

Ratified Minutes

Of the Ordinary Meeting of Standing Committee of the Oxford Union Society

Monday of 1st Week (13th October), Michaelmas Term 2014

The President's Office, 4:00pm

Present: **The President** (Mr Mayank Banerjee, *St John's College*), **The Treasurer** (Mr Roberto Weeden-Sanz, *St Benet's Hall*) **The Secretary** (Mr Dom Merchant, *New College*), **The Elected Member** (Mr Stuart Webber, *Somerville College*), **The Elected Member** (Joseph Miles, *Wadham College*), **The Elected Member** (Miss Tutku Bektas, *Exeter College*), **The Elected Member** (Mr Henry Lee, *St Catherine's College*), **The Librarian-Elect** (Mr Charles Vaughan, *St John's College*), **The Treasurer-Elect** (Miss Nam Phuong Dinh, *Corpus Christi College*), **The Bursar** (Mrs Lindsay Warne), **The Women's Officer** (Miss Alys Key, *Somerville College*), **The CCC** (Miss Olivia Merrett, *St John's College*), **The CDSC** (Mr Daniel Bregman, *Merton College*), **The Ex-Secretary** (Mr Alex Trafford, *Pembroke College*), **The RO** (Mr Wharton Chan, *Pembroke College*)

Attending: **The Chief of Staff** (Mr Robert Harris, *New College*), **The Press Officer** (Mr Daniel Valentine, *Hertford College*)

Absent: **The Ex-Officio**

The President opens the meeting at 4:04pm

Apologies: **The Librarian** (Miss Mehrunissa Sajjad, *Merton College*) sends her apologies (Society's business), **The CCC** sends her apologies (Society's business), **The Senior Librarian** sends his apologies, **The Elected Member** (Miss Sharmani Clark, *St Hugh's College*) sends her apologies (Society's business), **The President-Elect** (Miss Lisa Wehden, *Worcester College*) sends her apologies (illness), **The Co-Access Officers** (Mr Samuel Billington, *Somerville College*, and Miss Asta Diabate, *Balliol College*) send their apologies.

Matters arising from previous meetings

None.

The Ratification of Minutes

The President moved that the draft minutes of the meeting of Vacation Standing Committee, 6th of October, and the draft minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Standing Committee 8th week TT14, be ratified.

Nem. Con.

The President moves to the business of the Treasurer.

The Treasurer

The business of the Treasurer:

The Treasurer informed the TSC that the following expenses had been approved by The Bursar.

The Treasurer moved that the Standing Committee pass expenditure of £1407.78 for debates expenses

Nem Con.

The President asks that the Treasurer send a breakdown of the expenses to the Secretary that they may be attached to the minute book.

Questions to the Treasurer:

There were no questions to the Treasurer.

The President returns to the order of the Agenda.

The President

The business of the President:

Appointed positions;

The President moved that this term's appointed positions be approved by the Standing Committee.

Nem. Con

Co-hosted events;

The President provided the details of the term's proposed co-hosted events which are; the Homelessness panel (OUSU), comedy debate (RAG), and the Malcolm X debate (History Faculty) are all to be restricted to Union members. Also Al Jazeera events which open to all non-members and Geir Lippestad who to be co-hosted with the Oxford Scandinavian Society and which will be open to Scan Soc members as well as Union Members.

The President moved that this term's co-hosted events be approved by the Standing Committee.

Nem. Con.

Discussion of electoral changes;

The President informs the Standing Committee that the reports from last terms Electoral Tribunal are available (*copies are distributed*).

The RO adds that the document available is only the recommendations for Standing Committee from the panel. He says it includes suggested changes to rule 33b and comments about social networks.

The President says that these comments contribute to the discussion of electoral rules changes that he and other members of committee are in favour of, principally concerning; the legalization of "slates" and "lining", changes to make campaigning more open and legalized online campaigning, and a possible change to the method of voting to move to online voting (he adds he is personally not in favour but feels it worth discussing).

He clarifies nothing is being brought today, but encourages the TSC to note the comments of the tribunal report that slates and lining have been the norm for up to 15 years, and that open campaign needs to be permitted in a modern Society.

He resolves to set up a working group to finalize proposed changes in the coming weeks and encourages members to get in touch.

The RO advises that such changes would have to be passed by 5th week (at the public business meeting on Thursday) to take effect for this term's elections. He adds that he will affix the tribunal reports to the noticeboard following the meeting and contact the relevant people.

The President wishes to note to that the requirement in the report for a paragraph (8.4) to be read at the next public business meeting carries a risk of creating a negative impression of the Society and impacting the membership drive. He takes responsibility in advance if the paragraph is not read at the appropriate time.

The Website;

The President informs TSC that the company (Squiz) delivering the upgraded website is over two weeks behind and adds that there is little that can be done other than to continue to press them. He clarifies that it is still functional in that members can still join online and the term schedule has been uploaded; we are simply waiting for the cosmetic improvements.

Second half of the payment of the Term Card Designer;

The President moved that the Standing Committee pass expenditure of £550 for the second instalment of payment to the Term Card Designer (Miss Daniella Shreir, Somerville College).

The President clarifies that although the design was submitted late the term cards were delivered on time. He notes that the design has been widely praised and the additional £100 total payment are to cover the Facebook banners and for inflation.

Nem. Con.

OMA filming arrangements;

The President moved the Standing Committee be in camera at 16.18 to discuss a financially sensitive contract

Nem. Con.

The President moves the Standing Committee out of camera 16:23.

Proposed rules changes relating to complaints, response to criminal proceedings, impeachment, and Chapter C of Standing Orders;

Copies of the proposed rules changes are distributed, as well as a letter to TSC from the Ex-Librarian Mr Chris Starkey, St Catherine's College.

The President responded to Mr Starkey's letter; regarding paragraph 1 he said he sees no substantive criticism of the rules. He said that, regarding the rest of the letter, last term's events were not a direct response to last term's events, and did not affect the purpose of the Union as the letter seems to suggest.

The Treasurer-Elect said she feels that the changes are a knee-jerk reaction to last term's controversy and wouldn't have happened without last term's events.

The President agreed on the second point and said that the events highlighted some of the flaws in the way the Union is run.

The Librarian –Elect noted how much time had gone into the drafting of the rules and suggested they were anything but “knee-jerk”.

The President moved that speaking rights be granted to Mr David Browne, Merton College.

Nem. Con.

Mr Browne wished the record to show his opinion that the Society needs to find another way of governing other than immediate responses to crises to appease critics.

The President responds that he did not instigate the changes in order to appease anyone, rather to improve the way the Union is run.

The CDSC noted that the speed at which a good change is enacted does not affect the merits of the change and praised the proposed amendments.

The President responded the criticism that the possibility of the suspension of Officers in the middle of carrying out their duties, such as a Secretary preparing a ball, was a serious risk to the smooth running of the Society. He said he fundamentally disagreed since at the current time an illness or resignation could cause the same issue and the proposed rules is helpful in providing a method for the reallocation of duties.

He further responded to the criticism based on his own words in the previous week's meeting about decision making powers from committee (with reference to the Complaints Consultant). He re-stated his opinion that this was a positive change as it concerned decisions that TSC was not qualified to make. He refuted that the process would take time away from the running of the Society, adding he believed the opposite would be true.

Mr Miles commented that he believed that had these rules been in place last term, a large part of the controversy would have been averted.

Mr Trafford says that he believed the knee jerk criticism to refer to the changes appearing to pander to the small minority of members who caused problems last term. He added that the rules should be judged according to how they served the membership in general.

The President responded that he felt that, as the overall running of the Society would be aided, the membership would benefit from the changes.

Mr Browne wished to dispute Mr Starkey's suggestion that the Society seemed to be turning itself into a judiciary and was beginning to resemble the NUS and OUSU by noting that the changes simply constituted an automatic response that could be overturned and that democratic engagement was necessary when the reputation of the Society was at stake.

The Librarian-Elect explained the progress made on the rules discussed the previous week and recommended that the rule about impeachment be left out of this week's discussion as there remained issues to discuss.

He suggested that TSC could pass a resolution this week recommending the rules regarding complaints, the pausing of disciplinary procedures and the change to Standing Order C.

Mr Miles particularly commends section 11 of the changes.

The Librarian-Elect explains that the President intends to pass these changes at an Extraordinary Public Business Meeting on Thursday of 1st week at 5:30pm in the chamber. This will be publicized widely and is to avoid disrupting the first debate of the term with a lengthy reading of rules that would not be of interest to prospective members. A vote will be taken at the meeting.

Mr Miles moved that the proposed change to rule 71a, i,1 be amended to include "gender identity" as a category.

Nem. Con.

The Senior Treasurer notes that the institution of a Complaints consultant would be the first time ever, to his knowledge that the Society had gone outside of TSC for its governance. He said he worried that this might be the beginning of a slippery slope and emphasised that TSC was elected expressly in order to run the society.

The RO recommend that there should be a rule defining what the complaints consultant's role was, and to formalise the process of finding and recruiting the person.

The President and the Bursar expressed the view that it would be best to pass the rule and start looking for an appropriate person, and then legislate to formalise the process for future occurrences when more was understood about the process.

The Senior Treasurer expressed concerns about what the details of the financial arrangements would be.

The RO moved that the following clause be inserted into 71 a 1, paragraph 3, in the proposed changes; "In order to appoint a Complaints Consultant the President will move a motion to the Standing Committee recommending a suitable individual to the post."

Nem. Con.

The President moved that the Standing Committee recommend a Private Business Motion pertaining to rules changes in the event of complaints, and in reaction to criminal proceedings, including the changes passed.

Nem. Con.

The President moved that Mr Webber be appointed delegate to Library Committee, Mr Miles to Wine and Spirits, Miss Bektas to Access, Miss Clark to DSC and Mr Lee to Finance for Michaelmas Term 2014.

Nem. Con.

The President closes the meeting at 5:03pm.

Questions to the President

There were no questions to the President.

The Librarian

The business of the Librarian in her absence

None

Questions to the Librarian in her absence

None

The Secretary

The business of the Secretary

None

Questions to the Secretary

None

Mr Stuart Webber

The business of Mr Webber

None

Questions to the Mr Webber

None

Mr Joseph Miles

The business of Mr Miles

None

Questions to Mr Miles

None

Miss Tutku Bektas

The business of Miss Bektas

None

Questions to Miss Bektas

None

Miss Sharmani Clark

The business of Miss Clark in her absence

None

Questions to Miss Clark in her absence.

None

Mr Henry Lee

The business of Mr Lee

None

Questions to Mr Lee

None

The President-Elect

The business of the President-Elect in her absence

None

Questions to the President-Elect in her absence

None

The Librarian-Elect

The business of the Librarian-Elect

None

Questions to the Librarian-Elect

None

The Treasurer-Elect

The business of the Treasurer-Elect

None

Questions to the Treasurer-Elect

None

The Ex-Officio

The business of any Ex-Officio

None

Questions to any Ex-Officio

None

The Senior-Librarian

The business of the Senior Librarian in his absence

None

Questions to the Senior Librarian in his absence

None

The Senior-Treasurer

The business of the Senior Treasurer

None

Questions to the Senior Treasurer

None

The Returning Officer

The business of the Returning Officer

The IDC shortlist is distributed.

The Librarian-Elect noted that the name of Polina Ivanova was spelled incorrectly.

The President moved that Mr Alex Trafford, Ex-Secretary be granted speaking rights

Nem Con.

Mr Trafford informs the RO that he is not supposed to be on the list following his conviction for electoral malpractice the previous term.

The Returning Officer moved that the Standing Committee pass the IDC list with the corrections discussed.

Nem Con.

Questions to the Returning Officer

There were no questions to the Returning Officer.

The Chairman of the Consultative Committee

The business of the CCC in her absence

None

Questions to the CCC in her absence

None

The Access Officers

The business of the Access Officers in their absence

None

Questions to the Access Officers in their absence

None

The Chairman of the Debates Selection Committee

The business of the CDSC

None

Questions to the CDSC

None

The Bursar

The business of the Bursar

None

Questions to the Bursar

None

Changes to the Composition of this Committee

None.

Any Other Business

None

Date of Next Meeting

Monday 2nd Week, Michaelmas Term 2014, President's Office, 4:00pm

Signed,

Dom Merchant
New College
Secretary