



Union Council Minutes

Date: Friday 28th January 2011

Time: 16:00

Venue: Essex House Rm 18

1. Attendance (16)

David Cichon <i>(Chair)</i>	Councillor for EngDes	Erif Petch	Women's Group Rep
Martha Baker	Councillor for MPS	Sol Schonfield	Communications Officer
Biz Bliss	Finance/Operations Officer	Scott Sheridan	Activities Officer
Keiran Burn	LGBT Rep	Jo Stovell	Activities Committee
James Duffield	Media Development Officer	Cameron Tait	President
Jo Goodman	Welfare Officer	Bobby Treweek	Activities Committee
Jamal Maxey	Councillor for BMEc	Lita Wallis	Education Officer
Becca Melhuish	Ethical & Environment Officer	Tom White	Councillor for LPS

Apologies for absence (5)

Jo Bailey	Councillor for Psychology	Serena Verdenicci	Activities Committee
Temujen		Stacey Whittle	Postgraduate Students' Officer
Gunawardena	Community Engagement Officer		
Danielle Oxenham	Councillor for Global Studies		

Other absences (4)

Sam Newman	Councillor for Informatics	Donal Twomey Brenner	Councillor for HAHP
Ikechukwu Onodugo	International Students' Officer	Daniel Ward	Councillor for LifeSci

Also present

Kate Madden	Women's Hockey	Roziye Aldcoe	
Kelly McBride		Charley Miller	
Paul Newton	Union Director	John Warmington	Minutes

The Chair reminded Council there was a packed agenda at this meeting and hoped members could remain throughout the meeting.

- 2. Minutes of Council meeting on 6th December.** These were approved. No matters arising were raised.
- 3. Order of agenda.** Sol proposed the motion on objectification/nude calendars should be debated before the AGM item. This was agreed. Cameron proposed the two 'emergency' motions should also be debated before the AGM and this was also agreed.

4. **Reports from committees and officers.** Written reports were submitted by a number of officers and included in the agenda. Because of the limited time verbal updates were not given. Jamal asked whether *Rate Your Landlord* was still open to submissions. Jo Goodman said that it was still open although provisional findings had been produced from responses already received. The reports were approved.
5. **Appointment to Activities Committee.** James Duffield agreed to be a Council member on the committee. Other places were still available.
6. **Motion on nude calendars.** Jo Stovell proposed the motion which calls for a change to Council policy that does not allow nude calendars to be produced by Union clubs. She said a survey had been carried into attitudes; a nude calendar could allow students to view other students as empowering. There is a particular view of female students involved in sport, as sport is seen as masculine and/or butch. The aim is to establish to students in general that female participation in sports is natural. Erif Petch said she had consulted with members of Women's Group about the contents of the motion; the most important thing is to ensure nobody feels unsafe. Kate Madden, Women's Hockey, was invited to speak in favour of the motion. She said Activities including sports teams are doing their own fund-raising. The calendar would a good way to bring women's sports teams together there was of course no question of "forcing" anyone to take part and by including all types of bodies it would overcome the perception that women who play sport have one type of figure.

Points made during debate included: although the intention was to be inclusive, the idea of the calendar or nudity in general would put off those from certain cultural backgrounds; and that Union Council should not say that a proposal from another area of the union is wrong because of hypothetical objections. Jamal Maxey asked whether, if the decision was in favour of calendars, there should be some guidelines. Scott Sheridan proposed that there should be a working group to look at how the policy would be implemented and to draw up some guidelines.

Jo Goodman said there were some issues about the 'Notes' and 'Believes' sections of the motion. Council then discussed whether to accept the motion or defer it for more consideration, noting that the current proposal for a calendar wished to make progress quickly. Finally it was proposed that without voting on the whole motion, Council agrees in principle that nude calendars can be acceptable in certain circumstances, on the basis of guidelines to be established by a working group. This was agreed by 13-2. It was then agreed 12-0 with 3 abstentions that the working group should be given the power to approve the calendar being proposed. Those nominated for the group were Erif, Jo G, Jo S, Scott, Sol and Kate Madden; to be convened by Scott; open to others to take part.

7. **Motion on campus housing.** Cameron Tait proposed an emergency motion concerning the rent levels on campus and the implications of the new housing at the North Field and what should

replace East Slope following its proposed demolition. He said matters had moved more quickly than anticipated and he wished the Union to have a policy that recognized the need for an adequate supply of lower-cost housing units after East Slope had gone. Several Council members commented on this situation, saying that although the University always quoted high demand for en-suite facilities, this demand would be substantially met by the North Field development and that often students wished to move to cheaper accommodation without en-suite during their year on campus. Also NUS research suggested that students in en-suite housing often socialize less in their flats. The main issue should be that the University should provide more affordable accommodation especially at a time when students' finances were becoming tighter. A vote was taken on the motion and it was carried with no opposition.

8. Motion on UK Benefits Agency consultation. Jo Goodman proposed this motion which refers to a current consultation which could result in far fewer international students coming to the UK and Sussex. There was no opposition to the motion. The additional point was made that the Union should make sure that the University was making appropriate representations to Government. An amendment was moved including this in the motion and the motion as amended was carried. Cameron asked anyone interested in making representations on the issue to get in touch.

9. Report of inquorate AGM and consideration on indicative votes. The meeting received the report of the meeting in November and the votes taken.

Motion on fees and cuts. The motion was endorsed without debate, excluding the reference to a demonstration on a date that has now passed.

Students against sexual harassment. The motion was discussed and especially the points that had been proposed to the AGM as an amendment, containing proposals that the Union should itself take action in cases when an allegation of sexual violence had been made. Jo Goodman said these amendments raised some problems around the powers of the Union and how they relate to the existing policies of the Union. Scott also pointed out that the word "societies" appeared where something like "clubs and societies" would be better. Erif pointed out that the words in the amendment originated from a completely different motion and do not fit with the spirit of this motion as intended; they could probably be taken out. Council then discussed which of the words added in the amendment might be retained; finally it was decided that: the words "the wishes of the survivor of an assault will always be taken into consideration first and foremost" could be retained by moving them to "Believes"; that each instance of "victim" should be replaced by "survivor"; and that otherwise the motion should be accepted without the added words. A vote was taken and this was agreed without opposition. The motion as amended was endorsed.

Motion on Jamie Shea. The motion was discussed and it was confirmed that Shea is still engaged in a programme as a visiting lecturer, the original appointment having been made outside the relevant department which could create an unwelcome precedent. It was proposed

and agreed to remove the reference to a demonstration on a date now passed, and instead to add to the first “Resolves” *“including support for upcoming public events associated with the campaign”*. Both amendments were carried.

The positions outlined in the motion were discussed, for example whether the main issue was the views of Shea, the fact he is not an accomplished academic, or the manner of his appointment. It was proposed that “believes” 3 and 4 should be deleted as well as the words “academic and” from “believes” 5. This was voted on in parts, the first two deletions not being agreed and the third one agreed 9-1. The motion as amended was endorsed.

10. **Update on Referendum on new constitution.** Cameron reported that the referendum would be held to coincide with the officer elections, and the officers and Operations Committee had agreed to campaign for a Yes vote.
11. **Amendment to Constitutional appendix on Union Media.** James Duffield introduced the proposals which update the membership and functions of the Media and Communications Committee. A question was raised whether the committee should be chaired by the Media Development Officer rather than the Communications Officer. It was agreed that this should be agreed by the two officers or the committee. With this amendment the document was agreed.
12. **Any other business.** The next meeting would be in week 6 and members would be notified of the time and place. The item not reached at this meeting on Council strategy would be considered then.

The meeting then closed.

Decisions of Union Council meeting, January 28, 2011

Housing and Widening Access

UK Border Agency Proposals and Consultation

Policy on the production of nude calendars by Union clubs, societies and student groups

Fees and cuts

Students against sexual harassment

Appointment of Jamie Shea as visiting lecturer

Housing and Widening Access

Notes:

1. On the 9th December, Parliament voted to raise tuition fees up to a maximum of £9000 a year.
2. East Slope is rapidly deteriorating.
3. The University is currently deciding on the next stage of accommodation development. We understand this will involve the phased demolition of East Slope and the development of new University-managed accommodation.
4. The new fee regime puts significant emphasis on local efforts to widen participation.
5. According to Union calculations with rents remaining the same and Northfields being the same price as Swanborough, the average rent will rise from £99.03 a week to £103.23 with the inclusion of Northfields. If East Slope was to be removed from this equation, this would rise to £106.84.
6. The government has voted to cut Educational Maintenance Allowance.
7. The government has announced AimHigher will be finished.

Believes:

1. Though we must not stop campaigning on a national scale against HE cuts, fee-rises and regressive reform, we must also focus on what the University can do to mitigate the damage.
2. The new fee regime will put off students from low-income backgrounds that will see the huge debt after a university education as a huge barrier.
3. The abolition of AimHigher will narrow access to universities and will ultimately result in a narrower demographic of those studying.
4. The University has a responsibility to do everything it can to make education available for all.
5. The Union has a responsibility to do all it can to remind the University of this.

Resolves:

1. Mandate the Full-Time-Officers to lobby the University to:
 - Freeze current rent prices for the next three years.
 - Replace East Slope with non-en suite accommodation which would occupy the position that East Slope currently holds at the bottom of the price range.
 - Consult thoroughly with both the Students' Union and the wider student body on an annual basis regarding rent increases and developments.
2. Mandate the Full-Time-Officers to build a report on University-managed accommodation to aid this process.

UK Border Agency Proposals and Consultation

Notes:

1. A UKBA and Home Office consultation has been released on the future of student immigration, which finishes on 31st January.

2. The Home Office Select Committee, headed by Keith Vaz MP, will consider the consultation and the future of student immigration after this.
3. On 7th February, the Home Office Select Committee will be visiting Brighton under the request of Caroline Lucas MP.
4. An ex-Sussex student has set up a campaign called 'Keep Your University International'.
5. A UCU study has noted that 30,000 jobs will be lost if these proposals go through. The study also suggests that courses, and even universities could close as a result of the decrease in funding.

Believes:

1. International students and a diverse University should be celebrated and defended.
2. The proposals are economically unviable. Funding will decrease from Universities as a result.

Resolves:

1. To continue to urge students to fill out the consultation form.
2. To urge Caroline Lucas and the Select Committee to come down to Sussex on 7th February.
3. If they do commit to coming to Sussex, to organise an event on 7th February with Caroline Lucas, Keep Your University International, the University, international societies and any other organisations that want to take part that will celebrate our international students and put public pressure on the committee.
4. To publicly oppose the restrictions on international students, and to urge the University to make appropriate representations to Government.

Council policy on the production of nude calendars by Union clubs, societies and student groups

Council agrees in principle that nude calendars can be acceptable in certain circumstances, on the basis of guidelines to be established by a working group.

Fees and cuts

This Union notes

1. The Browne Review has recommended removing the cap on University tuition fees, tightening up the student loans system and creating a two-tier system.
2. University funding is to be cut by 40% with no more funding for teaching in the arts and humanities.
3. Business Secretary Vince Cable expects some universities will collapse.
4. Resistance to austerity is taking off across Europe with general strikes in Greece, France, Spain and other countries.

This Union believes

1. Education is under attack on an unprecedented scale.
2. This is part of an agenda to make ordinary people pay for the deficit incurred bailing out the banks.
3. This agenda includes a broader assault on jobs and services, and we should stand in solidarity with other sectors facing cuts.
4. Education should be a right, provided at no charge to students and funded by progressive taxation.
5. Protests, occupations and industrial action are needed to stop the cuts to education.
6. This resistance should be coordinated at a national level.

This Union resolves

1. To affiliate to the Education Activist Network, which is coordinating resistance between unions across the country.
2. To publicise the TUC national demonstration in Spring 2011, support industrial action against cuts and austerity and add our voices to the call for a general strike.

Students against sexual harassment

This Union notes

1. That the NUS 'Hidden Marks' survey, a study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault; has found that 68% of women students experience some form of physical or verbal sexual harassment during their time at university. 21% of women students experience some form of physical violence. 25% experience some form of unwanted sexual contact. 7% of women students surveyed had experienced rape or attempted rape during their time at university.
2. That the Hidden Marks survey found that experiences of sexual harassment or violence had a significant and negative effect on students' mental health, academic achievements and interpersonal relationships.
3. That in the majority of cases recorded by Hidden Marks, the victim had not reported the incident to the police or to her university. 43% of victims of serious sexual assault had not told anyone about their experience. The most common reasons given included victims feeling too ashamed or embarrassed to report, thinking that they would not be believed or taken seriously, and thinking that they would be blamed for what had happened.
4. That although the Hidden Marks report only surveyed students identifying as women, other reports have shown that a smaller percentage of male students will also be victims of sexual or domestic violence during their time at university.

This Union believes

1. That all students deserve a university experience free from violence, harassment and intimidation. Students should not have their mental health, relationships or academic achievement negatively impacted by the violent or intimidatory actions of others.
2. That the university has a duty to help all students perform to the best of their academic ability. Academic work and attendance are often negatively impacted by a student's experience of violence or harassment.
3. That the university and the students' union have a duty, as part of their responsibility for student welfare, to maintain a campus environment in which harassment and violence are not tolerated.
4. That the university and the students' union have a duty to maintain a campus environment which is equally safe and supportive to all students, including those who are most likely to be affected by sexual harassment and violence, for example women students, disabled students and students within the LGBT community.
5. That the low rate of reporting to law enforcement or university authorities represents a wider social problem often referred to as a "culture of silence" surrounding sexual harassment and violence.
6. That the university and the union have a duty to treat all survivors of sexual harassment or violence with respect and care, and to make it clear to all students that all incidents of sexual harassment and violence will be taken seriously. The wishes of the survivor of an assault will always be taken into consideration first and foremost.

This Union resolves

1. To support and work with the Students Against Sexual Harassment campaign group in their efforts to prevent, raise awareness about, and offer support to survivors of sexual harassment and violence.
2. To ensure that all students' union staff understand what constitutes sexual harassment, and what they are able and expected to do to help maintain a safe and respectful environment on campus.
3. To provide annual training for one person in each of the union liberation groups (eg. Women's Group, LGBTQ) to enable them to provide peer support to students represented by that liberation group.
4. To work with existing university services, such as the Psychological and Counselling Service and the Student Life Centre, to encourage them to increase and improve their services for students who are survivors of sexual harassment and violence.

Appointment of Jamie Shea as visiting lecturer

This Union notes

1. That the University has appointed Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning for NATO, as a Visiting Lecturer in International Relations.
2. That NATO is in charge of the Western military presence in Afghanistan.
3. That Jamie Shea is a senior NATO official, not an academic.
4. Amnesty International has said NATO has failed to properly investigate civilian casualties in Afghanistan and accused NATO of war crimes for targeting civilian buildings during its bombing of Serbia.
5. A recent opinion poll found 77% of the public thought British troops should be withdrawn from Afghanistan within a year.
6. That many students and staff in International Relations and the wider university have expressed opposition to the appointment of Jamie Shea, and said they were not consulted prior to the appointment being made.

This Union believes

1. NATO is prosecuting an unwinnable, deadly and deeply unpopular war in Afghanistan.
2. To be a paid employee of NATO presents a conflict of interest with an academic position at the university.
3. To lecture at the university is a position of privilege. Decisions as to who should hold those positions should be subject to collective scrutiny.
4. A range of opinions should be represented in the university but 'free speech' does not mean we should not have academic and ethical standards.
5. The appointment of Jamie Shea is damaging to the university's ethical standing.
6. Jamie Shea's appointment should be rescinded

This Union resolves

1. To support the 'No Shea at Sussex' campaign, including support for upcoming public events associated with the campaign.
2. To lobby the university authorities to rescind Jamie Shea's appointment.