



Union Council Minutes

Date: Friday 17th June 2011

Time: 16:00

Venue: Fulton 103

Attendance (15)

David Cichon <i>(Chair)</i>	Councillor for EngDes	Becca Melhuish	Ethical & Environment Officer
Biz Bliss	Finance/Operations Officer	Sol Schonfield	Communications Officer
Keiran Burn	LGBT Rep	Scott Sheridan	Activities Officer
Catarina Carvalho	Councillor for Global Studies	Scarlett Storr	Councillor for Psychology
Sarah Clavel	Councillor for BMEc	Cameron Tait	President
Lucy Freedman	Councillor for English	Lita Wallis	Education Officer
Jo Goodman	Welfare Officer	Nad Williams	Councillor for HAHP
Bobby Harkess	Councillor for Informatics		

Apologies for absence (7)

James Duffield	Media Development Officer	Jamal Maxey	Councillor for BMEc
Danielle Oxenham	Councillor for Global Studies	Ashwin Persaud	Councillor for EngDes
Bobby Treweek	Activities Committee	Serena Verdenicci	Activities Committee
Daniel Ward	Councillor for LifeSci		
Alex Anpilogov	Media Dev Officer 2011-12	Tom Bucher	Comm Eng Off 2011-12
<i>John Allcock</i>	<i>Democracy/Rep coordinator</i>		

Other absences (12)

Jo Bailey	Councillor for Psychology	Ikechukwu Onodugo	International Students' Officer
Martha Baker	Councillor for MPS	Erif Petch	Women's Group Rep
Temujen Gunawardena	Community Engagement Officer	Jo Stovell	Activities Committee
Ian Llewellyn	Councillor for LPS	Donal Twomey Brenner	Councillor for HAHP
Paul Malget	Councillor for MFM	Tom White	Councillor for LPS
Sam Newman	Councillor for Informatics	Stacey Whittle	Postgraduate Students' Officer

Also present

Ariel Cohen	Communications Offr 2011-12	James Hickie	Activities Offr 2011-12
Alon Aviram	Global Studies	Adam Cantwell Corn	LPS
Meg Daly	Life Sciences	Jenny Legg	Life Sciences
<i>John Warmington</i>	<i>Minutes</i>	<i>Paul Newton</i>	<i>Union Director</i>

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted that it was not quorate, as so many members for whom this would be the last Council meeting were not present.

1. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest with matters on the agenda.** There were none.
2. **Minutes of Council meeting on 2nd June.** These were approved.
3. **Matters arising.** Cameron Tait has circulated information requested at the last meeting: that foundation year students would be charged the full £9000 fee and would have the same access to bursaries etc; and that year abroad and part time students would be charged pro-rata.
4. **Written reports from Union Committees. *Operations Committee.*** Cameron presented the written report circulated with the agenda. Members asked questions about the planned referendum on Israeli goods which was not taking place this term. In answer to questions, he confirmed that the boycott remained in place and that under the new retail arrangements on campus the Union will not be deciding what is stocked in the new supermarket. The decision as to whether to rerun the referendum has been left to the new year's officers/council. There is no provision in the constitution or rules to cover the situation.

Activities Committee. Scott Sheridan presented the written report circulated with the agenda. During the year a process had been put in place for setting up new sports clubs and a number had been started this year as well as creating a sports development fund.

5. **Other written and verbal reports. *Communications Officer.*** Sol Schonfield presented the written report circulated with the agenda. This included his report on the University IT Services meeting as well as a report on an editorial issue arising from The Badger. He also reported on discussions about designating certain toilets as 'gender neutral'.

President. Cameron Tait referred to his appreciation of the year as given to the Student Experience Forum, mentioning particularly a demand that future consultations on key changes should be better organized than the recent one on changing the academic year. He also reported on the recent ***Strategy and Performance Committee***, the main sub-committee of the University Council, which had considered the future financial position of the University. This was considered better than many other universities, and Sussex continued to see large numbers of applicants especially among International Students. This could lead to an issue for both the University and Union where students will want to ensure they are receiving the services they are entitled to and are paying for. Cameron also told Council that the assessment of the union within the SUEI process (***Students' Union Evaluation Initiative***) has taken place and we would hear the results in early July.

Lita Wallis expanded on the reference to consultation in the SPC report, saying that the issues had been raised also at Senate. A protocol had been drafted to ensure a better approach in future. In answer to a question about government guidelines on identifying violent extremism, the President said this had not been mentioned recently, and Jo Goodman said the previous level of attendance monitoring seemed to have stopped. Lita referred to a report from Universities UK on the issue.

Jo Goodman reported on the university's ***Equality and Diversity*** meeting which had been productive: she had presented the student parents' report which had been well received and recommendations had been made, for example on teaching practice and data collection. The Rate Your Landlord report has been sent to various interested parties such as local MPs and voluntary organizations. Scott Sheridan reported that ***Activities Committee*** would receive a report proposing a restructuring of its sub-committees.

6. USSU Budget strategy. Cameron Tait told Council that following agreement with the University on next year's core funding, a budget for the year had been drafted and would be presented to Council's first meeting in the new year. He also circulated a sheet detailing a three year budget forecast as presented in negotiations. The main change in the funds available to the Union will arise from the decision of the University to remove the Union's control of the store in York House as well as the Bramber House newsagents. Although other trading operations are under consideration these will not be producing revenue significant in the coming year. Union officers made a presentation to the University including the impact report showing the effect of Union activity on campus life. Included in the university's comments was concern about staff costs within the union and officers will be making a response on this point. It is clear that for the coming year, an amount of 'belt tightening' will be necessary while other income possibilities such as a lettings agency are developed. He asked Council members present to approve this strategy and approve the building of a full budget for the next council meeting.

Members discussed the financial and governance relationship between the Union and the Union trading company; the decision-making trading board needed to take into account ethical considerations. Biz said the Union's banking arrangements would be looked at again as well as the structure of the board. Cameron and Paul Newton answered questions about the arrangements with Southern Co-operative at Bramber House as well as the possible financial contribution from a lettings agency and the risk analysis of that project.

Members raised the issue of the Union's reserves and the suggested budget deficit over the next two years. Cameron said the reserves are held 'for a rainy day' and to use some of the balance at the present time is consistent with this. He also confirmed that the production of the three year forecast did not mean that the income from the University is guaranteed for those further years. If the financial situation does not improve, for example via the letting agency, the core budget will have to be looked at more stringently. Those present voted in favour of accepting the report.

7. Interim student trustees. Expressions of interest had been received in advance of the meeting from Sarah Clavel, Alon Aviram and Adam Cantwell Corn. Members mentioned the names of other students interested, and as the meeting was not quorate no decision could be made. Advice will be taken on whether these places must be filled now; if the appointments need to be made before the summer, the sabbatical trustees would make interim appointments from those students interested.

8. Annual Review of Equal Opportunities Policy. Jo Goodman reported on the annual review of the policy and said in future the union will collect more "demographic" data, to have an "audit" within departments and look at the success of "hard to reach student" initiatives. An issue that had arisen, for example, was the cultural provision for international students as well as tackling issues raised by the activity of external recruitment agencies. Another issue raised was development of students' conversational English alongside the academic language that was already provided. Bobby Harkess asked about any links that existed with international groups in Brighton & Hove. Jo said this had not been up to now done on a consistent basis but in the future it could be, with elected officers and representative office holders making those links. The report was accepted.

The Chair asked the meeting whether it wished to debate the two submitted motions despite the meeting being inquorate. The decision was to have the debate as both items were timely.

9. Motion Against Animal Entertainment industries

Jenny Legg of Life Sciences spoke to the motion submitted and explained it had been put together after the Union had recently used Brighton Racecourse as a venue for the Students' Union Awards ceremony. It is known that many racehorses have to be put to death every as a result of this sport and the key intention of the motion is that the Union will not use venues which use animals to entertain. She said the movers had not been aware of the financial reasons for using the venue (the circulated briefing explains it was a much lower cost than city centre alternatives). However it could be said that the use of a venue condones the cruelty involved.

Sol Schonfield and Scott Sheridan explained that in deciding on a venue for the awards event, the considerations were to find a place that accommodated the right number, and was the most affordable given the union's financial situation and the wish to allow those students nominated for awards free admission. Clearly if a policy was put in place rejecting the venue, that would have to be respected.

Keiran Burn noted the motion included "zoos" and thought this should be the subject of a separate discussion. Other members also asked about the precise list of venues that might be covered under a policy, and Scott asked whether a system could be included where a decision could be made within the union on any individual case. Jo Goodman mentioned children's visits to working farms, and maybe reference could be made to whether a venue had a suitable ethical policy. Lucy Freedman suggested the venues being barred could be those where "entertainment is a primary purpose"

The Chair suggested the proposers work with members of the Ethical and Environmental committee to draw up a policy, and Biz suggested some guidance would be welcomed now so that decisions could be made about Freshers' events. Keiran proposed that venues mentioned should not be used until a definitive policy was in place, and Cameron proposed members of Council with the movers could draw up such a policy, with a view to putting it to the membership at (the equivalent of) the AGM. This was agreed by those present.

10. No confidence in David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science.

Keiran Burn moved the motion circulated with the agenda. Lita Wallis explained that at Cambridge, Oxford and Warwick, statements of no confidence in David Willetts had been agreed by large numbers of academics and it was hoped at Sussex that a motion could be placed in the agenda of the July 1st Senate meeting. Cameron Tait referred to the proposed New College of the Humanities founded by A.C. Grayling and said that a group of Sussex academics from HAHP was mounting a campaign which the Union could join. After a brief discussion those present agreed to the proposal to submit a motion to Senate.

Catarina Carvalho proposed a further motion referring to Grayling's "**New College of the Humanities**". Among other proposals it calls for a "greylist" of the academics involved in the foundation, that is, that if they appear at Sussex attention will be drawn to their involvement in this project. Bobby Harkess was concerned that as a purely commercial concern, the "New College" needs to attract wealthy students and it will benefit from any publicity; by campaigning on the college you give it publicity. Lucy Freedman pointed out the offer by the college was not academically brilliant and they had received a lot of publicity already. After some further discussion those present agreed that this issue could also be put to Senate either separately or with the previous item.

The Chair closed the meeting and sent good wishes to those retiring from council.