

Minutes

Meeting:	Student Officer Committee
Date:	Thursday 26 Nov 2015
Paper:	SOC 5 15-16
Author:	Tony Moore
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

Key Discussions

- Funding for alcoholic drinks at Union campaign events
- Car parking and the special needs of mature students
- Club and Society publicity in Union House
- Union finances

Key Actions

- Noted report that Management Committee had elected L McCafferty as Lead Delegate to NUS National Conference
- Approved funding requests for:
Light up Campus (funds to come from SOC Projects)
Opposing Prevent
'Health Students, meet your Student Officers' with proviso that another venue be sought
Celebrating Arab Culture
- Deferred funding request for #StandByMe until more detailed break-down of costs circulated
- Approved 'fayre' type event for mature students from January nursing cohort
- Set up working group on transport in general with a special focus on parking permits for students with special needs
- Policy Implementation Review to be held in early January

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"

Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

26 November 2015

Members present:

Voting Members Present: Aaron Hood (Students' with Disabilities Officer), Theo Antoniou Phillips (LGBT+ Officer), Tom Etheridge (Non-Portfolio Officer), Sam Jones (Environmental Officer), Liam McCafferty (Postgraduate Education Officer), Philippa Costello (Non-Portfolio Officer), Cameron Mellows (Non-Portfolio Officer), Jack Robinson (Non-Portfolio Officer), Paul Erasmus (Mature Students' Officer), Alex McCloskey (Ethical Issues Officer), Hussam Hussein (Ethnic Minorities Officer),

Non-Voting Members Present: Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive)

Chair:

Chris Jarvis (Campaigns and Democracy)

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Democracy and Governance Coordinator).

1492 Departmental Presentation: Operations

Presentation given by C Alexander (Head of Operations)

P Costello commented that there should be channels for all staff to have meetings with colleagues from other departments so that they could flag up issues of common concern.

C Alexander left the meeting.

1493 Chair Update

Chair noted that, after their reading of the minutes from 5 November, they hoped for a more cordial meeting.

1494 Attendance and Apologies

Chair noted apologies from: Connor Rand (Undergraduate Education Officer), Yinbo Yu (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Beth Smith (Women's Officer), Jo Swo (Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer), Ting Ni (International Officer Officer).

1495 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015/Matters Arising/Action Log

T Antoniou Phillips apologised to SOC for not having remained impartial whilst chairing the discussion on the NUS Lead Delegate Election and noted formal personal apologies to L McCafferty.

Chair noted, as to the Climate Change demo, that external legal advice had been sought and that, in line with the advice, there had been an imposition of a small charge for transport; this had minimised costs to the extent required.

T Etheridge wondered whether there had been a result for the NUS Lead Delegate election as it seemed to have taken an inordinate amount of time to count five votes.
Chair noted that a vote had taken place at Management Committee and that L McCafferty had been elected.

J Robinson asked as to the arrangements for the drop off point for clothing donations to the Solidarity with Migrants Campaign. Chair noted that arrangements were being made to transport the stockpile of donated clothing to Calais and once this had been done a drop off point would be put in place.

1496 Budget Spending Update

Chair noted that the figures in the agenda papers were only approved and not actually spent and that for some campaigns there were significant underspends.

H Hussein asked for a column in the papers to show the actual spend. H Hussein asked for an explanation of the difference between General Campaigns and SOC Special Projects.

Chair noted that the difference was: one covered campaigns and the other individual events. Chair noted that, in future, figures on actual spend would be provided.

1497 Funding Request

SOC noted prior online approval of requests for:
Student Assembly Against Austerity

NUS Black Winter Conference Food Bank.

#StandByMe: SOC asked for a more detailed breakdown of costs to be circulated before approval.

Light up Campus: T Etheridge asked that future funding requests be more specific in regard to numbers of students benefiting as it was hard to see how the distribution of 250 torches would directly benefit 4,000 students. SOC approved the request with the funding to come from SOC Special Projects.

Opposing Prevent: SOC approved the funding for publicity in relation to the day of events on 7 December.

Health Students, meet your Student Officers: T Antoniou Phillips noted that the government spending review had abolished bursaries for nursing students and that it was imperative for the Union to deepen its current support for HSC students and this event would help develop the relationship. L McCafferty noted that there had been concerns expressed the previous year where the, then, Mature Students Officer had spent their entire Campaigns Budget on alcohol and that SOC should consider how appropriate it was to approve the spending of large amounts of campaign funds on alcohol. H Hussein noted that many of their constituents would feel uncomfortable attending an event in the Blue Bar and that facilities should be made available in a non-alcoholic space.

P Erasmus noted that an item later in the agenda might usefully be combined with the current proposal as the welcome for the mature students in the January nursing cohort could take place alongside this event.

SOC agreed P Erasmus's proposal for a 'fayre' style event on 6 January to welcome mature students in the January nursing cohort.

Chair noted that two specific concerns had been raised as to the original 'meet your officers' event: the location in a bar and the amount of money to be spent on alcohol.

J Robinson noted that the money specified was a maximum.

P Costello noted it was for money behind the bar and only represented a spend per head of £2.15.

H Hussein welcomed a suggestion from T Antoniou Phillips that the event might be held in the Hive with students being given tokens for drinks from the bars or from Unio.

SOC approved the funding request for 'Health Students: meet your Student Officers' with the recommendation that another venue should be sought.

Celebrating Arab Culture: Chair apologised for the late submission but noted this would be a SOC Project in line with Union policy against islamophobia.

H Hussein noted the events would be part of the fight against islamophobia campaign and would raise awareness of Arabic culture.

J Robinson welcomed the proposal but wondered why it had come to SOC rather than being a request by a Society for a grant.

H Hussein noted that this was because the events would play a key part in Anti-Islamophobia Month and in implementing Union policy.

T Antoniou Phillips wondered whether the funding should come from the Ethnic Minorities Officer's individual budget.

H Hussein believed funding should come from SOC because the initiative was a part of the anti-islamophobia campaign and was a faith issue not one of ethnicity.

P Costello wondered why this was just an Arabic initiative. H Hussein noted that not all Arabs were Muslims and the initiative was designed to demonstrate Arab solidarity against Islamophobia; H Hussein noted it would be good to also involve ISOC and other faith societies.

L McCafferty noted that SOC had failed to undertake the campaign on anti-Islamophobia that it had been mandated to do by Council and it was helpful that a Society was prepared to do this on SOC's behalf.

SOC agreed to the funding request.

1498

Items for Discussion

Car Parking

P Erasmus (PE) drew attention to his discussion paper on car parking and the heavy impact car parking fees had for mature students.

PE noted thanks to J Swo for the successful work on improving the Park And Ride facility but argued that something needed to be done to help local students from long distance, whose only transport option was the car, obtain parking permits.

PE asked also to draw attention to another matter of concern, particularly to mature students: the Nursery. PE noted absurdly long waiting lists, astronomical fees and, similarly to car parking, preferential treatment for staff over students.

S Jones noted meeting with the University's Transport Coordinator and that the University was committed to looking to improve the Park And Ride services.

PE welcomed this initiative but noted that the core problem for mature students was access to parking on campus and its cost.

S Jones believed that improving Park And Ride services would help to alleviate the pressure for car parking places.

T Etheridge reminded SOC of the Union policy on car parking which mandated Officers to lobby the University to obtain fair and equal treatment for students.

J Robinson believed the main issue to be the cost of car parking for students and wondered whether it would be an attainable goal to reduce prices and what was the balance between lower prices and better access to permits.

Chair noted that the main problem centred on the number of students from Norfolk whose only option was to use a car for transport to campus.

L McCafferty (LM) noted the matter was exceptionally complicated politically as the University had proposed building a multi-storey car park about six years ago and the Union had campaigned against this proposal on environmental grounds. LM believed that the University would argue that there was simply not enough parking available on campus and that, consequently, strict criteria had to be met to gain a parking permit. LM believed that the University would, also, argue on environmental grounds that car journeys should be reduced.

PE argued that for many mature students access to parking was a necessity: some students had to travel over fifty miles, after dropping off children at school and be on campus to attend a 9 am lecture and could not obtain a permit. PE contrasted the treatment of these students with that of staff who, automatically, received parking permits.

J Robinson suggested that, rather than lobby for permits for all students, the Union should argue for specific permits, for example, for mature students travelling from distance.

S Jones (SJ) believed there to be two separate issues: the need for certain students for parking permits and then the level of car parking charges. SJ believed the University policy that refused permits for students with pressing needs whilst giving them to all staff was ridiculous. SJ argued that there was, however, a need to discourage anyone who did not need to drive to campus from doing so and parking charges played a key role in suppressing demand. SJ noted feeling uncomfortable about any campaign that would seek to reduce parking charges across the board.

LM believed that SOC should investigate the wider issues around transport with the possibility of improving public transport services. LM also believed that the details of the criteria for awarding parking permits should be looked at. LM suggested that after these had been reviewed SOC should consider the possibility of proposing that Union policy should be amended to enable Officers to lobby the University for preferential access for certain groups of students with specific needs.

SOC agreed that L McCafferty would lead an open working group, to include the Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer, which would examine the whole issue of transport that would have a remit that would include the question of parking permits for particular groups of students. At the Chair's suggestion, the

remit would include better promotion of the University's car share scheme.

Policy Implementation Review

Chair believed that SOC needed to take a strategic review of the policies passed over the autumn term which would then inform its report back to Council on the progress on policy implementation.

SOC agreed to Chair's suggestion to meet as a group, provisionally, on Friday, 8 January.

1499

Policy Implementation

SOC approved the following allocation of Officers and staff to lead on the implementation of policy passed by Council on 19 November:

1789 Don't Judge the Jury	Jo Swo/Lucy
1790 Access to Personal Assistants/Carers' tickets	Aaron/Jo Swo/Paul I
1791 Wheels on Campus – making UEA more accessibility friendly	Aaron/Jo Swo/Josh/Chloe
1792 HIV and Sex Education	Theo/Josh/Jack
1793 Student Mental Health – from Service to Strategy	Aaron/Jo Swo/Josh/Liam
1794 Students who stutter	Aaron/Jo Swo/Josh
1795 No to Norfolk County Council Cuts	Chris/Liam/Josh
1796 Let's Stand with Our Junior Doctors	Connor/Chris/Josh
1797 Automatic voting registration on campus	Alex/Chris/Josh
1798 Make opposition to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) a Union campaign	Chris/Sam/Josh
1799 Come Fly with Me! (Air flights for Clubs and Societies)	Yinbo/Sam
1800 Campaigning for a Title IX equivalent in the UK	Jo Swo/Beth/Jim

1500 Union Council Open Discussion: Clubs and Societies

T Antoniou Phillips noted that there were continuing problems with the website as it took as many as thirteen clicks to navigate to where you could join a Club, for example.

J Robinson noted the Clubs and Societies part of the site was still difficult to navigate.

Chair noted they would lead on liaising with staff to investigate how to improve the Clubs and Societies area of the site.

J Robinson believed there should be a physical presence and a dedicated space for Clubs and Societies with pigeonholes and noticeboards.

T Etheridge believed a downstairs blackboard with sports results would be a great way to raise Clubs' profiles.

L McCafferty thought there was a difficulty as to the separation of commercial and non-commercial publicity.

SOC agreed that Management Committee would discuss the issue of the prioritisation between commercial and non-commercial publicity in Union House and a report would be made back to SOC.

J Robinson requested a more comprehensive description of what SAM pays for be posted on the website.

On the open discussion initiative, itself, SOC thought it was working well.

T Etheridge thought that Officers might give instant feedback, when items were raised in the discussions, as to whether they had them on their agenda and if they were already taking action to address them.

T Antoniou Phillips suggested that, as the discussions split into groups, Officers could assign themselves to help facilitate the discussion across the groups.

Chair noted the encouraging changes to the gender balance of the total number of speakers at Council that the open discussions had brought about.

J Robinson suggested that facilities should be available for Councillors to provide written contributions to the discussions.

Chair noted that they would feedback Officers' thoughts on the open discussions to the Chair of Council.

1501 Projects, Campaigns and Policy Reports**Priority Campaign Report**

T Etheridge commented that the response to Save Our Union had been quite pathetic with only thirteen responses collected

and perhaps other ways for engaging students in the campaign should be tried.

L McCafferty noted that the FTOs had discussed this and they had concluded that there was a problem over fixing a clear campaign message and how to create a sense of urgency without compromising the FTOs position as lobbyists.

Chair noted they would relate T Etheridge's concerns to Y Yu.

P Erasmus noted that an email had been sent out to all students over twenty-four years of age and there was uncertainty as to the reliability of the data base and how many of the present mature students this had reached.

Chair noted they would investigate how many recipients the mail-out had reached using the functionality that Union Cloud provided.

T Antoniou Phillips asked as to the position with regard to PTO Champions.

L McCafferty (LM) noted that the concept had been agreed earlier in the year and that FTOs had sketched, into the campaign planning, PTO Champions for each sub-section and they had based this on Officers manifesto commitments. LM hoped that they had got it right and asked any Officer who wanted to change campaigns to contact him.

T Etheridge asked that the Honesty Project be included in the general Well-Being campaign.

Chair noted that after the Policy Implementation Review a revised version of the Report would be sent to Council.

January Nursing Welcome for New Students

Covered in previous discussion.

Calendar of Activism Events/Actions

Noted.

1502 Finance Update

J Dickinson (JD) noted that the Union's overall financial model had undergone some changes in the past few years and the process was not fully complete.

JD noted the old model had been one of a small unincorporated charity with two massive trading arms where all the reserves were kept at arms' length from the democratic part of the organisation.

JD noted that the new financial model aimed at massively increasing spending on charitable outcomes. The model aimed to increase spending by: cutting costs of administration through efficiency gains, transferring some services including IT and

cleaning to the University, running the commercial operations as social enterprises and running them as efficiently as possible. JD noted the requirement of last year's Budget had been that commercial services were run well and that costs in the charity were kept in line. JD reported that the latter had been achieved with ease but there had been significant problems in commercial services which had been largely due to poor control of casual staff costs and had led to a negative performance against budget of £350,000. JD noted that in the main problem area, ENTS, revenue generation was fine; the problem lay with control of costs.

JD noted that the negative performance against budget had become apparent in the run up to the Trustee Board meeting in September and it also had become apparent that the current year Budget would have to be revised.

JD noted as part of the Budget revision some headline savings had been designed and implemented in commercial operations and some discretionary spending in the Charity had been held back pending developments in the autumn term.

JD noted that, as part of its strategic development, UEASU would be moving to a more developed financial model during the current financial year.

JD noted that the old financial model had hoarded money for capital investment; however, this had changed between 2008 and 2014 when alcohol sales fell precipitately.

For context, and to illustrate the need for a move toward a more sophisticated model, JD reported that UEASU was now the most commercially leveraged SU in the country. JD noted that UEASU's position was quite anomalous as it was able to have both bars and retail on campus and this exclusivity was seen, to some extent, by the University as a grant in kind. JD noted a key problem with the current model was that the University had a standard inflation rate to cover all its departments including the grant to UEASU. JD noted that a major problem caused by the assumption of a universal rate was that any inflation above this rate in the Charity would have to be covered by increased profits from the commercial operations and, over the last few years, this had proved impossible given the limited capacity in the Shop and the LCR.

JD noted that there would have to be change as, over the coming years, UEASU's financial position would become untenable.

JD characterised the relationship with the University as good and was hopeful that the University would come to see the need to treat UEASU differently from other departments in application of the inflation rate.

JD noted that there was scope for positive conversations with the University on areas such as student participation in the local voluntary sector where UEA scored extremely low in comparison

to its competitor universities and out of such conversations the University might see the need to increase the grant.

JD noted there was also further scope for rationalisation over IT infrastructure such as software licenses.

JD noted that the current increase in student numbers would not generate increased revenues from commercial operations as this, again, would be stymied given the limited capacity of the present infrastructure.

JD pointed to three significant financial pressures. JD noted that, as membership services now took up more of Union House and less space was devoted to trading, there was less ability to reclaim VAT. JD noted that, secondly, there was the historical legacy of the old NUS final salary pension scheme and that with increased adult longevity the pension deficit would, inevitably, continue to grow. JD noted that, thirdly, in the refurbishment of Union House, there had been no real costing of what was, in effect, the running of a social learning space for over eighteen hours a day in term time; JD believed there would have to be a conversation with the University as to this real cost.

JD noted UEASU would, simultaneously, be looking at how its balance sheet was structured in terms of the treatment of depreciation of fixed assets.

JD summarised the thrust of the Union's approach to future discussions with the University as:

- Apply the University inflationary rate to our expenditure rather than our grant
- Real conversations over student experience funding
- Money-saving collaboration on back-office functions
- Exploring possibilities of increasing retail outlets on campus
- Exploring different balance sheet treatment of depreciations and capital write-offs with regard to the building

As to the Waterfront, JD noted that, coming up to the renewal of the lease, there were substantial unplanned refurbishments required and, if the lease were extended, continuous upkeep of the building would have to be factored in to future budgeting.

In conclusion, JD outlined the recommendations that had been sent the Finance Committee of the Trustees:

1. Write down of assets replaced by the recent refurbishment
2. Seek clarification from the University on capital investment going forward
3. Restructure the balance sheet in light of 1 and 2
4. Create and actively manage an appropriate investment fund for future expenditure on membership goals

S Jones asked whether the new approach would mean that the cash reserves would be considerably lower than in the past.

JD noted that they would but, in comparison with the great majority of SUs, UEASU would still have an extraordinarily healthy cash reserve which could then be matched with future risk.

T Antoniou Phillips noted the drive to cut costs in commercial operations but also there was a need to provide a service for members and cited the running of Unio at weekends; they wondered whether this type of service would be cut to lower costs.

JD noted different staff ratios had been set for these type of services and the only requirement of them was that they should break even and not be loss making.

1503 Cycle of Business

Noted

1504 Any Other Business

There was none.

1505 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting

To note the next meeting will be held at 5.00 pm on Thursday 14 January in Bookable Room 2, Union House.