**Student Council 7th Week Trinity Term 2022**

**Tuesday June 8th, 2022**

**Hybrid-model- 5:30PM**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Agenda** | **Actions** |
|  | **Welcome**    Ciaron Tobin (Chair of Council) welcomed council members to the fourth hybrid council meeting of the term.  Chair handed meeting over to Returning Officer  Returning Officer announced the resignation of the Vice President welfare and equal opportunities.  Motion of no confidence was withdrawn by the proposers. | To note |
| **A** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  Chair opened the floor to questions and comments regarding the minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising from the minutes.  Minutes to the previous meeting can be accessed [here.](https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/22ht5w/) | To receive |
| **B** | **Matters arising from the minutes**  There were no matters arising | To receive |
| **C** | **Elections in council**  Chair announced that nominations for the following positions will open soon, and anyone can apply.  1. **Chair of Council**  2. **Returning Officer**  **Joe Bell** (Merton College) made brief remarks about his credentials and discussed the importance of reviewing the election rules.  3. **Steering Committee (x2)**  Chair opened the floor for questions and provided an overview of the various constitutional documents that exist. Reiterated that students will be able to nominate and vote online.  **Results:**  ***Returning Officer***   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Re-open Nominations (R.O.N.) | 4 | 0 | 4 | **Excluded** @ Stage 1 | | Joe Bell | 28 | 0 | 28 | **Elected** @ Stage 1 | | To receive |
| **D** | **Reports from and questions to Sabbatical Trustees**  Chair informed members that full officer written reports can be accessed on [student council website](https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/22ht7w/).  **Chair opens the floor for Questions and comments on Sabbatical Trustee Reports.** | To receive |
| **E** | **Reports from and questions to Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality**  Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality full report can be found [here](https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/22tt5w/).  **Chair was not present to provide the report but will receive questions on the report via email.** | To receive |
| **F** | **Reports from and questions to Social Sciences UG & PG Divisional Representative**  Full report of Social Sciences UG Div Report can be accessed [here](https://www.oxfordsu.org/pageassets/representation/student-council/22ht7w/Humanities-Rep-Report-HT22.docx).  **Chair was not present to provide the report but will receive questions on the report via email.** |  |
| **G** | **Report from and questions to the Trustee Board**  Full report of Trustee Board can be accessed [here](https://www.oxfordsu.org/pageassets/representation/student-council/22ht7w/Humanities-Rep-Report-HT22.docx).  **Chair was not present to provide the report but will receive questions on their report via email.** | To receive |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **H** | **Budget and Accounts Report**  Anvee Bhutani (SU President) directed students to where they can find the full report online. SU President provided an overview of the budget.  **Council Chair opened the floor for questions**  Q1: What does staff development and training mean?  Anvee: It provides staff with professional development training, but also used for attending conferences, and events.  SU President provided examples of trainings and conferences she has attended.  Q2: The report shows the SU had a loss of about £60,000?  Yes, we run a net zero budget, which means the intention is not so much to make money, but to spend it.  Last year there was a loss because of the Freshers Fair, which was traditionally held in Examination Schools. In 2020, it was virtual, in 2021, it was moved to an outdoor venue (University Parks) due to COVID. This was more expensive as there had to be an infrastructure set to hold the event outdoors. Thus, unlike other years, the event did not make a profit. Additionally, the advertisement that was done was overestimated and that is why there is deficit on the budget.  Currently, we are sitting on reserves which need to be spent, otherwise getting some of that funding in the future will be unfeasible. We have been advised to spend the reserve in the next 3-4 years. Thus, a deficit is not a bad thing.  Q3: Is the event taking place in the Examination Schools next year?  It will be held outdoors. We want to try it a second time to see if we can get the numbers to work better now that we have a better idea of how that works.  Q4: What about the money that comes from the Conference of Colleges?  As a whole, it is a grant of £99,000, which is split amongst all colleges, depending of the number of students, etc. It comes to about £2,000-£3,500 each.  SU President provided a point of clarification regarding what happens when colleges disaffiliate from the SU. Which only means that they have given away their votes in the SU. However, students from those colleges can still benefit from the services the SU provides.  Q5: Since the SU overestimated the amount of advertisement that came in this year, what is being done to prevent that from happening next year?  The operational costs could not be budgeted to an exact point because this had never been done before, thus, we can now use the numbers of this year for the next one.  Additionally, we have launched a graduate scheme for work with the SU, it would be a 2-year contract starting in the summer to provide dedicated staff to look for advertisements and ensure we make money. This year we only had one person in charge of this, going forward we will have an entire team.  **1. Motion for British Sign Language Course**  **Council Notes:**  1. That BSL was recognised as an official language in April 2022.  2. That an estimated 151000 people use BSL.  3. That students wishing to learn BSL at the University of Oxford currently have no possibility to do so unless they pay for private lessons.  4. That a similar project was run in 2019, it was funded by the SU and very well attended.  **Council Believes:**  1. That Oxford University must work to provide an inclusive environment to deaf student and staff.  2. That a BSL course should be offered free of cost to anyone interested at Oxford. 3. That a qualified instructor should be hired to provide lessons over the course of six weeks.  4. That the course should prepare participants to pass the BSL Level 1 Award.  **Council Resolves:**  1. To establish the British Sign Language Course as an SU Project and fund it with £500.  **Proposer:** Judith Valerie Engel, Christ Church  **Seconder:**  Andrew Paulley, Christ Church  Proposer provided an overview of the motion  **Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.**  Q1: Who is receiving the course?  Any student can sign up for the 6-week course.  Q2: Is there a petition for it to happen regularly instead of only once via language centre?  It is more efficient to do it with SU than the language centre  Q3: What is the cost? Will it be in person?  It will be funded by the SU and will be in person  SU President noted that the funds are sitting unused.  **Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the motion.**  Total Votes: 49  For 45  Against 0  Abstain 4    The motion was deemed to be CARRIED  **2. Motion to Re-establish the SU Campaign for Suspended Students**    **Council Notes:**  A suspension of studies, formerly known as rustication, ‘stops the clock’ for all elements of the degree, including residency requirements, fees and the number of terms for which a particular status may be held Suspension of studies can occur for a variety of reasons, from health to academic reasons. Although historically, rustication was a punishment used to condemn particular behavior, recent figures provided by the Oxford Blue reveal that suspensions predominantly occur for medical reasons. There are some standard aspects of suspension including retained access to: Online resources (E.G. SSO) University Libraries Counseling Services Careers Advice Although suspended students typically do not have access to formal teaching, the University acknowledges that “some departments or faculties may offer ad-hoc advice on substantive academic matters at their own discretion.” This discrepancy between each college’s approach to the treatment of suspended students can be observed in the following quotes are sourced from Mansfield College’s and Brasenose College’s Student Handbook Mansfield College - “Students on suspension do not have access to college facilities, and they may not come into College or attend any College events, including social and sporting events, unless given permission on each occasion by the Senior Tutor” Brasenose College - “The College also recognises that in some cases reasonable adjustments are required to enable a student to continue on course, or return to study following a period of intermission. The College endeavors to deal with such matters sensitively and non-judgmentally and in a spirit of collaboration with students. Early intervention and active collaboration with all parties are promoted by the College'' Despite colleges noting that suspending one’s studies is “not a decision to be taken lightly”, suspension rates are increasing, as indicated by research conducted by the Oxford Blue: In the academic year 2008/9 - the total suspension rate\* amounted to 298 In the academic year 2020/21 - the total suspension rate\* reached 575 \*This figure includes voluntary, imposed and ‘unspecified’ suspensions of studies  **Council Believes:**  The logistical process of suspending one’s studies is straightforward; it is clearly laid out on the University website. However, the means of requesting a suspension of studies and navigating the secondary-effects of suspension (E.G. on student finance, accommodation) feels arduous and unclear. Hannah Capstick, a suspended music student at University College, notes that she: “Struggled to find information online on SF [Student Finance], accommodation, work, and how to manage my degree, etc. in the next year. I very much felt alone. I felt as though there were official rules and unofficial rules, and staff were following the unofficial while pretending to uphold the official.” Moreover, being a suspended student is an isolating experience. Besides a relationship with a welfare contact that exists at some colleges, little is done to support the suspended student’s connection with their college support network, the demands of their degree and broader college life. Combined with the general “social ban” instituted at certain colleges, a suspension of studies does not simply feel like ‘stopping the clock’ but rather like erasing the person’s identity as a student at the University of Oxford. Connie Hammond, a currently suspended PPE student at Mansfield College, commented that: “As an estranged student, being exiled from the college community was incredibly difficult - the college was my home year-round and I feel uncomfortable with the idea of living on site again now being afraid to visit.” Crucially, the isolating experience of being a suspended student makes the transition into full-time studies more formidable. Although some students may choose to prolong their suspension (with permission) or withdraw from the university completely, most suspended students intend on returning to their studies in the following academic year. The treatment of suspended students seemingly suggests that there is an expectation that individuals will seamlessly ease back into demanding full-time education, flourishing on only limited academic support. In response to this, Zahra Lahrie, a currently suspended student reading law at Brasenose College comments that: “Law is a really hard degree, and I felt the demands of my degree acutely even while having the academic support of tutors and structured learning within term time. Having been away from Oxford for nearly a year and being in charge of my own learning, I am worried about my academic attainment; especially knowing i’ll be sitting exams on content I learnt three years ago, unlike most students” Lastly, the discrepancies in each college’s treatment of suspended students are concerning. On one hand, students may feel that their college makes efforts to feel included within college life. Zahra makes the following comment: “I feel like my college really values me as a member of the student community, despite being a suspended student. Although there are moments of isolation, my college has tried to counter this. During the vacation period, I was able to spend time in college accomodation for free. Most recently, I attended the BNC sports day; an experience that affirmed that I belong within the college community” On the other hand, some suspended students have been entirely disallowed from coming onto college grounds, receiving treatment that seems reminiscent of the punitive past of rustication. Connie states that: “My college justified this social ban by saying that suspended students are ‘distracting’ and discourage other students from doing work, which is judgemental and cruel and in many cases ableist due to the high number of students who end up rusticating for health reasons.” Ultimately, it appears that one’s experience with suspension is dramatically defined by one’s college. Minor variations in each college’s conduct is to be expected, but not to the extent that can be currently witnessed.  **Council Resolves:**  Re-establish the SU Campaign for Suspended Students in order to: Support Suspended Students - this could, but is not limited to providing: Advice on matters such as student finance, managing mental health, keeping up with one’s degree, etc. Opportunities/events for suspended students to reconnect/maintain their connection with the University. A safe space to speak about suspending one’s studies, without taboo. Advocate on behalf of suspended students, particularly on the following two issues: Achieving greater university-standardardization on the broader process relating to a suspension of studies. Allowing suspended students access to college facilities during their suspension.  **Proposer:** Gabriel Lazar - Mansfield College  **Seconder:** Anvee Bhutani - Magdalen College  Proposer provided an overview of the motion.  **Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.**  Q1: Why had this campaign stopped?  Due to lack of interest, but after pandemic more people were interested in it, it is time for revival.  Q2: When do you intend to lobby colleges? How does that look like?  First, we will email to ask them to clarify their position regarding suspension, because most of the time, they just copy the university guidance, which again is just guidance.  That is why its important to have a more supportive and consistent process    **Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the motion.**  Speeches were made in favor, highlighting how difficult it is to find this information from colleges, the process being very difficult, and other students being the ones that ended up providing the support and guidance.  Additionally, how this campaign will help stop the perception that suspended students are troublemakers.  Total Votes: 49  For 40  Against 4  Abstain 4    The motion was deemed to be CARRIED  **3. Motion to introduce policy on conflicts of interest and affiliations 2nd reading**  **Council Notes:**   1. Currently, Oxford SU does not have a formalised policy on conflicts of interest in any of its governing documents - Candidates running for positions in the SU do not have to declare any organisations which they are currently serving on the committee of, or have been elected to 2. Candidates running for positions in the SU do not have to declare any organisations which they are currently serving on the committee of, or have been elected to 3. A similar motion to cover the first steps of the process, regarding the pre-approval stages, passed in Student Council in Week 1 of Trinity Term 2022 4. In Week 3, a prior iteration of this motion failed to meet quorum, which gave us the opportunity to make improvements before another reading   **Council Believes:**   1. Conflicts of interest due to roles or affiliations elsewhere risk compromising the integrity of some of the most essential officers within the SU 2. Furthermore, especially high commitment additional roles may compromise the quality of work in the Sabbatical role, worsening student satisfaction with the SU 3. Whilst Sabbatical Officers/Sabbatical Officer candidates have a right to associate with whatever organisations they choose, their constituents should equally have the right to scrutinise them for this both before and after their election 4. The roles a candidate chooses to take on once elected remain highly relevant, as it may impact the choices they make as a Sabbatical Officer 5. These concerns are most relevant for Sabbatical Officers as the only paid elected representatives of the student body within the Oxford SU, instead of also applying these to trustees or NUS delegates   **Council Resolves:**   1. To insert the following Clause 17 to the Regulations–– “17: Roles and affiliations 2. When the campaign period begins, candidates must declare to the Returning Officer any roles within any relevant organisations to which they were elected or appointed since their matriculation. This declaration must be included in the candidate’s manifesto, if they produce one. If they do not produce a manifesto, the Returning Officer shall publish details of the declaration. 3. Relevant organisations shall include College JCRs or MCRs, the Oxford Union Society, student publications (e.g., The Oxford Student, Cherwell), and any other classes of societies or groups that the Elections Committee deems should be classified as relevant organisations for the period of one election cycle and the following academic year. Relevant organisations shall not include organisations relating to protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010, or organisations which are party political (e.g., Oxford University Conservative Association, Oxford University Labour Club, Oxford University Liberal Democrats). 4. Other candidates in the election may bring to the attention of the Elections Committee any role or affiliation held by a candidate which they believe is likely to cause a major conflict of interest, and the Elections Committee shall make a determination as to whether it should be declared in accordance with (a) above. 5. The Elections Committee shall issue such directions as may be necessary to clarify the enforcement and operation of this regulation.”   2. To insert the following Clause 22 to the Bye-Laws––   1. “22. Sabbatical Trustees must publicly declare any current roles within any relevant organisations as set out in Regulation 17 2. as well as any new roles they take on. This includes appointments to new positions within an organisation with which they have previously declared a role. These declarations shall be announced in Student Council and shall be listed on the Oxford SU website.”   Proposer provided a brief overview of the motion, noting the improvements that have been done.  **Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.**  Q1: After these exceptions, which societies are left?  A substantial amount, for example most of the JCR and MCR, the Oxford Student Union, etc.  Q2: Why was it decided to exempt political societies?  Strong concerns existed about it becoming a political aligned  **Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the motion.**  Speeches in favor noted that the motion still does a lot considering that it is important to know a person is part of a given society. Additionally, it creates a culture of declaring what candidates are involved in.  Proposer noted that everyone seemed to have a problem with including political affiliations, and that is the reason it was removed.    Total Votes: 49  For 41  Against 3  Abstain 5    The motion was deemed to be CARRIED.  **4. Student Council to ratify the appointment of Tony Strike as External Trustee**  **Council Notes:**   1. The Trustee Board must appoint an External Trustee. 2. This appointment must then be ratified by Council. 3. The External Trustee acts as a way to help scrutinise the operations of the SU and provide strategic direction for our operations 4. The Trustee Board have selected Tony Strike as the External Trustee.   **Council Notes:**   1. Tony Strike is well equipped with experience to fulfil the role of External Trustee.   **Council Resolves:**   1. To approve the appointment of Tony Strike as an external Trustee   **Proposed:** Anvee Bhutani, Oxford SU  **Seconded**: Safa Sadozai, Oxford SU  Proposer provided an overview of the credentials of the appointee and recommend the ratification of appointment for Tony Strike to the board.  **Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.**  none    **Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the motion.**  Speech in favor:  I was in the subcommittee that oversaw the process. I think he is a good choice given his wealth of experience, especially given that policy and governance in that sector is missing from the current board.  Total Votes: 47  For 27  Against 2  Abstain 18    The motion was deemed to be CARRIED.    **5. To support Postgraduates Consultation Group (PGCG) as Co-Chair**  **Council Notes:**   1. This project aims to engage more postgraduates and to enable full postgraduates would be represented at the university level in terms of diversity because postgrads are a very diverse punch. It's not just your defaults, masters, but ten different degree levels. Not to mention they're more international than your average undergraduate population. 2. Postgraduate opinion is directly accessible to the university and the university is not just hearing from one postgrad i.e. the SU Postgraduate representative. The group is now called Postgraduate Consultation Group. 3. £30,000 was secured from the university to fund it until 2024-2025. It is the first step in the SU VP Graduates lobbying the university. This is not to replace MCR representation system with more, but to facilitate it. 4. The funds will be used to reimburse or reward the group in some way for the services.   Proposer noted that quorum was not reached for the votes during the previous council meeting.  **Chair opened the floor for questions and comments.**  None  **Chair opened the floor for speeches for and against the motion.**  Total Votes: 48  For 40  Against 1  Abstain 7    The motion was deemed to be CARRIED. |  |
| **J** | **Any Other Business**  Council noted this is the last meeting of the term, acknowledgments were given to the Chair and everyone else involved in running the meetings.  Commendations were given to the Sabbatical Officers for their hard work, noting that this is also their last meeting.  **Chair declares meeting finished at 18:58 p.m.** | To note |