

**Union of UEA Students Purpose:**

“To enrich the life of every UEA student”



**Minutes of the Student Officer Committee**

**5 December 2013**

**Summary**

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**Key Discussions**

- Guest Speakers at Union Council
- Reporting from Union Council Action Log Committee
- Implementation of Fair Treatment of UUEAS Staff policy
- Consultation on future Full Time Officer structure
- Management Committee Report to Council

**Key Actions**

- Individual Officers to be given £200 campaigns' budgets
- Improvement Plan to be widely circulated once publication approved by the Trustees
- Reporting template for individual Officers to Council agreed

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## Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

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### Voting Members present:

Louise Withers Green (Academic Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Kimberley Hirst-Jones (Postgraduate Officer), Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer), Eunice Opore-Addo (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer), Emma Silk (Environment Officer), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer), Daniel Delargy (Students with Disabilities Officer), Freddie Meade (Non-Portfolio Officer), Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Holly Staynor (LGBT+ Officer), Trevor Killeen (Mature Students Officer) joined the meeting later.

### Non-voting Member

Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive).

### Chair

Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer).

### In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker)

### Apologies:

Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer), Rachel Knott (Women's Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer).

### 1075 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2013

The minutes were agreed.

### 1076 Action Log

**Union Council Action Log:** L Sloan noted this item should have been part of the agenda papers; she asked Officers to update any of their actions on policy implementation.

**Local Mental Health Services/UCU Industrial Action:** R Rawle reported she had written the health service open letter and she had discovered a second, more comprehensive, existing policy on industrial actions. SOC

agreed these items would be struck from the SOC Log.

**1077 Matters Arising**

There were none.

**1078 Elections**

In view of the absence of both DRO candidates; consideration of this item was postponed.

**1079 Guest Speakers at Union Council**

L Sloan noted, at the last meeting, a guest speaker had taken up 30 minutes and the meeting had not been able to consider all its agenda items. She proposed that guest speakers should, in future, be invited to an open meeting for all students which would be widely publicised rather than to Council.

T A Ngo believed that guest speakers at UUEAS should be better publicised

S Bachelier noted concerns as to the possible low turn-out at open meeting.

R Rawle noted she would, at SOC's suggestion, ask the Chair to consult Council on the matter.

**Action**

**1080 Individual Officer Campaigns Budgets**

L Sloan noted her disagreement with the proposal not to bring funding requests to meetings; she also noted her concerns as to where any extra money, referred to in the proposal, would come from.

L Withers Green felt that it was an inappropriate use of SOC's time to examine individual funding requests for small amounts of money.

R Rawle argued that there was no structure to discuss other areas of UUEAS' finances at SOC and that the campaign budget was one area it had control of and that this should be retained.

L Withers Green noted these concerns but noted she believed SOC should be looking at the wider financial direction of UUEAS.

R Rawle believed a compromise would be to have small individual budgets alongside the general budget. She noted that there was a need for caution as the current year had been unusual with no big expenditure items such as coaches to national demos.

J Dickinson advised that the NUS divided campaigns budgets into guaranteed, negotiated and priority categories. SOC agreed J Dickinson would bring an advisory paper to a future meeting to inform future budget planning.

**Action**

T A Ngo suggested splitting the personal and general budgets 50/50.

E Gilbert suggested a personal budget allocation of £200 per capita.

L Sloan highlighted a problem: the Ethical Careers Fair had not been in her manifesto but she had been mandated by Council to implement policy and organising the Fair would take up all and more of her entire personal campaigns budget.

S Bachelier thought a solution to the problem would be that any spending

on actions mandated by Council would come from the general budget and not the personal budgets.

SOC voted by 9 votes to 3 to T A Ngo's proposal that Officers would be given £200 personal campaigns budgets. Chair noted he would prepare a paper, detailing the changes, for the next meeting.

### Action

1082

#### Union Council Action Log

R Rawle noted this was a live Google Document that Officers could access and update. Key reports were:

**Postgraduate work space:** K Hirst-Jones reported she had met with the Library concerning their plans for postgraduate workspace. She noted that the Library had plans to provide separate postgraduate study space and separate Ph.D. space as well as lockers and that the conversion work would take place in summer 2014.

**Students as partners:** L Withers Green reported she was submitting jointly with the University two HEFCE Catalyst funding bids and would be presenting a workshop on partnership at the University Teaching and Learning Day.

**Terms of Reference for SOC, Council and the Trustee:** J Dickinson advised that this would be the focus for the joint meeting between SOC and the Trustees.

R Rawle noted that there had been questions as to why another Committee was needed but noted the UCALC meeting took over an hour and a half and this would be impractical to integrate into SOC meetings.. She understood Officers might have concerns over the lack of ownership of UCALC's recommendations but noted any Officer was very welcome to attend the meetings or to set up a separate SOC committee. She felt the work of UCALC to be important and ground-breaking. SOC agreed to receive fortnightly updates from UCALC.

1083

#### Policy 1442

Chair noted that this was to be considered by SOC as to the mandated actions in Resolves 3 and the references to the mandated actions prescribed by the earlier Policy 1254.

R Rawle confirmed to the Chair that the Trustees had not, as yet, considered Policy 1442.

R Rawle felt that the PTOs had not been made fully aware of the FTOs strategy on the Block Grant. She noted the following key innovative strands in the lobbying strategy:

The formal cycle of meetings between the FTOs and the University's ET.  
A presentation to University Council.

A presentation to over 40 key University decision makers.

L Withers Green noted a key element of the strategy had been to present to the University a well-thought out plan for what a better-resourced UUEAS might achieve.

R Rawle argued that formulation for a future strategy should come from SOC as a body.

L Sloan noted the progress so far had been to get small grants for specific projects which had very little effect on students' lives. She felt UUEAS was content to acquiesce to requests from the University on issues such as

'Members Only' in the hope of an increase in the Block Grant which she believed the University had no intention of agreeing. She believed under the present strategy UUEAS would gradually lose its autonomy.

F Meade believed there had been very little consultation with Officers or the wider student body as to the formulation of strategy.

L Withers Green argued that it was important to maintain a relationship with the University that was based on partnership not confrontation. She noted that this is why she had brought the Students as Partners Policy to Council.

L Sloan believed that very few members had understood this policy.

T Killeen noted that the decision by the University to spend £6 million upgrading Union House was more about appearances and maintaining the University's place in the THE table than real support for UUEAS.

E Gilbert argued for a two pronged approach: on some issues one had to work in partnership with the University whilst, on some, UUEAS had to demonstrate that it 'meant business' and could take a stand.

T Killeen believed the policy to be very clear: SOC must publish the lobbying strategy and then take action to increase the Block Grant. He believed that, at present, UUEAS should take steps to get its Own house in order and, in the meantime, ensure that the lobbying strategy was well publicised. He argued that the University would not pour money into an organisation that was bleeding money.

R Rawle noted that the University had intimated that there would be no hope of an increased grant until UUEAS had demonstrated improvements to its operations. She noted UUEAS Trustees believed that all options over the lobbying had been exhausted and that the requirements of Resolves 1 had been fulfilled. However, she believed, as a member of SOC, that there was a possibility that all options had not been exhausted.

T Killeen noted the importance of publicising the Block Grant figures so that the entire UUEAS membership knew how derisory the grant from the University actually was.

L Sloan believed that, in this instance, Council had set clear policy but that this had been twisted and policy implementation had not been brought to SOC for consideration.

F Meade agreed that UUEAS had to get its house in order but believed that decisions had to take place with accountability and through the democratic process.

T Killeen noted that full discussion on staffing matters was precluded by the Staff Protocol.

L Sloan noted that Council had already discussed the matter of making cuts to staff and had decided there should be no cuts; unfortunately, Council's wishes had been ignored.

T Killeen believed there was a link between efficiency and the Block Grant negotiations.

L Sloan argued that 'efficiency' was the key word and that Council had not taken the word to mean the necessity to sack people.

T Killeen argued that, essentially, Council had asked SOC to lobby for an increase in the Block Grant to subsidize UUEAS' inefficiencies; he believed this approach to be misguided. He noted that this did not mean he was in favour of redundancies; he would rather see staff deployed elsewhere in the organisation.

Chair believed SOC should look at another aspect to the question: who did students think was looking after their best interests in this matter: the University or UUEAS. He felt it would be hard for UUEAS to answer any charge by the University that it was not acting in its members' best interests when it continued to waste money in its commercial operations. J Dickinson advised that it was important to remember that the FTOS had given full detailed reports on the Block Grant lobbying campaign to a previous meeting of Council and that open, accountable processes had been followed.

T Killeen believed lessons should be learnt in terms of SOC's communications and organisation as failures in these areas had caused many problems. He noted this had been demonstrated by the rushed consultation exercise over the future of the FTO structure. He believed SOC should be far more pro-active in communicating with students and should be making the membership aware of the fact that the University would not supply UUEAS with members' emails.

Chair asked that the full comparator Block Grant charts and information be posted on the Blog and that a statement on the lobbying campaign should be posted on the SOC Facebook page for approval before being posted on the Blog.

R Rawle believed that Council really needed to see a plan for both the Block Grant and efficiencies and that the ideal vehicle for this would be the Improvement Plan that had been sent to the Trustees.

SOC agreed that the Improvement Plan would be circulated to Councillors once the Trustees had agreed to its publication.

#### **Action**

#### **1081 Full Time Officer Structure**

T Killeen believed that J Levell had taken on board the critique of the consultation in that SOC had had no opportunity to feed into the proposals for the new structure that had been sent out for consultation. He believed the consultation would have to be better planned and to would have to engage a wider number of students. He felt there would be no problem in putting back the election and calling the referendum at the meeting Council in January.

#### **1084 Reporting Template**

R Rawle drew attention to the proposed template which she believed to be reasonably clear and would aid transparency and reporting to Council.

SOC agreed to adopt the template and that the template would form the basis of reports to Council from the start of the next semester. SOC noted that the Reports would be presented to Council as an appendix to the main agenda.

#### **Action**

#### **1085 Management Committee Minutes**

L Sloan noted that she continued to be unhappy about the format of the minutes as SOC had been informed that they would be presented in far more detail. She noted that there was still no discussion included in the minutes and how decisions had been reached.

J Dickinson advised that for most of the items there had been no substantive discussions as these had taken place prior to the meeting. J Dickinson noted he did not realise that SOC did not receive the Management agenda papers as these provided more context for the minutes. He noted that SOC would, in future, receive the agenda papers.

**1086 Any Other Business**

T Killeen reported that he had arranged the Mature Students' Forum for 28 January which would be an all-day event.

E Opare-Addo reported that Signature Ministries Society had wanted to organise a worship night but had been told by both the University and UUEAS that they could not hire rooms for this purpose.

T Killeen believed that this information was inaccurate and that there would be no problem as to the Society hiring one of UUEAS' private rooms. H Staynor noted she was organising the 'Big Pride Discussion Forum' which would take place the following week; she invited Officers to attend.

F Meade wondered what views Officers might have on the Management Committee Report that had been submitted to Council. He noted that in the Report the FTOs had concluded that the negotiating process had been exhausted. He noted that this was the first he had heard of this conclusion. He asked whether the report had been written by the Chief executive.

A Moore advised that he had received the report by email from the Chief Executive and, under time pressure to publish the Council agenda, he had assumed, mistakenly, that it was an advisory report to Council when, in fact, it was a report from the Full Time Officers.

L Sloan noted that R Rawle had disassociated herself from the Report. Chair noted that the MarComm Manager had asked that SOC be informed that the UUEAS Annual Survey would be starting the following Monday. Chair asked Officers to help in the promotion of the Survey. SOC agreed they would help to promote the Survey the following week. T Killeen asked that students taking the Survey should be encouraged to sign up for E-Rabbit.

**1087 Time, Date and Place**

T A Ngo suggested having 'bring a dish' refreshments at the following meeting.

SOC noted the joint meeting with the Trustees scheduled for 6 pm, and agreed to meet beforehand at 5 PM in a venue tbc.