Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Date: 26th February 2024

Time: 14.00pm – 17.40pm

Location: Barring Court, St Luke's Campus, University of Exeter

Membership:

Rhys Wallis (RW) – Societies and Employability Officer / Officer Trustee **Interim Chair of the Trustee Board**
Alex Martin (AM) – Student Trustee
Alex Stanley (AS) – Education Officer / Officer Trustee
David Craddock (DC) – External Trustee
Ella Trudgeon (ET) – Student Trustee
Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee
Julie Walkling (JW) – External Trustee and **Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board**
Margaret Laithwaite (ML) – External Trustee
Mia Robillard-Day (MRD) – Communities and Equality Officer / Officer Trustee
Nur Farah Meor Azlan (FMA) – Student Trustee
Pip Shaw (PS) – Student Living Officer / Officer Trustee
Reuben Sek (RS) – Student Trustee

Apologies:

Emma de Saram (EdS) – President / Officer Trustee and **Chair of the Trustee Board**
Agneta Ravindran Buvana (ARB) – Student Trustee
Tom Barrass (TB) – Head of Student Engagement

In Attendance:

Ali Chambers (AC) – CEO and Board Secretary
Cassie Thornton (CT) – Head of Marketing and Brand
Tony Reissner (TR) – Interim Head of Finance (online)
Eleanor Walker (EW) – Head of Organisational Development
Dani Alexander (DA) – Senior Coordinator, Board Clerk / Minute taker
Emily Jameson (EJ) – Campus Engagement Manager
Amy Holden (AH) – Insights and Influence Senior Manager
Charles Jones (CJ) - Observing
John Vickery (JV) – Project Manager, University of Exeter
Lucie Grando (LG) – Administrator, meeting support

MEETING MINUTES

1. **Welcome to Trustees and new trustee Charles Jones**
2. **Apologies for absence**
   Emma de Saram (EdS) – President / Officer Trustee
   Agneta Ravindran Buvana (ARB) – Student Trustee
   Tom Barrass (TB) – Head of Student Engagement
3. **Notification of Any Other Business**
   a. Sustainability workshop for Trustees - EdS
   b. Guild Advisory Board Processes - AM
4. **Notification of Any new Conflicts of Interest**
   No new conflicts of interest
5. **Notification or Any Conflicts for this meeting**
   No new conflicts of interest
6. **Minutes from the last meeting and action log**
   a. Clarify point in Officer Role Review/Student Representation Report
   b. Action for the CEO Appraisal to be Board – Board agree this process was covered in the CEO Pay and Performance Framework from April 2023. Board will follow this process
7. **Enhancing the student experience at St Luke's Campus**
   EJ/AH/JV/LG joined the meeting.
   a. Presentation on St Luke's Master Plan – John Vickery (JV)
   b. Presentation from the Campus Engagement – EJ/AH

John Vickery presented to the Board on the St Luke's Masterplan Framework. JV noted the confidentiality of this framework, and the scope of the plan being over a long term period of 75 years. Stakeholders involved in this project includes Exeter City council, local residents, local communities, Devon County Council, Exeter Students' Guild.

Trustees asked how the University will manage student study spaces such as the Library as the regeneration is carried out – JV confirmed the regeneration would be carried out in phases to create more space for staff and students. Trustees asked whether the Exeter Students' Guild would be given more space/facilities for staff and student spaces – JV responded saying this has been considered.

Emily Jameson and Amy Holden presented to the Board on Enhancing the Student Experience at St Luke's campus. EJ presented on what is going well on St Luke's campus, and what is not working well. EJ presented on the data gathered around the demographic of students on St Luke's campus, and the Guild Life Participation scores from September 2023 to January 2024 including how students are engaging, and comments on how students feel about the Guild on St Luke's, and the plan on how to enhance the student experience on St Luke's campus. There were 1321 St Luke's students who were a member of a society, 26 academic societies focused on

courses taught on St Luke's, and St Luke's students make up 16% of our student population.

Trustees asked about co-creating with St Luke's students, and how the Guild plan to hear from more St Luke's students. EJ has said there are several ways the Guild would like to engage including tapping in to University communications, and said more work will be done on this.

Trustees asked about student staff on St Luke's, and how the Guild plan to increase student staff numbers. EJ responded around how this would be achieved. Trustee wanted to see a journey of the St Luke's student, and where they are engagement and feeling a sense of belonging throughout the year. EJ agreed that more work can be done to understand St Luke's campus, and how/where students work on this campus, and elsewhere nearby including hospital buildings, coffee shops etc.

Trustees asked about Advisory services, and whether these services are covered on St Luke's. Trustees highlighted the difficulties Postgraduate students face, which may mean they need more support services. Trustees raised the issue of staffing at St Luke's Campus. EJ said we need to explore the staffing options at St Luke's, and how the Advice service could be more mobile to reach St Luke's students.

EJ, JV, LG and AH left the room.

8. CEO Report

AC presented the paper as read. AC welcomed Charles Jones to the Trustee Board. AC expressed the confidentiality of the report, and gave some more details on the Cornwall Campus, and an update on the University of Exeter. AC noted the risk register would be updated.

AC gave an update on a meeting with the Vice Chancellor, where Emma de Saram also attended. AC and EdS discussed Cost of Living, and how to deliver an excellent student experience to an increasingly diverse student body, and how the Guild can work with the University to achieve an excellent student experience for all students, and build this into the Guild Strategy and ensure the Guild is relevant.

Trustees discussed a sector leading students union strategy, and how to ensure this is student focussed and builds in delivering an excellent student experience for the current resources. Trustee discussed NUS Charities' involvement in a sector leading students union strategy.

Trustees discussed the risk register, and suggested a deep dive session for Trustees to be arranged.

ACTION: Deep dive into Risk Register for Trustees

Trustees noted the paper.

9. Student Experience Report

RW presented the paper as read. AS gave an update on his trip to Latvia, Estonia and Finland with Wonkhe, and how this would feed into the student representation review including ensuring students are always in the 'room' when having discussions with the University, and lobbying the University on Policy. Officer Trustees added verbal updates to the paper on recent developments related to the content. Trustees discussed what the Guild is doing to influences the University and delivering services. Trustees discussed setting principles ahead of time in influencing the university.

CT updated the Board on a recent meeting with a society in response to Devonshire House/ build facilities' accessibility.

Trustees noted the paper.

10. International Student Research

AH joined the meeting and presented to the board on the International Student Experience Research Project. AH updated the board on international student numbers which is 25% (University aim is 40%). AH showed the international student engagement with the Guild vs overall Guild engagement, and Social Impact Measures (KPIs). This research was gathered by feedback through surveys led by student staff. The research came up with a number of recommendations shared in the presentation including practical and local information, building community and meeting people, settling in and adapting to British culture, academic experience, representation and student voice, exclusion and discrimination. Trustees were asked for feedback on the data/research shared in the presentation.

Trustee praised the Insights Team on this research. Trustees asked for more detail on the point around discrimination. Trustees raised a point on international student demographic, and accessibility for students coming to the University.

Trustees asked to know more about where the Guild sits within international student experience meetings in the University. AC updated the board on the risks around presenting this information to the University, and ensuring the research is thorough to present to the University. Trustees discussed the role of the Guild in ensuring the University is meeting the needs of International Students, and ensuring the University is not jumping into solution mode, but instead gets to the route of any needs or issues faced by International Students.

The board noted the paper.

The meeting had a break

11. Reforecast

TR joined the meeting to present the reforecast paper as read. RW highlighted how the reforecast was presented to the Finance and Audit committee on the 15th February 2024, and this reforecast was recommended by FAC for final approval at Trustee Board.

TR updated the board as follows. The management accounts up to December 2023 showed a surplus of £155k. £79k in Finance, £21k in People and Culture, £42k in Advice, and £6k in Arts development projects which totalled £148k which represented the unspent budget up to the end of December 2023. The Guild Managers used actual figures from August to December and confirmed expenditure and phasing from January to July 2024. Whilst the original budgeted figures have not changed significantly for the remainder of the year, the Guild incorporated additional items totalling £113,830 for the wishlist. TR showed a summary from the papers on the wishlist expenditure. The Reforecast was then showing a surplus of £35,674, and TR gave a top level overview of the reforecast for 2023/2024.

The Board approved the Reforecast and wishlist.

12. Management Accounts

TR presented the Management Accounts to the Board. As of 31st January 2024 the Guiild reported a year to date surplus of £196k. This was a positive variance of £17.9k compared to the reforested budget of £178k. The year to date savings related mainly to unused contingency, and expenditure how due to be spent in February 2024. TR presented on each department, society balances (top 5 positive and negative balances as well as the Society General Fund and the EDI Fund).

ML updated the Board on these Management Accounts which were for December 2023 and January 2024. Balance sheet showed a large figure regarding the SUSS Pension scheme which gave the Guild a negative net asset. This would be cleared following the successful SUSS Pension scheme 'Pay up and Walk' project, which was a huge positive for the Guild.

The Board approved the Management Accounts.

13. SUSS Pension Project Update

AC updated the Board on the SUSS Pension scheme 'Pay up and Walk' project which has successfully been completed, pending a receipt. AC highlighted the estimated cost of legal and other fees as approximately £100k which would be split between the University and the Guild. AC will look into a way to celebrate this successful project. AC thanked the Guild Finance Team, Margaret Laithwaite and others involved during this process, and highlighted the risk that will be taken off of the Guild risk register, and the significance of this.

The Board noted the report.

14. Enhancing the profile of student leadership in the Guild – our comms approach

CT presented the paper as read, and highlighted the context of this paper, and how the paper was presented to the Compliance, Governance and Risk committee in February 2024, and received feedback in that committee which has been included in the report.

Trustees discussed the 1 social media account for Officers. Officers fed back on the success of the 1 Instagram account used by all Officers. Trustees raised the point of how some students will not have social media, and CT raised how this has been looked at some a more multi media approach, including bringing in movable screens. Trustees felt the Guild staff team could be more visible through a multimedia approach. Trustees discussed the Student Experience Framework and how that goes alongside the Guild Strategy to help all students to Love Exeter.

The Board noted the paper.

15. Finance and Audit Committee Update

ML gave an update to the Board on the Finance and Audit Committee (FAC) on the 15th February 2024 including SUSS, approving updated to the Expenses Policy, the purchase of a minibus, December Management accounts, an NUS VAT update, the University Block Grant and approach to inflation, and the Committee approved the reforecast for 2023-2024 for recommendation to the Board. ML highlighted the papers for approval including the Treatment of Restricted Funds, and the Student Staff Pay review.

Trustees discussed the Student Staff Pay review paper that had gone to the Finance and Audit Committee which was discussed at length in that meeting. Trustees discussed how Committees scrutinise papers and decisions at Committee level, and how these papers come to the Board for approval. The Governance Working group were going to be bringing this into the Committee structure review.

The Board were asked to approve the Student Staff Pay review paper – **approved**
The Board were asked to approve the Treatment of Restricted funds – **approved**

16. Compliance, Governance and Risk Committee Update

JW gave an update to the Board on the Compliance, Governance and Risk Committee (CGR) on the 8th February 2024, including Freedom of Speech, the AI Policy, Compliance dashboard, Enhancing the profile of student leadership paper, the Unison recognition agreement, the Guild employee engagement survey and the People and Culture Strategy.

EW updated the Board on the context of the Unison recognition agreement which had been in place since 2014, and was updated the agreement went to the CGR on the 8th February 2024 with agreement from the Unison Trade union rep.

The Board were asked to approve the AI Policy - **approved**

17. Governance Working Group

RW presented the paper as read. The Board is asked to approve the strategic direction of a 2-committee model for the Trustee Board under the proposal outlined in the paper. Trustees felt that EDI and Sustainability processes and principles should be embedded into the Committee structure in more detail. The Governance Working Group would be looking in to this in the terms of reference, cycle of business and the board training and development plan.

The Board approve the paper.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

18. Register of Interests
19. External Trustee Recruitment Update
20. Process for Student Trustee Recruitment
21. Budget timeline 2024-2025
22. Finance and Audit Committee minutes 15 February 2024
23. Compliance, Governance and Risk Committee minutes 8 February 2024
24. AI Policy - approved
25. Treatment of restricted funds - approved
26. Student Staff Pay - approved

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

27. Any Other Business

1. **Sustainability policy group kick off meeting - EdS**
   EdS requested an AOB. RW brought this forward to the Board in EdS's absence. EdS requested Trustees to show their interest in a attending a Sustainability policy group kick off meeting by emailing emma.desaram@exeterguild.com.
2. **Guild Advisory Board Processes - AM**
   AM brought forward a concern from the Guild Advisory Board to the Board for discussion. AM highlighted their personal connection to the student Advisory Board members who raised their concerns. The Guild Advisory Board raised concerns to AM around process of appointing trustees, and the Guild Advisory Board's involvement in this. Trustee Board asked for more information and more understanding of processes around how the Guild Advisory Board works alongside the Trustee Board, and a more

comprehensive report is needed to be presented to Trustee Board, including student involvement in the appointment of Trustees. Board noted general confusion and/or concerns around the nature of this report from the Guild Advisory Board, yet felt unable to effectively conclude discussions on this point without further information.AC echoed the concerns raised from the Guild Advisory Board, and referenced requesting a paper on the effectiveness and implementation of the Democracy Review.

ACTION: Trustees agreed they would like a Democracy Update to come to the next Trustee Board in April 2024.

28. **Feedback Form**
    Trustees were asked to complete the Board feedback form after the meeting.
29. **Date of the Next Meeting – 15 April 2024**
30. **End of meeting 17.40pm**
31. **Optional Trustees board effectiveness check-in (15 minutes) – Guild Staff left the room**

ACTION LOG

Action	**Date of action**	**Deadline**	**Responsible for action**
Update to board around the direction of travel and top level strategic plan for how the organisation will embed sustainability	13/2/23	July 2024	TB/EdS/PS /Trustees
Create top level principles around EDI for the new building within the Estates Strategy	12/04/23	2023-2024	People and Culture, and Operation Team
Survey stakeholder and partnerships plan to come to Board	04/12/23	April Trustee Board	SLT
Student priorities report to come to a future Trustee Board to update the board on progress	04/12/23	~~February~~ April Trustee Board	TB
Deep dive into Risk Register for Trustees	26/2/24	April Trustee Board	DA
Trustees agreed they would like a Democracy Update to come to the next Trustee Board in April 2024.	26/2/24	March CGR and April Trustee Board	AC/TB