



c o u n c i l m i n u t e s

3rd week Council at 5.30pm on Wednesday 27th October held in St John's Auditorium

- a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- b. Matters Arising from the Minutes
- c. Ratifications in Council
- d. Elections in Council
- e. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers
- f. Reports from the Executive Officers who wish to make reports
- g. Questions to Members of the Executive
- h. Emergency Motions
- i. Passage of Motions Nem Con
- j. Motions of No Confidence or Censure
- k. First readings of Motions to Amend the Constitution or Standing Orders
- l. The Budget or Amended Budget
- m. Motions Authorising Capital Expenditure
- n. Other Motions
 - i. motions affecting ousu members as ousu members
 - ii. motions affecting ousu members as students at Oxford University
 - iii. motions affecting ousu members as members of the student movement
 - iv. motions affecting ousu members as residents of Oxford
 - v. motions affecting ousu members as residents of the United Kingdom
 - vi. motions affecting ousu members as citizens of the world
- o. Any Other Business

a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

none, deemed passed

b. Matters Arising from the Minutes

none

d. Elections in Council

The following positions will be elected in OUSU Council of 3rd week. To nominate for any of these positions please e-mail a completed nominations form to enquiries@ousu.org as soon as possible, as the deadline for nominations is midday on Tuesday, October 26th

5 Divisional Board Representatives (2 for each Division – 1 graduate & 1 undergraduate). Divisional Board Reps are responsible for representing their peers directly to the heads of faculties and division. Successful candidates will serve for **ONE YEAR**, and further information can be obtained from Alex Bulfin, VP (Access and Academic Affairs) at access@ousu.org.

Vacancies still available: Postgraduate Humanities Rep
Postgraduate Maths, Physical and Life Sciences Rep
Undergraduate Social Sciences Rep
Undergraduate Medical Sciences Rep
Postgraduate Medical Sciences Rep

Complaints Committee (1 vacancy) Complaints board deals with any complaints raised through OUSU's statutory complaints procedure. Successful candidates will serve for **ONE YEAR**, and further information can be obtained from Jack Matthews, the Common Room Support Officer, via commonrooms@ousu.org.

Nominations Committee (1 vacancy) Nominations Committee is responsible for nominating candidates for the post of External Trustee. Successful candidates will serve for **ONE YEAR**, and further information can be obtained from David Barclay via president@ousu.org.

JCCSM Representative (3 vacancies; minimum 1 postgrad). JCCSM is the University's committee responsible for overseeing the work of OUSU. Successful candidates will serve for **ONE YEAR**, and will be responsible for representing the views of students on the activities of their student union. Further information can be obtained from David Barclay via president@ousu.org.

Budget Committee (3 vacancies). Budget Committee is responsible for overseeing OUSU's budget, and for discussing and scrutinizing any changes to it. Successful candidates will serve for **ONE YEAR**, and further information can be obtained from David Barclay via president@ousu.org.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Please read the election booklet and fill in your ballot papers
Put a one for your first choice, then 2 for your second choice, then 3 for your third, don't need to use all votes

If you are interested in running for a position there many left. If interested please send an email to ro@ousu.org

Divisional Board Rep (Undergraduate Social Sciences)
Sebastien Fivaz – 24
Alex Shattock – 41
RON – 0
SBV – 0
Elected – Alex Shattock

JCCSM Rep – Alex Shattock Elected

Budget Committee – Daniel Stone Elected

e. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Please take a minute to read the booklet. Would any of the Sabbatical Officers like to add to their report?

David Barclay (President): Just to pull out some of the important points I have been working on this week. I have been focusing on the Browne Review and Comprehensive Spending Review

I got in touch with Nicola Blackwood, the MP for west Oxford, and had a good meeting with her. Obviously we didn't agree on everything. She believed that no matter what courses cost, students would pay if they are passionate about it, but was uncomfortable about students paying more and getting less. She agreed in principle to come to a public meeting in central Oxford. I will be organizing a meeting to have reps of all the student body, and representatives for each MP present.

Email Nicola Blackwood, only two people have emailed her about their concerns with student cuts. So if you live in Oxford west and feel passionate about this then please send an email to her. MPs use it as an indicator of how passionate you are.

Happy to answer any questions you have
I have also been talking to Conference of Colleges about OUSU funding

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any questions? None

Alex Bulfin (VP Access and Academic Affairs): At Council meeting two weeks ago I was mandated to lobby against Oxford making A* offers in the 20011/2012 admissions cycle. I have been having lots of meetings with

University committees and University staff to express student concerns and have been making headway. Would like to thank JCRs and Access and Academic Affairs Reps for all their work. There is still a lot of work to be done, however several people have already emailed to say they are voting against the introduction of A*, and the initial signs are promising.

Chris Smith (Keble): Has any data come back yet?

Alex Bulfin (VP Access and Academic Affairs): Data is expected to come back next term. They are very limited with data and that is why we are opposing the introduction of A*s at this point.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any other additions? No. Any questions, No.

e. Reports from the Executive Officers who wish to make reports

Jack Matthews (Common Room Support Officer): In my report I mentioned getting a Clubs and Societies bank account was organised. This is now up and ready to go with Santander. It will have 6% on money, debit cards, and will be a good package that will make finance and accounting and much easier. If interested come to me or go to the university branch of Santander. There is one designated staff member there to help with these accounts.

Yuan Yang (Women's Campaign Officer):

The Gender Equality Festival launches this Friday at 8pm at Wadham. There will be lots of open debate, questions and answers, please come along and make it lively. Bring friends. I have posters here so please pick one up and put it up in your common rooms. This will be the launch of three weeks of events. Please get involved and find out more information on the Oxford Gender Equality Facebook page and through the Oxford Feminist Network Page.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any other additions? No. Any questions, No.

RO. Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): I called statutory elections yesterday. President, all VPs and part time Exec positions are up for election. Nominations open tomorrow. Polling Tuesday to Thursday 6th week. Nomination forms in OxStu tomorrow or online. Or email me at ro@ousu.org

If you would like the candidates to come to your college and hust then send me an email and we will try and tee up a date.

h. Emergency Motions

Ruling on Emergency Motion

A motion has been submitted for consideration at tomorrow's meeting of OUSU Council after the deadline for motions, and I am required, under Standing Order B.1.2.d, to rule on whether the subject of the motion has "substantially arisen" since the aforementioned deadline.

The subject of the motion in question is a demonstration organized by the Oxford Education Campaign.

I note that the decision to hold a demonstration was made on Monday of this week.

This motion meets the requirements laid down in Standing Order B.1.2.d, and I therefore order that it be added to the agenda for tomorrow's meeting.

Joseph Wales
Chair of Council

I. Oxford Education Campaign Demonstration

Council Notes:

1. Oxford Education Campaign held 2 open meetings attended by roughly 200 and 300 people respectively to discuss an Oxford University response to the Browne review and the Higher Education cuts.
2. This movement of Oxford students has grown spontaneously with little involvement from OUSU.
3. Attendees of the second meeting resolve to hold a peaceful demonstration in front of the Examination Schools on Thursday of 3rd week to mark the visit of the business secretary, Vince Cable.
4. This decision was made on Monday of 3rd week. That is after the deadline for OUSU motion submissions had passed.

Council Believes:

1. That the Browne review and the government's planned cuts are a huge threat to the future of Higher Education.
2. With so much at stake, it is only natural that Oxford students should wish to take action around these proposals and that it is good so many are already doing so.
3. That OUSU should be involved in the movement initiated by Oxford Education Campaign.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate the OUSU President and Vice-Presidents to actively support the demonstration on Thursday of 3rd week.
2. To mandate all sabbaticals to use OUSU's resources to publicise this demonstration as widely and as effectively as possible.
3. To mandate at least one member of the sabbatical team to attend all future O.E.C. meetings on behalf of OUSU so as to coordinate their actions more effectively.
4. To condemn Vince Cable for cancelling his visit and thereby refusing to explain his position on tuition fees to Oxford students.

Proposed: Loren King (St John's)

Seconded: Martha Mackenzie (St John's)

Loren King (St John's): The OEC have held two meetings on the past two Mondays at Wadham with massive attendance. At the second meeting we decided to have a peaceful demonstration Thursday in light of Vince Cable's supposed talk at the University. We also want OUSU to get more involved, hence we have put forward the following motion to mandate OUSU to get involved with the OEC meetings. We are asking OUSU for backing for this Thursday's demonstration, as we want to get as much support and turnout as possible

Q: Why supposed talk?

Loren King (St John's): Apparently he might not be coming

Jason Keen: Vince Cable is not coming. Possibly on police advice given, as 1000 students on FaceBook have signed up to come. The protest is going ahead. This issue is much bigger than Vince Cable. We should all go out and see what he is missing. We will peacefully demonstrate our views. More info on FaceBook page.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): An amendment has been submitted.

The amendment reads:

To Add:

Council Resolves 4:

To condemn Vince Cable for canceling his visit and thereby refusing to explain his position on tuition fees to Oxford students.

Proposed: Loren King (St John's)

Seconded: Martha Mackenzie (St John's)

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any opposition to this amendment as being friendly?

SFQ: I think Vince Cable is waiting to find out where government stands on it before coming. Which is fair enough

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): Humanities and Social sciences are the most likely to have the most cuts. Elected politicians are accountable to us. He shouldn't have to wait until he has made up his mind before coming to speak to students. Now is absolutely the best time to try and influence those in government

Mark Gilbert (Exeter): By condemning him for something this small paints the wrong the picture

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Move to vote on amendment

The amendment is repeated

If you think we should amend the motion then please put up your voting cards

Vote to amend - 67

Against amending the motion - 3

Abstain - 1

Motion stands amended

Move to a more general debate

No opposition

Those in favour - 70

Against - 0

Motion passes

i. Passage of Motions Nem Con

1. The Browne Review

There is an amendment, so there is opposition

2. Anonymous Incident Reporting

Council Notes:

1. That many students will not make a complaint against an act of racism or prejudice that they have experienced
2. This is due to a number of reasons, including:
 - a. not wishing to alienate themselves further from majority groups
 - b. not wanting to 'rock the boat' by bringing up difficult issues
 - c. concern that a complaint would jeopardise their social standing (in the case of actions by peers) or they perceive that it would jeopardise their teaching (in the case of actions by tutors or supervisors)
 - d. concern regarding going through the (often lengthy) formal complaints procedure for 'low-level' or 'casual' discrimination, as such events happen comparatively frequently.

Council Believes:

1. That all students should feel comfortable making necessary complaints about incidents that they have suffered
2. University should consider introducing an anonymous on-line reporting register for incidents relating to possible breaches of the University's Equal Opportunities Policy (similar reporting systems already exist in the wider Oxford community) that would run alongside the existing systems
3. The benefits of this system include:
 - a) Enabling students to 'flag up' incidents without engaging with the full complaints procedures
 - b) Providing full anonymity, meaning students could use it without fearing that they were causing 'trouble'
 - c) Recording student experiences and have the University take note of them
 - d) It would aid the University to better target the resources of the Equality and Diversity Unit with regards to training, more in-depth inductions and awareness campaigns
 - e) We would be in a better position to support local hate crime initiatives

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) to lobby for the creation of an incident reporting system

Proposed: **Amy Duffuor (St Antony's)**

Secinded: **Tom Perry (St John's)**

No opposition, motion passes

3. Returning Officer's report from Trinity Term 2010

Council Notes and Approves:

1. The appended RO's report from Trinity Term 2010

Proposed: **Jonanthan Edwards (Balliol)**

Secinded: **David Barclay: (Worcester)**

No opposition, motion passes

n. Other Motions

I. The Browne Review

Council Notes:

1. The Independent Review of Higher Education and Student Finance ('The Browne Review') which has recently called for the abolition of the cap on undergraduate tuition fees.
2. The Review's statement that undergraduate fees will have to rise to £7,000 in order to make up for cuts in government funding for teaching in universities.
3. That OUSU has policy against lifting the cap on tuition fees and for a graduate contribution to higher education dating from Trinity 2009.4. That OUSU has policy against the cuts to universities which were announced earlier in 2010 dating from Trinity 2010.

Council Believes:

1. That the cuts to universities of £2.9 billion (40% of the entire government higher education budget) which were announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review on October 20 threaten the future of Britain's universities.
2. That the proposal from the Browne Review of abolishing public funding for all undergraduate courses outside of science, mathematics, engineering and other "strategically valuable" subjects such as medicine and certain languages risks fees for Humanities and Social Science subjects becoming incredibly high, damaging access to these subjects.
3. That the combination of the planned cuts to universities and the government's intent to remove the cap on undergraduate fees should be opposed.
4. That although the package of proposals within the Browne Review should be opposed, certain proposals could be positive and should not be opposed.
5. That notwithstanding positive recommendations within Lord Browne's report the proposals as a whole would be the wrong direction for British universities and therefore the report as a whole should be opposed.

Council Resolves:

1. To oppose the cuts to university funding announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review.
2. To continue to actively oppose the implementation of the overall package of the proposals put forward by the Browne Review
3. To continue to lobby for a fairer funding system for universities along the lines of OUSU's submissions to the Browne Review.
4. To support the NUS and UCU National Demonstration in London on November 10.
5. To encourage tutors to move teaching on November 10 in order to allow staff and students to attend the National Demonstration.
6. To support other demonstrations against cuts to university funding and a rise in tuition fees.

Proposed: Jonny Medland (Wolfson)

Secoded: Beth Evans (Wadham)

The effect of Council Resolves 2 will be to supplement OUSU's existing policy in favour of a graduate tax, and to make it OUSU's official policy that it opposes the implementation of all or any of the recommendations of the Browne Review

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): On the light green piece of paper is the amendment to the motion. Can we please have a speech in proposition of the amendment

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): If you pass the motion as it stands it means we oppose all or any of the recommendations of the Browne Review. There are some good points, such as raising the repayment threshold on student loans, and the requirement that new academics engaged in teaching receive a teaching qualification. Other than those few exceptions, we overall think the Browne Review is bad, but want to clarify with this amendment that we don't oppose all of the Browne Review.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Amendment read out
Amendment 1

To Add:

Council Believes 4:

That although the package of proposals within the Browne Review should be opposed, certain proposals including the raising of the repayment threshold on student loans from £15,000 to £21,000 and the requirement that all new academics engaged in teaching must receive a teaching qualification, would be positive and should not be opposed

Council Believes 5: That notwithstanding positive recommendations within Lord Browne's report the proposals as a whole would be the wrong direction for British universities and therefore the report as a whole should be opposed"

To Amend:

Council Resolves 2 to read: To continue to actively oppose the implementation of the overall package of the proposals put forward by the Browne Review

Proposed: Jonny Medland (Wolfson)

Secoded: Beth Evans (Wadham)

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any SFQ?

Dawn (Balliol): What type of teaching qualifications will new academics need to receive?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): Not much info on it in the package and not enough detail. I imagine either a variant on current teaching qualification or something similar

Dawn (Balliol): Isn't it bad to agree if we don't know?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): I was just giving examples from the Browne Review that we wouldn't altogether oppose

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): If people like bits, but not all of the amendment then we can take the amendment in different parts

Q: Are these the only two we like?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): We haven't done a full break down of all the parts of the Browne Review as not enough information is provided in the package so far. Those were just two examples of points that we wouldn't necessarily oppose

Q: Can we amend the amendment?

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): You can amend the amendment once passed or take the amendment in parts

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): At the bottom of the original motions it reads:

"The effect of Council Resolves 2 will be to supplement OUSU's existing policy in favour of a graduate tax, and to make it OUSU's official policy that it opposes the implementation of **all or any** of the recommendations of the Browne Review"

We didn't want Council to have it written down that we now have to oppose everything in the review as it is very comprehensive.

Q: Could we come back with a motion that lists the things we agree and disagree with?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): This motion is here now. Decisions about the Browne Review will be made by end of term. Rather than have a consultative exercise now, it is better to look at the Browne Review now, overall as it stands. What is most important is to look at the review now and say generally it is going in the wrong direction. We don't want to handicap us now by debating it all now.

Q: So the intention is that there are parts that we shouldn't blanket completely?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): Yes

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Is there a speech in opposition to the amendment? We can take out the examples in the amendment and take it in parts. The most efficient way to look at it is to take it in parts.

Now considering "Council Believes 4", we can take out the examples

Dai Bowe (St Hilda's): Can we put "could" instead of "would" in Believes 4?

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any opposition to changing the amendment?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): Rather than oppose each individual proposition, we just want to oppose the overall package that Browne has put forward.

David (President): It is important to say oppose Browne now, and then when government unfolds more of the package, then we can say what our stand point is and act quickly.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Reads out the new amended amendment

Amended Amendment 1

To Add:

Council Believes 4:

That although the package of proposals within the Browne Review should be opposed, certain proposals could be positive and should not be opposed

Council Believes 5:

That notwithstanding positive recommendations within Lord Browne's report the proposals as a whole would be the wrong direction for British universities and therefore the report as a whole should be opposed"

To Amend:

Council Resolves 2 to read: To continue to actively oppose the implementation of the overall package of the proposals put forward by the Browne Review

Proposed: Jonny Medland (Wolfson)

Secoded: Beth Evans (Wadham)

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any opposition to this motion being amended?

No. Motion stands amended

Speech in favour of this motion

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): I believe that the Browne Review would be a disaster for Unis in the UK, and Oxford. It is important to start opposing it now as by Christmas this package could be passed in government. It is very clear that we have a very limited window of opportunity to make a move on this. We are going to have a National Demo. We should say something now. These cuts are the most radical thing that has happened in the last 80 or 90 years. The Oxford VC is against it. It is a big news item. We need to make it very clear we oppose the Browne Review. It is important that the formal student body should say that we oppose it now.

SFQ: ?

Jonny Medland (Wolfson): I would be in favour of OUSU being more vocal against cuts in graduate funding

Q: Against any increases in fees?

David (President): Browne says grads shouldn't have the same access to funding as undergrads. We don't agree. We could have a package of loans for students. If anyone wants to investigate that or bring a motion about that to Council that would be good

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): No speeches in opposition?

There is an amendment. Must have it written on paper with a proposer and seconder so I know what is happening.

The amendment reads:

To Add:

Council Resolves 7: To mandate OUSU President to communicate with the Oxford Brookes Student Union President to establish what OBSU are doing in response to the Browne Review and how the student unions could work together, and report back at the next Council.

Proposed: Chris Gross (Balliol)

Seconded: Ali Travis (Balliol)

Speech in proposition:

Chris Gross (Balliol): Brookes student union is doing lots of good stuff at the moment. It would be good for OUSU to speak them.

David (President): I think that is a good idea. I just spoke to Brookes' student union President yesterday. They have written to all the schools in Oxfordshire asking them to make banners that they will take to London. If they get lots they will give some to us. They are getting local businesses and community involved.

Brookes don't have lots of resources but it is great to see how they are getting others involved. By speaking to schools, businesses, producing fliers to take to businesses to put in their windows. We will be willing to do similar activities.

For the National Demo we are helping to provide transport. We have coaches booked for the day that are costing £2,670. We will give just over £1000 towards that. And some is given from NUS. We would like to ask JCRs to give towards this as well. The coaches leave from St Giles 9am, come back 5pm. We need to know numbers in advance. We have lots of sign up sheets here today. Please take a sign up sheet in to your common room. Get in touch with me if you want to be a point of contact person for your common room. Lots of commons rooms are on board already. The deadline to sign up is next Friday 5th November as we have to tell the bus company how many people there will be and if we need to order more coaches.

If you want more info stay after this meeting as we are having a training session on how to get people to turn up on the day and on how to encourage people to get involved.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): How would you like to proceed with the amendment?

Chris Gross (Balliol): As the OUSU President has just given us a report then we will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment withdrawn

No opposition, motion passes.

2. Anonymous Incident Reporting

No opposition, motion passes

3. Returning Officer's report from Trinity Term 2010

No opposition, motion passes

o. Any Other Business

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Under any other business we have the Environmental and Ethical Policy Motion on the green paper.

Daniel Lowe (St Edmund Hall): We want this document to part of the governing body of Council. To make Council easier, rather than have a big debate here, we will discuss this at Environment and Ethics Committee tomorrow. If you have anything to add or amend then please come to me afterwards or email me.

Chair, Joseph Wales (St Hugh's): Any other business?

Alex Bulfin (VP Access and Academic Affairs): We still have several of the Divisional Board Rep positions to fill, including:

- Postgraduate Humanities Rep
- Postgraduate Maths, Physical and Life Sciences Rep
- Undergraduate Medical Sciences Rep
- Postgraduate Medical Sciences Rep

These are important powerful positions for lobbying to get change. Email me if you want to get more info.

Appendix A – Report of the Returning Officer Trinity Term 2010

Referendum on Changes to the Constitution, Trinity Term 2010

1. Overview

I was elected Returning Officer unopposed at Council on Wednesday of Fifth Week (26th May) in Trinity Term, assuming the role previously filled by Acting Returning Officer Daniel Alphonsus. My principal task was to organise and carry out the referendum for proposed changes to the OUSU Constitution. This referendum was conducted online on 15th June, in Eighth Week. The referendum was widely publicised, although one complaint was received from a student that this was inadequate, and turnout was extremely low. A campaign was validly submitted for 'Yes', with no submission received for 'No'.

2. Dearth of candidates for Returning Officer

As noted in the previous Returning Officer's report nobody stood to replace them at the end of Hilary Term, and it was not until the second half that I was elected unopposed. The problems that the absence of a Returning Officer causes were stated in the previous report and I will not repeat them here. It might be answered that during Hilary and Trinity the Returning Officer has few functions to fulfil and so it is sufficient to elect one only when a specific need arises, as it did with this referendum. There are two problems here however:

- (a) It is not certain that a candidate could always be found at such short notice. If this is the case it is not clear who would assume the role and it is hard to see a desirable solution.
- (b) Even if a candidate is found their lack of time to fully assimilate all the necessary information is likely to result in errors, especially as the lack of continuity will make it much harder to find an experienced predecessor to advise them. This may have been a contributing factor to one problem encountered, which will be discussed below.

I believe it is necessary therefore that continuity is maintained and the position of Returning Officer is always filled. I also believe that there will always be a number of people willing to take the role in Hilary and Trinity as it is much less time-consuming than in Michaelmas, and so this problem can be resolved through improved publicity for the position. The election in Fifth Week Council was brought to the attention of all members of OUSU, but was buried in a standard email that I am sure the vast majority of students do not read thoroughly or at all. One proposal for remedying this is drawing attention to the availability of the position in the subject line of the email, which should catch the attention of those likely to be interested.

3. Low turnout

There were in excess of 19,000 eligible voters in the referendum, but only 151 votes were cast including abstentions. At first glance this is a truly dismal figure, but to the extent that it is beyond the ordinary for OUSU elections and referendums I think it can be attributed to factors that do not indicate any serious issues. Chief among these is that the referendum was primarily used as a device to implement changes to the constitution so that OUSU complies with new legislation, and accordingly there was no campaign for a 'No' vote. It is unsurprising therefore that there was little controversy which might have resulted in greater press coverage and greater interest being taken, and that the vast majority of students were not incentivised to take a position actively.

However it is likely that another cause of the low turnout is a general lack of interest in OUSU. This seems to be a long-standing issue and one that steps are being taken to address, but I note it here as it means that the issue cannot be combated merely by increasing publicity for the elections and referendums, and that to a large extent this would probably be wasted expenditure.

Having said that, it is the case that publicity for this referendum was significantly less than for other elections, where posters are widespread and hustings take place in the colleges. As a result, one complaint was received that inadequate advance notice of the referendum was given. I responded by explaining the measures that had been taken, namely email notification, a page on the OUSU notice board, and a full page advertisement in the *Oxford Student* newspaper. This reply seemed satisfactory, and I feel that given the function and context of the referendum the publicity was sufficient.

4. Late opening of the polls

I was alerted before 9:30am that voting had not opened as it should have done at 8am, and remedied this almost immediately. This was entirely due to human error as it had not been realised that when the software described the referendum as 'Pending' rather than 'Incomplete' it would not open as intended, and in fact the right status would have been 'Ready'. Errors of this kind have led me to my above conclusion that it is highly desirable that the position of Returning Officer is always filled so that experience is not lost. In respect of this particular problem I have provided my successor with a page describing the process for successfully creating an election or referendum.

In this particular instance the effect was thankfully very slight. A small number of voters reported the problem and I responded to each of them individually informing them that the issue had been resolved, well before the polls had closed. There may have been others who experienced the problem and did not report it but as it occurred relatively early in the morning and for a small proportion of the total voting time it is inconceivable that the outcome of the referendum was affected, as this would have required additional 'No' votes totalling nearly half as much again as the overall turnout. I received no formal complaints and as with a similar problem in Hilary the issue seems to have escaped all outside attention.

5. Online Voting

I have read the two reports immediately prior to this, and entirely concur with their statements on online voting and have little to add. The simplicity and reliability of the MiVoice system is vastly preferable to paper ballots and the possibility of outside interference with the system is remote. It is also worth bearing in mind that by moving back to paper ballots the duties of the Returning Officer would become much more onerous and the problems with the lack of candidates would be greatly exacerbated, which would surely outweigh any gain.

However it is highly desirable that the Returning Officer be subject to some level of oversight. One possible move in this direction is to have the number and size of batches of UVCs briefly examined, and the Returning Officer be asked to account for anything unexpected. This would guard against perhaps the easiest and least traceable method of abuse – generating additional codes. It would not though come close to a significant limitation on possible abuse, and OUSU may well have to decide whether it will institute some new regime or continue to place such trust in the Returning Officer.

6. Concluding Remarks

I would like to particularly thank Jonny Medland, Stuart Togneri and Ronald Collinson for the invaluable support they provided throughout my time as Returning Officer.

I handed over the responsibilities of Returning Officer to Joseph Wales after his election in Council and wish him the best of luck with the up-coming elections, and will make myself available if I can be of any assistance.

Jonathan Edwards
Balliol College