

Leeds University Union

Union Council Minutes

Date: 14th April 2008

Location: ARC Conference Hall

Present: Harry Aslam, Barry McGuire, Joshua Jones, Kudzai Shava, Noam Harris, Aiysha Ahmed, Abdulrahman Alhadithi, Ben Angell, Laura Conrad, Joel Harrison, Thomas Jeffery, Guy Mitchell, Tracy Poon, Alia Mahdi, Mai Ali, Sophia James, Alex Hunter, Madeline Harris-Smith, Andrew Greer, Neil Mackenzie, Sara Gill, Susan Nash, Hind Hassan, Lizzie Fellows.

In attendance: Aidan Grills

Minute taker: Sophie Parker

Reference: UC/0708/10

1. **Apologies for absence**

Mina Said

2. **Minutes of the previous Union Council meeting for ratification as a true and accurate record of that meeting**

2.1 Ordinary Union Council held on 10th March 2008

Minutes ratified

3. **Matters arising out of these minutes**

3.1 Action Points

NM noted that board meeting minutes can be released if requested, but not routinely.

NM also noted that a meeting will take place between himself and JJ (Democracy and Communications Chair) in the near future. The results of this meeting will be discussed at the next Union Council.

Details on the GM potatoes motion will be shared at a later date.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the sub-committees of Union Council

4.1 Minutes of the Student Exec meeting held on the 3rd March 2008

NM made the council aware that this section of the agenda has been moved according to a previous UC motion, to enhance exec accountability.

HH also noted that at future meetings, minutes and agenda items would be available in paper form for councillors to read.

Minutes ratified.

5. Executive Question Time

5.1 Executive work update report

The Exec each gave an update of their current work. The Speaker opened the floor for questions and comments after each update.

AG – main focus is Celebrate Week for student activities. Lots of events including the Riley awards.

No questions were asked.

NM – a setback with recent work on the ‘fair pay network’, in that positive action has been voted down locally. Further rallies in the coming months.

JJ enquired about a rumour that the Boddington site is to be sold to Leeds Met. LF said that no such information had been passed to the exec, but the rumour will be looked into. A meeting is due to take place regarding Boddington in the next few days with Residential Services.

SG – currently pushing forward awareness of student voting and registering to vote in local elections. Information available from the exec and reception.

No questions were asked.

SN – working on ‘Leeds for Life’, which looks into how students get information about opportunities at University. Also ongoing work/consultation with University libraries on issues of holiday loans etc, and ongoing work on fees.

No questions were asked.

HH – ongoing work on access audit, preparation for funding debate.

No questions were asked.

LF – ongoing work with Primary Care Trust regarding sexual health/drugs/alcohol awareness. Also focusing on current Green Week.

No questions were asked.

NM also welcomed comments on the layout of the above updates for future presentation, to ensure transparency and to make them easy to understand and question.

KS also enquired about information regarding the recent elections and referendum.

Action point:

- **NM to analyse surveys of candidates and voters for next meeting.**

6. Business referred by Assemblies

6.1 “You've got the power” campaign

SJ explained that UC/campaigning is not always seen enough. This campaign would make general student body more aware of UC, what it does, and how they can get involved.

The Speaker opened the floor for questions and comments.

A short discussion ensued, which was generally in favour of running this campaign. It was noted that the old campaigning and representation group, or the new form of this, would be good to lead this campaign. The possibility of running the campaign during or around Freshers week was discussed.

Action points:

- **NM to organise meeting with JJ, and to bring a discussion paper regarding this campaign to the next meeting.**
- **Exec to look into possibility of providing information about the union and democracy when students register with the University.**

7. Business referred by the Student Executive

7.1 The future of student computing

SN – an ongoing project with the University, looking at the future of student computing at Leeds and the provisions needed. Comments welcomed from UC.

AH voiced concerns about the VLE, and the lack of staff members who use it adequately.

SN replied that the new VLE, to be launched in September, will develop over time. It will also be written into degree program provision that work must be completed using the VLE, meaning that staff will be required to use the system.

KS also voiced concerns regarding the provisions for people with disabilities. He noted that such provisions need to be included at the initial planning process, not as an add-on.

SN replied that the mention of specialised provisions in the paper was referring to programs other than Microsoft, but that these comments regarding accessibility will be fed into the consultation.

The Speaker urged other councillors with comments to contact c.c.addy@leeds.ac.uk (further details on agenda).

7.2 Working whilst learning

This issue relates to a motion passed at a previous UC meeting.

SN – looking for part-time workers who study who have had problems with the University accommodating them in terms of timetabling etc.

KS also noted that equal opportunity for students with disabilities is an issue. HH noted that the exec is working on this.

7.3 I love my personal tutor

SN – this is an award scheme to promote personal tutors. It is a joint event with the University, and is linked from the website. Comments regarding tutors can be given to the new exec.

7.4 Feedback

SN – some University schools have now published their action plans regarding feedback online. Boxes will be sent to each school for students to drop in examples of good and bad feedback, to create an exhibition.

A Break was called.

8. Business referred by other Members

8.1 Twinning motion

Proposed by Shadin Dowson-Zeidan, who made a speech in favour of the motion.

- Leeds University is twinned with Birzeit University, and should act on this twinning to defend the right to education.
- Various students have been arrested, including the head and acting head of the union.
- The University should show support to these students and others, since the current situation is attacking the right to education.

Opposed by Alex Hunter, who made a speech against the motion.

- Disagree with the occupation, but need balance in arguments.
- The students in question are knowingly involved in political groups which are not allowed, meaning that they cannot take on positions of power in the union.
- It would difficult for this union to remain unbiased – we should therefore remain uninvolved.

The Speaker opened the floor for questions and comments.

There was an extensive debate, with arguments for and against the motion. There were questions over whether the arrested individuals had been involved in arms or terrorist activity. There was some general feeling that since the twinning issue was taken to the referendum, the union should honour this. The main concern of those in opposition was writing a letter in support of the arrested individuals, as it was unsure about whether such support could tarnish this union's reputation.

A procedural motion to defer the motion to the next meeting fell.

Kudzai Shava left the meeting.

An amendment was proposed by NH to add an additional point to This Union Notes, reading 'The Israeli town of Sderot has faced a barrage of rockets from Palestinian militant groups.' He felt that this underlined the overall Israel/Palestine issue and the safety issues of Israel.

Shadin Dowson-Zeidan opposed the amendment as she felt it was not relevant to Birzeit, or the requirements of the motion. HH also felt that this amendment would change the spirit of the motion.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
7	13	2

AMENDMENT FALLS.

An amendment was proposed by NH to add the word 'politically' immediately before the words 'imprisoned students' in This Union believes 2, as he felt that the union should not be campaigning for the freedom of all imprisoned students.

NM noted that in this context, the word 'political' is very subjective.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
15	4	3

AMENDMENT PASSED

An amendment was proposed by NH to remove This Union Resolves 2 from the motion, as he felt that not enough is known about the individuals in question to warrant full support from this union.

JH opposed the amendment as he felt that this amendment contradicted the last.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
6	10	6

AMENDMENT FALLS

An amendment was proposed by NH to remove This Union Resolves 3 from the motion, as he felt that marking Palestinian Political Prisoner Day was not the best use of LUU resources.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
5	12	5

AMENDMENT FALLS

A procedural motion to move straight to the vote was passed.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
AA, AAI, MA, JH, HH, TJ, NM, AM, GM, TP.	BA, LC, NH, SH.	LF, SG, AG, MH-S, BM, SJ, JJ, SN.

MOTION PASSED.

8.2 Boddington Hall

Deferred to next meeting.

8.3 Siege in Gaza

Withdrawn, pending more information.

9. Reports and declarations to Union Council

No reports or declarations.

10. Any other business.

SN made a short presentation of the Fees campaign.

- At the last UC, a fees action plan was discussed. The main aim is to build a good campaign for next year.
- Councillors urged to go online to look at these issues.
- Important to be organised and united.
- Working to influence and lobby at higher levels, and trying to set up Scrutiny panels to involve local MPs and evaluate the impact of fees on city development.
- 21st April = day of action for fees. There will be local and national media presence around the union at 3.45pm.

TJ noted that some teachers unions are striking on the 24th April, and that UC should be supporting lecturers to ensure quality of education and to promote the existence of an academic community.

NM gave a short report on NUS Conference. He explained that there was no paper on this due to the UC agenda deadline falling during the Conference.

- The Governance review fell by 25 votes, but will be taken back to the next Conference in an amended form. The motion to totally defeat the review was also rejected.
- The goals of the funding debate and the free education campaign

were reaffirmed.

- Wes Streeting was elected as the new NUS President.
- SN and HH were voted onto NUS Block of Twelve.

LF proposed a late motion, with the permission of the Speaker.

Climate Change Motion

Proposed by Lizzie Fellows, who made a speech in favour of the motion.

- There are currently plans to build a number of new coal power stations in Britain.
- There have been no new coal power stations in Britain for the last thirty years.
- The government is also looking to pass a new climate change bill. Not only is this not strong enough, it is also contradicted by the building of new coal power stations.
- The justification given is that the coal power stations will be 'carbon capture ready', but the technology for this will not be operational for many years.
- EON, who will be running the stations, have called for a delay due to serious concerns about the environmental effects.
- A Public enquiry is called for.

Opposed by Alex Hunter, who made a speech against the motion.

- There will soon be a gap in the energy usage market in Britain, meaning that new power stations are vital.
- Nuclear power has little public support.
- There are going to be inherent problems of the future of the energy situation without these new power stations.

A short debate ensued, which was largely in favour of the motion.

A procedural motion to move to a vote was passed.

Vote

For	Against	Abstain
AA, AAI, MA, LC, LF, SG, AG, NH, JH, MH-S, HH, SJ, TJ, JJ, NM, AM, GM, SN, TP.		BA, AH, BM.

MOTION PASSED.

11. Date and time of next meeting.

Tuesday 6th May 2006, ARC Conference Hall.

