Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) held in the OU HR Training and Development Centre, Wilson Building, OU Campus, Milton Keynes 29 September 2014.

PRESENT

Ruth Tudor, President (Chair)
Peter Cowan, V P Educational Support & Research (4th Officer Trustee)
Jonathan Fudge (External Trustee)
David Humble, V P Administration
Andrew Hulme (External Trustee)
Nik Morris, Deputy President
Al Thomas (Student Trustee)

IN ATTENDANCE:
Rob Avann, General Manager (Secretary)
Leanne Quainton, Executive Assistant (Minutes)
Anna Vickerson, Communications Officer (part)

1. WELCOME

1.1 The President welcomed Trustees to the first face to face meeting of the new term. Introductions were given for the benefit of the two new External Trustees.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Lucy Beech, S A R London & the South East (Non-Officer Trustee)
Anna Jenkins (Student Trustee)
Carey Shaw, OU Council Member (Non-Officer Trustee)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Minutes (BoT 7/14/M) from the July meeting were approved.

4. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER/SECRETARY

4.1 The General Manager outlined the contents of the paper advising that the purpose of this item was to pick up any matters that had been dealt with online since the last meeting or for information purposes.

4.2 The U S S Consultation is still receiving feedback even though the closing date has passed. The OU finally shared their response and we are now awaiting the final details of the proposals and the employee consultation that is due next year. The Unions are preparing for unsatisfactory changes which may result in action taken further down the line.
4.3 Andrew expressed continued concern in relation to the bank mandate although he was happy to pass the proposal through so as not to hold up the process. The General Manager urged him to speak with Head of Resources who will go through the process in more detail.

4.4 Trustees enquired about the arrangements for the General Manager’s forthcoming paternity leave. The General Manager advised that the 4 Senior Staff will continue to manage their own areas of work and will jointly work together to make any decisions outside of that. In relation to any passing matters he had full confidence that the senior staff would be capable to manage. He could be contactable in the event of an emergency and senior OU colleagues had been also informed of the impending paternity leave.

4.5 It was noted that the Nightline Project will be monitored on an ongoing basis but it will be in the New Year after 6 months in operation that the first full evaluation will take place.

4.6 The remainder of the report was noted without comment.

5. ANY ITEMS FROM THE C E C MEETING FOR REPORT OR ENDORSEMENT

5.1 None not already covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

6. APPROVAL OF THE 2014-15 OUSA BUDGET

6.1 The BoT had previously agreed the outline budget. The C E C had now agreed the detailed version which was now being brought to the BoT for final approval.

6.2 V P Administration summarised the report advising that there had been a bigger underspend in the last financial year than expected which does not benefit OUSA accumulating such reserves because it has an impact on the subvention negotiations with the OU. The budget therefore included a discretionary spending fund to be spent this year on special projects which will help OUSA and also reduce the amount to reach the target reserve.

6.3 V P Administration clarified a number of queries raised by Trustees including how the subvention was calculated, whether there was an expectation of changes in student numbers and whether there was likely to be any significant reductions next year.

6.4 It was noted that OUSA will be going out to tender next year its external auditor.

6.5. RESOLUTION: The 2014-15 budget was approved.

7. OUSA BRANDING PROJECT

7.1 Anna Vickerson, Communications Officer, presented her paper on the proposed OUSA branding project. She ran through the background for the need for OUSA to refresh our brand and the work taken in identifying a suitable designer. In addition to the cost to work up the design and create the new logo and brand, Anna requested
additional funding to allow for the purchase of publicity material to further promote OUSA including pop-up banners and other advertising material for degree ceremonies, consultative meetings and other events.

7.2 Trustees asked about evaluating the new brand and if the changes could be measured. Anna explained that we do hold baseline figures for engagement through Conference statistics, website click-throughs and social media so we should be able to monitor any increase in activity once the brand is launched. Trustees will be kept informed of this evaluation.

7.3 The next stage will be working with the design team to come up with a robust project plan and to take a final proposal to the next CEC in November. Work is hoped to be completed for a February 2015 launch in time for Freshers week and the start of the Graduation season.

7.4 **RESOLUTION:** Budget of £15,000 agreed for the OUSA Branding Project.

8 **APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE BYE-LAWS AND PRINCIPLES OF APPOINTMENT**

8.1 The paper had been considered by the CEC prior to being put before the BoT for amendments and approval.

8.2 Amendments agreed were;

Bye-Laws:
14.2.4 – Under General Manager add (non-voting)
14.5.4 – Change to ‘That recommendation will be presented to the CEC and BoT for consideration and to allow individual comments to be submitted to the Appointments Committees (though the Chair) before…..
14.2.7 – add that Chair will have casting vote
14.8 – Senate Reference Group – typo – should be 14.8 not 14.7
14.8.3 – It is unclear for Assemblies that they can appoint for 2 years. Do timescales need to be made clearer?

Principles of Appointment:
2. Reword so it doesn’t sound like we’re appointing 2 new members to 1 committee
13. Change to ‘If any member of the CEC or BoT has queries about an individual applicant they will be given the opportunity to address these directly with the Chair prior to the list of recommended applicants being considered by the Board of Trustees.’

8.2 The President highlighted that the BoT needs to elect 1 Trustee to sit on the Appointments Committee but as some members were absent this process will be carried out online.

8.3 **RESOLVED:** Subject to the amendments agreed, the Appointments Committee Bye-Laws and Principles of Appointment were duly approved.

9. **WEBSTORE**
9.1 The General Manager introduced the paper explaining that the current webstore is not fit for purpose, both in aesthetic appeal and functionality for both the staff maintaining it and students purchasing from it. It is thought that the bespoke webstore will cost approx. £30,000 and will follow the new OUSA brand to fully compliment the new OSL merchandise which is currently being added.

9.2 It was noted that with the improvements both to the store and the merchandise that OSL could see an increase in sales. The changes will need to be monitored and evaluated once in place although a lot of other factors could influence this i.e. brand awareness and advertising at OUSA events.

9.3 Trustees agreed that a new webstore was well overdue and that it should be implemented as soon as possible. It was agreed that the OU's IT should be pushed to get this done efficiently.

9.4 RESOLVED: That OUSA provide the necessary funds to OSL as a loan, to be paid back within 1 year.

10. COMMUNICATIONS INTERN RECRUITMENT

10.1 The General Manager introduced his paper about the proposed recruitment of a Communications Intern as agreed as part of the staff restructure. David McCann, Head of Communications and Technology had included background information and terms of employment which included the three key projects the intern would primarily be focusing on. The paper detailed the required recruitment budget along with the proposed timescales advising that the starting date would be January 2015. It was clarified that the first year intern role would be on a 9 month basis but it would be a permanently established role, with post-holders changing from year to year.

10.2 Peter asked whether OUSA will be offering a certificate of some kind once the intern comes to the end of their internship to aid them in future employment. The General Manager confirmed that OUSA would provide a reference and would aim to improve the interns employability skills.

10.3 RESOLVED: The terms of employment, the recommendation of an initial 9 months appointment and recruitment budget were approved.

11. STAFFING MATTERS

11.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and therefore has been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

12. FINANCIAL MATTERS

12.1 The Trustees received the information provided at Appendices A, B and C. V P Administration advised that there needs to be more financial controls throughout the year and the need for proper accruals based reporting. It was noted that the audit meeting is scheduled for 5 December 2015.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
13.1 The Deputy President raised a query passed onto her by V P Student Support after being approached by a company called BResilliant about a Community App created for disabled students, asking for the OU’s involvement. The Company is a Social Enterprise, therefore will have implications around legalities over advertising.

13.2 **ACTION: Deputy President to initiate a discussion in the Forums to enable Trustees to make a decision over whether to participate in the scheme.**

13.3 The Deputy President felt that concern needed to be raised with the BoT over the lack of movement by the OU in progressing with the improvements to the V L E following it being promised as a priority over 9 months ago. The issues with StudentHome in the previous week was also raised having had 2 major outages. The Trustees will monitor the situation as discussions continue with the OU.

14. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT/FUTURE MEETINGS

The C E C meetings for 2014-16 had been confirmed therefore it was suggested and agreed that the next face-to-face meetings of the Board will be:

Monday 30 March 2015
Monday 6 July 2015.

Discussions will continue online in the meantime.