**St George’s Students’ Union**

**Trustee Board Minutes**

**Minutes of the 2nd Trustee Board Meeting 2015-16**

**25th February 2016**

1. **Present**

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| Steven Gilbert | SG | President (Chair of the Board of Trustees) |
| Kat Telford | KT | VP Education and Welfare |
| Alice Walker Earwicker | AWE | VP Finance & Student Activities |
| Ruth Varney | RV | General Secretary (Clerk to the Board of Trustees) |
| Deborah Bowman | DB | Dean of Students |
| Michael John | MJ | Student Trustee |
| Martin Gannon | MG | Student Trustee |
| Tanisha Amin | TA | Student Trustee |
| Ian Spires | IS | Lay Trustee |
| Kea Horvers | KH | Lay Trustee |
| Judith Ibison | JI | Deputy Dean for Students |
| Roger Horton | RH | Lay Trustee |
| Dheemal Patel | DP | Ex-President Trustee |
| In attendance:  John McDonagh | JMD | Interim Financial Manager |
| Nicola Arnold | NA | SGUL Director of Finance |

1. **Apologies:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Mark Lubbock | ML | Lay Trustee |
| Elizabeth Neal | EN | SGSU Financial Manager |

1. **Minutes from previous meeting**

Dheemal was removed from retired Trustees

The amended minutes were PASSED.

1. **Finance Update (JMD) – Reserved Business**
2. **Staffing Update (SG) – Reserved Business**
3. **London Living Wage Proposal – Paper E (SG)**

The question from the University is: would the SU put their casual staff (bar and shop) up to the London Living Wage in line with the University in order for the University to become accredited. The total extra cost to the SU each year would be approximately £10,000.

The board is in favour of implementing the London Living Wage.

1. **Reports from the Senior Officers (Papers A, B, C, and D)**
   1. **Events Zone – SG**

RAG week is going on at the moment and has so far been a success. We have not yet counted the money however we have already beaten the last 2 years. The magnitude has not been as great as I had hoped but good still. Student engagement has been my biggest concern whether that is to do with charity, events, changes to the constitution and political things. The technical officers have been working exceptionally hard during the show seasons. Bar takings are up on previous years for this term.

* 1. **Student Participation Zone – AWE**

MG: How do you think the role will change for the next person? As far as being a team leader for exec and basically a Finance Manager as I know you have had to pass over parts of your zone. Do we need a restructure of that?

AWE: Yes we need to change it. But I couldn’t foresee what that would look like. But it is clear that significant additions of finance staff are needed. We often have to do things such as counting coins which should not be in a Sabbatical’s job.

DB: We are so indebted to AWE for all the work she has put in.

SG: Once we know what staffing is going to look like then we can look at the VP Finance & Student Activities role, as what AWE has done is not a sustainable model.

JI: Many thanks to Alice for her work. It will be interesting to look at the roles of students and the control over the money that the Sabbaticals have. It all together depends on permanent roles and the training that can be provided for incoming Sabbaticals. It is difficult to distinguish that which required expertise and that which doesn’t.

AWE: It will require a meeting between the finance staff and the senior officers to see how we can distribute the jobs. Some finance should definitely be retained, the more strategic things such as reports and sponsorship and distribution rather than operational jobs. Looking at the bigger picture is more critical to the Union.

* 1. **Representation Zone – KT**

Firstly, Junior Doctor Contract Imposition has caused an all time low in morale. It has resulted in the most politically active the Union has ever been. Secondly, INTO students have suffered many major problems on the new courses including consumer law issues, communications and the risk of a high number of ‘Interruption of Studies’. Finally, changes to the national prescribing exams have really affected the final year students. I predict NSS feedback will be very low from that final year group.

KH: The interruption of studies – is that due to the INTO course?

KT: Yes it is because they don’t just need to pass the home exams, but also need to pass the USMLE. If they don’t, then they can’t progress to the next year. An interruption of studies has been provided as the only other option as the level of teaching they have received will not enable them to pass the exam.

KH: Who are they complaining to?

KT: Ian McPhee – Dean for International Education, the INTO operations committee and the GMC.

JI: The students did us proud at the GMC meeting and they were praised for their professionalism.

MJ: On the ground it looks dire. A mock exam for the T year students recently, showed that only 2 passed so the whole rest of the cohort is going to have to take a year of interruption. They are completely unsupported in preparation for this exam and it is being reported that there are no places available abroad but they are also not able to stay here as they aren’t under the home caps. However, I am not sure what we as a Trustee Board can do for them apart from support them, which KT has been doing well.

KT: Also, an interruption of study for many of them isn’t an option as their visas won’t allow them to stay in the UK and it will adversely impact their finances.

KH: What is the University’s attitude towards this?

DB: Less than ideal. It’s been really difficult and staff not involved in it have expressed concerns. I would say that the principal is taking a direct approach and the GMC have made firm statements that things need to change.

KH: Is this a reputational issue here?

RH: Absolutely. This has been completely driven by finances and not well thought out.

DP: In terms of support, is this mainly pastoral or representing them?

KT: Both. I have been providing regular support and representation for individuals but also attending monthly meetings and forming an agenda of points to focus on in order to apply pressure on academics.

DP: What if you have 20 people turn up at your doorstep? That’s not fair on you.

KT: I do and I do represent them. But I have got round that point by getting the INTO reps on to the course meetings. Students have stopped attending monthly open meetings because they have lost all trust in the staff and committee. It has taken a lot of time for me to build up rapport with them as they associated me with the University.

DP: Last year they had a staff member map our curriculum to the USMLE. What happened to that?

MJ: The curriculum mapping has been given out. It’s in a traffic light system, green is what we cover at George’s, orange is what we semi-cover and red is what we don’t. And a lot of it is red.

KT: It is really broad with ill-defined margins and then they are being told to self-direct learn but this is not guided.

KH: What could happen to the University?

MJ: Law suits. Many of the students involved come from America where there is a litigation society and many students have intentions for this to be progressed.

JI: The big issue is USMLE preparation. The students in the States at the moment are happy.

KT: Those students who got to do the USMLE out in America did well as it is well taught but they changed the scheme of assessment so student’s have to do it before they go now.

MJ: They were told they would cover a lot of it here but realistically given ¼ teaching that is given in the US. American students have 2 years of physiology first whereas here you have half a year of physiology. If they don’t pass it well then they won’t be able to get a job in the US and so they will sue on the basis of loss of earnings.

SG: KT has been a champion for the INTO students. KT and I have been and will be applying pressure where possible. We are considering taking the whole SU report as INTO to the next SGUL council and taking KT ad well in order to make a point.

DP: Have you spoken to NUS?

KT: No, I shall do.

* 1. **Communication Zone – RV**

Mostly operational work so nothing really to say here except that I have been working to clear up space to make it useful and neglected societies to enable easier allocations of budgets etc. Space is a massive issue for our students especially with more students, more societies and less space that the University allows us to use. All of which I deal with on a day to day basis. We had SGM which was a low point due to poor student engagement, as we only had about 20 non-exec turn up out of a cohort of 5600 which was disappointing. It is a definitely something we need to focus on as a Union but, how, I don’t know.

MJ: Following the issues with space, what is happening with the Blue Unit as a potential space for society storage.

RV: Although it was looked at by last year’s General Secretary, SG and I aren’t so sure. We went to see it at the start of the year however it is full of set building wood which would cost an extortionate amount to clear, it is damaged and not water tight and it is difficult to get in to due to rust… therefore it is not high on my list of useful spaces. We have every intention of putting more storage into the games room and using that for the stage etc we intend on buying then making the rest of the room a better space to use for societies but it is all taking time, logistics and finance. Especially as a non-Sabb having the time to sit down and concentrate on a project like this is pretty difficult.

IS: Previously we have discussed the space at the Halls of Residence, which may not be convenient but is useable space.

SG: We did enquire however we were told ITAV have claimed them.

1. **Strategic Plan Review**

The NUS have offered to provide a diagnostic review of our Strategic plan as included by the fee we already pay them. We have not as of yet had the plan to do it but SG has made contact.

DP: What does a diagnostic review entail?

SG: It consults the students and staff on where we are and how we can improve as an SU. It is likely to pass over the end of my tenure.

KH: Do they provide a list of objectives?

SG: They will be sending me over a pack.

IS: It is a significant time commitment.

SG: It would mainly be my burden, but it is my job. It will be better when SP is back.

JI: Did you think it would go into the next year?

SG: The diagnostic review shouldn’t take that long. The strategic plan will take weeks and months.

JI: Would you consider a short term plan so that it doesn’t run into the next year.

DP: The last plan was too detailed and written in 2011.

JI: Just thought it might help when planning your budget for next year.

1. **Student Engagement**

Myself and RV put lots of time and hours into running a Special General Meeting where we could look at some crucial constitutional changes which have arisen this year and since we have been here such as Awards, Elections and quorum for important meetings. As RV stated, very few non-exec came and then left leaving the meeting unfinished, only 10-20% of the meeting completed. We are appealing for ideas and suggestions from your experiences.

KH: Do you have any digital way of contacting students?

SG: All student emails, outside the library, social media etc.

KH: How about mobile phones?

SG: We don’t have that information.

IS: Did you ask why people didn’t turn up?

SG: Yes. Most didn’t reply. The other answer was the length of meetings. Do we do lots of short meetings which people can’t commit to or one really long one?

DP: People only come to things that they care about such as the Junior Doctor Contracts meeting.

SG: However, we only scrapped over quorum for the Junior Doctor Contract meeting and less than <10% of the student body voted on the referendum, was which is half the number that voted on President in elections last year.

KH: What are you benchmarking against? What about other universities?

SG: UCL which is quite politically active is about 50-60% for the big issues, and smaller issues about 20-30%.

KH: What about other medical schools?

DP: Other universities have more arts students who seem to be more interested in getting involved and these make up a large percentage of other universities.

SG: Imperial and UCL medical schools don’t hold these events, their parent unions run the events.

MJ: I know a major problem is the 5:30pm start. Students on placement don’t feel like they can make it back in time, whereas if they start at 6.30pm those who are already onsite won’t want to stay that late. Any engagement plan needs to start from the first years as there is a long standing apathy. How to do this? I don’t know.

KH: Isn’t good practice to feed people?

SG: We already do a lot of that.

KH: What is the target? What would be good for you?

SG: 10% would be a miracle.

RV: We were looking at quorum which was set as a static 60 people. So we decided to make it a percentage because our student numbers are increasing massively. What I would have liked to go for was 5% but we had to set it at 1% because nothing else was in anyway feasible, nothing would ever be decided. And that 1% can be reduced. We discussed making it a minimum of 1% and we decided that was not feasible either. So for that to be the situation, anything above 1% would be great, it doesn’t have to be a massive number just more than 1%. Because then once we have some engaged, more will join and we can slowly increase but at the moment, we don’t have anyone to start with.

DP: As you want to target the younger generations why don’t you try meeting at halls in a common room or something?

MJ: I also think a problem is now students are consumers. We believe the SU should meet all our requirements and we shouldn’t have to put anything in to it. We need to change that apathy to get them to work with us.

TA: Another thing I think is that people don’t know they can turn up to exec meetings, they think it’s for officers only. And what about live links like we have for hustings with twitter feeds, as that would solve the problem of travelling and placement. You would also know was watching and add them to quorum.

MG: You can even tell which students are watching and from where using the system which would give us information on which cohorts aren’t engaging.

RV: The only issue with things like a live link is the burden on our tech officers. We have a meeting every Tuesday which we would be expecting students to turn out to, set up the equipment, monitor it and put it away. And that is simply not sustainable, especially with the work those students already do.

MG: As of 8 weeks time, every computer screen in major lecture theatres links audio to portal and live steams it, which can be accessed by any student. Then we would just need to hold our meetings all in major lecture theatres.

1. **Appointment of the Fifth Lay Trustee – Reserved Business**
2. **Risk Register (Paper F) – Reserved Business**
3. **Financial Improvement Plan (Paper G) – Reserved Business**
4. **Reserved Business**

None.

1. **AOB**

None.