

Minutes

Subject:	Student Officer Committee Minutes
Date:	Thursday, 21 May 2015
Paper:	SOC 1439
Author:	Tony Moore
Purpose:	Record of decision making

Key Discussions

- Trans* Officer for the NUS and the report from the delegation to NUS National Conference
- Women in Leadership Action Plan and question of gender quotas for Officer positions

Key Actions

- C Jarvis elected Chair, T Antoniou Phillips elected Deputy Chair for 2015-16
- H Hussein and S Jones elected as Part Time Officer Trustees
- T Antoniou Phillips elected pro tem SOC non-executive director of SUS Ltd., A Hood elected pro tem SOC non-executive director of Waterfront Ltd.
- Agreed funding request of up to £150 for anti-Austerity banner
- Agreed funding request of up to £150 for SU/UEA Pride banner
- Agreed to set up Officer Role Review group, which will look at gender balance proposals raised in the Women in Leadership Action Plan.

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"

Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

21 May 2015

Voting Members present:

Beth Smith (Women's Officer), Aaron Hood (Students with Disabilities Officer), Chris Jarvis (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Connor Rand (UG Education Officer), Yinbo Yu (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Hussam Hussein (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Alex McCloskey (Ethical issues Officer), Liam McCafferty (PG Education Officer), Cameron Mellowes (Non Portfolio Officer), Philippa Costello (Non Portfolio Officer), Theo Antoniou Phillips (LGBT+ Officer), Sam Jones (Environment Officer), Tom Etheridge (Non Portfolio Officer), Jack Robinson (Non Portfolio Officer), Paul Erasmus (Mature Students' Officer)

Chair:

Holly Staynor (Welfare, Community & Diversity Officer)

In attendance:

Josh Clare (Head of Student Engagement), Tony Moore (Democracy and Governance Coordinator), Rob Drury (Welcome Period Coordinator)

Apologies:

Ting Ni (International Officer), Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive)

1431 Welcome Period

R Drury gave a presentation on the work that had been done so far on Welcome Period.

J Robinson noted the problems over ticketing for the LCR during the last Welcome Period and wondered whether the situation would re-occur in September.

Chair noted that the policy had not been communicated well but a change had been made last September to ensure tickets were available for first year students, international students and PG students and so that tickets were not all snapped up by second and final year home students. Chair noted that the policy would be in place, again,

for the next Welcome Period and that it would be better communicated.

C Rand noted that there was a large number of members willing to volunteer to help out in Welcome Period and it would be imperative to have good communication in place to facilitate their work.

Chair noted that Management Committee had considered the divide between the traditional Welcome Period, centred on the LCR and alcohol consumption, and the more alternative approaches centred around Liberations groups and as to how these might be integrated.

Officers suggested possible approaches with: group cinema trips, and non-alcohol based welcoming events in the Square.

C Jarvis believed it to be important that all events were advertised as one and that the big commercially important events were not advertised separately from the more niche events.

Chair asked for more LGBT+ events.

1424 Statements from the Chair

There were none.

1425 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2015

The minutes of the meeting were approved.

1426 Matters Arising/Action Log

There were none and no comments made concerning the Log.

1427 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

C Jarvis and T Etheridge put themselves forward as candidates for Chair.

C Jarvis was elected Chair for 2015-16.

T Antoniou Phillips and T Etheridge put themselves forward as candidates for Deputy Chair.

T Antoniou Phillips was elected Deputy Chair for 2015-16.

1428 Election of Officer Trustees

H Hussein, C Mellows and S Jones put themselves forward as candidates.

H Hussein and S Jones were elected as Part Time Officer Trustees for 2015-16.

1429 Election of two Non-Executive Directors of the Charity's subsidiary companies.

Chair noted that the governance of the subsidiary companies might be changed over the coming year but that SOC should elect separate directors for the two companies for the time being.

T Antoniou Phillips and J Robinson put themselves forward as candidates for the directorship of Student Union Services LTD.
T Antoniou Phillips was elected.

A Hood and J Robinson put themselves forward as candidates for the directorship of the Waterfront LTD.
A Hood was elected.

1430 Social Policy Review

Chair noted that the two staff teams of Advice and Education and Engagement often dealt with similar issues but there was often not a joined up approach to dealing with common problems. Chair noted that this initiative would draw the two teams together with Officers to look at problem solving and policy formulation and that it would a great opportunity for Part Time Officers to address problems affecting their constituents. Chair noted that the first Social Policy meeting would be in September and that all Officers would be invited and issues that were to be discussed would be highlighted in advance.

Approved Social Policy Review.

1432 Anti-Austerity Banner

L McCafferty noted there was a need for a SU banner bearing the new logo. L McCafferty noted that the request was at the upper range for banners because it was hoped that a new well-made banner from durable materials could be purchased in time for the demo at the end of June. L McCafferty noted that it was, however, more likely that only a cheaper, lower quality banner could be found in time and this would cost around £40.

SOC agreed the funding request of up to £150.

SU/UEA Pride Banner

SOC agreed to hear an emergency funding request.

T Antoniou Phillips noted a request for funding for a banner to take to Norwich Pride. T Antoniou Phillips thought it important that the SU had a strong, visible presence at Pride; especially after the University's refusal to fly the Pride flag. T Antoniou Phillips noted the request had a limit of £150 but thought the cost would be around £100.

Chair noted that the SU should have a stall at Pride.

The Liberations Officers agreed the funding request of up to £150.

1433 HE Landscape after the General Election

This item was deferred to SOC residential

1434 NUS Delegation Reports

C Jarvis noted the SU's increased engagement with the national movement and that policy had been sent to National Conference for the first time in several years.

C Rand highlighted that the Competition and Markets Authority resolution that Council had sent to conference had been passed unopposed.

Chair noted the importance of fringe events at conference and attendance at the Federation of Islamic Students meeting about guest speakers on campus. Chair reported that most decisions made by Conference had been along the lines of SU policy which was positive.

H Hussein noted it had been agreed, previously, that all the delegates to National Conference, and not just the FTOs, would be invited to present reports to SOC.

Chair and C Jarvis apologised for the oversight of not inviting the other delegates to report.

H Hussein noted that one of the resolutions that had not been passed: this was the resolution for NUS to appoint a full-time Trans* Officer. H Hussein noted support for the resolution as well as its backing by the LGBT+ Conference and wondered why it had not been passed by National Conference and how UEASU delegates had voted on the question.

C Jarvis noted that the LGBT+ Conference had given the resolution its support with a simple majority but not a two-thirds majority and that the arguments in that debate had been around funding and the fact that LGBT+ already had two full-time officers whilst other Liberations groups only had one.

C Jarvis (CJ) thought that the argument at National Conference had been more focused on the latter issue. CJ noted that the vote at National Conference had been by secret ballot and CJ noted disapproval of this process. CJ noted that voting by secret ballot meant that no SU could be certain that their delegates had acted as mandated.

C Rand believed that the reason National Conference had opted for a secret ballot and that the resolution had not reached the two-thirds required had been the powerful speech by the NUS Disabled Students' Officer who had argued that for National Conference to vote on this matter would undermine the autonomy of Liberations Conference and had asked for a secret ballot because of the intimidating and inaccessible way in which the debate had been conducted.

C Rand and C Jarvis both reported that they had voted in favour of the resolution but that this would have to be taken on trust because of the secret ballot.

C Jarvis noted disapproval of the secret ballot not because it was secret at the time, as there was an intimidating atmosphere in the hall at the time, but that it was not made public after conference so that delegates might be held to account.

Chair reported voting in favour of the resolution. Chair believed there had been a split in the LGBT+ Conference and a group of Trans students had gone to National Conference and had asked for help in asserting their basic rights. Chair argued that the Trans group's arguments had been manipulated within the debate and commented that it was important that their voice was heard.

C Rand asked how UEASU's delegates had voted on the matter at LGBT+ Conference.

Chair reporting abstaining at LGBT+ Conference because of not defining as trans but voting for at National Conference.

T Antoniou Phillips reported voting against at LGBT+ Conference and that as for the other delegates: one had voted for with the other four delegates abstaining or voting against.

T AP noted a change of mind after the LGBT+ Conference and now believed that trans students were unrepresented and there should be a third officer within LGBT+ to represent them.

C Rand deprecated the behaviour of some delegates from other SUs who had created an intimidating atmosphere in the hall during the debate.

C Jarvis asked Officers who were interested in the above issues to consider standing as candidates in next year's elections for the delegation to National Conference.

L McCafferty asked disappointment be minuted that on return from Conference the front page of Concrete had been taken up by an allegation that one of the SU delegation had breached the SU Zero Tolerance policy whilst at Conference.

C Rand disputed and termed inaccurate the information that had been published concerning this matter and asked that this be minuted.

J Clare asked Officers to consider how National Conference could be made more accessible and immediate to the wider SU membership and suggested the possibility of live feeds in the Bars and in Unio.

Women in Leadership Action Plan

Chair noted that SOC had agreed to consider an extra agenda item.

Chair noted that, as demonstrated by the make-up of the current meeting, a disproportionately low ratio of self-defining women had been

elected or stood as candidates in SU elections. Chair noted that a working group of women Officers and SU staff had designed the action plan for consideration.

Chair noted that, from feedback received, a possibly controversial part of the Plan would be the proposal for gender balancing of the Non Portfolio Officer positions.

Chair noted that the plan would be to mirror the NUS' practice of ensuring that the make-up of any committee or democratic structure would be at least half self-defining women.

Chair noted that SOC did not have any power over this matter but it would be good to establish a consensus on proposals to send to Union Council and to the Women's Caucus.

Chair noted that there was a complication in that the SU had policy that opposed the NUS' gender balancing policy on the grounds that it did not make provision for Trans* students.

T Etheridge noted a key concern, as to quotas for positions, was the low number of women running as candidates and cited a possibility that if only two women ran for the Non-Portfolio position they would automatically be elected no matter what their policies were or how many votes they received. T Etheridge believed it would be better to concentrate on getting more women candidates and to challenge the reasons why women did not run.

Chair clarified that the proposal for the quotas would specify 'non-men'.

J Robinson noted agreement with T Etheridge that the focus should be on the number of women candidates and the number of women who withdrew their candidacies and noted that elections results should reflect the hard-work of candidates in their campaigns.

C Jarvis noted hesitation over adding another male voice to the debate but argued that the earlier arguments could, even, be used to question the need for a Women's Officer. C Jarvis asked that the gender balance proposal be extended to include the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of SU committees and meetings.

B Smith agreed that a lot of work needed to be done as to promotion of elections but believed that quotas would represent a necessary starting point to get more women involved in the SU's democratic structures. B Smith believed that quotas did not, necessarily, have to be permanent.

P Costello noted that, in case Officers had not read the Plan, there were, in fact, detailed sections on increasing the number of women candidates.

L McCafferty noted that an overall review of all the Officer roles had been mooted and suggested that the issue of gender balance could be integrated into this wider review which should take place in the

autumn term.

C Jarvis counselled that any results of a review would have to be considered by Union Council and that, if these involved changes to Officer positions or roles, there would need to be sufficient breathing space before the SU General Election.

SOC agreed to set up an Officer Role Review group, which would consider the issues raised in the Action Plan with reference to gender balance with C Jarvis to lead. Proposals on gender balance to also be consider at Women's Caucus. C Jarvis to circulate proposals for membership of the group and timeline.

1435 Officer Go Around/Reports

T Etheridge: attended Operations Department Strategy Day focused on communications commitments in manifesto

T Antoniou Phillips: received refusal from the University to fly the Pride flag; reported good progress on gender neutral toilets with the University; support for prison pen pal

C Rand: published the SU's Internalisation Strategy, finalisation of the Faculty Organiser's advertisement. (CR to check whether PTOs can apply for these positions)

H Hussein: organising and planning in response to the feedback on Black History Month.

C Jarvis: organising event with Clive Lewis MP building towards the June National Demo; signed letter by UEA academics supporting Fossil Free campaigns imminently to be delivered to the University.

1436 Reports on Priority Campaigns/Projects/AOB

There were none.

1437 Time, Date and Place

A date in September to be confirmed.

SOC noted thanks to H Staynor for the Chair's work during the year,