

1. To create positive change in matters relating to the education of UEA students
by effectively representing their collective views.



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

7 March 2013

Summary

Key Discussions

- By Election dates
- Electronic voting
- Ethical banking and ESSA's response
- Ethical banking and the University
- University's proposal to spend money on the outward appearance of buildings on campus
- UUUEAS' ability to communicate with members by email
- Officers' attendance as observers at NUS Conference
- Survey of General Election candidates
- PRES Survey

Key Actions

- SOC agreed dates of Ethnic Minorities Officer By Election
- J Levell appointed DRO
- Other students' unions to be contacted over ESSA boycott

Union of UEA Students Mission 2009-13

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by effectively representing their collective views.



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Voting Members present:

Eliot Fallows (Non Portfolio Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer), Tess Gilder-Smith (Women's Officer), John Taylor (Post Graduate Officer), Rosie Rawle (Ethical Issues Officer), Benjamin Brown (Environment Officer), Jess Lewis (Non-Portfolio Officer), Hussam Hussein (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Astrid Heidemann Simonson (International Officer), Abbi Forsyth (Non Portfolio Officer) for last part of meeting, Richard Laverick (LGBT Officer).

Chair

Matthew Myles (Communications Officer),

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker).

Apologies:

Derek Bowden (Chief Executive), Sam Clark (Community and Student Rights Officer), Trevor Killeen (Mature Students Officer), Kim Jenkins (Students with Disabilities Officer), Josh Bowker (Academic Officer), Bintu Foday (Non-Portfolio Officer).

888 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February

The minutes were agreed.

889 Action Log

Chair noted the completed actions.

J Levell reported that he was still working on the Safe Room and noted that the issue would be room bookings and when the space could be free, he would be discussing the matter with UUEAS staff.

Chair noted that he and staff would be drafting the PTO Handover Book and, hopefully, SOC would be able to see the results at the next meeting.

J Levell reported that Luke Gilbert, the interim Chief Executive, would be attending the next SOC meeting and that his two days each week would be on Thursdays and Fridays. He noted that D Bowden's last day in post would be 22 March and that Officers were invited to a leaving drink with D Bowden at lunchtime of his final day.

Chair noted as to the discussion session on the Strategic Plan that, in the absence of S Clark, it would be best to reschedule this item for a future meeting.

J Taylor noted that there would be another meeting, quite soon, with the University on the Student Charter and he asked Officers to post any input on the Facebook page.

Chair asked that the ordering of Officer Hoodies be allocated to S Clark and J Bowker.

Chair noted that the meeting between the new PVC Academic and the new Officers should be organised soon and, therefore, be moved to the current Action Log.

890 Matters Arising

There were none.

891 Ethnic Minorities By Election

Chair drew SOC's attention to the options outlined in his briefing paper, noting that the main difference between the first two options were the dates for closure of nominations and of candidate training. He further noted SOC should consider that the Investment Society were still planning to petition for a referendum on the ESSA boycott and it would be best if a referendum did not happen during a by election.

R Rawle asked if letters urging individual UUEAS members to consider running would be sent.

Chair noted that they would not but that there would be online publicity and that he was reasonably confident that 3 or 4 candidates would come forward.

SOC agreed to Option 1 with a shorter nomination period and candidate training before the Easter break.

Action

SOC elected J Levell as DRO for the By Election.

Action

Chair noted that, as DRO, he had one small concern over the General Election process. He noted that the University were investigating whether the high traffic which they believed had caused the problems with electronic voting might have been the result of a possible attempted hacking as it appeared that someone had tried to vote over 2800 times in just 11 minutes. He believed that there would be no problem as to the validity of the election results, as all who had wanted to vote had been able to do so. However, he asked that the University's concerns be minuted.

J Taylor, noted, as a former IT specialist, that it was hard to believe that this level of traffic could have caused the problems.

892 RBS ESSA Update

Chair noted the response from ESSA in the agenda papers.

R Rawle noted that the part of RBS that administered ESSA, 'FIG: Find, Invest, Grow', was the corporate, social responsibility arm of RBS. She

noted that FIG disavowed any ability to influence RBS' investment policies.

A Simonson noted that the ESSA response was that that they would not reconsider their position; so she believed this meant UUEAS should now contact other students' unions about the boycott.

Chair noted his belief that it was absurd for one part of an organisation to espouse a corporate social responsibility ethic whilst disassociating itself from the destructive actions of the main part of the organisation.

R Rawle noted the absurdity of FIG sponsoring community environmental schemes when their main arm was financing the most environmentally destructive industrial project on the planet.

T Gilder-Smith thought it bizarre that BP was sponsoring International Women's' Day.

R Rawle noted another bank, Barclays, were sponsoring National Volunteering Week.

J Levell reported that again another bank, Santander, had contacted UUEAS about their own version of the ESSA scheme. He noted that, given UUEAS' somewhat unhappy recent interaction with Santander and taking in mind the discussion, he would not be taking up the offer for UUEAS to become involved.

R Rawle noted the above discussion showed the importance of having an overarching policy on ethical banking and she would be bringing this to the next meeting. She noted she would be meeting with the Investment Society to outline the reasons for the boycott.

Action

SOC agreed that UUEAS would be contact other students' unions and work with them to help them campaign for an ESSA boycott.

Action

Chair noted that two Officers who had expressed reservations about the boycott, A Forsyth and B Foday, were not present and they should be involved in discussions before the next meeting of Council.

893 Review of decisions made by Union Council on 28 February

J Taylor noted that there were several comments from the Vice-Chancellor that should be followed up.

R Rawle noted the VC's commitment to 'reflect' on Barclays.

J Lewis noted she had been informed that, constitutionally, the University was prohibited from imposing a boycott.

Chair noted that University Council had passed policy that the University would need its permission before campaigning on a particular issue. However, he noted that UUEAS could argue that refusal to bank with a particular bank was not campaigning but adherence to ethical standards.

R Rawle noted that, in University committees on procurement, the University took ethical and environmental standards into account when making decisions.

B Brown wondered whether the new building projects, mentioned by the VC, were on Green Belt land

J Levell reported that they were not.

Chair believed the new projects reflected the University's preoccupation with what the campus looked like rather than attention to service provision. He felt that the money recently allocated to improving the outside appearance of the building would make little difference but if it were spent on the inside it would be of massive benefit to students.

B Brown wondered whether the projected spend on the outside of the buildings would include investment in double glazing and other energy saving technology.

J Levell noted this had not been mentioned at the meetings he had attended.

SOC agreed that the Finance Officer would bring updates on the University's renovation plans to the next and future meetings.

Action

A Simonson noted the importance of Officers being consulted by the University as to building projects; as for the new accommodation block she would want to lobby for all Erasmus students to be guaranteed accommodation.

J Levell reported his concerns as to the practicalities of the projected Enterprise Centre and he believed the money would be better spent elsewhere.

T Gilder-Smith raised the issue of UUEAS' ability to communicate with the members.

R Laverick noted that the Dean of Students who had failed to help UUEAS send a universal email at the height of the election crisis had seen fit to send an all student email asking for views on student accommodation. He believed that this highlighted DOS' true sense of priorities.

J Taylor noted, on the new accommodation block, that trees had been felled, already, so that the University would not be breaking the law by felling them during nesting season, and that, if students objected to this and other issues to do with the project, they could write formally to Norwich City Council as part of the planning consultation. He believed this would send a strong message to the University.

Chair noted, on the EU resolution, he had written to the proposer with the suggestion that the Resolves should simply be that, in the event of a yes vote, UUEAS should campaign to stay in the EU.

894 Management Committee Minutes

Chair noted the minutes from the 11 February meeting.

J Levell noted that his request for funding to attend as an observer at NUS Conference, in order to run for the Block of 15, had been rejected. He noted that he would still like to attend Conference and that a contact from NUS could provide him with free accommodation and a balcony pass. He noted that he would bring a funding request, purely, for transport costs. He asked SOC whether they had any objections, in principle, to his attending Conference.

A Simonson wondered if attendees should be elected.

Chair noted his confusion as he thought the opportunity for attendance had been offered to Councillors.

J Levell confirmed he had sent emails and had not received any responses.

J Levell confirmed that he would look into the matter of attendance of observers and bring the matter back to SOC.

SOC noted the issue of queuing in the Hive and separate queues for buying smoothies and the difficulties faced by staff.

895 Any Other Business

Chair reported from the CRG meeting with the NUS expert on democracy and governance. He noted students would be surveyed as to their views on how to make UUEAS democracy effective. He noted he would be passing the survey on to the next year's Officers to feed into the finalisation of the CRG proposals.

R Rawle asked that the exercise on "what would happen without the democratic structures being in place" should be viewed online.

R Rawle noted that all candidates at the recent elections had been surveyed and she wondered how the results of the survey would be used and whether a discussion session might be held

Chair noted that this would be part of the Election Planning Group review and he would organise a discussion with the candidates.

Action

T Gilder-Smith asked that FAQs be included in candidates' handbooks to guide them through questions such as what 'self-defined' meant.

Action

J Lewis reported that there was an anti-bedroom tax event scheduled soon in Norwich and wondered whether she would need to submit a funding request for leaflets. Chair noted that, if there were time, a financial request should be submitted.

SOC noted that this could be advertised on the front page of the website with the anti-austerity logo.

Action

A Simonson noted she was following up the position of Syrian students, in the light of the VC's answer and she believed it would be good to organise a petition in order to show broad student support and to rebut the suggestion that international and home students might object to fee waivers being applied to one group of students.

Chair noted that the petition would be supportive of the policy.

J Taylor reported that GSA elections would be taking place, the following week. He noted that the two candidates for President were women so UUEAS would have a female PG Officer for the coming year.

He noted problems with the PRES survey of PG research students; he characterised the questions as awful and noted the inconsistencies in the format of the survey. He noted that, in the questions on a PG social space, the only options given were 'PGR students only' or 'all students and staff'. Thus, he believed it was skewed to completely

segregated or all inclusive with a bias toward segregation. He noted he had raised his concerns with the University and that he had asked that before the University took any decisions based on the survey's results there should be prior consultation with students. He reported that a NUS survey had shown a third of PG students that taught had been shown to be earning below both the Minimum and the Living Wage. He noted he would analyse the figures and report back to a future meeting.

Action

SOC thanked the Chair for his excellent work as DRO during the General Elections.

- 896 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting**
5 pm, Thursday 14 March in the Board Room (Formal items only).