

# President Council Report

April 2018

Manifesto Updates with General Activities:

## OneZone

Original Manifesto pledge - *Listening to students' concerns regarding the ever-becoming lack of space in the OneZone and lobby for an extension:*

*Every year, the University is accepting more students than previous years and provisional space in the OneZone will become a problematic issue, pressure needs to be put on University to act and provide solutions that will benefit students on Frenchay Campus.*

First meeting held to hold discussions regarding the use of OneZone, concerns regarding lack of space and possible extension took place on 11<sup>th</sup> of July. This meeting was held between myself and Pete Sutherland (Head of Space Management and Design) and our discussions were general regarding the space provisions and future plans the University had with the OneZone.

After gathering the feedback and plans from Adam, I then requested another follow up meeting with the Director of Estates and Facilities to take my proposals forward. The meeting on the 11th of August consisted of myself, Chris Abbott (Director of Estates and Facilities), Pete Sutherland (Head of Space Management and Design) and Adam Hill (Assistant Director of Business Services). I asked for updates on any projects the University were undergoing around the area or close proximity of the OneZone, and I was very happy to hear that at the old Students' Union Escape Bar and Red Bar have massive developments happening which affect this manifesto pledge in a very positive way. At the Escape Bar, there will be new study spaces available entitled 'Foundry' and upstairs at the Red Bar, there will be additional spaces created to cater for all kinds of students activity, and from the discussions held with Estates and Facilities at this meeting, it has now also been agreed that indeed it can also be used as additional seating areas for those who wish to use it who are carrying food from the OneZone, making it not a direct 'extension' of the OneZone however the principal still stands as extra spaces have been created. We are looking to have this space in use in time for the new 2018 calendar year. Moreover, there is an agreement in place to also open the classrooms at the back if they are still needed after the completion of the refurbishment of the old Red Bar.

Updates:

Pledge complete as much as possible, no change since last submission to Council. 'The Works' has since opened and satisfies the original need for additional spaces to be opened up. With the new FBL building, traffic is dispersed across different parts of the Campus.

## Relaxation Room

Original Manifesto pledge - *Introduction of a Relaxation Room:*

*Mental health is an important factor in the life of a student, this will help be a solution. I will lobby the university to provide these spaces on both Frenchay and Glenside Campus.*

The first discussion that took place related to this manifesto pledge was within my first week in Office, on 5<sup>th</sup> of July where the prospect of a new 'Student Centre' service and facility was being discussed. From this meeting I gathered ideas and the general plan for what this Student Centre would be, and then held a follow up meeting with Rachel Cowie (Director of Academic Services) on 24<sup>th</sup> of July. In this meeting it was brought to my attention that the new 'Student Centre' would be situated within the Farmhouse, once the Directorate had moved out to the new FBL Building, X Block. I proposed the idea of including the 'Relaxation Room' within the Student Centre at the Farmhouse, an idea which Rachel indeed was very receptive to. The task from here was then to gather feedback from students in general what they would like to see within this Student Centre, Sian Hampson (VP for Community and Welfare) created a Facebook poll to gather some feedback and one of the options we had put down were 'Comfy sofas & beanbags' which we intended as the 'Relaxation Room' – this at the time gathered over 150 votes, attached is a screenshot below with the latest figures (as of 20/11/17) of the idea gathering now 219 students on the Official UWE Freshers 2017 Group.

The idea of having a 'Relaxation Room' has preliminary been accepted, and now awaiting further developments for the Student Centre on Frenchay Campus. Once this has developed, I will turn my attention to also facilitating the Relaxation Room on Glenside Campus.

Updates:

Relaxation Room will be accommodated within the refurbishment plans of the Farmhouse. According to UWE's timeline of the project, the Farmhouse is due to open in September 2018. Had a meeting with Rachel Cowie on 16/02/18 to take a look around the Farmhouse to hear updates and potential locations of where the Relaxation Room can go.

## Faith Hub

Original Manifesto pledge – Better Facilities for Faith Related Activities:

*Will work actively with all the Faith societies to help ensure better facilities will be lobbied for that benefits students in the future including getting involved with discussions of a new **Faith Hub** bringing Faith groups together, complementing UWE's 2020 vision. Includes larger Prayer Rooms.*

The first meeting held regarding a proposed 'Faith Hub' was before I took office, within my capacity as President for the Islamic Society before elections. Whilst President-Elect, I held further meetings with Ian Yemm (University Chaplain) to put across my proposal and get initial feedback for all faith activities to move under one

building, or new building, so that inter-faith activities can be strengthened and to also form a solution to the ever-growing problem of lack of space in the Muslim Prayer Rooms and indeed the Octagon which is used for Friday Prayers. Upon taking office, I've had numerous meetings with both Ian Yemm and further meetings with Pete Sutherland to explore options. A meeting was then held between myself, Valerie Russell Emmott (then Equality and Diversity Manager at UWE Bristol, now on sabbatical leave), Russell Thomas (Equality and Diversity Manager in place for Valerie during her absence), Ian Yemm, Suzanne Carrie (Head of Student Inclusivity), Jason Briddon (Head of Library Services and also the Vice-Chancellor's Champion for Faith and Chair for Faith Advisory Board) and most influentially Bill Marshall (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Commercial Director and Corporation Secretary, and also Head of Masterplan) where an initial proposal was put forward to William with regards to a separate building to accommodate the 'Faith Hub' after all other parties came to an agreeance that a new space will need to be provided as current provisions do not have the capabilities to support this.

From this meeting, we agreed to create a 'working group' between myself, Ian Yemm, Suzanne Carrie and Russell Thomas to put together a comprehensive plan to submit to William. I will be assigned as co-lead for this project once started up towards the end of this calendar year.

Updates:

'Faith Hub' plan being discussed now within Frenchay Refurbishment Group, can potentially provide a more detailed update after catch up meeting with Pete Sutherland on 18/04/18. The idea has been bounced back and forth as it is an idea the University likes and is receptive to, however due to recent Suspension the working group that was proposed has since collapsed so the proposal has been taken to various different committees to gather feedback. It will also be raised at the upcoming Student Governor meeting on 02/05/18. Hoping that a concrete plan will be in place by the time of leaving Office so the Students' Union can continue the discussions and planning after my term has ended.

Additionally, I have been working closely with Marc Griffiths, Deputy Dean of HAS, on discussions for Faith spaces at Glenside as the current ones, if you have not already seen, are simply inadequate and not fit for purpose. We have made a commitment to opening up larger prayer rooms on Glenside Campus, and with the help of Marc and Masterplanning, we're hoping this new facility by the academic year as that is the aim for both the Students' Union and the University.

## General Activity

Have only been serving as an active President this year from mid-February after the infamous one month Suspension. Had also taken time off during December for personal reasons.

Since February, a lot of time and effort has been made towards talking to students post-referendum to see and hear views and opinions, interesting to see how many views changed after a simple conversation to clear the air. However the stain of it will undoubtedly remain throughout the rest of my Presidency, though I have taken upon

myself as a challenge to have tough and indeed intellectual conversations with fellow students about how they feel which has been personally rewarding.

Due to certain events, I have also started taking a more invested interest into Mental Health and have been active alongside Sian to help with gathering feedback and running events such as 'Faith and Mental Health'. Because of my identity, I have paid closer attention to Mental Health within the BME community, and subsequently wrote a blog sharing some thoughts and opinions which was ultimately also shared by UWE as part of the Mental Wealth First strategy launch-  
<https://www.bristol247.com/opinion/your-say/services-need-to-reflect-student-population/>

I have been engaged with Andy Bennett whom is the Superintendent and Commander of the Bristol Police, regarding many contemporary issues that the youth face in Bristol ranging from racial profiling to drug abuse. I have also been invited to apply for a position on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel for which I am currently considering. It's been very rewarding to be connected to our Bristol community in a strong way which in turn is enhancing our Students' Union presence in a powerful way.

Currently putting together the Terms of Reference for a new BME Students Network that will be set up by the time I leave office, with the intention of this being a more robust and stable platform to enhance the experience of BME students engaging with the SU. This work is being done alongside our BME Officer.

Lots of students have come up to me regarding Car Parking letters that students had received towards the end of February, as over 800 were sent in one batch which I deemed unfair as it was regardless of when the student even received the initial parking penalty, whether it was in October 2017 or January 2018. All students were fined £40 per enforcement letter which is extortionate. Parking is of course an issue in itself, and I am not against students receiving these parking fines if they are parking without relevant permits; however, I am against students receiving these enforcement letters all at one go and was rightly concerned as it puts students under further financial burdens plus many more things. I have raised this issue with Jo Midgley and Steve West whom both have been very receptive to these concerns and hence are having conversations with Estates & Facilities to write these fines off for the vast majority of the students whom received them and starting with a fresh and better approach towards parking fines which Steve has also admitted are very inconsistent, hence the sheer volume of parking offenders. I reckon this will collectively save students over £30,000.

Alongside Sian, we both sat on the Rents Meeting where we successfully lobbied the University to not raise their Rent fees for the next academic year, this means that around £500,000 will be saved from the pockets of Students due to the 0% raise in rent. This is quite extraordinary if compared with the Sector as other Universities have risen their rent prices whereas ours is frozen for the next academic year.

I have been engaged alongside the University on our new Report & Support toolkit that will be available for students, staff and visitors to use from the next academic year onwards. Other universities have adopted this toolkit already and I'm happy that here at UWE we will too which makes it easier for anybody to report any type of

harassment and abuse to a centralised location, as currently our systems do not allow that.