

Student Council Meeting

Meeting held in Students' Union, Frenchay Campus, at 17:30 on Wednesday 25th April

001: The Chair introduced himself and welcomed those present to the second SCM of the year and set out the agenda and purposes of the meeting and role of the Democratic Procedures Committee. The Secretary reported that there were no updates on Ideas progression since the last meeting.

002: The Executive had provided reports of activities to date that had been circulated to members previously. Members were able to send in questions requiring quantitative answers beforehand (no such questions had been forthcoming however).

Derya to VP Ed: Can you provide some additional context to your recent course fees success?

VP Ed: UWE has pledged free printing for all students as well as a review of the learning outcomes for all programmes to ensure that mandatory costs associated with those learning outcomes will be covered by tuition fees. The additional 'bursary' for programmes in ACE and FET for the additional material costs on those programmes will remain.

Ayrden supplemental: Can you explain how the remuneration will work?

VP Ed: I believe students will simply have access to the materials they need as opposed to a system of reimbursement.

Ayrden to VP S+C: How is planning for Embers proceeding?

VP S+C: All planning and costs have been finalised. There are some tickets left to sell so the focus is now on promotion to ensure maximum use of the space. This is looking to be the largest Societies Ball UWE has had.

Freddie supplemental: You have stated that you intend to reduce the amount of alcohol at the event, why is that?

VP S+C: There is an after party being held in a club style venue so this represents a better use of resources for everyone in attendance making the night more cost effective. Also, we shouldn't be putting undue pressure on attendees who do not drink.

Oliver to VP S+C: What can be done to improve the experience of societies who experience poor handovers?

VP S+C: I think a lot of the problems raised are a result of poor communication and can actually be easily resolved. The SU is always looking to strengthen the relationship between societies and staff.

Derya to VP S+C: Now that Hub Media has had its final issue, can you expand upon the plans for its future?

VP S+C: My job is concluded as per Hub Media so this will be up to the incoming VP and committee and I am facilitating meetings between them. There have been many perennial issues with Hub such as generation of content but we have seen better presentation and better quality content this year. The rebrand has fulfilled its purpose.

Derya to VP S+C: Based on your report, what experiences have you had this year which makes you say that clubs and societies need to be provided for?

VP S+C: Opportunities is the largest demographics of students engaged with the SU so their needs should be addressed to ensure they, and by extension the SU, are successful.

Ayrden to VP C+W: Decisions seem to already have been made regarding the future of the Farmhouse, what additional student consultation has been undertaken in this regard other than the non-binding Facebook poll that had been conducted and I mentioned in the last meeting?

VP C+W: The Nightline office is going into the Farmhouse. The volunteers and committee were asked about their preferences and a larger office was agreed as necessary. Other than a relaxation room, nothing else has been decided and is open to consultation.

Ayrden supplemental: Was there consultation regarding the relaxation room?

SUP: This took place at the start of the year.

Ayrden supplemental: Was there consultation as to whether students wanted this room in the Farmhouse? This is prime real estate so there will be many competing demands for its use so students need to be consulted on its future.

VP C+W: This has not been high on the Executive's agenda so not much consultation has taken place. We will look for more opportunities to take students round the building and seek their feedback on its future.

Ayrden supplemental: Students need to be informed about these opportunities and that they can feed into the process or the decisions will be taken without student input.

Freddie to VP C+W: What were the unforeseen circumstances at NUS National Conference and what help did you give delegates mentioned in your report?

VP C+W: There was an occupation of the stage against the guillotine of the Welfare Zone motions. I was keeping the other delegates informed of the developments and checked to make sure everyone was safe afterwards as there was a further protest.

SUP: I was on the stage to show my solidarity for the motions.

Sagoon to VP C+W: I understand you have been working to improve international arrivals which is very welcome but what about the issue of international students being placed in University accommodation with only other international students meaning they cannot have a fully immersive experience and the difficulty they have in finding housing?

VP C+W: The University says that the arrival contract dates are different for international students so certain blocks are kept free for them.

Sagoon supplemental: What about mixing them in with home students as that is central to the purpose of their time here?

VP C+W: I will raise this.

Ayrden supplemental: Is it not the case that this is only administratively difficult?

VP C+W: I will bring this up with accommodation.

Sagoon supplemental: Will you be able to action this before you leave office?

VP C+W: I will raise this by the end of the week and work with the relevant societies and groups.

Dominik supplemental: If they keep blocks free, why not just keep the equivalent number of rooms free instead?

VP C+W: I will raise that as a potential solution.

Ayrden to VP C+W: You have maintained that moving the Lock In was the only way to save the SU's licence to serve alcohol but is it not the case that only the mid-week late night licence was at risk?

VP C+W: This was decided by the previous Executive and is not just my responsibility. If I did say that then it was a slip of the tongue but I maintain it was the right decision.

Yasmine to VP C+W: What steps are being taken to improve BME representation in mental health and wellbeing services?

VP C+W: We have had conversations about students of faith accessing mental health services and there is a commitment from the VC to look at this and the University is looking into how it can diversify the service. The profession itself isn't very diverse so a long-term solution is required and this is a conversation that the SU is continually having and looking to get written into the welfare strategy.

Derya supplemental: You mentioned changes related to wellbeing and that the University has agreed to look at funding, can you elaborate further?

VP C+W: There is a pledge for the funding of an additional wellbeing practitioner.

Derya supplemental: Is this sufficient to meet student demand?

VP C+W: It is better than nothing but obviously I would have hoped for more. The strategy is to look at prevention as well as staffing.

Derya: There is to be a Substance Misuse Counsellor, can you expand upon this?

VP C+W: The University is now more open to talking about substance misuse and this person will be supporting students in relation to harm reduction and the service will be totally confidential and independent from the University itself.

Derya: The University has agreed to establish an out of hours service co-located with Nightline, what is the difference between these two?

VP C+W: This will be a service of high level professionals who can offer advice over the phone and face to face, unlike Nightline, and who will be able to support the Nightline volunteers.

Oliver to VP C+W: The post-it notes around campus encouraging discussion of mental health issues were a good idea but some of them were inappropriate and could trigger individuals; was there any vetting of the messages?

VP C+W: I tried to chase UWE on these so the SU could be involved but did not get a response so I do not know what the vetting process was.

Oliver supplemental: What about taking them down as they could no be distressing for some?

VP C+W: I will look into clarifying the process to ensure transparent and pass on this feedback to the organising team.

James to VP C+W: Is the University paying the repeat fee for the NUS Alcohol Impact Accreditation?

VP C+W: Yes.

James to VP C+W: What is the timeline for the restart of the Nightline service?

VP C+W: We're looking to do some retraining but hopefully within the next two weeks.

James supplemental: Will there be a separation of promotion between Nightline and the new out of hours service?

VP C+W: Yes, it should be clear which is which.

Mohammad: At the UWE Mental Health Conference, the VC said he was open to applications into the wellbeing service from diverse backgrounds but we don't have counsellors from diverse backgrounds yet.

VP C+W refers to her earlier answer.

Mohammad supplemental: What practical steps can be taken to meet requirements?

VP C+W: We are constantly raising this and lobbying the University but there is a set budget which I am trying to increase as well as the realities of recruitment.

SUP: This requires work with multiple teams across the University and we will do everything we can to keep this high on their priorities.

Tiffany supplemental: BME students approach welfare services less often than other students so is there anything being done to combat this?

VP C+W: This issue will feature prominently on my handover for my successor.

Derya to VP C+W: What is the future for the rent freeze in UWE accommodation?

VP C+W: This is unknown at the moment as future commitments have not been made but this is a

significant win and we have also managed to change the membership of the rent setting board to include staff who have a specific student experience remit.

Derya to VP C+W: Bristol Council is looking to charge landlords through its HMO licencing scheme, what steps are being taken to make sure these costs are not passed onto students?

VP C+W: I was not aware of this development but will look into it and most likely contact the Mayor of Bristol.

Freddie to SUP: What did the occupation at NUS National Conference entail, what was the outcome and what outcome were you looking for?

SUP: Delegates joined NUS officials on stage in order to debate and vote on motions in the Welfare Zone; these motions were passed to an emergency meeting of NUS National Executive Committee which has now taken place.

Ayrden supplemental: What was the need for this emergency meeting?

SUP: The motions were time sensitive as they affected the rights of people in Northern Ireland.

Derya to SUP: You have spoken about increasing the space available in OneZone and that the opening of the Works has satisfied the demand for additional space but this is mostly computer services; what else is being done to meet the demand of students for space?

SUP: I wasn't aware of the Works when I ran for office...

Derya supplemental:...These plans were available in the last academic year.

SUP: But I have met with the UWE space management team and because of that meeting students can now eat in the Works and there is additional table space. The campus's changing footprint means that the discussions as to where space can be found to meet student demand are on-going.

Oliver to SUP: In terms of faith spaces, there do not seem to be many 'catch all' spaces so what is happening to keep them available for everyone?

SUP: There are currently two rooms in E block and the Octagon and we are currently looking for a central space for all religions at UWE. I have been working with the Equality and Diversity Manager on this but unfortunately she has been on sabbatical for eight months and UWE has not had a chaplain since September so progress has stalled but the discussions I have had have been positive.

Oliver supplemental: The Octagon is the current catch all place but it has a strong link with Christianity so does this mean it is not suitable?

SUP: The point of my manifesto pledge for a Faith Hub is to replace the Octagon with a modern and bespoke centre.

Ayrden to SUP: What have you done to reach out to Jewish students since your suspension?

SUP: I haven't knowingly spoken to any Jewish students on campus as they have not identified themselves as such and none have come to speak to me.

Ayrden supplemental: Could you have done more since you have made numerous social media posts on numerous issues? You spoke in your report about discussion with students, were any Jewish?

SUP: I don't know.

Ayrden supplemental: What does "clearing the air" mean?

SUP: A lot of students thought the I was the reason Lock In moved so that needed clearing up.

Ayrden supplemental: What other things did you clear up?

SUP: The poster with a Tweet taken out of context which was propagandist in the way it was presented.

Ayrden supplemental: How was that propagandist if you said it? You mentioned lies being told, what were these?

SUP: The lies were that I was responsible for Lock In and that I had links to extremist organisations which were not true and totally unacceptable.

Ayrden supplemental: If anyone made those suggestions it was a minority and did not come from the official no campaign.

SUP: But I still heard these things directed at me.

Derya to SUP: This is the first time you have appeared before an SCM since the first meeting in November. The big issue has obviously been a leaked message the content of which you did not deem bad enough to resign over; your official response was not an unreserved apology, could you clarify your statement and make it an absolute apology?

SUP: My original apology was almost two pages long; I am not going to satisfy everyone especially those who wish me to resign. If I have offended anyone, then I apologise.

Derya supplemental: Did you reach out to the Union of Jewish Students?

SUP: I have worked with the Jewish community before so I am well-aware of these issues. Anti-Semitism training was deemed unnecessary for me because of my previous work and record on this but I have still been talking to the UJS about how to tackle anti-Semitism on campus. I did not attack an individual for being Jewish and have said that the comment was wrong. I was unaware at the time that I could not take a stance in the election.

Derya: Do you understand what the DPC is and what it does?

SUP: When I took this role I had a different understanding of their role which has matured over time. I was feeling very passionate that day but I admit it was a mistake.

Derya supplemental: They are a neutral body with a totally non-political role so the views of that candidate would not have been relevant at all. Do you understand why you were suspended?

SUP: The exact reason is confidential but essentially it was because of interference in an election process.

Derya supplemental: Do you believe your suspension was right and that the anti-Semitism had any bearing?

SUP: I thought at first it was excessive but now believe it to have been fair. There was a nuance to the content of what I said which made it extremely difficult to judge.

Derya supplemental: What was the training that you were sent on and was any of it benefit?

SUP: Two of the proposed training sessions were dropped as it was felt unnecessary for me. I ultimately went training called Holding Public Office which dealt with the responsibilities of and what it means to hold public office; I found it beneficial.

Derya to SUP: After the results of the referendum were published with 548 students voting they had no confidence and only 110 voting that they did have confidence in you, you publicly suggested that there had been lies and manipulation, can you expand on this?

SUP: That was in reference to the activities which I mentioned earlier.

Derya supplemental: What was dubious or malicious in the no campaign arguing that you brought the SU into disrepute? Was it just the fact that people misconstrued why the vote was called?

SUP: I am saying that some lies were told not that the whole campaign was lies.

Derya: Having said all of that, do you agree that the referendum was conducted legitimately?

SUP: I think being a Muslim President is a challenge of itself and creates a narrative lens through which my previous actions were viewed. I feel I was unfairly treated by the no camping but I do not feel there was any bias on the part of the SU.

Derya supplemental: Do you think the no campaign was too passionate?

SUP: I think there were multiple threads and elements to the no campaign.

Derya supplemental: Did the no campaign break the rules?

SUP: Officially no but hypothetically yes.

Derya supplemental: The no campaign suffered multiple attacks against it; these things weren't just directed towards you.

SUP: I acknowledge that.

Derya supplemental: So you accept that there were no institutional missteps. Do you feel any differently about what you said in regards to your Tweet and your actions in regards to interfering with an election?

SUP: My point is that I do not feel the referendum was necessary and that I could have worked through this positively with students. I have learnt a lot from this experience and now take more things into account to be a better President.

Oliver to SUP: Do you feel accountable for the yes campaign?

SUP: I chose not to be involved in any of the campaign planning or activities.

Oliver supplemental: You have not answered my question.

SUP: The agent was responsible for the campaign.

Oliver to SUP: Do you feel there is a wider problem with student participation in politics and student politics?

SUP: That is a very broad question with many elements. There is engagement but it is not mainstream within the SU.

Oliver supplemental: Do you then think that the yes campaign has done damage to student participation by encouraging students not to vote.

SUP: I don't think that was advocated for by anyone in that campaign.

Oliver supplemental: Without taking responsibility for the yes campaign, do you think that the idea of not voting is bad for participation?

SUP: It was the choice of individuals not to vote; I think that neither campaigns really caught on with people.

Oliver supplemental: I really believe that the yes campaign has damaged future student engagement with the political and democratic processes at UWE, that genuine democracy has been bypassed and that you should have stepped in to affect a campaign that was acting in your name.

Derya to SUP: I note that you have achieved an amnesty for students in regard to parking fines, what more can be done to help students with on campus parking?

SUP: I am meeting soon with University Governors about where we can go next especially in relation to fines and lack of communication about new enforcement procedures.

Derya to SUP: In relation to drug use on campus, what more can be done about moving from zero tolerance to harm reduction?

SUP: This is the direction of travel that the University is taking with a greater focus on healthcare.

Ayrden to all: Who advised on the move of Lock In and what evidence did they provide you?

VP C+W: Staff are not held to account in this forum.

Ayrden supplemental: Very well. What evidence were you presented when making this decision.

VP S+C: The decision was taken on the basis that the University would not support our licence renewal.

Ayrden supplemental: So the decision wasn't based on evidence but on you accepting the University's stance?

VP C+W: If the University had not supported renewal, we would have lost our licence.

Ayrden supplemental: South Gloucester council can confirm that that would not have happened. For licence removal the burden of proof would be in the local community and constabulary and the SU has already mitigating contingencies to support our position.

Tiffany supplemental: Can you confirm that the licence at stake was the mid-week late night, 1-4am licence?

VP Ed and VP C+W: Yes.

VP C+W: But the University is our landlord so if they did not support our licence renewal then that would be that.

Ayrden to all: Going back as far as 2015 in Union and University committee minutes, this issue has not been mentioned until Summer 2017 so how can there have been the necessary widespread consultation? There is no local media coverage discussing the Lock In, the number of complaints is limited and the University has confirmed that the total number of complaints do not all refer to Lock In. We need to be a commercially viable organisation in order to fund the services students rely on...
VP C+W:...we are.

Ayrden:...Yes but we are beholden to the University the more funds we have to take from them limiting our operational independence and ability to hold them to account.

VP C+W: I abstained on the vote at the Board because the role of a Trustee is to think wider and beyond public opinion.

VP S+C: we are already dependent on the University through the block grant and our position is not to make a profit as we are a charity.

Freddie to all: If it was only the mid-week licence under threat and the University could not take the licence away only refuse to support us in renewal, then why vote to move the Lock In pre-emptively when that would have been the worst case scenario anyway?

VP S+C: Lock In is not the only late night mid-week event we could want to put on at different times of the year for different purposes. In my opinion, it is best to take concrete action before the worst case scenario happens. If our licence was brought under review by the community then that would isolate us and there is no way to predict the outcome of any future review.

Ayrden supplemental: It was a tiny section of the local community which had complained though.

Derya: The Cheswick Village Facebook group is vociferous in its complaints about the University's intention to expand its accommodation in that direction. Do you think that that will stop the University's infrastructure plans? The point about commercial viability was a wider point about being financially independent from the University so as to allow the SU to act in the best interests of its members without worrying about losing funding.

VP S+C: There are no conditions placed on how we can spend the block grant.

VP C+W: We are actually raising more money through commercial services.

Derya supplemental: You said before that even if the Executive had block voted you would still have been out-voted, that's not actually true is it?

VP Ed: We could not have swayed every vote because had their own vote and opinion.

Ayrden supplemental: Did you know going into the vote how you would act, had you had any discussions as an officer team beforehand and how much pressure was placed upon you externally to vote a certain way?

VP C+W: We had had a discussion beforehand.

Ayrden supplemental: Was there any data or evidence, written or verbal, which was provided? If there was not then you made a decision based on no substantive evidence. There was a Student Idea in December which you could have acted upon to move the Lock In back.

VP S+C: I voted against that Idea as it seemed to suggest moving it back to a Tuesday mid-semester which did not make sense.

Derya supplemental: As you are well aware, with every Student Idea, it is up to the Executive how to action the points within the Idea and to understand and shape how it is to be delivered.

Ayrden to all: I think to have voted that Idea down in the face of so much student support is unforgivable.

James to all: Do you have any comments on the recent Dispatches programme relating to the VC's expenses?

VP C+W: UWE was very honest in tis submission and perhaps a little naïve in how the information was going o be presented and so that data isn't really comparable to other institutions who report their finances and expenses in a different manner. The statement that UWE put out in response was very fair and the University is on the whole very transparent and open on these issues.

Questioning ends.

003: Those present voted to transact Council's remaining business.

004:

Make the upstairs of the library at Glenside accessible by wiring up the electric 'push button' access system

Votes to veto: 0

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Lobby for a reading week for English Language & Linguistics students

Votes to veto: 0

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Glenside campus should have a gym

Votes to veto: 0

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

005:

Hand sanitiser dispensers at food serving hatches on all campuses (Executive Pass)

Votes to veto: 0

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Install Smart Energy Meters into Student Halls (Executive Pass)

Votes to veto: 0

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Campaign for more water fountains, bins and free hot water at Glenside Campus (Executive Pass)

Votes to veto: 0

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

The Students' Union to install a dance mat (Executive Pass)

All members: the money for this could be better spent and the SU should focus on inclusive events.

Votes to veto: 13

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Veto**

Make the Students' Union website's registration process more streamline for mobile compatibility (Executive Pass) amended from: "Simplify the SU registration process"

Votes to veto: 0

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Lobby to make sex and relationships education a mandatory part of the e-induction for all students moving into UWE accommodation (Executive Pass) amended from: "Education about consent should be given to all students"

Votes to veto: 1

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Make study pods on 5th floor of Library bookable (Executive Pass)

Derya: there are lots of bookable study spaces in the library already; level 5 should remain a place for quiet study; there are ways that this ability to book could be misused.

Votes to veto: 13

Votes to abstain: 1

Outcome: **Veto**

Increase funding for 'Team Representation' at the SU (Executive Pass)

Votes to veto: 0

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

Invite the Vice-Chancellor to sit before the Student Council

Votes to veto: 0

Votes to abstain: 2

Outcome: **Pass** (without discussion)

006: Hana: Most students at City Campus aren't aware of SCM or the issues that have been discussed here, what can be done to increase awareness?

Council members recommend to raise this with the new City Campus Officer and the wider Executive.

The Secretary requested that SCM indulge him in thanking them for their service and that it had been a pleasure to work with them and the DPC.

Ayrden: I would like it minuted on behalf of those present that we would like to thank the Secretary for his work and commitment to improve representation and democracy at UWE.

Other members of Council agree.