

Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 25th October 2021,
Mandela Room, 18:00 – 20:00

Present

Robert Smeath, External Trustee **(RS)** (Chair)
 Mikey Brown, President **(President)** (Vice-chair) (arrived at 18:25)
 Jules Singh, Education Officer **(EO)**
 Josephine Conway, Activities and Employability Officer **(AEO)**
 Aaliyah Simms, Welfare and Community Officer **(WCO)**
 Wei-Lun Chen, International Officer **(IO)**
 George Christian, Sports Officer **(SO)**
 Tom Goodman, Student Trustee (Postgraduate) **(TG)**
 Johnny Davis, External Trustee **(JD)**
 Wyn Williams, External Trustee **(WW)**
 Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
 Henrietta Brealey, External Trustee **(HB)** (via Zoom)
 Sarah Aray, International Student Trustee **(SA)**
 Serabi Opiyo, BAME Student Trustee **(SEO)**
 Jake Poulton, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(JP)**
 Erica Conway, University Representative Trustee **(EC)**

In attendance

Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)** (arrived at 18:30)
 Sam Jones, Executive Assistant **(SJ)** (note taker)
 Nick Bailey, Head of Finance **(NB)** (agenda Items 0 – 11 only)
 Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)** (agenda item 11 only)
 Lucy Gill, Voice & Representation Manager **(LG)** (agenda item 12 only)
 Kate Angus, Mazars Auditors **(KA)** (agenda item 0 only)

Apologies

Ian Pain, External Trustee **(IP)**
 Danielle Murinas, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**

The Chair welcomed all attendees and the meeting began at 18:00.

No	ITEM FOR DISCUSSION	NOTES	ACTION
0	2020/2021 Financial Statements and Audit	<p>KA joined the meeting at 18:00 via Zoom.</p> <p>NB presented the Guild's 2020/2021 Financial Statements and Audit for the Board's Approval.</p> <p>KA presented the Audit Completion report, noting that the process had gone well and no items of concern had been raised.</p> <p>NB noted that the Guild's previous 2019/20 catering VAT provision had been reversed as a prior year adjustment following HMRC confirmation that no historical liability was payable, which Mazars deemed to be an appropriate course of action. KA also noted that the accounting treatment of the potential VAT liability in relation to the Student Mentors and Hall</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>Reps schemes had also been treated as a prior year adjustment, which Mazars also agreed was appropriate.</p> <p>KA noted one outstanding item raised by Mazars related to the operation of the Community Wardens Scheme in partnership with the University without a signed SLA in place. KA noted that this was the only internal control recommendation raised in the report and noted Mazars' advice that formal agreements should shortly be put in place. NB noted that revised agreements with the University were under discussion as part of the wider UoB and Guild 'Resident's Life Review' work, which was due for completion before Christmas.</p> <p>KA noted the helpful support provided by Guild staff over the course of the audit. KA noted that the Guild's annual audit had been very positive and no serious issues had been raised in relation to the Guild's operations.</p> <p>NB noted that annually, a key point of discussion is usually the pension deficit adjustment. KA noted that the Guild's applied discount factor of 1.24% and status as a 'going concern' had been accepted by Mazars.</p> <p>EW noted that the Guild's level of debtors was higher than in previous years. NB noted that the Guild's VAT dispute with HMRC with regards to SLA scheme funding and the uncertainty of student numbers during the pandemic had delayed the receipt of SLA funding, impacting the level of debtors held at year-end.. NB noted that the Guild's debtor levels would have largely been unchanged to previous years, had this not been the case. SLA funding for 20/21 was received shortly after year-end.</p> <p>The Board approved the 2020/2021 Financial Statements and Audit.</p> <p>KA left the meeting at 18:10.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p> <p>Noted</p>
1	Minutes of Previous Meeting (06.09.21)	<p>The Chair invited members to introduce themselves again for the benefit of the all.</p> <p>The Chair presented the Trustee Board minutes, dated 6th September 2021 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
2	Matters Arising	<p>The Chair noted the no actions were outstanding from the previous minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
3	HR Committee Minutes (29.09.21)	<p>The WCO presented the HR Committee minutes, dated 29th September 2021 for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the HR Committee minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
4	FC Committee Minutes (05.10.21)	<p>The President presented the Finance Committee Minutes, dated 5th October 2021, for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the Finance Committee Minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>

5	A&R Committee Minutes (12.10.21)	<p>The EO presented the Audit and Risk Committee Minutes, dated 12th October 2021, for the Board's Approval.</p> <p>The Board approved the Audit and Risk Committee Minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
6	E&D Committee Minutes (14.09.21)	<p>The WCO presented the Equality & Diversity Committee Minutes, dated 14th September 2021, for the Board's information.</p> <p>The Board noted the E&D Committee Minutes.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
7	EDI Update	<p>SJ presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Update, for the Board's approval.</p> <p>SJ noted that the paper o had been deferred to this meeting from the previous meeting. SJ noted that internal work on the principles had continued pending approval from the Trustee Board.</p> <p>SJ noted that the Guild had previously held a Trustee Board away day with a focus on EDI in the Guild's governance structures and across the wider organisation. SJ noted that the work on diversity in the governance structures had been progressing for several years, however had been given greater direction by changes to the charity governance code in January 2021, which had added additional requirements for UK charities to set targets for diversity and regularly review EDI engagement work at the Trustee Board level.</p> <p>SJ noted that following the session, a set of 12-month aims had been generated from group work outputs, as well as a series of longer-term aims which would feed into the Guild's future strategy work.</p> <p>The Board discussed the proposed EDI principles. EC asked which areas of activity were progress more slowly. SJ noted that there was further work across the organisation to do to understand barriers to student engagement in front facing departments and, if present, within the Guild's refreshed democratic processes which were still bedding in.</p> <p>SEO asked about the current status of the Guild's Liberation Associations. SJ noted that a paper on reforms to the Liberation Associations presented by the previous Activities & Employability Officer (AEO) had been discussed at the Trustee Board in July, however the action for their next steps now sat with the Officer Team and the incumbent AEO.</p> <p>RS asked about EDI activity within university sports teams. The SO noted their ongoing work with UB Sport on a set of recommendations to focus more significantly on EDI in the University's sports strategy, including their own work with sports team committees.</p> <p>EW asked about building the next steps of the Guild's EDI plans in the Guild's Strategic Plan. SJ noted that the current strategy for years one to four were currently being developed, and EDI was highlighted as an enabler in current working documents.</p> <p>The Board approved the EDI Update.</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> <p>Approved</p>

8	Officer Action Plan (WCO)	The Board agreed to defer this item to the next meeting. SJ to include on agenda.	SJ
9	CEO Report	<p>Note: This item was taken out of order later in the meeting, following item 11.</p> <p>JT presented the CEO Report, for the Board's Information.</p> <p>JT noted that Welcome Week 2021 had been very positive, with high footfall across all events and a fantastic effort by the Guild staff team to deliver a wide range of events. JT noted positive venues sales figures for welcome week and into semester one.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on progress on the Guild's IT Infrastructure bid with the University. EC noted that the Guild's request was due to be presented to University Executive Board, however a meeting date had not yet set. RS noted their concern that the proposal had not yet progressed to approval within the University. EC and JT discussed the timeline for next steps.</p> <p>JT noted the hard work of the staff team over the previous several weeks. JT noted their concern that Guild staff were regularly working over their normal hours and that workloads were very high. JT noted plans for additional staff wellbeing content over the coming weeks in staff communications.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on plans for a possible new 'Engagement Committee', noting the focus of the Guild's current governance structures on fiduciary and compliance work. JT noted plans the new committee to oversee student-facing engagement activity in the Guild including Student Group, Student Voice and Community Welfare. JT updated the Board on plans to the reduction of the frequency of several other Committee meetings to allow for capacity for the new body.</p> <p>JT noted that the Guild was currently progressing with recruitment for an External Trustee, in light of WW expected departure in January 2022 after six years as a Trustee.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on potential strike action by campus trade unions, expected in late November. JT noted that the local branch of the University & College Union (UCU) was balloting for strike action of pension, pay and conditions. The President noted ongoing work to understand student opinion on the issue of campus strikes after significant disruptions to learning during the pandemic. The President noted developing plans for a possible referendum on the Guild's current strike policy, if the local ballot were to prove successful.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on plans for an 'engagement fund' within the Guild budget. RS noted the value of the engagement fund, and suggested the Board receive an update on its impact at future meetings.</p> <p>JT noted the upcoming departure of the Guild's long serving Facilities Manager after 29 years with the organisation. EW noted a possible risk of</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>

		<p>EW noted the Guild’s outstanding appeal with HMRC on the two schemes, and also the lack of a signed agreement with the University for the Community Wardens scheme. EW noted that if the Guild’s HMRC challenge was unsuccessful, the Guild may be continuing to incur VAT charges on its current activity. NB noted that the Guild’s aim was to incorporate University funding for the schemes in the long-term into the Guild’s main University block grant, however this progress had been paused following advice from the Guild’s legal counsel and University tax Manager.</p> <p>EW asked about the Guild’s plan to possibly back-date an agreement with the University for the schemes. RS noted that the Guild was not planning to do this. NB noted that the Guild was liaising regularly with the University and its advisors to move the issue forward, however RSM had advised that the issue may take an additional 6-8 months to resolve with HMRC. EW noted the need to resolve the structure ahead of the Guild’s next annual audit.</p> <p>RS noted that the Guild’s budget performance had been very positive so far and it was very good to see students returning to the Guild’s commercial services and enjoying themselves.</p> <p>The Board noted the Budget 2021-22 Forecast 1.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
11	<p>Commercial/ Income Generation/ Resident Life Update</p>	<p>JT presented the Commercial/ Income Generation/ Resident Life Update for the Board’s information.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on the Guild’s positive commercial performance, noting that commercial sales during the Welcome period had been very positive.. JT noted that it had been good to see students returning to the Guild for evening activities again.</p> <p>JD asked about the possible reintroduction of COVID-19 controls in the building. JT noted that the Guild had previously considered implementing COVID-19 vaccine passports for entry to Guild club nights over the summer, as this had been proposed as national policy.</p> <p>The Board discussed possible COVID-19 controls as the winter period approached. JT noted the Guild’s understanding anecdotally that the majority of students had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine and would be content, if required, to show their vaccination status, however there remained a small minority who had not been vaccinated. The AEO noted that during welcome week, only very few students spoken to had indicated their unwillingness to be vaccinated. The President noted the rollout of ‘pop-up’ vaccination centres on campus, which the Guild had hosted on its front car park.</p> <p>The Board discussed the possible reintroduction of COVID-19 vaccine passports on a national or regional level as the Government’s ‘Plan B’ may be introduced. JT noted the Guild’s concern prior to welcome week that many international students would either not have received a vaccine in time to participate, or would have received a different vaccine which did not qualify for the UK’s scheme.SA noted their understanding that</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>international students who had been vaccinated abroad possibly could not register it through the NHS vaccine COVID-19 pass app.</p> <p>JP noted the possibility that students arriving from Eastern Europe who had received the Russian vaccine were not able to access the app as that vaccine was not approved in the UK. JT and AS to review.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on the Guild's progress on the Guild and University's joint commercial review. JT noted that the review had proceeded at pace over the summer, however progress had slowed during the Guild and University's audit period and through welcome week. JT noted additional difficulties in assessing the total figures for facilities and utility costs of the University's venues, as these were calculated campus wide. JT noted an upcoming meeting with the University's Campus Services team.</p> <p>JT noted that the Guild's retail tenant base had declined during the pandemic with the departure of Santander and STA travel. JT noted that the Guild was keen to progress new tenants and was working with the University to identify new partners for the vacant spaces on the ground floor.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on progress on the Residence Life review, noting the appointment of Redbrick consultancy as external partners to produce a report by the end of November, and report to the Guild in January 2022. JT noted that a range of stakeholder sessions with Guild and University staff would be taking place over the coming weeks.</p> <p>EC noted a deadline for the Guild to achieve the deadline of the next meeting of SPRC in January. JT and EC agreed to discuss the timeline outside the meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted the Commercial/ Income Generation/ Resident Life Update.</p> <p>NB left the meeting at 19:00.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>AS/JT</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
12	Student Voice Report	<p>LG joined the meeting at 19:00</p> <p>LG presented the Student Voice Report for the Board's information.</p> <p>EO noted that the Guild's Student Voice report was written annually to inform Guild and University work on academic issues, sourcing data from the NNS survey, Student Rep System (SRS) and University College reports.</p> <p>The EO noted the key areas of focus in the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement, Communications and Partnership-working. • Access & Participation. • Black Student Satisfaction, Attainment and Experience. • The Experience of Disabled Students. • Assessment & Feedback. • Postgraduate Taught Students Experiences 	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>LG noted that the impact of Covid-19 had delayed a number of datasets usually employed in the report, such as Student Support Fund Annual Reports and the Annual Review process. This had meant that the Guild has not been able to fully assess/review areas of good practice that exist across the University.</p> <p>LG noted that the Student Voice Report has been presented to the University via the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (DPVC) for Academic Experience and across college committees.</p> <p>EC noted the wording of the report, commenting that the report should inform the Guild's action plan to lobby the University to take action.</p> <p>WW noted the declining scores in the NSS 2020 scores for the University. LG noted that the Guild presented its recommendations to the University annually. EC noted that the University's NSS scores were difficult to affect and were not necessarily directly linked to the University's policies, also being affected by external factors including the pandemic.</p> <p>LG noted the new role of the DPVC for Academic Experience at the University, who had a responsibility for the NSS results and was being supported by a new network of student academic interns. LG noted regular conversations between the Guild and University at a senior level, which were moving at pace. RS suggested inviting the DPVC for Academic Experience to a future Board meeting to discuss collaboration on the NSS.</p> <p>The EO noted the recent announcement of the resignation of the current PVC for Education at the University, which may affect progress on the project.</p> <p>JD noted the need for action on the NSS to be consistently co-branded with the University and Guild. JD noted the need to be clear with the University on the Guild's priorities and stance on student academic experience and to make clear 'red lines' for the Guild.</p> <p>The Board noted the Student Voice Report.</p> <p>LG left the meeting at 19:10.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>JT</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
13	AOB (Any Other Business)	<p>The President updated the Board on possible upcoming UCU industrial action on campus in November. The President noted that current Guild Policy within the Guild's 'Beliefs and Commitments' document bound the Guild to support any trade union industrial action by University staff. The President noted that they had drafted the current wording of the policy, prior to taking office.</p> <p>The President noted that in-light of the pressures on students being able access to teaching during the pandemic, the Officer team had agreed to move ahead with plans for a referendum on the Guild's stance on any future campus industrial action, in order to establish the opinion of the student body on what the Guild's stance on strike action should be. The President noted that the Guild was now planning to hold a referendum in the case that the Birmingham branch of the UCU trade union's ballot for</p>	<p>Noted</p>

		<p>strike action was successful. The President noted that the Guild's current policy on campus industrial action would hold until any changes were made.</p> <p>SA noted the significant effect of campus industrial action on international students, disproportionate to home students in terms of the visa requirements. The IO noted the need for the Guild to actively inform international students on the context of possible strike action, which they felt was not widely known in the international student community.</p> <p>RS noted the need for adequate resource for informing students and promoting the possible referendum with respect to engaging BAME students and making information accessible to students with disabilities.</p> <p>The President noted that the Guild Officer Group (GOG) was meeting the following day to discuss and action the proposal for a referendum.</p> <p>The Board discussed the Guild's communications around possible strike action. The President noted the importance of focusing the Guild's resources and promotion on student issues and Guild projects as a higher priority than campus industrial relations.</p> <p>The Board discussed the Guild's handling of recent national and local reports of drink spiking. The President noted that the Guild had released student communications on its zero tolerance stance on drink spiking, and noted that a new Guild task group had met earlier in the day to plan the Guild's response.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on the Guild's planning and response. The WCO noted plans for student facing communications, educating students about personal safety and signposting to Guild and external support services. The President noted a planned open letter to Birmingham venues calling for additional safety procedures. The President noted that additional screening, safety devices and information, including promotion of the 'Ask Angela' scheme.</p> <p>HB noted recent reports of homophobic attacks in Birmingham, and asked if the Guild had seen similar reports in the student community. The President noted their awareness of the increased reports of homophobia in Birmingham city centre, noting that they had recently spoken at a protest event in the Birmingham gay village, and had been in touch with West Midlands Police to encourage them to take more action on the issue.</p> <p>HB noted reports of growing inflation in commercial supplies. The Board discussed the potential for inflationary pressures on hospitality supplies.</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>
14	Meeting Reflection	<p>JT noted plans for a Trustee Board away day in January, possibly looking at the University new 'Exchange' building as a venue, to be followed by a Board dinner in the city centre.</p>	<p>Noted</p>

The Chair closed the meeting at 19:45.