



Imperial College Union Board of Trustees

Date 30.10.19

AGENDA ITEM NO.	TBC
TITLE	Summer Ball update
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The cost of organising and running the annual Summer Ball held in June has not been fully known owing to a number of reasons such as significant staff time and TOIL not included, costs not accurately accrued/internally charged and unrealistic budgets set in an effort to reach a break-even point. It is estimated that to hold the Ball according to a more realistic picture of the current set-up, the cost would be in the region of £160k-240k. At present, there is no permanent staff member in post to organise the Summer Ball for 2020. It is recommended the Ball be put on hold, in the short term, and replaced with an end of term party pending further consideration to the future options for this event.</p>
PURPOSE	For decision
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	Board to consider and approve the recommendation to not hold the Ball for 2020 and replace with an end of term party.

Background

The Summer Ball was previously the responsibility of the Social Enterprise Manager to deliver. When the person left this post (which now does not exist within the Commercial Services structure) the responsibility for delivering the Ball was added to the job description of the Events & Conferences Manager, in addition to the other responsibilities of this role. The Ball takes substantial time, effort, energy and resource to deliver and in 2018/19 a fixed term Summer Ball Project Coordinator was hired to assist the Events & Conferences Manager with this project. Despite scaling back the 2018/19 Summer Ball budget to a break-even position, the organisation and delivery of the event continued to provide huge challenges and it simply was not possible to deliver against this budget leading to a conservative estimated £8k loss (not taking into account staff time to organise and set-up the Ball plus TOIL claimed by staff for working the event itself).

The main challenges were:

- Health & Safety – with such a large, spread-out event the Health & Safety aspects of transporting, setting up and taking down rigging and equipment / mobile bars / supplying power / etc were numerous and challenging. The hours worked by several stakeholders to run the event, including Union staff and CSPs, were excessive leading to detrimental physical and mental well-being. More resource, and hence cost, will need to be allocated here going forward in order to address this.
- Security – the 2018/19 event was understaffed in this area and needed additional security guards – probably in the region of an extra £1.5k to be spent here going forward.
- Coordination of all stakeholders - College relationships, CSPs, students, Union staff, suppliers, security, external contractors and vendors, licensing authority, neighbours, police
- Working towards a 'break-even' budget (on paper) with costs scaled back to unrealistic levels in terms of delivering a good experience and ensuring safety

Current situation

The Summer Ball was discussed at a recent Leadership meeting, with no resolution for a way forward forthcoming and the decision taken to not appoint a Summer Ball Project Coordinator at this time. In addition to this the Events & Conferences Manager post is currently vacant, with the recruitment process in motion, and therefore no one currently 'owning' the Ball. The timing of appointing for this role is realistically not going to be before January 2020, leading to unrealistic expectations in terms of planning the Ball as tickets should be on sale already at this point. The person appointed to this role will need time to get to grips with the entire workload and demands of the job, aside from the Ball.

The new Operations Manager commences the role on the 4th of November but the Ball will not be this person's focus, as the current focus for Commercial Services is laying foundations as previously outlined to Board. Again, this person will need time to get to grips with the demands of the job.

A more realistic set of costs to run the Ball as-is has been put together and shows the total expenditure to be in the region of £160k–240k:

Cost of Sales	(7,000)
TOTAL COST OF SALES	(7,000)
EXPENDITURE	
Staff Costs (Pay)	
Permanent Staff	(59,000)
Temporary Staff	(6,500)
Agency Staff	(1,500)
Security Staff	(7,000)
Staff Costs (Pay) Subtotal	(74,000)
Staff Costs (Other)	
Late Taxis	(500)
Subsistence	
Staff Costs (Other) Subtotal	(500)
Premises & Equipment	
Cleaning	(2,500)
Decorations	(100)
Equipment Hire	(47,350)
Equipment Purchase	(3,000)
Maintenance	(700)
Parking	(100)
Premises & Equipment Subtotal	(53,750)
Consumables	
Consumables & Disposables	(750)
Consumables Subtotal	(750)
Administration	
Acts	(17,000)
Accommodation	(540)
Health & Safety	(1,000)
Hospitality	(2,500)
Licences	(900)
Printing Costs	(700)
Publicity	(1,000)
Administration Subtotal	(23,640)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (With DramSoc)	(159,640)
Contingency (extra for external tech)	(60,000 - 80,000)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (No DramSoc)	(219,640 - 239,640)

This figure includes permanent staff time required to organise the Ball and TOIL taken by Union staff after running the event, which has never been factored in. Consideration has also been given to external technicians being used in the scenario that DramSoc aren't. With ticket numbers at 1,700, total tickets would need to sell out and income would need to be £140k-£220k, or £83-£130 individually to break-even. The figures also do not include the opportunity cost to the Union in terms of lost revenue due to diverting commercial staff resources away from income-generating activities.

To organise the Ball at this point in time would mean that a temporary event manager would have to be hired in the region of £15-£20 / hour in addition to a part time Summer Ball Project Coordinator, but this would need to be done now. At this late stage we would have to approach recruitment agencies for potential candidates who could start immediately. The Union would also need to consider how the Ball costs are to be covered or be happy to sustain the loss. If the Union is not happy to sustain the loss, additional funding would need to be secured prior to making any staffing decisions as the risk is that funding is not secured and/or is not enough to cover the loss. If funding is not secured, ticket prices would have to rise substantially from last year (sold at £30-£50 last year); the risk being that tickets do not sell out and, again, the Union has to sustain the loss.

Recommendation

Further consideration is needed regarding the funding and organisation of this event. It is therefore recommended, in the short term, that the Ball be put on hold for 2020 and a celebratory end of term party be hosted instead in the entire Union Building and Beit Quad. Scaling back the event to a manageable level for this year would allow new staff to get properly acquainted with their roles, explore options for how the Ball might look in the future and allow time to properly consult with the student body.