

University of St Andrews Students' Association

Minutes of the Students' Association Board Meeting

Held via MS Teams on 27th January 2021, 5:00 pm

Present: Debbie MacCallum (lay trustee, items 1-3 and 5-8 only), Avery Kitchens (SSC Senior Officer), Dan Marshall (Association President), Tom Groves (Association Director of Events and Services), Gavin Sandford (Association Director of Student Development and Activities, from item 2.1), Amy Gallacher (Association Director of Education), Emma Walsh (Association Director of Wellbeing), Andy Goor (University-appointed trustee), David Scott (lay trustee, Chair), Joe Horsnell (SRC Senior Officer), Clare Peddie (University-appointed trustee), Will MacFarlane (lay trustee, items 4 and 9-13 only)

In attendance by invitation: Iain Cupples (Secretary to Board/HR Manager), Jillian Cowan (Management Accountant/Deputy General Manager), Sophie Tyler (Athletic Union President), Chris Clarke (Operations Manager)

1. Chairperson's Business

1.1 Apologies for Absence

None.

1.2 Acceptance of Minutes of Students' Association Board Meeting of 9th December 2020

These were **approved**.

1.3 Matters Arising

- An update on discussions with Turcan Connell would be given under GNS business: see item 4.
- Iain Cupples (IC) had scheduled a meeting on 29/1/21 with the Clerk to the University Court regarding a possible extension to the term of one of the University-appointed trustees.
- Gavin Sandford (GS) had included an update on website security as part of the DoSDA report: see item 8.
- Other matters arising were covered under item 2, 3 and 5.

2. Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Business

2.1 Update from Finance & Risk Committee

- Latest Position vs Plan

There had been an abbreviated FAR meeting on 22/1/21: an unexpected staffing issue meant that no minutes or papers were available. Balances were looking relatively healthy as at the end of November. Jillian Cowan (JC) would be taking a proactive look at the budget going forward with the assistance of key management and trustees.

Action point: JC to convene group to take proactive look at budget for remainder of financial year 2020-21.

- Short term actions to manage costs

The use of furlough to save on staffing costs was agreed as appropriate but should be monitored to ensure effective operations including availability of timely and accurate management information to trustees.

Action point: JC, IC and CC to monitor use of furlough.

JC and Chris Clarke (CC) were making sure the risk register was accurate and would forward reports to trustees as soon as possible.

Action point: JC and CC to update trustees on risk register before next meeting.

3. COVID 19 Operations

3.1 Update from Board Working Group on Operational Plans

The management team had been active in adapting operations as government guidance had changed over the period since the last Board meeting. There had been a highly successful collaboration with the University to provide services to students still in St Andrews over the Christmas period. The building was now closed temporarily, with a skeleton staff working mainly from home, but space could be made available for Can-Do activities if required and services could be restarted if needed.

3.2 Plans and criteria for SA services as restrictions are eased

The need for scenario planning to reinstate services as and when restrictions made this possible was discussed. It was agreed that the management team including the sabbatical officers should set criteria for reopening services to students as soon as possible, with amendments if necessary (eg offering takeaway service). Trustees noted the need to balance financial responsibility with the duty to offer services to members. It was noted that some services, including student advocacy, could not be suspended while teaching was going on.

Action point: CC to undertake scenario planning to set criteria for service provision and report to next COVID-19 Operations Group.

3.3 Update on strategic options assessment

There would be a separate meeting restricted to trustees only on the 3rd February 2021 to discuss these options.

4. Governance, Nominations and Staffing Committee Business

4.1 Update from Governance, Nominations and Staffing Committee

Will MacFarlane (WMac) had met with Turcan Connell to discuss governance options. WMac briefly outlined all options discussed at that meeting and summarised the advice given, noting that Turcan Connell were happy to discuss these with any trustee who wanted further information.

The 'corporate trustee option' was advised to offer administrative simplicity though further advice was needed on the pensions issue before committing to this. The process would take around 3-4 weeks for drafting and 2-3 months once all advice was in place. Dan Marshall (DM) noted that any such change would need to go to University Court and OSCR for approval and the timing would need to account for this. DM also asked if a corporate trustee could own shares of any limited company set up by the Association – WMac said in principle this seemed likely but further advice on this point was advised.

Expenditure to cover further advice on pensions liabilities under the 'corporate trustee option' and any other associated fees was approved. WMac would draw up a proposed timetable incorporating the timing for approval by Court and OSCR.

Action point: WMac to draw up proposed timetable and undertake further research on 'corporate trustee option'.

5. General Manager's Business

5.1 Update from Management Team

CC was discussing the occupancy of the vacant retail unit with interested parties.

Action point: CC to progress discussions over vacant retail unit.

6. Association President's Business

6.1 Update from President

DM discussed estimates of numbers of students currently in St Andrews. The Association's relationship with the Rector's Committee was being reviewed and formalised with the twin aims of aligning activities and defining roles.

7. Director of Events and Services Business

7.1 Update from Director of Events & Services

Taken as read.

8. Director of Student Development and Activities Business

8.1 Update from Director of Student Development & Activities

Security concerns around the website had now been addressed. Further revision and development work was under way.

GS noted that fundraising for nominated charities had been reduced by up to 90% due to cancellation of events such as Race2 and Catwalk. The Charities Campaign were considering continuing support for these charities into 2021-22, rather than nominating new charities.

8.2 Update on position with Barron Theatre

GS updated trustees on the situation with the Barron Theatre in light of University plans to redevelop the area and direct student theatre activity into the Byre.

There was discussion of the present facilities for students at the Barron and the proposed alternative facilities at the Byre, particularly covering availability, storage, autonomy, and capacity. Debbie MacCallum (DMac) asked if there was any survey or other documentation to suggest the Barron was unsafe – CC responded that there was not. A quote had been obtained to address some known wiring issues, and various housekeeping/supervisory issues were being addressed before the closure due to COVID-19.

It was noted that the relevant student representative body, the Student Services Council, had passed a motion opposing the proposed rapid closure of the Byre and mandating sabbatical officers to write to the University expressing this opposition.

Trustees acknowledged that, while there had been flaws in how the decision had been communicated to students, the University had committed to a closure of the Barron. The focus now needed to be on ensuring the best outcome for student theatre in St Andrews. GS would lead a group to include CC aimed at agreeing transition arrangements, possibly including a written transition agreement.

Action point: GS to lead group agreeing transition arrangements from Barron to Byre.

9. Director of Director of Wellbeing Business

9.1 Update from Director of Wellbeing

Taken as read.

10. Director of Education Business

10.1 Update from Director of Education

Amy Gallacher (AG) said that work on the postgraduate academic representation research project was now in its final stages and noted the outstanding contributions of the two interns, Andrea Ritchie and Chase Greenfield, on this.

CP minuted thanks to AG and the School Presidents for input on the University's academic mitigation measures for academic year 2020-21, which had just been announced.

In relation to all of the sabbatical positions, and with student elections due shortly, Board noted the unprecedented challenges faced by this year's sabbaticals and that these would almost certainly continue to impact the next academic year. The critical importance of sabbaticals passing on their learning from their experiences this year was therefore emphasised.

Action point: sabbaticals to update handover documents with key lessons from this year.

11. Association Updates

11.1 SRC/SSC Updates

No business.

12. AOCB

DS informed the Board that DMac had resigned as a lay trustee with effect from the end of March, due to other commitments.

13. Date of Next Meeting

17 March 2021

ACTIONS

Ref	Description	Owner	Target Date & Status
270121.01	JC to convene group to take proactive look at budget for remainder of financial year 2020-21	JC	17/3/21
270121.02	JC, IC and CC to monitor use of furlough	JC/IC/CC	Ongoing
270121.03	JC and CC to update trustees on risk register before next meeting	JC/CC	17/3/21
270121.04	CC to undertake scenario planning to set criteria for service provision	CC	10/2/21
270121.05	WMac to draw up proposed timetable and undertake further research on 'corporate trustee option'	WMac	17/3/21
270121.06	GS to lead group agreeing transition arrangements from Barron to Byre	GS	Ongoing