

**Newcastle University Students’ Union/ Newcastle University Partnership Committee**

**COUNCIL REPORT**

**February 2024**

**Summary**

This paper summarises the discussions held between the Students’ Union and Newcastle University at the first three meetings of Partnership Committee for the academic year 23/24. The regular meetings were held on 16 October 2023 and 24 January 2024 an extraordinary meeting also took place on 4 September 2023 to specifically discuss the NUSU franchise agreement with Wetherspoons and building refurbishments. A further two meetings will be held during the academic year.

1. **Updated Terms of Reference**

Heid Mottram’s term as Chair of Partnership Committee had ended and Pat Ritchie had been appointed to the role of Chair.

The Terms of Reference had been amended to include an update relating to NUSU’s status on NUS affiliation.

1. **NUSU Budget and Management Accounts**

Lindsey Lockey, NUSU Chief Executive, reported on the 2023/4 Q1 forecast.

1. The budget had been set to include a £12k surplus based on expected income from the Wetherspoons franchise.
2. The management accounts at the end of November 23 showed that NUSU were £120k below the expected position. A similar trajectory expected. This position is largely due to lower than expected bar income, freshers’ income and marketing income.
3. Contributing factors include: a delayed opening to the new bar, power issues which have reduced services and have not been resolved, a lack of comparable data to aid planning of staffing levels, ratio of food/drink sales estimates being difficult to assess and training costs.
4. The NUSU trading account is showing a positive income and growth from last year despite not being able to offer hot food sales due to the power issues in the building.
5. A reforecast budget will be submitted to the Trustee Board and then to the next meeting of Partnership Committee. It is likely that a request to approve a forecasted deficit will be made. Interim measures to control costs include a recruitment freeze and training restrictions.
6. **Sport Strategic Plan**

The recommendations of the sport review were shared with Partnership Committee and it was agreed that a new Sports and Active Wellbeing Governance Group would report to Partnership Committee to oversee a more student-led approach to sport, improved governance and greater collaboration between the partnership especially relating to health and safety in sport.

1. **President’s Report**

The NUSU President gave an update on the wide-ranging activities and campaigns that the Sabbatical Officers were working on:

1. A student-led debate session for the candidates for the new mayor for the North East Mayoral Combined Authority was being organised collaboratively by the relevant universities.
2. Active bystander and consent training was being rolled out successfully, in-person training was being piloted with one school.
3. The new safe space in the SU building was now open.
4. Student disbursement funding had been sourced to replace equipment used by student radio.
5. An opportunity for students to develop sports journalism skills had been secured at NUFC and links with the journalism course had been formed as a mutually beneficial arrangement.
6. A raising awareness campaign had been launched on visa surcharges and changes for international students.
7. Planning or the annual Teaching Excellence Awards “TEAs” had begun.
8. Work was ongoing to support students with housing, including an arrangement to source pro-bono legal advice online and the possibility of introducing a “rate your landlord” platform.
9. Student Council had unanimously voted in favour of adding a Working Class Liberation Officer role. Chris Day noted that this addition was in line with the OfS agenda on attainment.

**Students In Newcastle Forum (SINF)**

Stakeholder work relating to the Students In Newcastle Forum (SINF) was ongoing. Lindsey Lockey had met with her counterpart at Northumbria University to discuss and draft updated terms of reference to take to Newcastle City Council (NCC) for discussion. Jane Robinson had discussed the focus of the group with Pam Smith (Chief Executive, NCC) who was supportive of reviewing the group’s remit and ensuring a more strategic and far-reaching approach to the group’s business and membership (i.e. not just accommodation/anti-social behaviour focussed and to include Newcastle College).

**Freedom of Speech and Code of Practice**

Colin Campbell and Lindsey Lockey provided an update on the implications of the new legislation and Office for Students regulatory guidance relating to Freedom of Speech.

A collaborative approach had been agreed and an updated code of practice covering both organisations would be submitted to Council and Senate. NUSU is undertaking necessary updates to the constitution and the University is updating the internal complaints policy and external speaker policy.

**Voter Registration**

1. The University has worked with Newcastle City Council (NCC) since 2016 to promote voter registration. The student registration system allows a voter registration opt in, which is shared via a data sharing agreement with NCC.
2. The student registration system is being updated and there is an opportunity to improve the voter registration opportunity in line with sector best practice and a request from CitizensUK to participate in their voter registration champions scheme.
3. Partnership Committee were generally supportive of the introduction of the scheme, assuming it did not negatively impact on the SU elections.

**Gail Moore on behalf of Pat Ritchie**

**Chair of University/Union Partnership Committee**

**February 2024**