



student council minutes

Minutes of the Central Hustings
At Oriel College, 2:30pm, 10th November 2006

Returning Officer Andrew Grey, St Peter's as Chair.
Deputy Returning Officer Pete Wright, Wadham, as Secretary.

RO briefly outlined the hustings and welcomed all.

President

Martin McCluskey, St Hugh's: OULC, Labour Party, Amnesty International.
Frank Hardee, Oriel: OULD, Liberal Democrats, Operation Student Vote.

MMC: JCR president of St Hugh's. I talked to a lot of people last term: There is a common belief that OUSU is not just talking about change but delivering change on important issues. As Rent Campaign Chair I delivered a petition of 2,000 signatures to Parliament.

There are difficult questions OUSU needs to ask. Oxford has high levels of suicide and depression, so there is a need for campaigns on welfare as well as having a proactive counselling service. Students deserve support and not just social stigma.

The Vice-Chancellor holds up examples of Harvard and Yale – similar campaign needed for welfare, and the opening up of access to all potential students.

Withdrawal of the night bus was definitely a bad thing. OUSU needs to engage with JCRs to create a training programme for new JCR presidents. My plan is for consultation with all 17,000 students across the university, building up to a long-term plan of action in Hilary Term 2008. These are realistic and ultimately achievable promises that should hopefully raise turnout from 15% to the high 75% of 1970, by communicating with students and opening up OUSU.

FH: Oriel's JCR president last year, former JCR food rep, leader of campaign against Stagecoach's national fares discrimination against students, as well as hosting OUSU's Oxovision song contest. I achieved much in terms of rent negotiations, standardising cost of living, extending Freshers' Week.

OUSU involves too much talking about unnecessary policies, whilst most JCRs and MCRs are unconnected to students. It logically follows that JCRs and MCRs are the best places for discussions, and OUSU needs to decentralise into a federation of colleges. OUSU agendas should be printed fortnightly in the OxStu, for example so JCR welfare reps know about welfare motions in Council.

OUSU needs to save and support common rooms and not go above their heads, to be based on the college structure. It's time to be frank about OUSU.

RO: Invitation for questions. Questions limited to 5mins according to Standing Order C3 e) 11.

Q. How would you summarise OUSU in two words?

FH: Common-room support.

MMC: Representation, services.

Q. Opinions on the common access framework?

MMC: Signed up to by every college, increases transparency for admissions. Good for the short-term but not a long-term solution, useful for adding to common room independence.

FH: Disagree – the banding system discourages applicants from non-traditional Oxford backgrounds. I would like to see a common framework set by departments. I can see its aims but it fails to achieve them.

Q. Views on the Environment & Ethics committee?

FH: OUSU has an important role to play; I personally signed a petition for renewable energy. Emphasis tends to fall wrongly on world issues, the subject of the environment should be moved to monthly councils only to save time. Overall I'm a big supporter.

MMC: E&E committee has a great turnout from JCR reps, but a monthly council would hold up its valuable work. There is an important need to look at world issues as well as local ones.

Q. How would you prioritise OUSU services?

MMC: Opposed to prioritising services and issues, sabbatical officers should be able to balance rather than prioritise.

FH: I agree, but OUSU should look to common rooms first.

Q. How exactly do you extend common room integration?

FH: Documents to extend the involvement of people in JCRs and MCRs. Need to get them involved in their first two weeks at Oxford by having common room presidents persuade them into it.

MMC: Not always just about engaging with common rooms but individual students as well, all 17,000 students, whether affiliated or disaffiliated to OUSU.

Q. How would you reach out to graduate students?

MMC: The University is going wrong with graduates, for example they need to look at PGCE or overseas students arriving before term. OUSU at the moment doesn't do enough – we need to make sure they don't feel alienated.

FH: The major challenge is that graduates mostly do not live in college, so their needs (particularly housing) need to be addressed. I would send out a graduate questionnaire as well as a common room one.

Q. To achieve common room integration, which services would have to be cut?

FH: None – the theory is getting more people involved, which may free up time for the sabbatical officers.

MMC: I'm not trying to centralise OUSU – some services just cannot be provided through JCRs and MCRs alone, so OUSU is of great use in that respect.

Q. Should OUSU continue to support the 'Make Poverty History' campaign?

FH: It's an issue for individuals and JCRs to decide, OUSU should not. Too much time is spent in council discussing things not relevant to students; issues like this should be restricted to once a term.

MMC: Of course, JCRs and MCRs can decide themselves, but OUSU should be part of a wider campaign and these issues not restricted to once a term. For example, the campaign against apartheid in South Africa in the late 1980s was encouraged by student unions.

Q. What criteria would you use to judge whether or not you had enjoyed a successful year?

MMC: Reaching out to students – whether a student had seen a visible, active OUSU working for them.

JH: If my JCR felt supported by OUSU.

Q. Shouldn't disaffiliated colleges be left out?

FH: You should get involved in your JCR, which you can still be an individual within.

MMC: A lot of representation is on behalf of all students, such as on university committees.

Q. Why did you both oppose the motion for removing the cap on top-up fees?

MMC: I don't believe the cap should be lifted, since how can you make decisions based on so little data and evidence? We need to attract other students who end up going elsewhere, particularly through the target schools scheme. A bursary of only £4,000 won't affect the threat of a debt of £15,000.

FH: I wholeheartedly agree, fear of debt is what stops people from non-traditional backgrounds applying to university. I don't support the lifting of the cap at all.

VP (Charities & Community)

Claire Addison, Pembroke: Amnesty International.

CA: JCR President of Pembroke, C&C is different from other positions since it is funded elsewhere and doesn't seem essential to most students. People are so apathetic in the twenty-first century and this role enables students to interact with OUSU, students, and the wider world.

RAG is of enormous importance, not only in an extra-curricular sense for CVs, but for reaching out to people. I would try to co-ordinate a balance between RAG and smaller charities, having worked for Oxford, the Red Cross and Amnesty International, so I know how charities work and what keeps them ticking along. I want to speak to every single president of every single charity.

For community work, we need to be less insular and be more like American universities, and I will organise

buses to take people to marches. We need to consult JCRs and JCR presidents at least once a term, encouraging them to talk about issues. Our position on recycling is shocking; it's ridiculous why there aren't recycling facilities in every JCR.

Q. How will you encourage individual students to get involved?

CA: We need to reach individuals in JCRs, and I will go round every two weeks to check on progress. I need my own C&C board in every college, to go to every JCR and get them to support us. We need to set a precedent that it's not odd to get involved in university life.

Q. What about MCRs?

CA: Graduates have returned from the real world, and we need to harness their experience. For example, they know about council tax, and since they are less focused on going to Filth and doing their work, graduates will be more receptive to my ideas.

Q. You're not wearing a poppy – how can you claim to support charities?

CA: My poppy is on a coat at home. Wearing a poppy specifically to a hustling is a very politician thing to do.

Q. How would you justify the funding for your job by OUSU?

CA: I don't know enough about that, but we need to maintain the OUSU funding that exists at the moment. We need to seriously look how the funding for the community side of the job can support charities and the environment, or how bodies like the Charities Commission or the government can help us maintain the position.

Q. Which OUSU campaigns will you focus on?

CA: Alternative 'green' careers need to be focused on, to advertise more altruistic jobs and to encourage placements for 'green' jobs.

Q. Shouldn't you focus only on student issues in Oxford?

CA: We're not only Oxford students fundraising for ourselves, the Council and C&C necessity is looking outwards. One local charity is fine but we need to emphasise wider, national campaigns.

VP (Finance)

Christine Quigley, Brasenose: Labour Students, Labour Party

Rich Hardiman: Amnesty International, formerly Liberal Democrats

CQ: Current Brasenose JCR president. Need for financial reform, furthering of the current OUSU programme, to work better for companies to ensure sponsorship. A full-time entz and business manager is needed.

For entz, a comprehensive review of Zoo is needed to bring in alternative forms of entertainment beyond club nights, I will send out questions to student to see what they want, and to work with JCR entz reps.

We need to consult JCRs on issues like rents, as OUSU advice on the subject is helpful, but needs to have a formal channel for providing advice to JCR treasurers on what can or can't be done. We can do more for societies in terms of publications that generate revenue for OUSU, such as printing facilities. To ensure a high standard of OUSU publications, responsibilities should ultimately be designated to individual editors.

RH: Accountability and communication with students crucial – OUSU gets too much bad press. Need to bring back having an OUSU Press Officer, as well as reconnecting with disillusioned students by publishing plans and information about what OUSU does. I would create a 5 year financial plan to plan for the future with the other sabbatical officers. We need to reach out to Zoo through JCRs, as well as getting bops back such as in the case of Teddy Hall. I want to work on campaigns that deserve greater support.

Q. Where does Zoo add value? Are you cool enough to promote club nights?

RH: I'm a pretty cool guy...we need to expand the current business team. We can do things about alternative entz. We should see if people feel they are part of things, for example by bringing back the night bus.

CQ: We need to add value through consultation and market research. I'm not such a cool person.

Q. What do you want to do with publications, and what experience do you have?

CQ: I don't have a lot of publication experience, not nearly as much since I left school. I can learn – I've asked the editors of the OxStu what they think, planning in advance of the term. I want to get involved in the OxStu and

check it's working with the law, but without interfering unnecessarily.

RH: Publications are big money spinners, and we need to start them in Easter long before summer, when student budgets are more accommodating. There is a vexed relationship between OUSU and the OxStu – we need to consult OxStu, sabbatical officers and students to draw up an OxStu constitution to define its rights and limits.

Q. What ideas do you have in continuing the programme of financial reform, and what experience do you have in finance?

CQ: I spent three summers working in banks. My JCR experience has taught me project management, for example by talking about financial issues with the Bursar. This year's reforms are helpful, having a finance committee to delegate responsibility to is good.

RH: I'm not an economist, but we should work within the framework established this year. Fundamentally, we need to make more money, for example by publishing earlier than summer and running summer club nights for overseas students. I spent the last two summers at OUSU, not banks, but my gap year was spent at the Inland Revenue and Barclays' Bank.

Q. In what areas would you prioritise spending money?

RH: Services for making money, such as club nights and equipment for JCR bops, and supporting genuine student campaigns.

CQ: Making sure entz are making money, into welfare, and into charities for campaigns.

VP (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

Louise Randall, Lady Margaret Hall: No disclosures.

LR: Current LMH welfare officer. Advice and support from OUSU in the form of a full-time welfare officer is really valuable for students. I am passionate about providing services to students in all forms, as well as raising issues of importance such as drink spiking. Welfare is desperately underused, and we need to ensure that welfare officers in JCRs are in contact with OUSU, as are LGBT officers. We need to maximise benefits for students, particularly on the issue of pro-life pro-choice. By working with the VP (Women) I hope to re-establish the night bus through corporate sponsorship, and maintain a good relationship between OUSU and the Oxford Brookes SU.

Q. How do you balance welfare and equal opportunities in your job description?

LR: Need to extend the remit to counterbalance the VP (Women).

Q. Is your role useful?

LR: Common room welfare officers are dependent on OUSU support and its whole network of help.

Q. Will you provide welfare to disaffiliated colleges?

LR: OUSU can and will provide it to all.

Q. Is your role political?

LR: My experience of welfare is skills-based, although I don't have the political experience.

Q. What would be the first and last things to go in your job description?

LR: Responsibility for accommodation could be resourced into a general or alternative source. Supporting common room officers is most vital, as they are on the front line and need OUSU training.

Q. What are the roles of welfare officers in college?

LR: They are not counsellors or peer supporters, but they provide direct advice to students on where to find and how to use the different avenues available.

VP (Women)

Hannah Roe, Balliol: Amnesty International, OxWiP

Suzanne McClelland: No disclosures.

HR: Women are not always recognised, the VP's job is to change this and bring out issues that affect women. For example the finals gap, where women get fewer firsts than men, is due to the lack of female tutors. As a former women's officer in my JCR, I am aware of the inequality in women's sports, as they secure fewer resources and lower funding than men, and I am working to make this recognised, for example in the varsity Boat Race.

I am a pro-choice campaigner, so that women have access to all support. Incredibly inadequate childcare provision in the university leads to a lack of female tutors. OUSU accountability is important.

SMC: Representation, the finals gap, wage gap, safety at night etc. are issues that affect all Oxford women. Women's representation has a huge impact, but there are only eight female JCR presidents and women specific positions are dwindling. This has an impact on Oxford's image, and we need to safeguard those women's positions.

I would create women's workshops and training to encourage female participation at lower levels, for example women in sport. Raising the profile and funding for women's sports is crucial, as well as inclusion in the student media. University welfare is also important as women do not feel safe. We need to fund the safety bus, distribute rape alarms, and make V Day major and inclusive.

Point of order: There should be a female chair.

RO rules that there should be a female chair and men as well as women can ask questions of the candidates. Helen Bagshaw (VP Access & Academic Affairs) takes the Chair.

Q. Is attention on women's sports really necessary?

SMC: Women's profile is most important, and sport is a prime example of an issue that has not been tackled as it is a big part of women's lives.

HR: The representation of women in sport is an issue of concern, and we need to respond to student views. That type of campaigning does not have to take as much time.

Q. Why should you represent only women and not men?

HR: To represent underrepresented women – the VP Women is accountable to the women they represent.

SMC: Agreement, as women are not always represented.

Q. Your two or three priorities for the Women's Campaign (WomCam)?

SMC: The safety bus, representation of women at JCR/MCR level, women's access.

HR: Supporting women inside WomCam, childcare provision for student parents, increasing numbers of female tutors to decrease the finals gap, and the safety bus.

Q. How can men help the WomCam?

HR: Only women are involved in the WomCam, but with a supportive OUSU Council taking women's issues seriously. For example, pro-choice needs male support through the 'reclaim the night' march. It's not possible to fully include men but I'll try.

SMC: Women don't see the relevance of WomCam, and we need to extend the campaigns to JCRs. Men can show support.

Q. How would you justify your small workload to your salary?

SMC: Relevance of the VP Women to issues of access, student debt, the targeting of similar issues. I would need to look beyond the job description and be creative.

HR: We could add emerging women's societies in the university, such as OxWiP or the female debating group, to the job description to liaise with and support them. A general improvement of communication between women at the whole university level, and creating a forum for debate about women's concerns.

Q. How would you ensure general equality of women across the university?

HR: Different colleges have different measures for supporting women, and the VP should act as a role-model to pressure colleges into targeting specific issues.

SMC: Closing the finals gap, as well as changing the interview system to reflect the merits of women's different approach to problems.

RO resumes the Chair.

VP (Access & Academic Affairs)

James Lamming, Merton: Amnesty International, Tory Reform Group.
James Downing, Lady Margaret Hall: No disclosures.

JL: As a former AccAff rep, I've seen fantastic work going on but not all potential students are aware of the target schools scheme. We need to inspire to a change in demystifying Oxford.

JD: The outreach work by Oxford is essential. As LMH's AccAff officer last year, I'm used to representing students at senior levels. My policy is for advice, action and accountability, by being approachable and advertising information better. The student guidance service is useful and important, whilst OUSU is a great resource. I would like to stage a review of unfair university disciplinary procedures.

Q. Is there a limit to demystifying Oxford?

JD: The media propagates these views, and applicants can dispel the myths by visiting and experiencing Oxford first hand.

JL: There's no need to hide these idiosyncrasies, they are enjoyable for students. I would support video conferencing between students and applicants.

Q. Should the government refrain from interfering in Oxford's affairs?

JL: Oxford knows what's best for itself – student representation is about encouraging that, and I would support moves to fight against government regulations.

JD: We need students to apply to fill quotas. Oxford should become more in line with other universities in this respect.

Q. What about graduates?

JD: We need to work with the Graduate AccAff officer to address these problems, which OUSU should support.

JL: Support for MCRs, information on websites and prospectuses, anything OUSU can do to make the transition as easy as possible.

RO steps down and Helen Bagshaw (VP Access & Academic Affairs) takes the Chair.

Part-time Executive, Women's Campaign Officer

Emma Clossick, Queen's: OULC, Socialist Party, OLF.
Maddy Rudge, Merton: OUCA, Pro-Life Society.

MR: Not all women are pro-choice, and we should not exclude these female students. There is no need to focus OUSU campaigns on matters of conscience. I am for the increased publicity of WomCam, greater interaction between WomCam and societies, and provision for student parents.

EC: I am heavily involved in valuable OUSU campaigns: Pro-choice campaigning is especially important. I recognise the potential for women's activism at a JCR level, for there to be a JCR women's officer in every JCR, and joint campaigning between WomCam and other women's groups.

Q. What are your pro-choice policies in relation to the referendum of two years ago?

EC: I wouldn't be explicitly pro-choice if it hasn't been voted for in that referendum.

MR: We need to review that outdated referendum, as the pro-choice campaign is not the best way forward.

Q. What do you understand by 'pro-choice'?

MR: A woman who has a right to choose whether to have an abortion or not.

EC: Choice of having a baby or not, and a choice of the medical facilities that are available.

Q. Are you prepared to radically overhaul women's policies?

EC: Women's officers have been trying for years to get women's issues raised in JCRs and at OUSU.

MR: I totally agree.

Q. Should there be communication about student parents?

MR: I would represent this problem to the university.
EC: I totally agree.

RO resumes the Chair.

Part-time Executive, Environment & Ethics Officer

Kieran Hutchinson-Dean, Wadham: OULC, Labour Party.

KHD: I am passionate about the position, to co-ordinate E&E campaigning. OUSU needs to support JCR environment reps and to stress the line in ethical issues.

The RO closed the meeting at approximately 5:30pm.

