

Scrutiny Panel Minutes

Present: Zach Barker-Williams (Panel Member), Amber Culley (Panel Member), Tom Jordan (Panel Member), Clara Martinelli (Panel Member)

In attendance: Oli Killeen (Democracy Coordinator, Note Taker), Lucy Gill (Student Voice Manager), Adam Sheridan (Director of Engagement)

The meeting commenced at 18.00

No	ITEM FOR DISCUSSION	QUESTIONS ASKED	ACTION
1	Commuter Students' Officer Report and Questions	<p>The Commuter Students' Officer's Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. He was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: How do you work with other Part-Time Officers in the Team? A: it can be quite difficult to work with the other PTOs on matters relating to commuter students, as not all of them will be commuters others aren't. I have been working most closely with the Mature Students' Officer and Postgraduate Officer, so there are conversations happening with them to engage more people.</p> <p>Q: How will you engage other Commuters with the work of the Guild? A: I have worked with the Mature Students Officer to put on a number of pizza socials that have been well attended as we are aware there is cross over between these groups.</p> <p>Q: Have you had much engagement with the University on the student experience of commuter students? A: This is important, but the first priority is to engage with the Guild. I attended the recent Vice-Chancellor's Question Time and asked the panel about the commuter student experience; this was followed up by the Academic Registrar who I am in the process of arranging a meeting with so we can discuss this further.</p> <p>Panel Comments: The Panel agree that good work has taken place so far, the Officer is clearly passionate about issues affecting commuter students, and is able to well articulate these issues to the panel. The Officer acknowledges that there is still work to do to benefit commuter students and this was welcome.</p>	Noted

2	Trans Students' Officer Report and Questions	<p>The Trans Students' Officer's Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. The TSO was not present at the Scrutiny Panel Meeting. The Panel asked some questions which the TSO was invited to respond to in writing.</p> <p>These questions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difficulties/challenges have you faced as the first Trans Students' Officer – there are continuing obstacles posed by University structures, how do you think these can be addressed? • Can you provide more details on the CAL welfare model – what is this and how is it progressing? • How is the University's admin system working – particularly in light of news about the new core? <p>A response is awaited.</p>	Noted
3	President Report and Questions	<p>It was noted that the President was on leave, and was not present for the meeting, Panel Members did receive a report in advance of the meeting, and RPR submitted a video update in his absence, with was played.</p> <p>The Panel agreed some questions, which the President was asked to respond to in writing. The questions are:</p> <p>Q: Your report mentioned a Democracy Review, how is this progressing and how would you intend to replace “Your Ideas” if this was a conclusion of the review?</p> <p>A: I only got approval to conduct the Democracy review this month from our trustee board, with the aim to have it finished and submitted by the end of April (so I will be living and breathing this). Currently your ideas is not functioning as once thought, whilst every student has the possibility to submit an idea, sadly, very few know how the process works or choose not to engage with it. We would be looking to move back into a parliament or council system, if the finding from the report back that transition. This would create the much needed debate that is lacking from your ideas and ensure every student is able to participate, whilst having key stakeholders who will be representatives to the council (i.e. student staff, liberation, hall reps etc.).</p> <p>Q: In relation to the additional work mentioned outside of mandates, Brexit is mentioned, but there is no written update. How is work on this progressing?</p> <p>A: I have been working with the university on ensuring students are taken into consideration in there Brexit planning. This includes the underwriting of Erasmus/year abroad fess for this year and next year, making sure that students are still able to enrich themselves from studying abroad and are not blocked by Brexit. I have lobbied the university to be in continual contact with students currently abroad to give them some reassurance. Whilst ensuring at the Guild we are putting out information and speaking to our contact in Government, Parliament and the NUS.</p>	Noted

		<p>Panel Comments:</p> <p>It is clear that there has been a good level of progress overall. There is a high level of commitment to areas of the manifesto and the President is active on social media, so updates are communicated regularly. There are some areas that could do with more detail, for example, it would be nice to have explained areas where the University could improve, where things haven't gone well and what could be improved.</p>	
4	Activities and Employability Report and Questions	<p>The AEOs Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. She was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: What do you think are the main challenges for you in your role? A: Some aspects of the role changed this year, I am still responsible for Student Groups and Volunteering, but have taken on issues of membership conduct and venues and commercial services from the RRO role. One aspect that has been a challenge is the amount of time it takes to proof Redbrick, and the additional responsibilities associated with this, which I wasn't necessarily aware of at the time, I am looking at working with the team to change some of the processes to make this easier.</p> <p>Q: Could you provide more detail about these changes? A: I have been working with Redbrick on a new process, which has been most recently about putting in contingency plans for if something goes wrong, as the process itself gives redbrick a lot more responsibility in terms of proofing many of their own articles without the Guild seeing them beforehand and we want to make sure we cover everything before we finalise it.</p> <p>Q: Can you provide more information about the Society Tiered Structure? A: This was a point on my manifesto. it will be called the Society Recognition Structure. It's designed to ensure a way of recognising the good work that Groups already do, but aren't aware of, and helping them to develop where needed. Working on the structure, all Groups should achieve Bronze easily as this is based entirely on completing audit requirements. There are a number of ways societies can achieve Silver and Gold, it can work across all Groups. Much of the feedback has been largely positive, and it will operate as a trial, so we will be able to fully evaluate its effectiveness.</p> <p>Q: How are you progressing with opening up room space on Satellite Sites? A: This is something I wanted to work on targeting drama students who already spend the most time on that campus. I asked students if they wanted it and almost everyone said they wouldn't use it, and due to this I didn't think it was beneficial to students to continue the work. It may have been feasible, but I chose based on feedback, not to continue with it.</p> <p>Q: How are you progressing with making the room booking process at the Guild easier?</p>	Noted

		<p>A: I have been working on the Room Bookings Policy – hopefully this will streamline the process. I have been hoping to meet with the University to see what the possibilities will be for allowing student groups to use University rooms. This meeting has not yet taken place.</p> <p>Q: What work is being done to ensure students can make the most out of the new Green Heart Space?</p> <p>A: Funding has been secured from the Graduation gown provider as an additional source of funding for students to use for activities on the Green Heart. This hasn't been hugely accessed yet, but it needs to be promoted more to students, which is being worked on.</p> <p>Panel Comments: Overall there has been a good level of progress, whilst the Panel would have liked to see more detail in some areas, there is some really good work highlighted. Clearly, the AEO is active in her role and this reflected by the work completed and the number of students worked with.</p>	
5	Education Officer Report and Questions	<p>The Education Officer Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. He was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: It's clear that you do a lot of work, most of this might not be clear to students – how are communicating this to the student body?</p> <p>A: I communicate this where I can, and have published a number of posts on the Guild website, but sometimes the information I am given is confidential, so it's not possible to tell students about some of it. I am aware that the role is very slow moving compared to the other Officer roles – so things don't happen as quickly as I would like.</p> <p>Q: How do you use the Student Rep System to consult with students?</p> <p>A: At the moment this doesn't happen as much as I would. This can also be quite difficult as the Reps within the System have different functions and there is often little interaction with Reps at different levels, this is something that may change with the Rep System Review.</p> <p>Q: What degree of influence do you have over the University when getting things done?</p> <p>A: It can be difficult for me to have direct involvement in the changes that the University makes, as these can happen over a long period. My role is to shape the priorities of the changes. For example, with reference to timetabling changes, I have worked to ensure that Wednesday afternoons are free for Postgraduates as well as Undergraduates.</p> <p>Q: You've spoken about reviews a lot, specifically the Rep Review, how is the progressing, what is the end goal of this review?</p> <p>A: This process is ongoing, so the precise outcomes aren't known yet. The Goal is to make sure that there is a sufficient level of support for student reps, ensuring the processes are consistent</p>	Noted

		<p>across all courses and schools across the campus. I want to make sure the Guild and the University can make use of them more to consult with students, which as mentioned, is not something that happens at the moment.</p> <p>Q: Is there scope to utilise the Guild more in your role? A: I find that it can be quite difficult for me to do this, as I see it as my role to hold the University for account, which is different from all of the other roles, in that my role isn't necessarily Guild facing.</p> <p>Panel Comments: Progress has been made against objectives, however the Panel wondered if students were aware of most of the changes. The Panel wondered if there could be a little more communication about successes. The Panel acknowledges that it can be difficult for this to happen as the role is less Guild-facing than the other Officer roles.</p>	
6	International Officer Report and Questions	<p>The International Officer Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. She was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: How will you focus your role in the future? A: This year I have had to take a more general approach – attending lots of meetings with many people. My role is a new Full-Time Role, so I have had to spend time building those links with the University. Next year, I want to make sure I have regular meetings with University staff. I think that international student mental health is a key priority for me – I want to work to shape support available to international students – as well as international student access rates to university as this can be a challenge.</p> <p>Q: You've spoken about a Global Alumni network, what is this and how would you think it would work? A: I hope that this will be similar to the UK network – hoping to build a platform for international students in the UK – where students can get advice and support from other students who have studied in the UK. It may also be useful for UK students to use who may want to work in other parts of the world, and can build a network of support to help them do that.</p> <p>Q: You've spoken a lot about feedback you have been gathering from students, what kind of feedback do you mean, and what have been the impacts of this? A: Gathering feedback is important to make change. I currently sit on the Motability Working Group and found out that students felt they didn't have enough information about the countries they were going to prior to going abroad, support in country and aftercare. I worked with the Student Exchange Society to get some feedback and awareness of these issues and found there was a need to gather information, so have worked on some forms which are given to students to allow them to provide information when they have returned which can be shared with outgoing students.</p>	Noted

		<p>Panel Comments:</p> <p>There has been lots of positive work to build connections with the University. This is appreciated as there had previously been no base to work from. The International Officer is very proactive, and passionate about issues affecting international students. There is lots of involvement in lots of projects, which means that some of the detail is lacking. We hope that the Officer can provide more focus for the role in future.</p>	
7	Sports Officer Report and Questions	<p>The Sports Officer Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. He was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: In your report, you wrote about accessible sport sessions, what work did you do on this?</p> <p>A: I worked with UBSport to hold a "Barriers in Sport" Workshop. This was designed to understand what they might be and how these could be mitigated. Some of the feedback received was that people felt unsafe going home from the Sports Centre at Night, so information was put out about keeping safe. We have worked to make sure that resources are accessible in different formats, and the Sports Centre held sessions like Sitting Yoga.</p> <p>Q: You have mentioned your work with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Society, what other mental health related societies or groups have you worked with?</p> <p>A: I worked with Beat on the Sock it to eating disorders campaign. I did my best to ensure why clubs knew it was important, as this didn't happen previously and I thought it meant the messaging got a little lost.</p> <p>Q: Can you outline the work you did regarding initiations this year?</p> <p>A: I wanted to do something to tackle this, so worked with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Society to put together an anonymous survey, as there can be reluctance to come forward, which received over 200 responses, both positive and negative. Following some feedback about the Hockey Team, UBSport conducted an investigation, which led to them being banned from Sports Night. Action on this has been taken up by BUCS who will ban whole teams from competitions if they feel it necessary.</p> <p>Q: How can you ensure the work you've done on things related to initiations continues next year?</p> <p>A: This work will feed into Club Development Meetings with me and the incoming Sports Officer during the handover period. I am working on scenarios and case studies for use at Committee Training, and this will be written into the University Conduct Policy.</p> <p>Panel Comments:</p> <p>Overall there is some really positive work here; the Sports Officer should be commended. There is a commitment to the sport community on campus. There has been a real effort to work across different groups to achieve manifesto points, which is welcome. It is appreciated that there is acknowledgement of the challenges</p>	Noted

		faced, but steps have been taken to mitigate these as much as possible.	
8	Welfare and Community Officer Report and Questions	<p>The Welfare and Community Officer Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by the Panel. She was invited to provide a brief introduction to her role and what she has been working on. The Panel then asked a number of questions.</p> <p>Q: You spoke about the Mental Health Strategy – can you provide more information about this? A: Following Conversations with the University, the mental health strategy I had been working on has become a wider student wellbeing strategy which we hope will give it a wider focus by the University as a whole. Work on this strategy has involved feedback on social media and work with Student Minds. It will now include mental health as a key strand, but will also include work on accommodation, food – including meal plan – and sport and activity.</p> <p>Q: Tenancy rating services have been talked about for a while – how is this going? A: I have been working with Marks out of Tenancy, to launch a landlord rating platform – this is hopefully going to be launching next term. I have been working with other Student Unions who have similar platforms, and seeing how we can implement this in our context. I have also been working with the company to ensure that we can communicate this effectively.</p> <p>Q: What conversations have been taking place about CCTV in Selly Oak? A: There are conversations taking place about who will fund the cameras. This is not going to be a one-time cost, there are additional costs relating to upkeep and monitoring of the systems, so it has not been decided yet how this might be funded and who would be responsible for this funding.</p> <p>Q: What involvement do you have with the new Blue Line Specials? A: I have limited day to day involvement with this. There are 5 overall covering differing areas, and are funded by the University rather than the Guild. I do however; meet regularly with the Campus Police Officer, who works with them closely.</p> <p>Q: Will you be discussing the mental health strategy with the local GP Practices in the area? A: They are being talked to as part of a wider list of stakeholders in the area who will have input into the strategy.</p> <p>Panel Comments: There has good progress on the Meal Plan, work on this is overdue. There is lots of work and projects that has not been mentioned in the report, there does seem to be a lot of work happening behind the scenes. Overall, the Panel would like more detail.</p>	Noted
9	AOB	None was noted	Noted

The Chair closed the meeting at 20.00
Date of next meeting: TBC