

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

“To enrich the life of every UEA student”



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

13 February 2014

Summary

Key Discussions

- UUEAS Restructure
- Management Committee minutes

Key Actions

- Block Grant Committee to meet the following week
- Requested Trustees to formally consider Management Committee's decision on the restructure
- R Rawle, E Gilbert, F Meade, K Hirst-Jones and L Sloan made personal statements that they were politically opposed to the restructuring that was being undertaken by UUEAS

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Voting Members present:

Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Kimberley Hirst-Jones (Postgraduate Officer), Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer), H Staynor (LGBT+ Officer), F Meade (Non Portfolio Officer).

Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer), Rachel Knott (Women's Officer), joined the meeting part the way through.

Non-voting Member

Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive).

Chair

Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer).

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker)

Apologies:

Joe Levell (Finance Officer), Emma Silk (Environment Officer).

1128 Membership

Chair noted that this item had been added because one Officer had missed two meetings without communicating with SOC; she noted, however, that the Officer was present at the current meeting.

1129 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2014

The minutes were agreed.

1130 Minutes of the joint meeting with the GSA held on 31 January 2014

The minutes were agreed.

- 1131 Matters Arising**
L Sloan raised the matter of the name and role change and make-up of Management Committee. Chair noted this would be covered later in the meeting.
- 1132 Action Log**
R Rawle noted that, since the Union Council Action Log Committee had been disbanded, she was the sole person responsible for monitoring implementation of policy passed by Council. She asked her request that the **Council Action Log** should be an agenda item at each meeting and then she could present actions that needed to be taken.
SOC agreed that the **ethical banking** motion be removed from the SOC Action Log.
R Rawle reported, on the **ambiguity of questions in Referendums**, this would be covered in a future meeting of the CRG which she would be arranging.
T A Ngo noted on, **personal campaign cards**, that Officers could see E Allard, in MarComms, and he would arrange this; Chair noted this information would be posted on Facebook. SOC agreed that E Allard would be asked to prepare cards for the incoming PTOs.
R Rawle reported, on guest speakers at Council that she had spoken to the Chair of Council who was happy to have them so long as he was formally made aware of a proposed invitation before it was sent.
R Rawle reported that the first meeting of the **Democracy and Representation Working Group** had been held but that only one person had attended.
R Rawle noted she had not had a date confirmed for an exit interview with T Killeen.
R Rawle reported, on **the Stop the War affiliation**, noted that this could be done through a UUEAS Society. On other affiliations, she noted the Right to Work Campaign no longer existed whilst Coalition of Resistance was now part of the Peoples' Assembly; she would be reporting the matter to the next Council meeting.
H Staynor noted, on the question about not showing the **Winter Olympics** in the Bars, that she re-considered the matter and she believed that boycotting the Games would not be the best way of showing solidarity with LGBT+ athletes; she believed that the campaign should be about positive not negative change. SOC agreed that this item would be removed from the Log.
- 1133 Officers on Livewire Union Show**
B Foday, H Staynor and R Rawle to take part, the following week.
- 1134 Election Timetable**
SOC confirmed its approval of the timetable.
- 1135 Referendum Report**
Chair noted, in her capacity as DRO, that the Referendum had been successful in terms of turn out with 963 votes cast. She noted there had numerous complaints which she would be addressing in her report to Council. She noted that the problems had arisen from differing

interpretations of the Constitution and Bye-Laws.

R Rawle noted that she would be bringing emergency resolutions to Council, later in the day, one of which would be to confirm the Referendum results as she believed the complainants might take the matter further in the hope of annulling the Referendum result.

J Dickinson advised that his guidance to the Chair of Council would be that this resolution should be ruled out of order as Council would have the right to amend the resolution which would conflict with a decision made by a higher power: the generality of students.

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UUEAS Restructure

L Sloan asked Officers whether they believed SOC should have been consulted prior to the implementation of the Restructure and what they thought of the Restructure, itself.

E Gilbert argued that SOC should have been consulted and she noted her annoyance that she only found out once it had begun.

H Staynor noted that SOC had only limited powers over staffing issues but she believed they should have been consulted as this would have been more democratic and SOC might have set some guidelines and given some direction to the restructuring.

K Hirst-Jones noted a formal consultation meeting would have been desirable.

R Rawle noted J Levell had called a briefing meeting after staff had been informed of the proposals and at short notice and at an inconvenient time.

S Bachelier thought it would have been good if Officers had, at least, been informed beforehand.

TA Ngo noted that SOC had been informed via Facebook, in the same way as the Burger Van affair, with a proposal that had to be accepted but with the presumption that if Officers did not accept it there would be nothing they might do about it. TA Ngo accepted that SOC did not have much power over the matter but she could not accept the lack of consultation.

J Raynes noted that SOC did not get to decide over whether people lost their jobs or not. As to whether SOC should have been informed, he wondered whether Officers believed they should have been told before staff whose jobs might be at risks; he argued the answer would be no.

TA Ngo noted that SOC was the Student Officer Committee and it had to be accountable to students; but if any of her constituents had asked about what was going on in the Union she would have had to say that she had no idea. She believed her inability to answer would impact on her credibility.

E Gilbert believed the matter to be symptomatic of a situation where many decisions were taken without the PTOs being consulted and this was unacceptable.

R Rawle noted both the way the restructuring had been announced and the fact that it went against two UUEAS policies. She noted Council had mandated SOC to set up a Block Grant committee and this had not been done and she believed SOC should take responsibility for organising this. She asked that SOC immediately set a date for the committee to meet.

SOC agreed that a meeting of the Block Grant committee would be arranged for 4 pm, Wednesday, 19 February.

R Rawle argued there was a contradiction in that Management Committee had felt it had power to take the decision to launch the restructure before the process that SOC had been mandated to explore had been exhausted. She noted that the paper to Management Committee on the restructure had been tabled at the meeting; this had been the first time that the FTOs had seen it. She noted the FTOs had then had to ask for an extra three days to examine it and this came at the time they were fully involved in the Referendum campaign. She noted that at Management Committee there had not been a consensus; there had been many serious concerns raised. She noted her concerns that SOC, although they had been excluded from the decision making, still needed to hold Management Committee to account but they were unable to do this because they were not being given any minutes and she believed this should be a matter of serious concern for the PTOs. She believed SOC had the power to voice their unhappiness to Management Committee, to say that the decision making had been illegitimate and to demand detailed minutes of Management Committee meetings. She argued that SOC should take a formal vote on whether to ask for the Management Committee decision to be referred to the Trustee Board. She reminded SOC that the four FTOs had been rushed into a decision in moving forward what had been scheduled in the Improvement Plan for implementation in June. She noted that SOC could not stop the restructuring from happening but it could make a statement.

L Sloan noted she had raised at Council and in SOC the matter of Management Committee minutes and that she would have to characterise her feelings as being thoroughly 'pissed off' that her concerns had been ignored. She noted she had been told that the minutes would improve but they had continued to be of lamentable quality and she believed this to be unacceptable. She argued that, as well as a vote to send the matter to the Trustee Board, SOC should take a political vote as to whether or not individual Officers were in favour of the restructure going ahead; she thought this should be a matter of record.

E Gilbert argued that the restructure had been a shocking and terrible process and lessons had to be learnt for the future as to what was acceptable.

R Rawle believed that the votes on the political decision would hinge on whether Officers believed that the negotiations on the Block Grant had been exhausted.

L Sloan noted that she had not seen a shred of evidence brought to SOC on any campaigning or even any information given concerning the Block Grant and it was entirely within SOC's remit to take any indicative vote.

J Raynes felt there to be a semantic problem over the use of the verb 'to exhaust' as one could say they would not be exhausted until one had hurled oneself naked in protest at the Vice-Chancellor's windows. He also felt it would be inappropriate to vote when not all Officers were present and no agenda papers had been provided.

S Bachelier agreed that it would be inappropriate to take the results to Council when not all Officers had been present at the indicative vote.

R Rawle believed it important to have a 'temperature check' as to Officers' opinion on the Block Grant aspect; she also felt the SOC should take a vote on whether to refer the Management Committee decision to the Trustee Board.

J Dickinson advised that this matter would, in fact, be on the Board's agenda for the following week.

SOC voted by 7 votes for with no votes against and with three abstentions to request the Trustee Board that they formally consider Management Committee's decision on the restructure.

Chair noted that SOC would proceed to vote on whether any evidence on whether negotiations had taken place on the Block Grant.

J Raynes noted his protest that it would be improper to spring a vote, such as this, without notice or any information whatsoever.

R Rawle, L Sloan, E Gilbert, K Hirst-Jones, and F Meade asked that it be minuted that they believed that not all avenues had been explored as to negotiations to increase the Block Grant.

J Raynes asked that it be minuted that he had not seen any justification by UUEAS management for the decision to undertake the restructure that alluded in any way to the exhaustion of negotiations over the Block Grant.

L Sloan reiterated her request that Officers should formally vote on whether they were politically for or against the restructure.

J Raynes noted his opposition to a vote on the matter without any information.

R Rawle noted that this had been exactly the situation when Management Committee had been asked to vote on the matter.

TA Ngo noted that this would not be a decisive vote; it would be a statement by each Officer on where they stood, politically.

S Bachelier noted that very little new information would be available the following week to influence what would be a personal statement by each Officer.

J Raynes noted that SOC had postponed for five weeks a decision on whether to divide the Campaigns Budget because it felt that it did not have enough information. He believed when one was asking Officers to make a political decision, even if it was an indicative vote, one had to provide enough information to inform the decision and validate it.

TA Ngo thought that the information given on the unveiling of the restructure would have prepared Officers to make a decision.

SOC agreed to R Rawle's suggestion that Officers should make personal statements as to whether or not they agreed with the restructure and that this would not be a vote.

R Rawle, E Gilbert, F Meade, K Hirst-Jones and L Sloan made personal statements that they were politically opposed to the restructuring that was being undertaken by UUEAS.

J Raynes observed that he had just seen a student walk by and it

reminded him of the actual reasons why SOC met.
L Sloan interjected: "fucking hell" and R Rawle noted her thoughts as to how appropriate the comment had been.
Chair thanked Officers for their contributions to the discussion.

1137 Management Minutes

L Sloan reiterated her comments that Management Committee minutes had been terrible and that SOC had asked for them to be improved without any result. She believed it hard to gain any information from the current minutes. She noted that Management Committee's name, membership and role had been changed; she believed these changes to be unconstitutional.

R Rawle suggested this matter should be brought to the CRG and also put on the Trustee Board's agenda.

J Dickinson advised that there appeared to be some confusion in that Management Committee had not been re-named or had its membership changed. He noted that the minutes of 10 December made clear that it was a Management Committee meeting and were as verbatim as one could get. He noted that on 14 January a Management Committee meeting had not been held but the wider strategic management team had met with the FTOs for an away day that as it was not a formal meeting had not required to be minuted; but, for reasons of transparency, he created a minute of all the key decisions and sent it for inclusion in the SOC agenda papers.

He noted, as to membership, the committee was meeting under the auspices of a wider team but that the actual Management Committee membership was unchanged. He further noted that its constitutional role and its terms of reference were unchanged.

L Sloan noted that the meeting's notes had stated that the Committee had changed to be more operational.

J Dickinson advised that the Trustees had resolved to alter the level of delegation between the Trustee Board and Management Committee but this had not altered anything in terms of constitutionality.

Chair noted there were no minutes after 14 January.

J Dickinson advised that, if Officers only wanted formal meetings minuted then he would work on this assumption and only send these for inclusion on the agenda.

1138 Any Other Business

J Raynes noted that UUEAS had policy concerning ATOS, the commercial provider of disability assessments with regard to state benefits for the UK government. He noted recent press reports that the backlog of people waiting for assessments and therefore benefits had reached 80,000 and that ATOS had targeted a 'fail rate' for assessments of 65% which was deeply worrying for all of UUEAS' students with disabilities. He noted there were many actions that Officers could take to help implement policy; including lobbying their MPS and that he would post a link to the campaign on the SOC Facebook page with a summary of the press reports.

R Rawle asked Officers to shout out any of their activities for inclusion in the SOC Report to Council.

E Gilbert: building a bike generator

H Staynor: talking to Labour Soc about involvement in UUEAS, promoting the series of upcoming LGBT+ lectures, including one on heteronormative imagery in wild life films, a discussion group with DEV SOC on the international LGBT+ perspective and a quiz.

R Knott: organising the line-up for International Women's Day on 6 March.

TA Ngo: establishing the International Students' Committee which would focus on keeping the International Officer accountable and to which she would report.

K Hirst-Jones: reported the first PGT discussion group had met and that more PGT and PGCE students were becoming involved with the GSA with the help of the new Masters Rep.

L Sloan noted that the working group on designing a UUEAS Decision Making matrix would meet next week and she would be inviting the Chair and Deputy Chair of Council.

R Rawle noted progress on the new website had been excellent with the launch due within two weeks. She asked Officers to think of ideas to bring to the next SOC about Officer roles or activities for inclusion on the website.

Chair reported that the inaugural Inter-Faith Day would take place the following Thursday; she noted that the Day would be funded by the £500 grant that she had gained. She noted there would be a stall in the Square, or in case of bad weather, the Hive and there would be a discussion group with members of different faiths and holders of belief systems to talk on the theme of 'tolerance'. She noted she had organised food and refreshments,

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Time, Date and Place

4 pm, Thursday, 20 February in 1.31, Union House.