

29 November 2018

Minutes of the Previous AGM and Making Change Summit

Annual General Meeting

AGM Minutes

Welcome and apologies

The Union President, Flora Noble welcomed everyone to the meeting. Flora also confirmed that the meeting was quorate based on those present in the room and registered online for proxy voting.

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 17 May 2017 were approved - For: 72 Against: 3 Abstain: 45

Annual reports

- a. Receipt of Consolidated Accounts and Trustee Report for the year ending 31st July 2017 and approval of affiliations 2016-17.

The Report and Account were received - For: 67 Against: 4 Abstain: 44

Appointment of auditors

The continuation of the appointment of the auditors was approved - For: 63 Against: 6 Abstain: 41

Resolution 1: Political Expenditure

The Resolution of Political Expenditure was passed – For: 46 Against: 18 Abstain: 45

Resolution 2: What inscription should be written on the plaque to commemorate the passing of Susu, our cat and Honorary President?

- a. Option 1: What greater gift than the love of a cat. *Charles Dickens*

For: 75 Against: 26 Abstain: 23

- b. Option 2: Time spent with cats is never wasted. *Sigmund Freud*

For: 52 Against: 41 Abstain: 30

- c. Option 3: Arise from sleep, old cat, and with great yawns and stretchings, amble out for love. *Kobayashi Issa*

For: 45 Against: 51 Abstain: 31

As a result, the chosen inscription was Option 1: What greater gift that the love of a cat.
Charles Dickens

29 November 2018

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Annual General Meeting

Resolution 3: What action should the Union take in light of government changes banning card charges?

a. Option 1: Absorb the cost with no change to pricing.

For: 70 Against: 49 Abstain: 8

b. Option 2: Manage the increased cost by increasing prices.

For: 35 Against: 82 Abstain: 11

c. Option 3: Do not accept card payments under £5, requiring cash payments only.

For: 37 Against: 88 Abstain: 6

As a result, the chosen action in light of government changes banning card charges was to absorb the cost with no change to pricing.

AOB

There being no further business, the Annual General Meeting was closed and the Making Change Summit commenced.

Making Change Summit Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Open Senate Meeting of 17 May 2017 were approved - For: 72 Against: 3 Abstain: 45

Debates:

a. How can we hold the Union to account?

- Our students are unclear about what Senate is and what they are responsible for as Senators. Our students at the debate linked this to transparency issues that the Union has generally and in how decisions are made at the Union.
- It was also raised that Union Senate should meet more frequently and that 3 times a year does not help with keeping up to date with current issues.
- There were concerns about over what power Senators hold as the sabbs are also employees at the Union. How are Senators able to hold sabbs to account in the event that they do not do as they promised in their manifestos?
- It was raised by the VP DCI that there is no accountability over the summer if our Senators are elected during the Autumn Election period. We will bring the question of when to elect Senate to the first meeting of Union Senate on Thursday 7 December.

29 November 2018

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- The VP DCI also raised the criteria for electing Senators as many students don't know that this is written into the rules when they nominate themselves and it isn't fair to turn away students who are interested if they don't hold these characteristics.
 - A solution to the above two points was suggested, the idea would be that certain student leaders will be guaranteed a place on Senate in order to represent cohorts of students such as the International Students' Officer and the Equality and Diversity Officer. Outside of this, we would then look to elect a group of Senators without any criteria attached.
 - The discussion then moved on to Union Council, which we had before Union Senate and how this wasn't very effective because it was too large, too many people sat on council making the meetings very long (up to 4 or 5 hours on some occasions). We would need to be careful if we change Senate to have guaranteed members that it doesn't grow to be unwieldy again.
 - General points raised about holding the Union to account revolved around transparency. Students raised the point that the bubble that the sabbs work in tends to lead to a divide between them and the students which can lead to the feeling that the students aren't being represented. We also struggle with engaging students because only a few remain involved as the year progresses.
 - Some useful suggestions were made, such as to contact the Presidents of clubs and societies to ask them to contact their mailing lists about events or campaigns that are happening. The example for this being the debate on banning straws and why the eco societies at the Union were not invited.
- b. How can we improve study spaces on campus?**
- Sam introduced the topic, and gave some context to the debate. He explained that one of the primary aims of the Education Zone this year was to improve study spaces for students, and that as part of that process they wanted feedback from students. As part of that, a survey will be launched next week at a coffee and consultation event on the Redbrick, asking students for their views and thoughts on study spaces across the university and union.
 - Sam kicked off the debate by explaining that the idea discussed at Education Zone was to create a space to relax within the union and be able to use laptops. For example sofas, coffee tables, plug sockets and wifi. An informal breakout space. There could also be the option of printing from your own device, which is something Sam is currently looking into.
 - The issue of a lack of plug sockets at Harley Library was raised, Sam said he will push for more plug sockets when they refurbish Level 2, which is the next area planned for refurbishment. Sam said that although the majority of spaces do now have power sockets, he was aware of the issues on Level 2.
 - Desk Camping was also raised as a problem at Harley Library, where people are marking their territory in certain areas. The library is trying to police this and will move people on after a period of time, however it is difficult to monitor this.
 - Lack of available spaces in the Assistive Technology Suite was brought up particularly since the refurb; the question was also asked if there were any plans to take the Assistive Technology suite to Avenue? This is something Sam will look into and discuss with VP

Welfare. Concerns were raised that students who require Assistive Technologies could be better represented in the Education Zone – Sam promised to look into the issue and welcomed the suggestion of representation for students who need assistive technologies as an excellent idea.

- Sam received a question on the Archives section in the Library regarding the fact it is quite small, Sam will raise this point and see if there are any plans for expansion. Sam also suggested talking to the Faculty Officer for Humanities who may be able to help with that, especially regarding more information in the first year on how to use the Archives. He also mentioned that the library offer a variety of workshops on how to use the library.
- Sam explained, following a question on the matter, that the library had conducted studies to assess demand for 24/7 opening of Hartley Library early in semester 1 and found there was not enough demand to merit it. However, Sam did add that towards the end of the normal academic year, the library will remain open 24/7 to accommodate medical students particularly, who traditionally have later exams.
- Upon a point raised about certain e-books being only available one reader at a time, Sam acknowledged the problem, but emphasized that there is not an awful lot the library services can do if the publishers are not accommodating. However, with regard to more key texts for courses please speak to the module staff who will be able to request the library to provide more copies or online texts.
- The new South Gower building was raised during the debate, with a question asking if the university had done any consultation about study space for this new building. Sam explained that the university are actively looking for feedback about refurbishment across the university so please feedback any views to them. Sam revealed that all the Common Learning spaces are on a 5 year cycle to be refreshed, so keep an eye out for the next areas.
- Concerns were raised about ongoing niggles with Delphis and the library self-scanning system, which Sam said he will look into.
- Sam and Arun explained that a fourth building at Avenue is being proposed to increase study space for post-graduates, which is in the university's long-term plans. Discussions will involve the Union. Arun added another possible way of expanding post-grad space was to share Masters space as well, but said they'd welcome feedback on this idea.
- Sam explained that one of the areas Education Zone were looking at to turn into a social study space, was Bar 2, rather than using the current flexible spaces which are used for societies in the evenings, for example the Café.
- In relation to a question about what's being done at other campuses to improve study space, Sam mentioned a concerted look at improving the MedSoc common room at Southampton General Hospital and that microwaves had been fitted to Winchester Cafe, helping improve a great informal study space. There are also currently discussions at NOC with the Faculty Officer and NOC site Officer around a common room there.

- One point raised was around gaining access to buildings outside core hours. Especially for meetings or extra work, Sam explained there has also been a You Make Change submitted around this topic and the Union will be looking into the issue. Arun also mentioned that Avenue Cafe will be bookable to students very soon.
- Audience members expressed frustration at scheduling of lectures and seminars alternating between Avenue and Highfield Campus, with one student asking if humanities seminars could be prioritised at Avenue. Flora responded by saying that work reducing the number of students having to travel between Avenue and Highfield was occurring and that they were looking at ways to improve the use of Avenue rooms. Timetabling will be launching a consultation soon around this issue, and Sam suggested speaking to course reps.
- Travel between campuses is an issue, not just for students based between Avenue and Highfield, the medics and nurses have problems with car parking and at NOC bike storage is also an issue. The Union is hoping to work with students on improving travel.
- Group study spaces in the library can be difficult to book with limited PCs and the wifi is often poor, so a more casual study space would relieve the pressure.
- One student raised an issue with a scanner at Avenue; Sam passed this on to the Humanities Faculty Officer who will take this away and resolve.
- The debate ended with Sam explaining that the Education Zone will seek further consultation across faculties and will be discussing all the points raised here.

c. How should we represent international students?

- Arun's opened by discussing the success of the Culture Festival in March and how this has helped to improve interaction between international and other students.
- It was raised that more thought should be put into how SUSU constructs it's interactive projects on campus considering that the board in Hartley Library which encouraged people to write what makes a good neighbour had seen potentially offensive remarks made, about ISIS and Turkey. Arun confirmed that there's no place for behaviour like that and it would not be tolerate but suggested that such interactive projects shouldn't be necessarily sidelined.
- It was discussed that the Union should work with societies and international student communities to create packs outlining cultural differences to help them settle into British life. It was acknowledged that such initiatives must be done in the right way to avoid being perceived as patronizing.
- It was also raised that there is a lack of BME and international student at SUSU. An audience member suggested more info about visa issues should be available for international students potentially interested in sabbatical roles which Arun was very receptive to and will take forward. This will potentially be shared as part of the marketing that is sent out ahead of the Spring Elections.

- General consensus was reached in the room of the need for greater promotion of initiatives like language exchange, making more people aware of them
- A number of students raised concerns about interaction between international and other students in halls and how international students could often be withdrawn, or only interact with other international students. Arun welcomed the feedback on this and the broad agreement in the room that formulating more social events was a way of perhaps addressing this
- Arun asked for suggestions from the audience about making international students feel more welcome generally. Among the suggestions was for a zone specifically concerned with international students
- One audience member who said he'd been a President of two societies last year expressed his concern that societies don't really know how to engage international students. Arun suggested one definite way of addressing this would be to contact specific international clubs and societies and provide relevant communications to them directly.

d. Should we stop using straws at the Union?

- 100 million straws used across UK – approximately 30,000kg of plastic straw waste. Small changes in our daily lives can have a big impact.
- Audience member raised concern over whether it was a blanket ban and if so how they would accommodate to disabled students who need straws? Sam suggested that a solution to this would be a stack of paper straws available behind the bar and metal straws also available to be purchased.
- The concern of whether we should be using plastic cutlery was also raised and it was suggested that reusable cutlery should be pushed.
- Environmental and Ethics officer asked what issue would be dealt with next after resolving the straw dilemma since the University of Southampton is voted as one of the worst universities for environmental impact. Sam responded that it would be too much to just ban everything all at once and in the long run it is these small changes that will make a huge difference.
- Placing the straws behind the bar instead of at the front hopes to remove the impulse of unnecessarily grabbing one.
- Cost wise the paper straws would be free since they are disposable and metal straws would be similar in cost to other universities which have advertised them for £1.
- An audience member raised a question as to whether the straws will be available at other retail outlets across campus and Sam responded that the union hope to set the example for these places.
- Students still have concern over the presented options and alternatives to which the union stated they will look into the best options and it is not limited to metal, paper and plastic.

- More clarification is needed on whether items can be recycled for example takeaway cups are usually not recyclable due to two materials being bound together.
- Sam suggests that maybe our local MP should be contacted to improve our local recycling rules, since it is a huge issue in Southampton.

e. How should we represent and support students in halls?

- First point raised was how to stop Mayflower from feeling very cut off from the rest of halls to which Arun suggested the Hall committee structure should be utilised to improve the community aspect of halls.
- There should be more clarity to societies that they get involved in hosting events in halls and promotion of this.
- Addressing the issue for private rented in Winchester and whether they should go to EP committee or Private rented committee for advice or accommodation to which Arun suggests EP is the solution.
- An audience member raises the question of how the union are trying to engage first year students who are not particularly interested in drinking based events. Arun suggested that the union have tried to have a 50/50 split for events so they could target different groups and different interests. However breaking out of the mentality that freshers week is alcohol-fuelled is a difficult stereotype which will take time to change.
- How to include students in halls who are not first year came up as an important issue. Arun stated that the focus is on working with the halls committees to see what different students want and what kind of events suit them.
- The cladding on halls have been checked recently and it is non-flammable and of the highest quality.

f. What is the future for sports within the Union?

- Clarification that the facilities are run by sports and wellbeing and not VP Sports himself although they do work together. The overall aim is to move towards a unified department which involves both the Union and Sports and Wellbeing.
- Steve asked the audience how the union should be spending the sport budget to which an audience member questioned how does intramural fit into the proposed aims and strategies? Steve suggested that since intramural is more casual you are only really looking at funding equipment and therefore the current way that this is paid for is likely the best method.
- The £110 sport pass is suggested to be lacking in value and it was raised as to how Steve would enhance this to make it worthwhile or potentially reduce the cost so it was more fitting? To provide more with the pass he suggested adding casual booking into the options or perhaps a super off-peak time with extra time restrictions that frequent fitness doesn't have.

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- One of Steve's key manifesto points was to bring about a semester pass to give students the chance to trial without a year long commitment. Although Steve currently cannot inform the students of any updates he does believe we will be seeing positive change very soon.
- There are a fair amount of people who can't afford the cost of playing sports at university, an audience member asks if this can subsidise or if there is any more funding/how can it be found? Steve recommends people who are struggling to go straight to the Union, there are bursaries for top-level athletes and there is also the hardship fund and also the enabling services and advice centre for students to talk to.
- Steve is keen to look into free sports since the union don't currently offer anything for free, for example there are no free courts or pitches. He believes this is a big issue and Sport and Wellbeing are also on board with resolving this which is why some funding has been put aside to perhaps provide free facilities.
- The introduction of welfare officers inside clubs this year was a great idea but students have felt they have not heard enough about this or received the Union's full support. Steve suggests that the officers are fulfilling their pledges and an increased push will be happening.

AOB

There was no further business raised and so the meeting was closed.