

ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on 25th April 2016 at 3.30pm via video link between the Magee, Belfast, Jordanstown and Coleraine Campuses.

PRESENT:-

Officers:

Colum Mackey President, Gillian Bell Sports President, Elliot Lyness VP Campaigns and Communications, Conan Meehan VP Belfast, Micky Quigg VP Magee, Emma Bonner VP Coleraine

Students:

Oisín Craig	B00658949
Johnston Crothers	B00666857
Kevin McStravock	B00631303
Mark Bell	B00564529
Stephen Ruddy	B00689379
Cait Ní Chianain	B00642684
Stephen Cole	B00643836
Niall Beatty	B00684513
James Gibson	B00697751
Vikki Lutton	B00610467
Danielle Roberts	B00601771
Bethlehem Negash	B00695491
Simana Ale	B00688641
Joy Goodall	B00596326
Ben Johnston	
Deborah Ferry	B00610433
Maria Donnelly	B00640117
Liam Mulvenna	B00611221
Ronan McAfee	

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Emmett Mullally (General Manager)
Avril Honan (Student Engagement Manager)

ITEM 1: QUORUM COUNT

The meeting did not have the minimum number of attendees necessary for the meeting to be quorate at the start time.

ALL DISCUSSIONS FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND NO DECISION IS BINDING UPON THE STUDENTS' UNION.

ITEM 2: REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Colum Mackey, UUSU President, provided a verbal report on behalf of the Trustee Board. He noted the following points:

Strategic Support Unit (SSU) Review

The SSU department of the national union NUS, carried out a review of UUSU in 2014/15. As a result of this several things have been actioned, including a review of the governance structures of UUSU and how the Trustee Board functions. This is a piece of ongoing work and a subcommittee the 'Governance Think Tank' has been created to oversee the review.

It was also suggested that an external piece of market research was carried out, and this is currently underway by the company Red Brick. Colum encouraged everyone to complete this; the aim is to have the findings inform the next UUSU strategic plan.

Mr Mackey also noted that the results of this survey may inform the UUSU presence within the new Belfast redevelopment. He explained at this point that it is still currently undecided what facilities UUSU will have: it may be that a commercial unit is operated by a third party, but branded as UUSU. Or UUSU may only have office and social space. Discussions with senior university management are ongoing in relation to this.

Job Evaluation for UUSU Staff

The Chair explained that the staff within UUSU are employed directly, and are separate from the University structures. As such, they have not been part of the job evaluation process and that this is now being undertaken by the Students' Union.

The outcome of this will be known in June 2016.

SUSS Pension Scheme

This is an historic pension scheme for UUSU staff, which has been closed since 2011, but as a contributing employer UUSU is still liable for a deficit in the account. This is an ongoing cost and risk for UUSU.

Charity Registration

The Chair noted that UUSU will become a charity within the next 12-16 months in line with recent legislation. The Trustee Board is also considering transferring the organisation to an incorporated association.

Full minutes of the meetings of the Trustee Board are available online if anyone wishes to review these.

Opened floor to questions:

What is the current University position on how an external company would be chosen and how controls on prices would be implemented?

The President replied that no decisions had been made in relation to this, but that a deadline of October 2016 had been set.

Why do the Trustees want to move to UUSU being an Incorporated Association?

The President explained that UUSU is currently an Unincorporated Association, which means that Trustees currently have personal liability for the organisation. Incorporating this would result in the liability being moved to the organisation as a whole, rather than the individuals.

ITEM 3: UUSU ACCOUNTS

The General Manager provided an overview of the UUSU Accounts paper.

Noted:

- There had been redundancy costs incurred which had not previously been budgeted for;
- The Jordanstown shop had been closed as it had been making a loss for a number of years;
- The Coleraine bar and catering unit moved into new premises, which resulted in costs and also staff restructure which resulted in a redundancy payment – these factors contributed to the loss in this area;
- As the President mentioned previously, the SUSS Pension scheme is non-negotiable and is a significant drain on the Unions block grant.

Questions were then taken from the floor:

How is the SU predicting a £10,000 profit this year?

The General Manager explained that the redundancies also saved money in longer term salaries and the cleaning contract had been

outsourced, which also saved money on staff salaries. Further, UUSU has benefited from a reduction in NUS affiliation fees – however this is due to stop this year.

Are any profits saved or re-invested?

These are placed into the reserves and used when needed for capital reinvestment. Also kept for any liabilities such as redundancies.

Why was the Coleraine catering unit closed if it was profitable?

The General Manager noted that this decision was not taken by UUSU: it was part of the move from the old premises: the University would not provide the space for a full catering outlet and restricted the commercial activity of UUSU.

ITEM 4: APPOINTMENT OF UUSU AUDITORS

The General Manager noted that the auditors RSM had been appointed, using the University procurement procedure.

This represented a saving of £8,000 on the previous providers.

ITEM 5: AFFILIATIONS OF UUSU

Noted that UUSU is currently affiliated to:

- NUS, and subsequently NUS-USI and USI
- NICVA

ITEM 6: OPEN QUESTIONS

The General Manager was asked to clarify the position of the Magee bar – will it be closing?

Noted that it had been closed since before Christmas and the members have been asked to recommend that it closes permanently, as it is making a loss. Further noted that as a club bar, it is separate to the Union and members are liable for these losses.

Mount Charles, who provide the University catering, have agreed to provide a bar service for key events during the year.

Could the Union have one-off licenses themselves, and make profit from this, rather than paying Mount Charles?

The General Manager noted that there is not a lot of profit to be made – but that an external provider might be worth exploring.

The President noted that the priority was to make sure it would be open in September for Freshers and at the moment Mount Charles were in the best position to provide this.

The VP Campaigns & Communications Officer was asked if he had followed up with an FOI request to the University in relation to their accounts and investment of endowment fund:

Elliott noted that this had been progressed and a paper was being tabled to the next University and Students' Union Forum.

A student expressed their concern at the recent controversy surrounding the NUS national conference and comments that were allegedly made by the NUS President Elect.

These concerns were noted and the member was advised to bring this to Student Council if he wished action to be taken.

No further questions were received and the President closed the meeting.