

ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION STUDENT COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 2nd February 2016 at 5.30pm on the Magee Campus

PRESENT:-

Officers:

Colum Mackey President, Gillian Bell Sports President, Elliot Lyness VP Campaigns and Communications (via video link), Micky Quigg VP Magee, Emma Bonner VP Coleraine, Kellie Murnion VP Jordanstown, Conan Meehan VP Belfast

Councillors:

Ami Cobane, Alexandra Colhoun, Anthony Mullen, Arthur Caulfield, Caoimhe Moreland, Christine Campbell, Catriona Doyle, Ciara Gribben, Daniel Reynolds, Danielle Roberts, Ellen McGuinness, Eimear Blaney, Deborah Ferry, Eamonn McLaughlin, Esther Twieg, Jessica Lee, Kevin McStravock, Oisin Craig, Mark Bell, Jay Burbank, Karl Hagen, Kyle Coolidge, Becky Brennan

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Stephen Aitken (Democracy Coordinator)

APOLOGIES:-

Anne Sheridan Deputy Chair, Amy Hamilton, Aodhan Benson, , Christopher McCabe, Christopher Stewart, Dylan Cumbo, Daniel Loughins, Darren O'Neill, Fearghal O Haire, James McGrane, Jude Doherty, Joy Goodall, Gemma Brown, Hannah Rooney, Jordan McCullough, Jamie Shaw, Johnston Crothers, Katie Ramsbottom, Laura Rogers, Lorna Loughran, Samuel Montieth, Sofia Heikkinen, Vikki Lutton, Lauren Cosby, Odhran Ruiseil, Oliver McKee, Sarah McNeice, Stephen Ruddy.

16.01

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2015 were approved

16.02

MATTERS ARISING

The President updated the Council with matters arising from the previous Council meetings.

In Jordanstown and Magee the bathrooms in the UUSU premises have all been designated Gender Neutral in line with the policy passed as per the Council held on the 27th October 2015.

The toilets in Coleraine and Belfast are not under UUSU jurisdiction so are not able to be changed yet, although the Student Executive are currently in talks with the University to provide Gender Neutral toilets.

The President also notified Council that they had met with MP's at Westminster to lobby against the abolition of maintenance grants in England, this collated to the Free Education policy passed at Council but will further notify the Councillors about this during their Presidents communications.

In relation to the emergency motion which was passed at the last Council the President had written to the Health Minister and will provide further updates as and when they are available.

The question directed to the Sports President from the previous meeting will be dealt with outside of Council.

16.03 CO-OPTION

The President nominated the following students for Council approval to be co-opted on for the remaining meetings for this academic year:

Ami Cobane: Magee
Oisin Craig: Coleraine
Mark Bell: Coleraine.

The Council approved the President to exercise his power to co-opt.

16.04 PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

The President delivered a presentation to Council outlining theirs and the Executives work from semester one. Highlights included:

Press releases on the Chancellor of the Exchequers Budget, Widening Access Cuts and on the DEL Cuts.

Training events held by USI and also USI National Council. The Executive have supported Pride in Belfast, international student excursions, inductions and also UUSU training days for Senior Course Reps, sports and society committee members.

The President also notified the Council that the Ulster University voluntary severance scheme closed the previous Friday and once more information of any staff changes, course cuts and/or closures were available they would notify the Council.

The President also notified Council of previous and upcoming campaigns, some examples were: Give your Liver a Break, the Real Cost, Love Week and We are International campaign.

The presentation also highlighted the work of the Student Executive showcasing their work with Freshers Week, protests against cuts outside the University Council at Magee. The Executive also presented to the DEL Committee at Stormont.

The Executive have continued to meet regularly with MLA's and MP's on the issue of course cuts and the funding crisis affecting higher education in Northern Ireland. This also involved the President along with representatives of NUS-USI and other Student Leaders meeting MP's in Westminster over the planned cuts to student grants. The President notified Council that the cuts were debated in parliament and unfortunately passed.

The DEL Minister has stated that there are no plans to cut maintenance grants in NI.

The President also notified the Council of upcoming events with NUS-USI, namely the launch of the Student Manifesto as part of the Owning Our Future campaign. He stated that this would be taking place in Belfast Met on 5th February and that all were invited.

Council were also notified that the NUS-USI Women's and NUS-USI LGBT conferences were coming up and encouraged all interested students to look at the NUS-USI website to attend as all eligible students are invited.

The President notified the Council of the upcoming UUSU elections for the positions of Student Executive Officers, Senior Course Representatives, Student Trustees and also of Conference Delegates. He encouraged all councillors to stand.

The President then opened the floor for questions:

Mark Bell asked what the situation was with the Widening Access Fund?

The President replied that the Widening Access Fund was normally regulated and was a mandatory requirement for all institutions to supply. This year DEL de regulated this and as such the University planned to cut some of the funding. In the ensuing consultation with

DEL UUSU disagreed with this. After analysis from DEL they agreed and decided that the plan was insufficient and returned it to the institution for re-evaluation. Council will be notified of any further updates.

Jay Burbank asked did the President meet with any Conservative MP's during his recent trip to Westminster.

The President replied that they did not; they only met with MPs from Northern Ireland.

Ciara Gribben asked in relation the Hidden Course Costs campaign and that the University has stated it will publish all additional course costs in its prospectus from next year onwards. Ciara asked would all costs for example Nursing uniforms be included?

The President responded that yes, all mandatory course costs will be published.

16.05 ELECTIONS

The Chair notified Council of the current election in UUSU. Up for election are the Student Executive Officer positions, Senior Course Representative, Student Trustee and NUS/NUS-USI/USI Conference Delegates.

They encourage all Councillors to look up the elections and stand.

16.06 PRESIDENT: REPORT

The President notified council that along with the written reports they had nothing to add as they had covered their recent work within President's Communications (16.04)

There were no questions.

16.07 SPORTS PRESIDENT: REPORT

The Sports President notified Council of their work to date since the previous Council. This included preparation for upcoming varsities, SSI and BUCS matches.

The Sports President notified Council that the Sigerson Cup has commenced with Ulster winning their first game.

The Sport President also discussed their meeting with the Vice Chancellor along with Sports Development Assistants around the Greater Belfast Development. This is due to their worry around the

effect on sport the move will have. They are currently carrying out research into other institutions with similar situations and will report back when updates are available.

Along with the President and Vice President Belfast they notified Council that they also met with the Pro-Vice Chancellor Allister Adair to gain more information on what the current plan for the Jordanstown campus is since the planning permission for the planned development was denied, there has been no update at present on what the current situation is in relation to the Jordanstown campus as of yet.

There were no questions.

16.08 VICE PRESIDENT CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNICATION: REPORT

The Council was notified that the VP Campaigns and Communications would be skipping in to present motions later in the meeting.

Any questions regarding their reports could be asked then.

16.09 VICE PRESIDENT BELFAST: REPORT

The VP Belfast gave a small summary of their work since the last Council. They stated that along with Vice President Jordanstown they met with the University Chancellor James Nesbit. He had wanted to see parts of the New Belfast Development and the University had asked if the Union could show the Chancellor part of the Development and do something student orientated.

The two Vice Presidents took the Chancellor to the new Art Studios in which he met with Students.

The Vice President then notified Council that their work with the Hidden Course fees campaign is continuing and part of this is that he has been told of 2nd and 3rd years been charged a fees for using the facilities on the Belfast Development. According to the University this is a compulsory donation though there is no clear audit trail of where the money goes or why it is being asked. The Vice President stated that they will continue to question and challenge this “donation”.

They are also working on Voter Registration campaigns and plans to launch a campaign to bring a goat to campus as part of the marketing of this.

They have also sat on the Transport Committee which is looking at ways to create greener options in relation to student transport. One of the ideas that have arisen out of the committee is a “multi-discount”

card to help encourage students to use Translink and other public transport. More updates will be presented when available.

There were no questions.

16.10 VICE PRESIDENT JORDANSTOWN: REPORT

The Vice President told the Council that since the last Council they have met with the Pro-Vice Chancellor Committee for a meeting around entry requirements. This is specifically looking at pairing academic entry requirements with relevant life experience. This would make access to Higher Education must more accessible for many people.

The Vice President also notified Council that they are in talks with the University to the possibility of piloting a laptop lending scheme. This is in the early stages but Council will be updated regularly on this.

The Vice President also updated Council on the 24 Library Campaign. Unfortunately 24 hour libraries were not possible but facilities are introducing 2 24 hour study rooms.

Other Campaigns that the Vice President has worked and is working on are the Women in Leadership Campaign, Exam Stress and is currently working on the Love Campaign.

There were no questions.

16.11 VICE PRESIDENT COLERAINE: REPORT

The Council were notified that since the last Council they had numerous meetings with UUSU catering on the Coleraine campus after requests to serve Halal meat. They are pleased to announce that this is being successfully introduced to the campus and aims to have it introduced soon after on the Magee and Jordanstown campuses.

Along with others of the Executive, they have been having informal and formal meetings with staff and students around the cuts and their impact. They have been assured that all students currently studying will be able to finish their studies with no impact placed on them.

The Vice President then told Council of the Faculty Board meetings that they have sat on, along with an update on the work with the Joint Agencies Committee.

They stated that they are also campaigning for a vending machine in the Library spaces and will update the Council as this progresses.

Campaigns they have been working on were: World Café, NUS-USI Voter Registration and also Carbon Monoxide Awareness.

There were no questions.

16.12 VICE PRESIDENT MAGEE: REPORT

The Council were notified that the Vice President had dealt with over 150 queries since term had started. They had also organised many events on campus since the last Council with the Carol Service being an example.

They stated that they had also met with the Social Health Care Board and is working with them to provide a GP service on Campus a few days a week. If possible this will hopefully be starting in the coming weeks.

They notified Council that they facilitated PIPS suicide prevention training. They have also been gathering student feedback which has led to, in conjunction with the University, silent study rooms.

They also notified Council of upcoming campaigns: Love Week and Ready to Rent.

There were no questions.

16.13 NUS-USI UPDATE

Fergal McFerran (NUS-USI President) was invited to give an update to Council of the current work of NUS-USI.

They began by giving a refresher to Council on what NUS-USI is and the work it does. They stated that they represent all students in Northern Ireland. The President then gave an update of current work and campaigns.

Currently NUS-USI is supporting all SU's in their work on approaching and campaigning to NI politicians and Ministers on issues affecting students. Currently NUS-USI is carrying out Stage 2 of its "Owning our Future campaign". This includes the launch of its Student Manifesto the coming Friday (5th Feb) at 11am in Belfast. All are welcome to attend. At this there will be a twist to the usual Panel Sessions with the politicians in which it will be students who will be the panel and debating what they want from their politicians and what issues are important to them. The Politicians will be the audience.

NUS-USI are also currently travelling around all campuses encouraging all student to register to vote in the upcoming Assembly elections. There will be further meetings and campaigns on this issue

and NUS-USI encourages all students interested to attend two open information days on the 15th March and the 5th April in Derry/Londonderry on how students can get involved.

Lastly they also mentioned that the NUS-USI Women's Conference was on the 16th Feb and the NUS-USI LGBT Conference was on the 17th Feb and that again all are welcome.

There were no questions.

16.14 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The President notified Council that this paper was being presented to the Council by the Student Executive. They then outlined the details of the Policy.

There were no further speakers for and none against. There were also no questions. The Chair moved to a vote and the policy passed unanimously.

16.15 GREEN SUB-COMMITTEE POLICY

The Vice President Campaigns and Communications through Skype presented this policy to the Council.

Councillor Mark Bell had a question on this policy. He stated that he supports this policy but also that the University has a sustainability committee that the President sits on. Would it also be beneficial to gain more seats for students on this committee? The Executive agreed that this is a good idea and something to look at.

Vice President Magee spoke for the Policy stating that it is a good way to gain student ownership over UUSU's green impact and that Council should vote for this policy.

There were no further speakers for and none against. There were also no further questions. The Chair moved to a vote and the policy passed unanimously.

16.16 STRIKE BALLOT PAPER

The Vice President Campaigns and Communications outlined this policy to Council, they also invited a guest speaker who sits on the National Committee for the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts.

The Speaker notified Council that the NCAFC main aims is the abolition of fees in Higher Education and the reintroduction of Grants. The paper presented to ballot for a National NI strike in March.

The speaker passed the floor back to the Vice President Campaigns and Communications who stated that it is important for students to decide democratically to support this ballot rather than the Executive deciding on their behalf.

Councillor Mark Bell spoke against the motion stating that they were in favour of the spirit of the motion but the logistics needed for such a strike were not realistically going to be available in the time frame but also would take away from the current work that NUS-USI is doing on this issue.

At this point a Point of Information was asked of the NUS-USI President would a ballot of NUS-USI be possible as stated in the Policy. The reply was no that mechanism does not exist currently on in the overall NUS does it exist.

There was some confusion around the Councillors as to what the precise policy intention was. A procedural motion (J) was called to put it back to the next Council with clarification.

The vote passed unanimously.

16.17 STUDENT MANIFESTO

The Chair moved this point up the Agenda as the proposer needed to leave the meeting early. The Vice President Campaigns and Communications presented the design and the intent of the Student Manifesto UUSU plans to create for the upcoming NI elections. They stated that this was only a draft and was looking for Council's input and approval.

There were no speakers for and none against. There were also no questions. The Chair moved to a vote and the policy passed unanimously.

16.18 MSM BLOOD BAN POLICY

The President outlined this policy to Council. They stated that this ban only exists in Northern Ireland, in the rest of UK the ban is not in place. They are looking for a mandate from Council to campaign to remove the ban.

Councillor Danielle Roberts spoke for the policy stating that the ban is not based on current scientific evidence. NI imports blood from other countries where the ban is not in place and sexuality is not checked so in practice this ban is invalid, it is a waste of money to keep ban in place.

Dan Reynolds also spoke for the policy stating that in NI Homosexual men can donate organs, these organs have been in contact with their donors blood again making the ban invalid in practice.

There were no further speakers for and none against. There were also no further questions. The Chair moved to a vote and the policy passed unanimously.

16.19 READY TO RENT POLICY

The Vice President Magee outlined the Policy to Council.

Vice President Belfast spoke for the Policy stating that they along with Vice President Jordanstown sit on Belfast City Council committee on student housing. An example of why this policy is needed is that recently a private letting agency have been sending out notice to quit letter to students across the Holylands. This is due to previous issues with another agency. This policy has been created to help UUSU combat issues such as these.

The Vice President Jordanstown also spoke for this policy. They stated that a lot of student housing is not registered HMO's, this can affect students in their rights as tenants and also their deposit guarantee schemes. Again this policy will help to combat this.

Councillor Ciara Gribben also spoke for the motion stating that this would be very beneficial or Nursing Students as currently the hospital accommodation does not cater for students on placement so information and help with private accommodation would go a long way.

It would also ensure students are finding good and safe properties.

A Councillor asked how Officers intend to carry out this campaign.

Vice President Magee replied that some of the things they plan to do if the policy is successful is create housing checklists, meet with landlords and create partnership agreements, Do's and Don't's for prospective tenants and also carry out workshops during the year.

The policy was then put to the vote in which it passed unanimously.

16.20 ELECTION PRINTING

The President outlined this paper stating its rationale and that it originated from the Student Executive.

The Chair moved to a vote as there were no speakers and no questions.

The motion passed unanimously.

16.21 ELECTION INCENTIVES

The President outlined this policy to the Council stating that this policy originated from the UUSU Student Executive.

Danielle Roberts spoke for the ban stating that it removes barriers from people standing in the elections. It will help create interest in student policies and not what free stuff they are giving away.

Councillor Kevin McStravock spoke against the policy stating that as someone who has been involved in the previous two UUSU elections for the full time officers that incentives encourage engagement, they also highlight the elections and drive students to look at the Manifestos. The Councillor also stated that they do not believe that students vote based on what free stuff they get.

The Sports President spoke for the policy stating that they only used what was provided to them from UUSU and they were successful in last years' UUSU elections and as such does not believe incentives are needed.

Councillor Arthur Caulfield spoke against the motion stating that incentives shows candidates initiative.

The Vice President for Magee also spoke for this policy stating that they believed that this policy supports fairness, and creativity. It makes the candidates focus their campaigns on increasing engagement.

Councillor Caoimhe Moreland spoke against the motion stating that incentives are in the real world and all around. UUSU uses incentives in some aspects. People should have the choice.

Councillor Oisin Craig stated that they believe incentivising does not give a realistic view on politics in the real world and that UUSU elections should foster the creation of policies and engagement in this area.

The Vice President Belfast stipulated that they were in support of this policy. They stated that though they used incentives last year in their own campaign they have come to the conclusion that candidates should be showcasing their policies and not "Freebies". They stated that if this caused the turnout to drop in the elections then they would accept that fact.

A Question was asked inquiring as to the consequences of breaking the election rules?

The President replied stating that the Returning Officer can discipline candidates depending on the severity of their actions.

The Chair called the motion to a vote as there were no more questions or speakers.

Voting For the Motion: 15
Voting Against the Motion: 10
Abstentions: 5

16.22 ADDITIONAL ELECTION MATERIALS

The President outlined this policy stating that this was another motion that stemmed from the Student Executive.

A Councillor asked the President would handmade printing on T-shirts be allowed.

The reply was that this practice would still be allowed.

Another question was asked of what the difference would be if this policy passes?

The President replied that at the moment additional materials are not regulated within UUSU. By the introduction of caps on spending and an additional allowable materials list this legislates these activities and ensures that UUSU is providing an equal opportunity within its elections.

The Vice President Magee spoke for the motion stating that they were in support of this motion as it helps encourage creativity and engagement. It enables candidates to take pride in the campaign they have created.

Councillor Mark Bell also stated that they agreed with the policy but also suggests that a candidate advice document on this be issued.

The Chair then moved the policy to a vote as there were no more questions or speakers.

Votes For the motion: 29
Votes Against the Motion: 1
Abstentions: 0

The Chair called an end to the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: 15.03.16

