



## **Graduate Union Minutes of a Meeting of the Student Council**

*Held at 2pm on 18 June 2016, in the CUSU/GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane*

### **Voting members of Council present:**

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Jean Laverune (Christ's MCR)
- Clara Tang (Churchill MCR)
- Oliver McMillan (Clare MCR)
- Rachel Evans (Emmanuel MCR)
- Millie Papworth (Fitzwilliam MCR)
- C. J. Rauch (Jesus MCR)
- Rebecca Love (KCGS)
- Craig Burns (Pembroke GP)
- Olivia Elder (Peterhouse MCR)
- Anna Fee (Robinson MCR)
- Arjun Sharath (Sidney Sussex MCR)
- Jonathan Shanahan (St John's SBR)
- Justin Yang (WCSA; Academic Affairs Officer)

Representing CUSU:

- Poppy Ellis Logan (Welfare & Rights Officer)

### **Voting members of Council present by proxy:**

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Fatima Baldo (Murray Edwards MCR)
- Filip Szczypiński (Trinity BA Society)

### **Non-voting members of Council present:**

- Chad Allen (President; in the Chair)
- Simon Graham (Families Officer)

**Other GU Members in attendance:**

- Mark Driver
- Bethan Ellwood
- Erwan Rolland

**Also in attendance:**

- Rob Richardson (Manager; acting as Secretary)

*The meeting opened at 2.05pm. At this point there were 13 voting members of Council (or their proxies) present, and so a quorum was not achieved. Item 3.b (President's Report) was taken first, and following the conclusion of the item at 2.15pm the meeting was quorate, with 16 voting members of Council (or their proxies) present.*

**1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

The minutes of the Council held on 30 January 2016 were approved, with no amendments.

**2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

There were none.

**3. Reports to Council from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee****(a) Welfare app**

The Welfare & Rights Officer had been working with a development team on an app that aims to solve many issues students experience in accessing welfare support while at Cambridge.

The developers presented a working prototype of the app. Functionality included enabling students to communicate with welfare providers such as representatives and advisors anonymously; no personal information is taken during registration and just an e-mail address and username are required to sign up. The President noted that he knew of several colleges that were trying to achieve similar functionality independently, and that a central provision could assist with this.

Future developments on the app would include a bot trained to answer factual questions from students', as well as increased compatibility with other platforms, including Facebook. There would be a web browser interface, as well as a space for static content such as college-specific information and guides. A central premise was also to ensure that the officers themselves were protected (in terms of liability and

also in terms of their own experience). Training on working with the app for J/MCR officers could added to the current Welfare Training scheme.

Members of Council were able to provide feedback and ask questions. It was noted that much promotional activity would be needed to ensure coverage, and that there was scope to involve a range of welfare providers such as the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

### **(b) President's report**

The President informed Council that the GU had recently submitted its audited accounts and annual returns to the Charity Commission and that a report from the Board of Trustees into why the GU had fallen into arrears with its returns to the Commission last year would be circulated to Council in due course.

The Board of Trustees had been developing the GU's internal policy. The GU now had a finance policy, a safeguarding of vulnerable persons policy, and risk management policy. Work on adopting other necessary or useful policies continued. The Board is also intending to develop a five-year strategic plan, and are keen for this to be influenced by the views and expertise of students and MCR officers. Further information on this would be circulated in due course.

University business had been busy of late. A key issue to arise had been the implementation of a framework for investigating instances of student harassment and sexual assault. A Report will be going to the next meeting of University Council and will thereafter be available in the Reporter; the President will be happy to air any comments from GU members on this. Another matter relevant to the Council was the University's work on graduate recruitment, with a focus on both widening participation and competing internationally, and its strategy involves a Graduate Open Day in Michaelmas. The President will keep Council informed as to how this develops.

The President attended the PdOC AGM and is in the process of building institutional ties with postdoc representatives. Working relations with CUSU were positive and the GU has supported CUSU with several events of late. At the last Council the President had been asked to investigate how the GU and the University and College Union (UCU) could interact. Graduate students can be full members of UCU, and the UCU Cambridge Exec Committee has a seat reserved for a postgraduate. If Council was interested, the President could investigate further. An indicative vote was held: there was unanimous approval.

The Executive Committee election took place last term, and the President congratulated the Families Officer and Academic Officer (in attendance), as well as the other officers, on their election. Much work has been carried out with student families of late, including the undertaking of a survey of student parents which offered insight into issues such as timetabling. The President had met with representatives from the childcare office several times, and the Families Officer had been generating an e-mail list to help keep in touch with student families who had been accessing GU

provisions. A more detailed report would be circulated. The Families Officer noted that many colleges have an officer on their MCR whose remit includes families and that it would be useful for him to have a record of these. The President agreed to ask for this information when circulating the minutes.

The last meeting of GU Council passed a framework for a second full-time sabbatical officer, and constitutional amendments required to take this forward will be submitted for the September meeting of CCSSU before being returned to Council for adoption either at the end of the Long Vacation or at the beginning of Michaelmas Term. The election for the position of Vice-President will take alongside that of the part-time Executive Committee in Michaelmas.

The President invited questions or comments; none were raised.

### **(c) Constitutional reformatting**

The President had made minor changes to the formatting of the constitution to enhance its clarity and functionality, and had corrected a number of minor typographical errors. Although advice from the Proctors had indicated that Council's explicit approval was not required, the President had wished to ensure full transparency by presenting the alterations to Council [Papers C.160818.A and C.160818.B]. No issues or objections were raised.

## **4. Motions to be ratified**

There were none.

## **5. Council discussions and questions to Council**

There were none.

## **6. Ordinary motions**

### **(a) Amendment to Schedule C**

The following motion was put to Council:

*Resolved: that the text of Paragraph 9 of Schedule C to the Constitution be deleted and replaced with "A meeting of the Student Council shall be quorate only if the number of voting members (as defined in paragraph 5 above) present is equal to or greater than two-fifths of the number of Affiliated Common Rooms."*

*Submitted by the President*

The proposed amendment had been discussed with the University's Legal Services Office, who deemed it unobjectionable. It had the support of the Board of Trustees.

The premise of the amendment was to remove the issue posed by the current high quorum burden and the instruction that if a meeting is inquorate, it should be adjourned, which, it was felt, provided motivation for people to avoid attending an initial meeting due to the likelihood of it being inquorate and of no meeting taking place. The suggested quorum of 2/5 of the number of affiliated Common Rooms scales with the likely attendance as well as removing the requirement to adjourn any inquorate meeting.

No speeches were made against the motion.

A vote was taken: 16 were in favour; none against.

The motion was carried.

### **(b) GU Stance on the EU referendum**

The following motion was put to the Council:

*Whereas:*

- 1. the result of the UK's referendum on membership of the EU on 23 June will have a very significant impact on current and future members of the GU as graduate students of the University;*
- 2. the GU, as a students' union, is legally entitled to take a collective stance on issues which affect its members as students;*
- 3. CUSU have taken a collective stance to support a "Remain" vote;*

*Resolved:*

- 1. that the GU use its social media accounts and email lists to remind its members who are eligible to vote in the referendum to do so;*
- 2. that the GU take a collective stance to support a "Remain" vote.*

*Submitted by Mark Driver*

The proposer noted that CUSU had recently passed a similar motion, and that this was an opportunity for the GU to vote on encouraging engagement with the referendum among its members as well as taking a stance. He noted that the Vice-Chancellor had made several strong public statements in favour of remaining within the European Union.

The President invited a speech against the motion. A member of Council questioned whether a students' union should be involving itself in such matters or whether it should focus on representing students. The proposer felt that the referendum was a key issue affecting students as students, and that it was a reasonable for the GU to take a stance in the run-up to the vote.

Another Council member felt that the GU should be representative of students; he questioned the purpose of advocating for a particular vote, when it would either be advocating for what students already intended to do or else be unrepresentative. The proposer responded that while each Council member was there to represent the students at their college, this motion concerned the taking of a broader official position drawing this and other arguments together. It was noted that the vote could be seen as the GU recommendation in the interests of its members, rather than a statement of collective student opinion. The President also explained that as well as functioning as a representative body, Council is also obliged to act in the interests of the GU and its members.

A member requested that information provided to member by the GU on the referendum should remain primarily focussed on fact rather than opinion; the President felt this would be in keeping with both resolutions.

A procedural motion to vote on the motion in parts was accepted.

A vote was taken:

On the first resolution, 16 were in favour; none against.

On the second resolution, 12 were in favour; 2 against.

The motion was carried.

### **(c) Annual review of policy**

The following motion was put to the Council:

*Resolved:*

- 1. that the following policy continue in force until reviewed again in Easter Term 2019; to support the replacement of affiliation fees with a levy on Colleges, as adopted by Council on 30 November 2011 and again on 2 May 2012;*
- 2. that all other policy made before 18 June 2013 be revoked.*

*Submitted by the President*

The GU Constitution obliges a review of all policy in the Easter Term preceding the fourth anniversary of its adoption and makes no provision for the expiring of policy. A schedule of policy for review had been circulated [Paper C.160618.C].

In the President's judgement, the only past policy that remains relevant to the GU's current work is policy that supports replacing an affiliation fee system with a College levy. In light of Council's discussions at the last meeting, the President observed that he doubted the Council would wish to retain the policy; the motion was nevertheless worded positively as a matter of form.

At the last meeting, Council discussed possible changes to the arrangements for the payment of affiliation fees. Since then, a consultation with College bursars has shown the bursars equally divided between supporting and opposing the introduction of a levy. CUSU have drafted a proposal on a new model that it wishes to discuss further with bursars, and the President assisted with this paper, which had been circulated to GU Council in advance of the meeting [Paper C.160818.D]. The President proposed that the motion be amended so as to include a resolution endorsing CUSU's proposal. There were no objections, so the amendment was accepted.

Currently, some colleges were effectively subsidising others as students at disaffiliated colleges still received services from the central unions by virtue of their individual membership. In the President's view, CUSU's proposal would offer a more equitable system.

In response to a question on the distinction between institutional services and individual services, the President gave examples. Welfare training, access to CUSU's online election platform, and holding a vote on Council were seen as institutional services, while individual services included those such as printing, gown hire, binding, and NUS Extra cards.

One Council member asked whether it was the case that a student of a disaffiliated MCR whose college nonetheless paid the levy would not receive representation. The President responded that the student would retain their vote in GU elections and referendums, and be represented at Council via their Faculty representative – though they would lose representation via their MCR.

Another Council member noted that a levy model would force their college to pay money to both unions even if they only wished to affiliate to one. The President noted that individual members could disaffiliate and this would reduce the amount paid by the college. The picture was further complicated by the fact that some colleges pass responsibility for paying the fees onto their MCRs while some do not; the impacts of a new system will differ across colleges.

The President suggested that the Council consider each matter at hand separately, and further proposed that the motion be voted on in parts. There were no objections, so the proposal was accepted.

The President asked the Council whether they wished to renew or revoke the current policy of supporting a College levy. An indicative vote was taken: 4 were in favour of renewing the policy; 5 were in favour of revoking the policy.

In the light of this vote, the President proposed that the motion be amended so as to revoke all policy made before 18 June 2013. There were no objections, so the amendment was accepted.

At this point, the motion before the Council was:

*Resolved:*

1. *that all policy made before 18 June 2013 be revoked;*
2. *that the GU endorse the proposal outlined in Paper C.160618.D.*

*Submitted by the President*

A vote was taken:

On the first resolution, 16 were in favour; none against.

On the second resolution, 8 were in favour; 3 against.

The motion was carried.

The President thanked Council for its feedback and had taken these views on board. He would email Council with availability in the coming week to allow Council members to discuss any concerns on the matter with him further.

### **7. Emergency motions**

There were none.

### **8. Elections by Council**

There were none.

### **9. Any other business**

There was none.

*The meeting closed at 3:50pm.*