

**Minutes of:** Board of Trustees

**Location:** Saw Swee Hock Student Centre and Zoom

**Date and Time:** Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 4pm

**Members:** James Relf (Chair), Chris Adewoye, Helen Bourne, Robel Iyassu, Sarah Onifade, Linea Petrela-Paiement.

**Apologies:** Marie-Helene Blattmann-Lenoir.

**In attendance:** Ben Whittaker (CEO), Nick Smith (Secretary).

	Item
1.	The board <b>noted</b> apologies. There were no declarations of conflicts of interest arising from the agenda.
2.	<p>The board <b>approved</b> the Minutes of the February Board Meeting without amendments.</p> <p>The following matters are arising were <b>noted</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The sabbatical officer support paper would come to the June board meeting.</li> <li>b) Work on the code of practice with the School was ongoing and it was hoped that it would also come to the last meeting of the year.</li> <li>c) The school was engaged in discussion on the hardship fund was ongoing as the current model was unsustainable.</li> <li>d) A policy on sabbatical employment would come to the HR subcommittee.</li> <li>e) The paper on Starbucks would come to the June Trustee Board alongside the budget discussion. It would be sent to LP as well as the Audit subcommittee.</li> <li>f) The skills, knowledge and diversity audit had been set up and trustees were asked to complete the document.</li> <li>g) An additional meeting for strategy should be set.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> NS</p>
3.	There were no board actions taken by the chair since the last meeting
4.	There were no update items from the Company Secretary
5.	<p>The board <b>noted</b> the Audit subcommittee minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A new date for the postponed staffing subcommittee should be set.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> BW</p>
6.	<p>The board <b>noted</b> the Chief Executive Report including a compliance and risk update.</p> <p><u>Freedom of Speech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The School had reconstituted its Freedom of Speech group and the union was taking part in this.</li> <li>b) LP-P raised an issue of the effectiveness of the union in relation to challenging speakers at the School. SO noted that the officer work was always as transparent to students of the work that they were undertaking and the legislation that was in place.</li> <li>c) The CEO noted that they union had given support for the officers to undertake opposition to the School.</li> <li>d) Work was being undertaken to prepare the students union for their responsibilities under the Freedom of Speech legislation including what the society team was undertaking.</li> <li>e) The SU would need to be clearer on who was hosting external speakers in the future especially for those with responsibility within the union such as society committee members.</li> <li>f) A deep dive on Freedom of Speech should be discussed at the next meeting including how the union could be transparent about risk.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> BW</p>

	g) The new General Secretary was a postgraduate and so still studying at the start of their term. One of the other sabbatical officers was an international student and would require a VISA from the School.
7.	The board <b>noted</b> a finance update as discussed at the Audit subcommittee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The SU was tracking ahead of budget but it was expected that this would reduce as trading income reduced in the final term.</li> <li>b) Stock re-evaluation had not impacted the financial position.</li> </ul>
8.	The board <b>approved</b> a reforecast budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) This had been recommended by the Audit subcommittee.</li> <li>b) Trading income had been offset by reduced costs of sales and there had been a positive variance in staffing costs due to staff vacancies.</li> <li>c) Additional costs from the Cost of Living Allowance had been included.</li> <li>d) As part of the budget process additional information should be given on staffing and activity costs for each area.</li> </ul> <b>Action:</b> BW
9.	The board <b>noted</b> a finance systems update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) This was now at a business critical risk level and there may be a need to inform the auditors of the issues being created by the system. BW highlighted the risk and made sure Trustees knew that they could ask any questions about this.</li> <li>b) To stop the relationship with exchequer required the negotiations of three separate contracts all of which had different renewal date and agreed a more aggressive approach on this.</li> <li>c) Audit subcommittee would be updated through the chair but the Trustees would be informed of any major issues.</li> </ul>
10.	The board <b>noted</b> an elections report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Trustees congratulated successful candidates and those who had taken part in the election.</li> <li>b) Like the 2023 elections there had been incidents of international conflicts being played out.</li> <li>c) Rules on eligibility related to past social media comments or expressions of beliefs were still unclear but the relationship between the board's role for reputational risk management and the Returning Officer's role to be an external adjudicator of democratic processes.</li> <li>d) The board felt the democracy committee had not successfully met their role in relation to promotion of elections and a report from them should be brought to the next meeting.</li> </ul> <b>Action:</b> JR to contact democracy committee chair.
11.	The board <b>noted</b> a Health and Safety Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Due to the late circulation the board could pass on comments to BW after the meeting but this would come back to the next subcommittees.</li> </ul> <b>Action:</b> Trustees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) 22.2 should clarify the different responsibilities and also the equipment provided by the union.</li> <li>c) No Trades Union were currently recognised by the Trustee board and if they did do so then the policies would need amendment.</li> <li>d) The whistleblowing policy would need to include routes for redress.</li> <li>e) A clear definition of "young person" should be defined in the Safeguarding policy.</li> </ul>
12.	The board <b>approved</b> a set of dates for 2024/5 and an initial calendar of business
13.	The board <b>approved</b> the closed minutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Different areas of risk within departments should be included in the register when developed.</li> </ul>

	<b>Confidential items</b>
14.	Staffing update
15.	There was a Trustee discussion without staff