



The Big RUSU Update - Minutes **(RUSU's Annual General Meeting)**

Tuesday 21st January 2020

Present: Molli Cleaver, President (Chair)
Zeid Sharif (Diversity Officer)
Gemma King (Welfare Officer)
Fifi Bangham (Education Officer)
Daisy O'Connor (Activities Officer)

In Attendance: Nicole Fox
(Deputy Chief Executive)

Welcome & Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone and outlined the format of the meeting, including explaining the voting process. Approximately 130 students were present.

Ratification of ASM 2019 Minutes

The minutes were taken as read and there were no questions.

These were approved by majority with no rejections or abstentions.

Approval of 2018/19 Audited accounts

Nicole Fox, Deputy Chief Executive, provided a summary of the financial accounts.

Reading University Students' Union Financial Statements, dated 31 July 2019, include the details of the Officer, Student and External Trustees throughout the financial year. The Trustee Report from page 3 onwards is prepared to meet the requirements for a director's report and accounts for Companies Act purposes. This report highlights the Structure, Governance and Management of RUSU and highlight some of the activities from the previous year.

The accounts are prepared by our Auditors, Knox Cropper. RUSU's financial year covered in this set of accounts is from 1 August 2018 until 31 July 2019. A team of auditors come to RUSU for a couple of weeks at the end of the summer vacation. They review the income and expenditure details and then prepare these accounts. They presented the findings of their audit and the year end accounts at the Trustee Board on 10 December 2019. The accounts have been online on the RUSU website since before the Christmas vacation.

Some of the highlights of the previous financial year include;

This year RUSU made an overall consolidated surplus of £230k which is a reduction on the previous year but ahead of the budgeted surplus.

Student Social Venues and Events which includes entertainments, 3sixty, Café Mondial, Monterey, Mojos, Catering and Events such as the Summer Ball saw a reduction in both income and surplus and contributed £82k compared with £202k the previous year. This is still a good result for an area that is in decline nationally.

The income granted to the Student Activity groups, which include sports, societies, RAG, volunteering and student media increased again to £247k from £232k.

The Business Development Area which focuses on generating new income from the existing RUSU facilities increased its income level to £299k from £272k the previous year and produced an overall surplus of £50k

Also, the support and cost for elected representatives such as Course Reps and School Reps increased and the Advice Service team expanded to offer increased support for students with financial, academic and housing issues.

In addition to the main charity RUSU also owns and runs 2 separate limited companies which include the Little Learners Nursery and RUSU Trading Ltd which operates any non-student events.

The Nursery, in line with most other providers, had a difficult financial year as it tried to balance the demand for places, government under funding and a difficult employment market. In this challenging environment the nursery made a loss of £57k compared to a surplus of £17k in the previous year. This was a combination of lower income than anticipated and higher permanent staff costs than the previous year. This remains a difficult industry in which to operate. A combination of nationally underfunded free nursery places initiative and the fact that parents are increasingly limiting the number of sessions they are contracted to means that it is more difficult for independent nurseries to remain economically viable. During the year the services of a specialist nursery consultant were utilised to make recommendations for improvement. The nursery management team are implementing a combination of these recommendations such as a fee review and a change to the way the rooms are operating to support the movement of children through the different age group rooms in the setting. As Little Learners is a separate limited company it is charged at full cost for support service provided by the charity and this year the figure was £57k compared to £64k in the previous year. The Trustees of RUSU are aware that the nursery needs to be financially viable.

Overall RUSU and its associated companies had a good financial year which meant an increase in overall reserves to £1.5m. These reserves are reviewed by the Finance Committee and each year money is designated to support a number of projects such as the recent redevelopment of 3sixty and proposed future redevelopments.

Approval of Affiliation Costs

RUSU is affiliated to the following external organisations:

British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS): £9,084.

National Union of Students (NUS) and NUS Services Limited (NUSL): £48,008

There were no questions and the affiliation costs were approved by majority, with no votes against or abstentions.

Appointment of Auditors

Nicole Fox: Full audit tender took place in 2015 and the 2016 ASM agreed to the appointment of Knox Cropper. The next review is due to take place in 2021 so on that basis we are continuing to use Knox Cropper to audit our year end accounts.

Student Representation Showcase

Fifi Bangham, Education Officer:

As your full time officer team, we are here today as part of a team of over 1400 reps, representing you in all areas of your university life, from making your sure your best interests are being represented academically, to sports, societies, and volunteering opportunities.

We held our annual Autumn elections in October, to elect our undergraduate and postgraduate course reps, postgraduate school reps, and postgraduate part time officers. We had 1138 voters in these elections- with 382 post grad voters, and 1056 under grad voters.

Many reps are elected through our elections, but where there is a vacant position, we ask staff within schools to appoint reps to the positions. This is referred to as co-opting.

In the course rep elections, we elected 209 undergraduate reps, and co-opted 126. We elected 88 postgraduate reps, and co-opted 22.

We currently have 34 school reps, filling all available positions. We have 30 elected school reps and 4 co-opted school reps.

We have 9 elected Part time officers in position currently, with one vacancy. The PTOs are Running campaigns including Breaking the silence campaign, LGBT history month, and the LGBT sport campaign

Change It is the RUSU online democracy platform. It is a space where any student can submit an idea of anything they would like to change at the university. This academic year so far, we have had over 44 ideas submitted to Change It! The deadline for this terms ideas is midnight tonight, so make sure you submit your ideas! However, any ideas submitted after midnight tonight will just be carried over to the next student voice, so please feel free to submit an idea at any time. Some examples of previous ideas that have been passed include: self defence classes, plug sockets in agriculture, union ticket resale option, and banning plastic straws on campus.

We currently have 37 JCR reps across 10 Halls supporting 5000 students. Examples of events the JCRs have organised include the Christmas formals, puppy days, international students games nights and welfare Wednesdays.

We have 1021 committee members representing sports, societies and volunteering groups

This year we have introduced ROSiE- the Rep online student impact evaluation. This a Feedback platform open to all students, but specifically designed to be used by reps. Over 250 Student Reps were trained to use ROSIE in Oct and Nov 2019. We are really pleased that 293 students have submitted feedback on ROSIE in the first two months of it being launched. We have received 269 comments about things at Reading that student felt weren't working well, and 384 comments about things at Reading that student felt were working well. 72 ideas have been submitted for ways things could be improved at Reading. The feedback has also been used in projects looking at feedback on assessments and on study space on campus.

Highlights of the 2018/19 Academic Year

A video featuring key initiatives from this academic year was presented. This can be viewed on the RUSU Youtube channel at https://youtu.be/gOwAL25aq_I.

Highlights were presented in RUSU's impact report, with copies made available in the meeting and online. There were no questions.

A selection of these highlights were presented through the use of an interactive quiz. The answers for each quiz question were embellished with further information relating to the question content, as follows;

Question: How many students were involved in student activities? Answer: 7263

Daisy O'Connor: With nearly 200 sports, societies, media streams and volunteering opportunities it is amazing to see so many students getting involved with student activities. Of course, the highlight of our year is to be able to celebrate all your achievements at our annual awards, to which nominations will be opening soon! None of this would be possible without the students on committees that essentially keep the activity running. So thank you to the 420 sport committee members, 792 societies and media committee members, 50 volunteering committee members and 77 JCR committee members.

Question: How many VK's were sold at Union nights? Answer: 149,951

Molli Cleaver: Out of the 87,140 students who attended Wednesday or Saturday Unions impressive is the wrong word for how many VK's you consumed, it is actually quite terrifying! None of this would be possible without our permanent staff but especially our 124 student staff team whose dedication allows these nights to run.

Question: Which of these Change it! ideas are false? Answer: Campaign for graduation to be free for students

Molli Cleaver: With 37 submitted ideas, 130 attendees to Student Voice and 2095 votes cast, it was a busy year for democracy. Free graduation is a perfect example of an actual idea that fell 2 votes short of being passed. The ideas students come up with are fantastic but unless 200 votes are cast, the ideas can't be tasked to an Officer. It is so important to have your voice heard so I'd encourage you to go and have a look at what ideas students have submitted and come along to Student Voice to hear more.

Question: How many students were seen by our advice team? Answer: 780

Gemma King: We have a free, confidential, non-judgmental, independent and non-discriminatory advice service here in RUSU for all your academic issues, housing problems and money matters. To help you understand the incredible work they do, after seeing the advice service, students were better off by £125,692. You are never alone at University and the advice service is always available in term time for any help you might need, just head to the RUSU website or reception for more information and support.

Question: How many new cultural celebrations were held in RUSU? Answer: 7

Zeid Sharif: There were many wins from the full time Officers including new cultural celebrations held in RUSU such as Holi, Diwali and Chinese New Year!

My role as Diversity Officer doesn't just focus on cultural issues; it has also allowed me to focus on projects that support minority groups and that help to enhance the student experience. We had another big win for our Free Periods Campaign where we are offering students free sanitary products. We also hosted the first year of the Good Lad training as part of the I heart consent campaign.

Question: How much money did RAG raise? Answer: £54,844.87

Daisy O'Connor: This was split with £39,957.62 from International challenges and £14,887.25 from fundraising on campus and in the community. Part of this money also went to RAGs two chosen charities: Student Mind, the leading charity for student mental health and the Red Balloon Learning Centre, a school in Reading for children who have suffered from severe bullying and similar issues. But this was not achieved without the constant hard

work of the committee and the involvement from all of you which included 268 students involved in RAG's naked calendar.

Question: How many drinks were sold at Summer Ball? Answer: 28,917

Molli Cleaver: Summer Ball is by far the biggest event of the year with 4,500 students attending, over £69,000 spent at the bar and nearly £50,000 spent on acts. Tickets sell out extremely fast so if you'd like to attend Summer Ball on June 13th keep an eye out as tickets get released on the 19th March.

Question: Which of these PTO campaigns is false? Answer: Decolonise the curriculum

Zeid Sharif: The part-time Officers represent and liberate the rights of students who are underrepresented or discriminated against. They work closely with the inclusivity coordinator and myself over the year and are given the opportunity to run campaigns which were listed above.

One of the most successful campaigns has been Let me in, pee, park where RUSU's Disabled Students' Officer spent time collecting feedback from students about the accessibility of buildings and spaces on campus. Since that point, campus accessibility has been raised at University meetings and changes have been made, such as increasing the disability and inclusivity training for the university help desk, and the university have contracted a company to carry out an audit to collect feedback on accessibility of their buildings.

Decolonise the curriculum is an idea Fifi and I have spoken about and we are hoping to run a campaign in the next term.

Question: How many positions were available in the UG and PG academic rep elections? Answer: 585

Fifi Bangham: Representation is at the heart of RUSU and gives you the opportunity to enhance your own academic experience whilst at Reading. We are proud of the diversity of people within these roles with 11 out of 13 PG school reps being International students and creating a new record of 406 voters for our 57 PG positions.

Question: How many votes were counted in the main elections? Answer: 17,587

Fifi Bangham: Representation goes beyond education; as you may know nominations are currently open until the 7th February for FTO, PTO, Senior Reps and Student Trustees. Last year we saw 63 students running for these roles and in our first ever 3-day voting period, 3,309 students voted with 17,587 votes cast in total. Overall, 1,792 students were elected by you to represent your interests throughout the year.

Wellbeing update

Gemma King, RUSU Welfare Officer, presented a timeline of welfare activities facilitated by RUSU this year, including a summary of significant highlights.

An open 'post it note' discussion was then facilitated, addressing four key questions relating to feedback around RUSU's initiatives:

1. What were you aware of and how can we communicate events more effectively?
2. What events/initiatives did you like?

3. What are we missing?
4. Any other feedback or questions

The responses from this wellbeing update will be reviewed and an article relating to this published on the RUSU website.

Full-time Officer Team's Plans for the future 2019-20

A video was shown outlining work undertaken this year and plans for the rest of the year relating to their role. This is available online on the RUSU Youtube channel, at <https://youtu.be/kxpfk4goFtU>.

This video covered a variety of the diverse initiatives RUSU's Officers have undertaken, or plan to complete, by the end of their time in office, including;

- Voting stations
- Make Your Mark (sustainability campaign)
- Touch screen boards
- Room booking system
- Publicising careers support
- Glass pods
- Mojos renovation
- New merchandise options
- University talks platform (RED talks)
- Good Lad initiative
- Sporting Excellence Scholarship
- 3G pitch
- Bike maintenance, running routes, storage at Sports Park
- Buddy Scheme
- Olio
- Streamline funding streams for clubs
- Knights Pride (sporting inclusivity campaign)
- Focus on Feedback (feedback quality campaign)
- You're Excellent (RUSU Excellence awards scheme for students to provide positive recognition to staff)
- Study space around campus
- 1in4 (Mental Health campaign)
- Housing rating scheme
- Drugs Alcohol Action Partnership
- Lake Safety working group
- Walking bus after Union
- Catering (RUSU and University)
- Appointments – Dean of Diversity, Investment Manager
- Support You (Trans Awareness workshop)
- Holiday Week and Cultural Show
- LGBT History Month
- London Road drop-in sessions

One question was asked, relating to a food sharing promotion initiative.

Daisy O'Connor (Activities Officer): Olio is an app which allows outlets to upload surplus food for people to come and collect. Lots of cafes use this, including well-known chains. Our venues now use this, so if you download the app you'll be able to see when there's free food available.

RUSU Elections 2020

Fifi Bangham provided an overview of roles available and key dates relating to RUSU's main elections 2020.

Any Other Business (AOB)

RUSU's Officers highlighted notable upcoming events or schemes of relevance to the student body, including the 'Buddy Scheme', 'BAME matters', 'Annual Rep Conference', 'Student Voice' and 'Social Impact Week'.

Molli Cleaver (RUSU President) also informed students of Ryan Bird, RUSU's newly appointed incoming chief executive from February 2020 onwards.

A prize draw was then held.

Close of Meeting

Chair closed the meeting, thanking all for their attendance.