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**Union Council Minutes**

**19th October 2016**

**Pre-council**

Before council began a temporary chair was elected by members due to the Chair position being vacant. Gemma Gessey was elected with 8 votes to 1 against RON.

Before council began Habiba delivered presentation for new members to have a brief overview of Union council

SI questioned the “ideas” section of the presentation. C&DA explained the implications of the motion passed last year and the bye laws it contradicted. SI asked if the outcome would still end with policy. C&DA explained that it was primarily a change to language due to accessibility, not the process.

1. **Attendance was acknowledged and apologies noted.**

Attended: Habiba Amjad (HA); Andy Aston (AA); Joshua Barden (JB); Nicole Berroa (NB); Gemma Gessey (GG); Rachael Healey (RH); Shazab Islam (SI); Issic Romel (IR); Afsheen Saleem (AS).

Apologies: Stewart Boyd (SB); Rebecca Baker (RB); Nishalini Ravindran (NR); Joshua Richardson (JR).

Absent: Ziya Mohamed (ZM).

Students present: Theresa Summerfield (TS)

Staff present: Dave Anson (SVM), observer; Robin Eves, Chair’s aide (SV&DC); Thomas Swainson, secretary (C&DA)

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting.**

The minutes were rejected by SI who claimed they were not a fair representation of the debate held around BDS. GG responded by saying the last council was not professional in regards to members behaviour. SI also stated that the actions stated in the BDS debate for officers were also false.

A non-council member asked why minutes were not sent to members more promptly after a meeting. SV&DC stated that minutes from now on will be sent out sooner.

SI also exclaimed that any actions around the NUS president discussion were also not a fair reflection. A previous council member also claimed minutes around her departure from the meeting were also a false reflection.

The rest of the minutes were accepted.

1. **Matters arising**

**Students who work or study (previous meeting minutes arising)** – Ongoing

**Lecture clashes** – Closed

**Transport issues** – A double decker bus starting from next year – Closed

**SEC parking** – Closed

**BDS Referendum**

SI said the campaign will continue as he felt he completed the due processes and yet wasn’t able to achieve it. GG asked the rest of council on their feelings about educating students on BDS. AS agreed we should continue to educate. SI claimed that there were opportunities to be educated and will be continuing. AS said the issue was that only one argument was put forward, SI said there was opportunity but he felt the processes were adjusted to make the motion harder to pass through. He also felt it was a challenge on democratic processes and that the referendum was cancelled.

GG claimed that not everybody may have felt educated and asked for a show of hands of members that understand BDS, several officers raised their hands. An ex member claimed that SI had put huge effort into educating students without support from other council members. SI stated he had a petition of over 500 students, 4 guest speakers and other events which is fair opportunity to educate students.

GG suggested that SI could set a meeting to discuss the BDS motion with the full time officers. SI claims that he wants BDS to be a debated subject with definite outcomes. IR claimed that he wants to make sure there is engagement from the student body to make sure the motion is voted on representationally.

TS said that the action was for officers to discuss education. IR said it’s more about making sure students are actually affected and that the motion is reflective of this. SI said the decision doesn’t need to be made now, but there needs to be definite actions. AS stated officers were not here to make personal votes based on our education so we need to make sure our students are fully educated on both sides of the argument.

IR said before we go out and use resources to go and educate students, we need to make sure this is actually affecting students at an academic and personal level.

GG asked if SI would agree for the action to continue in its current form. SI said the action wasn’t a true reflection and that it was marked as ongoing but nothing has been followed up.

**Officers actioned to meet up with SI**

**Men’s toilets**

SI claimed that the fact we don’t have gender neutral toilets when the university is spending so much money on other projects is appalling. We need to push for the opportunity for LGBT+ students to have gender neutral toilets and that we should push for it. Theresa said the stats show more young people are identifying and we should expect more LGBT+ students. AS said maybe we put the vote to the LGBT+ society to gauge opinion. RH said she received a lot of information around this at the LGBT conference.

SI claimed we shouldn’t delay anymore and should push for this. HA asked were specifically the discussion was around. SI said new buildings should accommodate for them. HA said there were discussions already around it. IR went on to say the university were discussing putting a gender neutral toilet on the 1st floor of the library. GG recommended that IR be actioned to take on issue, HA volunteered due to her previous discussions.

**Action: Habiba to continue pushing for gender neutral toilets.**

**4. Student issues**

AS mentioned that outside the MD/MB buildings there were a lot of students smoking and asked if there were any designated areas due to students being affected by this. Theresa said that outside MD and MB there were sanctions in place but they aren’t being strictly enforced.

**RH was actioned to explore the issue.**

SI brought up an issue raised in the last meeting about Malia (NUS President) visiting but nothing being followed up. He then stated he has organised an event with Malia for November and asked for support from the other officers.

TS raised that 6 days of research time was lost due to movement of the Post grad space. Jon Elsmore promised that this would not happened. TS raised that she wanted this minuting.

AS said there were a lot of issues around welcome week and students feeling lost and uninformed by the University. AS suggested we should take a more involved stance in inductions to help students. TS claimed that students have also raised a lot of timetable issues with students being able to read them. SVM suggested we help influence the university to provide better service during that time. AS suggested faculty based volunteers to help during this busy week. DA shared feedback from the Welcome Squad claiming that the university weren’t communicating well with the volunteers so some students felt lost during their time helping.

**Actioned: SV&DC.**

SI said that education at the moment was difficult due to rising costs and changes in SFE. SI explained the 19% pay rise for the VC that can demoralise staff and we should challenge this decision. TS claimed this was currently being looked at by the staff unions and the knock on effect means that if a new VC was to be appointed we’d see that wage increase again.

AA mentioned his idea for lobbying the University for a Quiet Room for students that need a quiet place to go. AA also mentioned the signage for building names, HA responded saying the letter based names will be changed soon to the new building names. A student claimed that students with Autism are struggling more with the change in building names as there was no warning for any students. DA said that the communication strategy needs to be addressed for all students in terms of changes on campus and said the union should focus more on making sure to lobby the university over the way it delivers information. GG said that the inconsistency is the cause of confusion with some university services referring to them by the new name and some referring to them by the old name. This includes the university maps and timetables. HA has said this has been pointed out by Jon Elsmore. HA said the changes will be a slow process. GG suggested we ask the university for a deadline for the formal change.

SI raised Black History Month stating that because it involves his remit he should have been involved earlier on in the planning of the events. He also said that he felt it should continue beyond the month and he will take a lead. SI also claimed that the programme was white washed as it didn’t contain any hard hitting issues. SI also claimed that Islamophobia month was fast approaching and there was no work seen on the ground. HA raised that this is something that is approached nationally but personally opposed the term of islamophobia due to negativity. SI said that it is an important issue and should be approached directly. SI said he wants to see more happening around the month from the SUs side. IR said he acknowledged SI should have been involved earlier with BHM but due to the timing over the summer it was harder to engage with students and wanted council to understand that’s why. HA also apologised. SI then went on to ask the officers for a definite plan from officers for content for Islamopobia. HA said she personally didn’t like the term but would still try and organise an event.

**5. Exec reports**

Full time officers delivered their reports.

**NB report -** SI commented on the HE reform saying there was huge holes in the reforms with too strong a focus on the commercial rather than educational elements. SI said that due to the student demographic and nature of the UoW we should have a stance on the reforms. SI claimed there are huge impacts on both home and international students and we should challenge it. TS asked if people were going to be educated on the scales for responding to questions within NSS.

TS asked if the support mentioned by NB was in addition to the services offered to international students. NB said it’s more about raising awareness to those services.

GG raised that as a faculty rep her students agreed with TS around the scale for responses and that students should be aware of the NSS earlier in their academic lives to make filling the survey easier in the final year. SI said we need to make sure people are aware of TEF. NB said we could plan a campaign around NSS responses. NB raised the NUS NSS boycott sharing her issues with it as the NSS is a useful tool for the SU to utilise. NB said she also had reservations around the metrics associated with the TEF. TS said that there are extra implications from the TEF for PhD students and they should be communicated.

**RH accepted, HA accepted, NB accepted, IR accepted.**

IR raised an issue with students not understanding fixed penalty notices around littering. GG mentioned that the bins are being removed by the university without prior notice. TS mentioned cigarette butt tins provided by other universities for the students. SI raised it is primarily the council.

**PTOs were not asked to submit a report.**

**RH left at 18:05.**

**6. Faculty Reports**

JB raised that in education committee they discussed how they are going to support course reps to improve the feedback loop and engagement from course reps. GG has created a pro forma to improve communications between reps to help that feedback loop. GG said there was also a Nursing Soc forming. GG commented that the move to MC isn’t yet complete but the new equipment will be cutting edge providing a better academic experience.

**7. Council Rep reports**

N/A

**8. Policy motions**

Non-submitted

**9. National and regional**

SI mentioned 19th November UCU and NUS demo around free education. SI would like council backing to subsidise travel for students to engage with the demo. TS mentioned that a lot of students aren’t aware of REF or TEF and so this should be considered. SI called for a show of hands to vote to mandate council to take action around the demo. SV&DC and C&CA advised that due to financial implications that the decision would have to be a formal process.

TS mentioned that students don’t know enough about TEF and that there are more implications around the increase in fees so more information should be given. NB mentioned that in the early stages of the TEF that fees weren’t affected. TS mentioned some students on longer courses may be affected.

A vote of personal opinion was called by SI showing peoples support for the Demo. The vote result was 62% for, 0% against and 32% abstain.

**10. Exec meetings**

SV&DC gave an update on the committee reforms so no minutes were submitted.

**11. AOE**

IR raised the charity of the year and wanted council opinion on the decision. He suggested that the charity should be local. The first was Rethink Mental Illness and are based in Wolverhampton who offer support for people suffering.

Papyrus was the second recommendation mentioned with information being signposted by IR online.

SI asked what the previous charity was, DA said it was St. Georges last year and Hear Our Voices for the year before. AA brought up WLV Mind which is pro mental health. SI suggested Care for Calais as a charity that help improve the living conditions in Calais. SI claimed that it would be a good gesture to international students. IR said he would like it to be voted on today but without some members here it would be unfair. TS suggested the charity Dudley Voices for Choices. GG asked if members would like to vote today or have time to research. AA suggested the charity should ideally be local. All members said they would like to vote at the next meeting to have a change to do their own research.

**IR was actioned to send his suggestions to members of council before the next meeting. Other members were also welcomed to submit their own.**

TS requested that if a post graduate rep isn’t elected that somebody take on some of the responsibilities within their remit. GG raised her concerns around the FEHW under grad reps and the faculty board said they were also in disagreement. GG asked for ideas from the members around how to get post grads engaged. GG asked what would happen if spaces are left open, C&DA explained co-opted officers as an alternative. SI said we need to make sure we have an openly independent voice that students can see we’re standing up for them. DA said that all officers now have objectives that relate to engagement with H2R demographics to help show that were loud and active. DA also said it’s not the independence that necessarily the focus but instead that there is support and care. Theresa challenged DA’s comment on independence due to the opinions from Post Grad students saying they feel there is need for independence.