which would shortly be reviewed by RSM and the QC.</p> <p>The EO asked about EC witness statement in relation to their position as a Guild Trustee. NB noted that EC's witness statement would be written in their capacity as the University's Finance Director.</p> <p>The Board noted the HMRC Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>NB</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
9	Commonwealth Games Update	<p>AS presented the Commonwealth Games Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>AS noted that the summer of 2022 would see Birmingham host the Commonwealth Games, with the University a key partner for the delivery of the games.</p> <p>AS noted work in collaboration with the University to support students, staff and alumni to contribute and volunteer in the games. AS noted that plans for Guild Media Groups such as Redbrick and Guild TV would likely be accredited as formal media partners for the games, which</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>would be a fantastic opportunity for all involved. AS noted that so far, student and staff engagement with the games across campus had been lower than hoped for by the University.</p> <p>AS updated the Board on plans for the Guild building to be used as a venue to host media organisations and broadcast media on site for a number of events on campus including Hockey and Squash matches.</p> <p>AS updated the Board on areas of the building planned for use. AS noted that the Commonwealth Games would be operationally responsible for the building during the games, with the majority of Guild staff working remotely during this period.</p> <p>AS noted use of the Guild building would enable the Guild to generate a surplus contribution for the Guild which would fall across both financial years due to the timing of the event.</p> <p>The IO asked about the impact on the Officer Team handover period. AS noted plans for the use of the University library where meetings needed to take place in person. SJ noted that the planned dates would fall outside of the formal Officer handover period.</p> <p>YY asked about the impact on student groups' events during the summer from the closure of the building. AS noted that campus was very quiet during the summer period out-side of term time, and the majority of campus would be closed to students regardless during the Commonwealth Games, as well as significant disruption across all of south Birmingham.</p> <p>EW asked about the Guild's liability during the period of the lease to the Commonwealth Games. NB noted that the Commonwealth Games organisers would be liable for activities within the building, however the Guild and University would likely be involved in responding to any incidents.</p> <p>The Board noted the Commonwealth Games Update.</p> <p>AS left the meeting at 19:20.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
10	EDI Update	<p>SJ presented the EDI Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>SJ updated the Board on progress to date on the Guild's 12-month EDI aims, first approved in October 2021.</p> <p>SJ noted significant progress on delivery for the Black Voices campaign which had run several events during October and November 2021, including two black student experience panels, a 'legacy of windrush' talk, and a BAME mental health discussion panel.</p> <p>SJ noted progress to date on Trustee Board recruitment, noting an increase in diversity in External Trustees following the most recent recruitment round, and the agreement of Appointments Panel to reserve one student trustee position for BAME students, which had been successfully recruited.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>SJ noted the redrafting of the terms of reference for E&D Committee, which had been refocused in line with the Guild's ambitions on EDI and the working of the current strategic plan. SJ noted that the committee had recently agreed a name change, from E&D to EDI (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) committee.</p> <p>SJ noted the roll-out of a 'pledge of non-discrimination' to Guild elections candidates in the most recent officer elections, and the Guild's continued progress with the new people management platform 'Staff Savvy'. SJ noted continued progress on EDI training across the staff team.</p> <p>SJ noted some areas of the 12-month aims which were still ongoing, including a planned review of the Guild's Liberation Associations, work to promote the organisation's EDI work at large events, and the collection of EDI information on the 'Staff Savvy' platform.</p> <p>The President noted the Guild's work on Gender Pay Gap reporting. The President suggested looking at reporting Ethnicity Pay Gap information. NB noted that Gender Pay Gap information was due to be discussed at the next HR Committee meeting.</p> <p>RS recommended looking closely at future Trustee Board recruitment considering the expected diversity of Trustees for the next academic year.</p> <p>The Board noted the EDI Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>SJ</p> <p>Noted</p>
11	Student Voice Report Update	<p>The EO presented the Student Voice Report Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>The EO updated the Board on progress on the recommendations of the 2021 Student Voice Report, including collaborative work on assessment and feedback, a new online 'canvas' portal for Student Reps, and the Guild's work on the Disabled Students Commission, through which a working group between the University and Guild was planned.</p> <p>The Board noted the Student Voice Report Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
12	Democracy Operations Update	<p>The IO presented the Democracy Operations Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>The IO noted a turnout of 6,003 voters in the recent Guild elections, slightly lower than the previous year at 6,228. IO noted the impact of COVID-19 on student engagement on the Guild's democracy, which had been substantial. JT noted that the Guild's voter turnout remained positive compared to others across the sector. The President noted the impact of the UCU strike on numbers of candidates on campus, and a reading week for social science students.</p> <p>The Board discussed the outcomes of the Guild Officer Elections 2022. JT noted the importance of Students' Union elections in reinforcing democratic habits and civic engagement in young people.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>YY noted declining voter turnouts across the sector during COVID-19. JT suggested further work to compare changes in elections turnout over the last 24 months.</p> <p>The President noted significant training and support for candidates in manifesto writing and campaigning, however there was more work to do in educating students and candidates about the importance of engaging with their Students' Union democracy. The WCO noted several instances of 'trolling' of candidates on social media.</p> <p>The Board noted the Democracy Operations Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
13	Strategy & KPI's Update	<p>JT presented the Strategy & KPI's Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>The Board discussed the agreed wording of the Guild's financial agreement with the University on new funding. JT noted stipulations in the agreement regarding the Guild's performance against KPI's in terms of future funding increases. RS noted the concern of the Board on the requirements of KPI performance data. RS suggested requesting clarification from the University on the required data for any future review of KPI's.</p> <p>JD noted that some KPI tracking may be more appropriate against historical baselines, rather than current data. JT suggested developing a proposal for the Board. JD suggested reviewing the planned KPI tracking at future Board meetings.</p> <p>TG left the meeting at 20:00.</p> <p>The Board noted the Strategy & KPI's Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>JT</p> <p>EB</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
14	Risk Management Policy	<p>NB presented the Risk Management Policy, for the Board's approval. The paper was taken as read, with no questions asked.</p> <p>The Board approved the Risk Management Policy.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
15	AOB (Any Other Business)	<p>The Board discussed the current situation in Ukraine, Russia's invasion of the country and the subsequent humanitarian crisis in the region.</p> <p>The IO noted two emails sent by the University to Ukrainian students to offer support. The IO noted that they had personally spoken to Russian and Ukrainian Students to offer the Guild's support. The IO noted that the University were looking at supporting those students unable to return home with possible visa extensions and offers of accommodation.</p> <p>The IO noted a planned fundraising project by Carnival RAG to help Ukrainian refugees for the British Red Cross Ukraine appeal.</p> <p>The IO noted that together with Aston SU, the Guild was hosting a vigil in the city centre for those affected by the events in Ukraine. The IO noted that the University had recently agreed to light up the Joseph Chamberlain memorial clock tower in the colours of the Ukrainian flag as a show of solidarity with the Ukrainian people.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>The WCO noted that the University had recently announced a welfare package of £500k for all students affected by the conflict in Ukraine.</p> <p>YY asked about academic and funding relationships between the University and institutions in the Russian Federation. JT noted that the University were looking closely at any possible links, but these were expected to be limited. The President noted that the University and Guild were clearly differentiating between the Russian State and Russian People in its approach to the conflict. The President noted an upcoming meeting between Students' Unions in the UK and the President of a Students' Union in Lviv, Ukraine, which they would be attending.</p> <p>YY asked about any instances of xenophobia in relation to the conflict. The WCO noted that thankfully so far there had been no reported instances of xenophobia amongst the student body.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
16	Meeting Reflection	No Items noted.	Noted

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:15.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 9th May 2022, 18:00 – 20:00, Venue TBC.