

Ratified Minutes of  
THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
2<sup>nd</sup> Week Hilary Term 2015  
Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015  
President's Office, 16:00

**Present:** **The President** (Miss Lisa Wehden, *Worcester College*), **The Librarian** (Mr Charlie Vaughan, *St. John's College*), **The Treasurer** (Miss NamPhuong Dinh, *Corpus Christi College*), **The Secretary** (Mr Robert Harris, *New College*), **The Elected Member** (Miss Verity Hubbard, *Lady Margaret Hall*), **The Elected Member** (Miss Cindy Yu, *Christ Church*), **The Elected Member** (Mr David Browne, *Merton College*), **The Elected Member** (Mr Alastair Holder Ross, *St. Hilda's College*), **The Librarian-Elect** (Mr Stuart Webber, *Somerville College*), **The Ex-Secretary** (Mr Dom Merchant, *New College*), **The Senior Treasurer** (Mr Stephen Dixon, *Downing College, Cambridge*), **The Bursar** (Mrs Lindsay Warne), **The Returning Officer** (Mr Thomas Reynolds, *University College*), **The Access Officer** (Mr Samuel Billington, *Somerville College*), **The Access Officer** (Mr Daniel Haynes, *New College*), **The Chair of the Debate Selection Committee** (Mr Jamie Jackson, *St. John's College*).

**Attending:** **The Ex-Elected Member** (Mr Joseph Miles, *Wadham College*), **The Chief of Staff** (Miss Olivia Merrett, *St. John's College*), **The Press Officer** (Mr Daniel Valentine, *Hertford College*), **The Senior Deputy Returning Officer** (Mr Michael Flagg, *St. Hugh's College*), **The Deputy Returning Officer** (Mr Robert Boissonneault, *Keble College*), Miss Ceri Smith (*St. Anne's College*), Mr Jamie Lagerberg (*Corpus Christi College*).

**Apologies:** **The Elected Member** (Mr Joe Fowles, *Pembroke College*), **The President-Elect** (Mr Roberto Weeden-Sanz, *St. Benet's Hall*), **The Treasurer-Elect** (Miss Antonia Trent, *St. Hugh's College*), **The Senior Librarian** (Mr Sean Power, *Oriel College*), **The Chairman of the Consultative Committee** (Miss Felicity Blackburn, *Somerville College*), **The Access Officer** (Miss Claire Butler, *Worcester College*).

**Absent:** None.

*The President opens the meeting at 16:06.*

**Requests to Pass Absences from Previous Meeting**

**The Secretary** explains that he was absent from the Ordinary Meeting of TSC of HT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week as he was on society business, convening a regional round of the Oxford Union Schools' Debating Competition in North London. He presents TSC with two items of evidence verifying his argument.

The Secretary moves that TSC passes his absence from the Ordinary Meeting of TSC of HT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week as being with 'good reason' due to his being on society business.

*Seconded by Mr Browne.*

*Nem. con.*

**The Secretary** informs TSC that he received an email today from the President-Elect, explaining that he was absent from the Ordinary Meeting of TSC of HT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week due to being in America on society business, contacting politicians and meeting with producers.

**Mr Browne** states that the President-Elect clearly wishes TSC to move a motion to pass his absence as being with 'good reason'.

**The President** asks whether he has presented both argument and evidence to support his claim.

**The Secretary** responds that he has provided argument, but not evidence. The Secretary reads out the content of the President-Elect's email.

**Miss Yu** notes that all that has actually been given is assertion, not argument.

**The Treasurer** says that the claims of the President-Elect are not 'entirely outrageous'.

**The President** expresses concern that no evidence has been provided to support the claims.

**Mr Browne** notes the distinction between 'being on society business' and just meeting politicians and producers socially in one's own time.

**Mr Merchant** asks whether the absence could only be passed as being with 'good reason' in this meeting, or whether we could defer the decision until a future meeting.

**The Returning Officer** explains that, given that this is the first meeting held at least 168 hours after the absence in question, it would need to be passed in this meeting.

**Mr Holder Ross** raises the possibility that the President-Elect might have gone to California and, when there, decided to do some society business.

**The Secretary** says that he has no more information than that from the email which he read out.

**The Treasurer** states her belief that the trip to America had been planned for a long time.

**The Secretary** confirms that he received apologies from the President-Elect before last week's meeting when the absence occurred.

**Mr Holder Ross** says that, given that he thought to provide reasons, the President-Elect must have known of the need to provide evidence.

**The President** agrees that, as the President-Elect, this is definitely something he should know.

**Miss Hubbard** asks when the President-Elect is returning to Oxford.

**The Treasurer** replies that he is returning at some point this week (2<sup>nd</sup> Week).

**The Senior Treasurer** argues that we should not pass the absence as 'extraordinary' as it does not seem to be the case that it really was, especially if the trip was planned long in advance.

**The President** notes that, in passing his absence as being with 'good reason', the Secretary provided argument corroborated by printed evidence.

**Miss Yu** asks the consequences of not passing the absence as being with 'good reason'.

**Mr Browne** responds that, if someone is absent from three meetings of the same committee in the same term, they are deemed to have resigned their position.

**The Librarian** suggests that, acting as the proxy for the President-Elect, the Secretary should propose that the absence is passed as being with 'good reason'.

**The Treasurer** notes that we often accept apologies from members of TSC without ever really discussing the reasons behind them.

**The Librarian** explains that apologies are simply courteous and have nothing to do with 'good reason'.

**The Senior Treasurer** agrees that apologies carry no weight whatsoever.

**The President** says that, moving forwards, we should expect both argument and evidence in order to pass an absence as being with 'good reason'. It is not good enough that the President-Elect has contacted neither her about society business for this term, nor the Librarian-Elect about society business for next term.

The Secretary moves that TSC passes the absence of the President-Elect from the Ordinary Meeting of TSC of HT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week as being with 'good reason' due to his being on society business.

*Seconded by the Treasurer.*

*Objected to by Miss Yu and Mr Browne.*

*Rejected by an overwhelming majority.*

**The Treasurer** suggests it might be useful to publicise the need for both argument and evidence to all members of TSC.

**The President** responds that, having been involved with the Union for many terms, all Officers should be aware of the rules.

**The Librarian** notes that everyone should be especially aware of these rules given the similar situation which arose in TT14 with Miss Mehrunissa Sajjad (the Librarian-Elect at the time).

**The Bursar** states that this rule is publicised to new members of TSC in the induction handbook.

**The Senior Treasurer** notes that, having been elected, it is very disrespectful both to TSC and to members not to attend meetings.

#### **Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

There are no matters arising from the previous minutes.

#### **Ratification of Minutes**

The Secretary moves that TSC ratifies the Minutes from the Ordinary Meeting of TSC of HT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week.

*Seconded by the Librarian-Elect.*

*Nem. con.*

#### **The President**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

#### **Business of the President:**

**The President** says that we need to discuss poll arrangements.

**The Librarian** clarifies that, under Rule 47(f)(vi), TSC needs to make arrangements for a poll regarding the electoral rules changes, in the event that one is called following the vote in the Chamber. The rules are essentially the same as last term but with new dates. If there were to be a poll, it would be on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February.

**Mr Browne** requests an amendment to (c)(5) as it is self-contradictory; it allows many different forms of campaigning, but then says that campaigning should not be ‘persistent’. We should strike the sentence regarding ‘persistent campaigning’.

**The Librarian** agrees.

The President moves that TSC passes the poll rules, with an amendment to remove the sentence in (c)(5) concerning ‘persistent campaigning’.

*Nem. con.*

**The Librarian** notes that, in the event that a poll is called, there will be a meeting of TSC beforehand at which any of the poll rules can be altered.

**The President** asks if we need to appoint an Emergency Returning Officer.

**The Librarian** responds that the Returning Officer (whoever it may be on 17<sup>th</sup> February) becomes the Extraordinary Returning Officer for the purposes of overseeing the poll.

**The Returning Officer** disagrees that, whilst the RO is normally appointed as the ERO, this is not always the case.

**The Librarian** argues that TSC only has the right to appoint a different ERO in the event that the RO is disqualified by virtue of being a speaker for either side of the House. We cannot, at this moment in time, appoint a specific person to be ERO; we can only appoint someone by virtue of their office. This issue should be re-addressed at a future meeting of TSC when we know who the RO will be.

*Miss Verity Hubbard (Elected Member) enters the room at 16:11.*

**Mr Browne** suggests that we should find a way to interpret the rule to remove the latent defect.

**The Librarian** responds that the rules are very clear in stating that the ERO has to be the RO unless they have been disqualified. It is sensible that TSC cannot simply choose the person most amenable to the rules changes to be ERO.

Questions to the President:

**Mr Holder Ross** asks what is the current status of our filming situation.

**The President** replies that there is a meeting tomorrow, so hopefully it will be sorted very soon.

**Miss Hubbard** asks whether “the Oxford Union Undergraduates” Facebook group has been deleted.

**The President** replies that it still exists, and is in currently in use to advertise upcoming events.

**The Librarian**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of the Librarian:

**The Librarian** explains that the Library Committee has appointed three new junior members (all Undergraduates), one studying each of PPE, Classics and Maths & Computer Science.

*Mr Robert Boissonneault (DRO) enters the room at 16:14.*

The Librarian moves that TSC approves the appointment of Mr Robert Harris (The Secretary, New College), Mr Timothy Foot (Merton College) and Mr Blagovest Gospodinov (St. John's College) as Junior Members of the Library Committee.

*Seconded by Mr Holder Ross.*

*Nem. con.*

Questions to the Librarian:

There are no questions to the Librarian.

**The Treasurer**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of the Treasurer:

**The Treasurer** states that DSC expenses have been recommended by the Finance Committee.

The Treasurer moves that TSC passes DSC expenses totalling £119.39.

*Seconded by the President.*

*Nem. con.*

**The Treasurer** explains that, last term, the Brookes' representatives enquired about making their membership permanent. TSC concluded that they had made significant contributions to the Society, but no further action has yet been taken.

**The Bursar** clarifies that they do not become 'life' members but, rather, their 'temporary' membership does not have an end date.

**The Librarian** explains that, in order to progress the situation, they need to make an application in writing to any member of TSC.

Questions to the Treasurer:

There are no questions to the Treasurer.

**The Secretary**

*Meetings missed: 1, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of the Secretary:

**The Secretary** reports that he has received an application for residential membership from Mr Stephen Eeley. Mr Eeley applied during MT14 but the application must have been lost. The Secretary interviewed Mr Eeley on Saturday and found him to be nice and of very good character. He has lived in Oxford most of his life, used to work as an administrator at the History museum, and is now the Bursar of Vincent's Club. He would love to attend debates and use the Library. He is very keen to contribute to the Society, possibly by serving on the Library Committee or the Access Committee. We can elect up to 100 residential members per year, and have not yet elected any this year.

**Miss Yu** asks what is a residential member.

**The Secretary** answers that a residential member is someone who lives in the local area and would like to become a member, but cannot become a member by virtue of university affiliation.

**The Bursar** says that residential members contribute a lot of money to the society. Membership is £242 for the first year and £120 for every year thereafter. They receive the same benefits as ‘temporary members’, meaning they can vote in elections but cannot run themselves.

**The Secretary** explains that, if no member objects to his election within 3 days of his name being posted on the noticeboard, then, once the correct fee has been paid, Mr Eeley will be deemed to have been elected as a residential member.

The Secretary moves that TSC deems Mr Stephen Eeley to be duly qualified for election as a residential member of the Society.

*Seconded by the Librarian.*

*Nem. con.*

**The Secretary** states his desire finally to settle the question of the attendance of the Wealdstone Raider (Gordon Hill) at this term’s ‘A Night in Paris’ Ball. He clarifies that TSC does not need to ratify the spending of the £1,000 ‘pot’ which was granted to be used by the Secretary in the way he sees fit for the best interests of the Ball and the Society. Nonetheless, since the Wealdstone Raider has massively divided opinion, it is sensible to bring the question to a vote of TSC. It would be best to vote by secret ballot so that nobody is influenced by the consensus view.

**The President** questions the necessity of a secret ballot.

**Mr Browne** states his support for the ballot being secret given that this is a divisive issue. It is important that every member of TSC feels able to vote for what they think is in the best interests of the Society.

**The Secretary** summarises the main arguments for and against the appearance of the Wealdstone Raider. There are two main arguments in favour: judging from the testimony of various members of committee, he seems to be very popular in Oxford; and it might also benefit the Union in making us seem slightly more fun and light-hearted. There have been three main arguments against his appearance. Firstly, he does not fit with the Parisian theme. But it is worth noting that, normally, not all aspects of a Ball do fit with the theme, such as the ubiquitous silent disco which often plays music unrelated to the theme. Secondly, the Returning Officer explained in last week’s meeting how it might be portrayed as posh Oxford students in black tie laughing at a working-class football fan. This is a totally understandable objection but probably not fair – he is selling himself as an ‘act’, in the full knowledge that he is an ‘act’, and it is patronising to assume that he is merely being tricked by his agent into selling himself for money.

**The Bursar** argues that what matters is not what Gordon Hill himself thinks, but what the perception is that will be portrayed of the Union.

**Mr Holder Ross** notes that he and Miss Hubbard feel that his appearance would do no favours for the Union.

**The Secretary** continues by explaining the third objection, namely the doubt that the Wealdstone Raider really is as ‘big’ or as well-known as we think he is.

**The Treasurer** asks how much he is charging.

**The Secretary** answers that he is charging £875, which would include socialising with guests for two hours, performing his Christmas single and making a couple of promotional videos to help us promote the Ball and sell tickets. Regarding the money, there is of course nothing wrong with making a profit,

but there is no aspect of the Ball which could particularly benefit from having £875 spent on it instead.

*Mr Dom Merchant (Ex-Secretary) enters the room at 16:22.*

**The Librarian** notes that one of the main initial motivations for having him appear was to help sell tickets. In just a couple of days, though, we have sold almost half of the tickets, so we should be able to sell out without potentially creating unnecessary controversy.

**The Secretary** confirms that we have sold around 230 out of 600 tickets so far.

**Mr Browne** says that he cannot envisage an appearance of the Wealdstone Raider causing national controversy, but local media may run misguided stories.

**Mr Haynes** suggests that this may well cause reputational damage to the Union.

**Mr Billington** disagrees, arguing that what the media will pick up on is the very fact of Oxford students attending a black tie Ball. The attendance of the Wealdstone Raider will make no significant additional difference to public perception. The cost objection is far more pertinent.

**Mr Holder Ross** suggests that, given that we have needed to discuss this issue at three separate meetings of TSC, it is probably more trouble than it is worth.

**Mr Merchant** says we are probably over-thinking the issue in terms of media articles, but the Wealdstone Raider appearing would, nonetheless, look tacky.

**The Secretary** explains that a major relevant factor is whether he would help to sell 100 tickets.

**The President** argues that this is very unlikely and that, looking at ticket sales so far, we should be able to sell out without him.

**Mr Boissonneault** makes the point that we should not underestimate public perception. He has seen people handing out leaflets saying that it is a disgrace that the Union is hosting Marine Le Pen.

**Mr Miles** shows TSC a recent article in the Mirror in which the Wealdstone Raider threatened to kill fans who phoned him.

*Miss Felicity Blackburn (CCC) enters the room at 16:29.*

**Mr Holder Ross** concludes that, whilst he does seem like a funny character and it is nice that he has been raising money from charity, the reason why he became famous initially was just because people were laughing at how he looked and spoke.

**The Secretary** says that he would now like to hold a secret ballot on the issue.

**The President** argues that it is more transparent if the ballot is open.

**The Secretary** responds that people are more likely to vote according to their personal opinions if the ballot is secret.

The Secretary moves that TSC holds a secret ballot on the question of whether or not to book the Wealdstone Raider to appear at this term's Ball.

*Seconded by Mr Browne.*

*Objected to by the President.*

*Rejected by an overwhelming majority.*

The Secretary moves the question of whether or not to book the Wealdstone Raider to appear at this term's Ball.

*Rejected by an overwhelming majority.*

Questions to the Secretary:

There are no questions to the Secretary.

**Mr Fowles**

*Meetings missed: 1, Missed without good reason: 1*

Business of Mr Fowles in his absence:

Mr Fowles has no business.

Questions to Mr Fowles in his absence:

There are no questions to Mr Fowles.

**Miss Hubbard**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of Miss Hubbard:

Miss Hubbard has no business.

Questions to Miss Hubbard:

There are no questions to Miss Hubbard.

**Miss Yu**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of Miss Yu:

Miss Yu has no business.

Questions to Miss Yu:

There are no questions to Miss Yu.

**Mr Browne**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

Business of Mr Browne:

Mr Browne has no business.

Questions to Mr Browne:

There are no questions to Mr Browne.



**Mr Holder Ross**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

**Business of Mr Holder Ross:**

Mr Holder Ross has no business.

**Questions to Mr Holder Ross:**

There are no questions to Mr Holder Ross.

**The President-Elect**

*Meetings missed: 2, Missed without good reason: 2*

**Business of the President-Elect in his absence:**

The President-Elect has no business.

**Questions to the President-Elect in his absence:**

There are no questions to the President-Elect.

**The Librarian-Elect**

*Meetings missed: 0, Missed without good reason: 0*

**Business of the Librarian-Elect:**

The Librarian-Elect has no business.

**Questions to the Librarian-Elect:**

There are no questions to the Librarian-Elect.

**The Treasurer-Elect**

*Meetings missed: 1, Missed without good reason: 1*

**Business of the Treasurer-Elect in her absence:**

The Treasurer-Elect has no business.

**Questions to the Treasurer-Elect in her absence:**

There are no questions to the Treasurer-Elect.

**The Ex-Officio**

**Business of the Ex-Officio:**

The Ex-Officio have no business.

**Questions to the Ex-Officio:**

There are no questions to the Ex-Officio.

**The Senior Librarian**

#### Business of the Senior Librarian in his absence:

The Senior Librarian has no business.

#### Questions to the Senior Librarian in his absence:

There are no questions to the Senior Librarian.

#### **The Senior Treasurer**

##### Business of the Senior Treasurer:

**The Senior Treasurer** says that he would like to update TSC on an ongoing situation, but without going into sufficient detail that it must be moved into camera. Last term, TSC voted to authorise a commercial deal with a supplier to the Union. Some money was authorised to be paid, and it has now been paid. In so doing, both sides are also signing a document saying that this is a full and final settlement of the dispute; the President will be asked to sign this document within the next 24 hours.

##### Questions to the Senior Treasurer:

There are no questions to the Senior Treasurer.

#### **The Bursar**

##### Business of the Bursar:

The Bursar has no business.

##### Questions to the Bursar:

There are no questions to the Bursar.

#### **The Returning Officer**

##### Business of the RO:

**The Returning Officer** explains that TSC needs to pass the DRO shortlist for this term.

**The President** explains that she has not yet had time to look at it. She asks if, as has been done in the past, we can delay this piece of business.

**The Returning Officer** responds that we can, especially given that it was not on this week's agenda, but it would be far from ideal. He recommends against delaying the discussion.

**The President** decides to delay this piece of business until she has had a chance to examine the shortlist.

**The Returning Officer** urges the President to reconsider her decision to postpone as it does not help anybody. We need to go through the order in TSC anyway, so it does not really matter that the President has not had a chance to examine the shortlist beforehand.

**The Librarian** says that, if delaying will cause problems, we should pass the shortlist now. In future, though, we should ensure that the President and the CCC have sufficient time to inspect the list first.

**The President** explains that she has a phone call in five minutes, so cannot spend the time now. She reaffirms her decision to delay this piece of business.

Questions to the RO:

There are no questions to the RO.

**The Chairman of the Consultative Committee**

Business of the CCC:

The CCC has no business.

Questions to the CCC:

There are no questions to the CCC.

**The Access Officers**

Business of the Access Officers:

The Access Officers have no business.

Questions to the Access Officers:

There are no questions to the Access Officers.

**The Chair of the Debate Selection Committee**

Business of the CDSC:

**The CDSC** gives advance warning that the Oxford Women's Open Debating Competition is taking place on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May (TT15 1<sup>st</sup> Week). Room bookings do not need to be made until 6<sup>th</sup> Week, but advance warning is always helpful.

**The Bursar** asks whether these dates have been checked by the Events Manager.

**The CDSC** replies that he is not convening the competition himself, but will ask the co-convenors (Annie Williamson and Elizabeth Webb) to speak to the Events Manager.

*The CDSC leaves the room at 16:45.*

Questions to the CDSC:

**The Senior Treasurer** asks, on behalf of OLDUT, where Oxford's debaters stand amongst their global competition. It has often been said that we are the first or second best debating institution in the world, but is there no formal equivalent of the 'Norrington Table' for debaters?

**Mr Browne** notes that the official rankings were discontinued several years ago.

**The President** explains that, whilst there are no official rankings, a best guess would place Oxford's debaters as fourth or fifth in the world.

**The Secretary** states that an Oxford team was in the Grand Final of this year's World Universities Debating Championships (WUDC) in Malaysia. The best institution in Europe is almost certainly either the Oxford Union or the Cambridge Union.

**Changes to the Composition of this Committee**

There are no changes.

**Any Other Business**

There is no other business.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> Week Hilary Term 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015), 16:00, in the President's Office.

*The President closes the meeting at 16:51.*

Signed,

**Robert Harris**  
*New College*  
Secretary