

Extraordinary Council Minutes

6th Week Trinity Term 2015

6th Week Council took place at 5:30pm, on Monday 1st June 2015, at Mansfield College, Old JCR.

If you have any questions about OUSU Council, please feel free to contact the Chair, Nick Cooper, at chair@ousu.ox.ac.uk.

- a. Passage of motions without discussion
- b. Motions
 1. Campaign Constitutions
 2. Pro-Choice Policy
 3. Abortion Rights Re-Affiliation
 4. Action for Trans* Health Re-Affiliation
 5. NUS Affiliation
 6. Amendment to Policy Guidelines on...Policy Guidelines

a. Passage of motions without discussion

1. Campaign Constitutions

Council Notes:

1. The requirement for all OUSU Campaigns to have a constitution that provides for a number of different elements. (Bye-Laws 29.6 and 30.1)
2. The review of all campaigns that the Sabbatical Officers have conducted over the past year, including extensive consultation with the campaigns.

Council Believes:

1. That it is important for all OUSU Campaigns to have a useful constitution in line with the Bye-Laws.

Council Resolves:

1. To approve the constitutions found in Appendix 1, which cover the following campaigns:
 - a. Environment and Ethics ('E&E')
 - b. It Happens Here
 - c. Living Wage Campaign
 - d. Mind Your Head
 - e. On Your Doorstep
 - f. Raise and Give ('RAG')
 - g. Target Schools
2. To approve the constitutions found in Appendix 2, which cover the following campaigns:
 - a. Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality ('CRAE')
 - b. LGBTQ Campaign
 - c. Oxford Students' Disability Community ('OSDC')
 - d. Women's Campaign ('WomCam')
3. To approve the constitutions found in Appendix 3, which cover the following campaigns:
 - a. International Students' Campaign
 - b. StudentsPLUS

4. That for the constitution of the Oxford Students' Disability Community, all of section 5.1 apart from sub-sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 shall not come into force until the beginning of Michaelmas Term 2015.

Proposed: Anna Bradshaw (Wadham)

Seconded: Ruth Meredith (Brasenose)

Motion passed with no opposition.

4. Action for Trans* Health Re-affiliation

Council Notes:

1. That the university has policy committing itself to "an inclusive trans friendly culture, workplace and learning environment".
2. That this policy also commits the university to "support trans students and staff living in their affirmed gender role" with respect to transitioning.
3. That a recent NUS survey found that 1 in 7 trans students had to interrupt their studies because of their transition.
4. The same study found that 54% of students felt their institution did not provide the necessary support to safely transition (Education Beyond the Straight and Narrow).
5. That Action for Trans* Health provides one of the few centres for trans-related resources concerning medication, administrative changes, housing, and the role of the NHS in transitioning.
6. We have been affiliated to AfTH for the last year and they have been really great. We still haven't done the fundraiser.

Council Believes:

1. That trans students in the university should be supported in accordance with university policy.
2. That Action for Trans* Health offers resources that will be of use to trans students in the university.

Council Resolves:

1. To re-affiliate to Action for Trans* Health at the cost of one fundraiser per annum.
2. To mandate VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) to notify Action for Trans* Health of our affiliation in accordance with the guidelines on <http://actionfortranshealth.org.uk/affiliate-groups/>.
3. To mandate VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and LGBTQ officer to organise an additional fundraiser at some point in the next academic year.
4. To send one delegate to their national conference.

Proposed: Rowan Davis (Wadham)

Seconded: Jessy Parker Humphries (Jesus)

Motion passed with no opposition.

6. Amendment to Policy Guidelines on... Policy Guidelines

Council Notes:

1. That Nick Cooper has put the words “Policy” in this motion too much, that he is deeply apologetic for this, and that he hopes it will pass without discussion.
2. That OUSU keeps a “Policy Book” containing long-term policies set by Council.
3. The current Policy on what goes into this Policy Book, which can funnily enough be found in the Policy Book.

Council Believes:

1. That the current Policy on what goes into the Book does not reflect current practice, as it calls for a Motions Book, which is too much work when Council minutes already contain this information, and that this motion tweaks the process to be better.
2. That Policy Guidelines should codify the Student Union’s long-term policies, rather than short-term actions.
3. That a streamlined Policy Book enables OUSU officers to follow Policy Guidelines more easily.

Council Resolves:

1. To overturn the current Policy Guidelines entitled “Policy Guidelines”.
2. To only record explicit Policy Guidelines in the Policy Book.
3. To require future motions enacting Policy Guidelines to state this clearly in the “Council Resolves” section of the motion.
4. To only enact Policy Guidelines that have some long term bearing on OUSU’s work.
5. To mandate the Chair of Council to inform any person proposing a motion of this process so that all students have the opportunity to pass, amend or overturn Policy Guidelines.
6. To make Believes 2 and 3, and Resolves 2 to 5 Policy Guidelines.

Proposed: Nick Cooper (St John’s)

Seconded: Louis Trup (Brasenose)

Motion passed with no opposition.

b. Motions

2. Pro-Choice Policy

(TT05: Renewed TT09: Updated & Renewed TT12) Updated for TT15

Council Notes:

1. OUSU’s current pro-choice policy is due to lapse at the end of this term.

2. That this motion largely reproduces the substance of the previous pro-choice policy, with some updates.
3. That, regardless of Council's stance on this or any issue, the Student Advice Service will continue to provide free, impartial and non-directional advice to individual students on pregnancy and other issues.
4. 1 in 3 women has an abortion in their lifetime. (Abortion Rights.)
5. Abortion Rights notes that abortion laws in the UK are more restrictive than in almost every other European country, where abortion on request is legal in the first three months of pregnancy. In the UK, someone wishing to get an abortion must persuade two doctors to agree to their decision on the basis of restrictive legal criteria. (Abortion Rights.)
6. The steps that OUSU has taken since TT12 to improve its support for student parents, including the introduction of a Student Parents and Carers Officer in MT14.

Council Believes:

1. OUSU is an organization dedicated to representing the interests of Oxford students.
2. As such, OUSU as an organization should affirm the right of all students to choose what happens in their lives and what happens with their bodies, including the choice of whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.
3. OUSU should campaign accordingly.
4. Abortion can be a difficult moral choice, and we should trust students to make it for themselves.
5. OUSU can and should do more to support both students who choose to have children during their time at Oxford, and students who arrive in Oxford as parents.
6. OUSU should, through the Student Advice Service, continue to make available impartial and non-directional welfare support to those students who are pregnant and in need of advice.

Council Resolves:

1. To support the right of all pregnant people to choose, and to campaign in support of this right being legally established.
2. To oppose measures to make it more difficult for students to choose either to terminate a pregnancy or to carry it to term and to work to ensure that no additional restrictions are imposed at any level so that Oxford students have a real choice.
3. To campaign to extend students' right of practical access to an abortion, and to extend their rights of choice over their own pregnancies.
4. To campaign for the University and the colleges to provide greater support for students who choose to carry their pregnancy through to term.
5. To work with other groups campaigning for the above objectives.
6. To reaffirm the importance of the VP (Women) and the Student Parents and Carers Officer in representing and supporting student parents, in order to further the provision for student parents by OUSU and the University.
7. To clearly affirm our support for a non-directive, impartial and supportive Student Advice Service, as laid down in the OUSU Bye-Laws.

8. To make **Believes 1-6** and **Resolves 1-8** policy.

Proposed: Anna Bradshaw (Wadham)

Seconded: Aliya Yule (Wadham)

Anna Bradshaw (Wadham) – Flagged that this is a difficult topic for many people, and that if anyone wanted to take a break they should. Urged council to look after themselves. Stated that she hoped we could keep this quite short, as it is a very difficult issue to talk about, and the majority of people in the room will already have made up their minds about how they are going to vote. Added that she didn't want to spend too long talking over facts about abortion, as she assumed that most are already familiar with them, but informed council for information that 1 in 3 women have an abortion at some point in their life, that in the UK it is a very safe and common medical procedure, and that it has been shown that the legalisation of abortion does not increase rates of abortion, but rather makes it safer, and decreases the gestational stage of which abortion most frequently takes place. Added that she would be happy to give advice on where to find this information online during short factual questions. Highlighted that the main issue to discuss today is whether or not OUSU as an organisation should have pro-choice policy. Stated that OUSU fundamentally is an organisation dedicated to representing the interests of Oxford students, and as such, she believes that OUSU should affirm the rights of all students to choose what happens in their lives, and what happens with their bodies, including the choice of whether or not to continue with pregnancy. Noted that we understand that abortion can be a difficult choice, but that it is a choice that we as an organisation should trust students to make for themselves. Continued that abortion is a student issue, because pregnancy is something that happens to students, but also because it is possible that the decision about whether or not to have an abortion can influence the decision about whether or not to stay in education. Stated that OUSU does everything it can to support pregnant students, and student parents, but that this choice will continue to be a live one for a long time, as the nature of the undergraduate college experience, of being a postgraduate student working in a lab, or of the short Oxford terms, means that our educational environment links choice about abortion to choices about education, and we should be enabling students to make their own choices. Confirmed that this does not mean that we should not be campaigning to make those options better, as she firmly believes that we should. Noted that OUSU has done a lot of work since this policy last came, to improve our support for student parents, including the introduction of a new Student Parents and Carers Officer, as well as making our events more family friendly, and are currently working on an accommodation database for student couples and families, and are re-vamping a guide for student parents. Added that OUSU has also done a lot about facilitating discussions around reproductive justice, including abortion, and have supported Abortion Rights. Urged council that we should be pro-choice, rather than pro abortion or anti abortion, that we should make sure that all of the available choices are as good as they can be, and that we should offer as much support to student parents as we do to students who have abortions. Informed council that OUSU have worked hard to show that we really do this, and that we really are a pro-choice organised. Explained that this is also a feminist issue, which is why as Vice President Women she is bringing this policy to council. Informed council that being pro-choice is a feminist issue, as it is about saying that women, and other people who get

pregnant, have the right to make a choice for themselves, that we trust pregnant people to make their own decisions, and to have full ownership over their own bodies, and that this is a fundamentally feminist statement, as all people who get pregnant, are people who are not cisgender men. Added they these people are women, trans and non binary people, people whose bodies are othered and policed by the society that we live in, and that saying that we have the right to make a decision about our own bodies is absolutely fundamental to being an organisation that recognises women and trans people as liberation groups which require extra support and representation. Urged that if council fail to pass this policy, then we will be making a really loud statement to all students at Oxford that are capable of getting pregnant, that we are not capable of making our own decisions, that we should not have bodily autonomy, that we are not as worthy and not as much people as cis men. Urged council to pass the policy and allow OUSU to continue to support both students who choose to have an abortion, and students who choose to carry pregnancy to term, and to say to all students who can get pregnant, that you trust them to make this difficult choice for themselves.

Peter Elliott (St John's) – Referred to Council Resolves 5, and asked how many of the other points those groups that OUSU would work with would have to agree with. Provided an example that Oxford Students for Life and the Chaplaincy would support student parents, and asked if this would cause contradictions.

Anna – Answered that it is important to collaborate with different groups on different issues, and that the only formal affiliation that has come to council around this is to Abortion Rights, adding that anything which came as a formal affiliation would need to be debated in the way which fits with OUSU policy more broadly. Encouraged affiliations to organisations that are relevant to these particular bits in the policy, but noted that it would be council's decision. Added that we have worked informally on different levels with different groups of people, for example, informed council that we have worked with Wolfson to help they run a play group.

Exeter Student - Asked for conformation that this has been OUSU policy for the last ten years.

Anna - Responded that this has been coming every three years when it is due to lapse. Clarified that the main changes that have been made this time are to reflect the political climate, and primarily the fact that it used to say 'women', when it is talking about everyone that can get pregnant, and now it says 'people that can get pregnant'.

Keble student – Asked what the other changes were that had been made.

Anna – Explained that the previous policy online, but one example is that it used to make specific references, for example to the government closing down Sure Starts, and it has now been changed to be a little more general, not focussed on any political party and more balanced between the options that students have. Argued that this motion is less controversial.

Mark (Lincoln) – Asked if when this motion refers to the UK, it is in fact referring to the England, Wales and Scotland.

Anna – Agreed, clarifying that Northern Ireland does not have legal abortion.

Peter Elliott (St John's) – Asked if there have been surveys done on this, and if there are any statistics, to ensure that the entire student population is represented.

Anna – Answered that we have not had a student wide survey on this, but the fact that we have passed this policy consistently, and the fact that we have affiliated to Abortion Rights annually is pretty strong, as well as the fact that UK wide surveys, have consistently shown over recent years that those who take a pro-choice stance are firmly in the majority, and in fact that over three quarters of people support a less restrictive abortion law than that currently in place. Acknowledged that we do not have Oxford specific statistics, but stated that we have no reason to suppose that they would be vastly different to the rest of the population, particularly given the votes that have taken place by this body.

Opposition to motion received.

Dane Rogers (Merton) – Suggested that we oppose this position for the somewhat controversial reasons that abortion is harmful to women, and that by supporting abortion, we are not getting to the root issues, and we are completely trampling over the rights of the unborn. Suggested that the link between feminism and pro-choice is a new idea which comes from the seventies. Claimed that many other feminists were opposed to abortion, and viewed it as the ultimate exploitation of women, and while caring for women, did not consider abortion helpful to them. Cited a statistic from Finland on a study of pregnancy associated deaths from 1987 to 1994, stating that in a sample of 9129 women from 15 to 49, the suicide rates amongst those who had an abortion went up by 7 times. Acknowledged that it would be unfair to say this was caused by abortion, but it is fair to say that abortion has not helped women with unwanted pregnancies and is not a good approach. Stated that he had further statistics which show that abortion is not only not helping women, but that it is outright hurting them. Cited a study called 'Induced Abortion and Traumatic Stress: A Preliminary Comparison of American and Russian women in 2004,' which found that 64% of women felt pressured by others into having an abortion, most felt uncertain, yet 67% had no counselling before, 84% said that they were not given enough information to make an informed choice, and women who aborted were 65% more likely to be at risk of long term clinical depression. Added that in a further study in the states, 83% of women said they don't actually want to have an abortion but feel pressured into it. Questioned if affirming abortion really is the best way to help women, or if we should instead be doing something that is pro-choice in a different sense, such as supporting the right to choose between pregnancy and adoption, stating that he believed that this would be a far better way of helping women. Re-iterated that abortion does not help women, and also that it harms the unborn, and that in terms of choice, he believes in bodily autonomy, stating that women should have a right over their own bodies, but that they should not have a right over other peoples' bodies, namely the bodies of the unborn.

Kristina Carney (Hertford) – Stated that she is an American woman, and has worked with lawyers and doctors, and that all the statistics that have just been listed are wrong, and that the vast majority of women do not regret their abortions. Questioned the point that abortions hurt

women in light of the thousands of life that have been lost in the UK and the US as a result of illegal abortion, arguing that illegal abortion hurts women, and legal abortion does not. Acknowledged that there are studies out there, but that specialists today have debunked these findings, discovered that they are not true, and that women do not regret their abortions, women are not pressured into their abortions, especially in the US, where the majority of states require counselling, so the idea that such a high percentage did not receive counselling is made up.

Sarah White (St Catherine's) – Stated that if anyone is worried about OUSU showing a pro-abortion stance that they should read through the motion, and remember what Anna said earlier about being pro-choice, not pro-abortion, and not pro-pregnancy. Added that those with fears regarding counselling should refer to council notes 3.

Anna – Quoted from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) in order to answer the questions raised and to back up a comment from Kristina: “The consensus of all authoritative psychiatric and medical opinion is that, for the large majority of women, the effects on psychological health of having an abortion are neither major nor long-lasting”. Added that there are people who find this a really difficult choice, and people who do regret this decision, as there are with all medical procedures, and stated that post-abortion syndrome is a myth. Reiterated that we want to be non-directional and pro-choice and recognised abortion as one potential choice.

Move to vote.

Opposed.

Lucy Delaney (Wadham) – Stated that people won't change their mind on this issue and the arguments have already been said.

Dane Rogers (Merton) – Informed council that he wanted an opportunity to challenge statistics used.

Vote on move to vote:

For – 52

Against – 2

Abstain – 2

Anna – Stated that the arguments that we have heard from the opposition are about a particular person's decision, rather than about what our policy should be. Claimed that OUSU should be pro-choice, because we should trust all students to weigh up all of these options themselves, to make what is a difficult moral decision themselves, and to receive non-directional and impartial advice when they do try to make that decision. Stated that pro-choice policy is the only thing that lets us do this and is a really fundamental starting point for our work on reproductive justice, and our work around supporting student parents and student families. Reiterated that we are here to be a representative body for all the students of the university, and the only way in which we can do this properly is to have pro-choice policy. Concluded that it is also the only

way we can stay in line with a huge amount of the other work that OUSU does surrounding the liberation of women and trans people, including our existing policy such as the advertising ban on LIFE, an anti-choice institution, which has within it our pro-choice policy. Urged council to pass the policy, to enable students to make choices about their own bodies.

Dane Rogers – Stated that there has been a lot of discussion on the statistics, which he is happy to provide for people. Added that what has not been discussed, is why the unborn should not have bodily rights, and stated that he has heard no reason for this in the debate. Argued that we need more discussion on the rights of the unborn, and to question why one person's rights should be prioritised over another.

Vote:

For – 52

Against – 1

Abstain – 3

Motion passed.

3. Abortion Rights Re-Affiliation

CN: contains language that erases trans people (quoting a lapsing policy)

Council Notes:

1. That OUSU has pro-choice policy, which resolves 'to support a woman's right to choose'¹, 'to campaign to extend students' right of practical access to an abortion', and to 'extend their rights over their own pregnancies'.
2. That this policy further resolves 'to work with other groups campaigning for the above objects'.
3. That Abortion Rights is the only abortion-focused campaigning and advocacy organization in the UK, providing up-to-date information to campaigners and campaigning materials.
4. That Abortion Rights has in the past year provided particular support to student campaigners, including OUSU, e.g. through the Abortion Rights Student Conference.
5. The work that OUSU has done over the past year to improve support for student parents, including the introduction of a Student Parents and Carers Officer.

Council Believes:

1. That OUSU's pro-choice policy should be acted upon.
2. That, although it is not a perfect organization, Abortion Rights offers helpful resources and support to assist OUSU in its work.
3. That the work of OUSU over the past year has emphasized that OUSU supports choice, rather than preferring any particular response to pregnancy.

¹ If the updated policy passes (in the same Council as this motion), then this will update to: 'to support the right of all pregnant people to choose'

Council Resolves:

1. To affiliate to Abortion Rights at a cost of £50 per annum.

Proposed: Anna Bradshaw (Wadham)

Seconded: Aliya Yule (Wadham)

Anna Bradshaw (Wadham) – Thanked council for passing the previous motion and stated that with this motion, she now wanted to act on that policy. Noted that Abortion Rights are not perfect as an organisation, and can be trans erasive, however recognised that they are otherwise really good, and that they are the only abortion focussed campaigning and advocacy organisation in the UK that provides up to date information and materials to campaigners, provides training, and further to this, particularly over the last year to year and a half, it has increased its focus on student campaigners and student unions, and we have really benefitted from that. Noted that this includes an Abortion Rights student conference which she attended in Michaelmas term, as well as a collaboration between Abortion Rights and OUSU that saw Abortion Rights open WomCam’s Reproductive Justice Week in Hilary term. Urged to support this re-affiliation, and stressed that even if people have reservations, we can be critical friends.

Sarah White (St Catherine’s) – Agreed that we should act on the policy passed, but argued that we just passed pro-choice policy, not pro-abortion policy, and this does say the only advocating group for abortion. Questioned how we would reconcile the two.

Anna – Responded that it was advocating abortion rights, not abortion, and that one of the things they do is spot checks to make sure that advice which is given is actually non-directive, and they are pushing for less restrictive laws around abortion, for example you currently need signatures from two different doctors.

Christina (St John’s) – Asked for more of an explanation of how they help OUSU.

Anna – Replied that they provide a campaigning pack with leaflets, balloons, badges etc. that we have been able to use throughout the year. Added that they have been very collaborative with us in running events, provided a day long event themselves, and have also been on hand to have long discussions with her around particular cases that have happened. Noted that she is not an abortion rights specialist, and knowing that there is someone that she can call up for help really supports her as an officer.

Jacob Williams (Exeter) – Asked if Abortion Rights are campaigning for legal changes.

Anna – Answered that they are, and that they would like to bring the abortion laws more in line with those across much of western Europe, where having to get two signatures and having discussions with two different doctors is very unusual. Added that there are other things that are creeping through UK law in different ways, like the sex selective abortion, and Abortion Rights work hard against amendments that try to make the law more restrictive.

Hertford student – Asked how OUSU can reconcile being pro-choice, but supporting abortion in this way. Recognised that this supports abortion rights rather than abortion, but questioned how OUSU can give equal support to other choices.

Anna – Answered that she can reconcile this in her job, as she knows that she actually does more work to support student parents than students who are pregnant. Added that Abortion Rights is an affiliation that has come, and if someone wants to bring an affiliation to an organisation which supports people who carry pregnancy to term and then opt for adoption, or an organisation which particularly supports young parents, then they are welcome to do that, however argued that OUSU has more expertise around supporting student parents than around supporting students who choose abortion, which is why we need this particular expert advice.

Kristina Carney (St John's) – Asked about what Abortion Rights does for Northern Irish women.

Anna – Noted that this is an area of work which she knows a little less about, but that she is aware that they do a large amount of work supporting campaigners in Northern Ireland, and also in the Republic of Ireland, who are working to try and create at least a vaguely modern abortion law, as it is exceedingly restrictive at the moment. Added that they also do collaborative work with an organisation that raises money for women who become pregnant in Ireland to travel over in order to receive safe and legal abortions in England, Wales and Scotland.

Jamie (Pembroke) – Asked for further information on the issues that were referred to with the organisation.

Anna – Answered that she has two concerns, firstly the fact that all of their rhetoric is about women, which is not representative of everyone who can get pregnant, and secondly, that she does not consider them to be very good at situating abortions rights within the broader context of reproductive justice.

Keble student – Asked if they are campaigning to have sex selective abortion to be permitted under UK law.

Kristina Carney (Hertford) – Explained that around a month ago, a Trojan horse amendment went through parliament. Stated that UK law already restricts sex selection abortions, but this amendment tried to make it harder and re-write the law for no reason other than to make it increasingly difficult for women to get abortions full stop. Abortion Rights opposed the amendment on these grounds.

Anna – Added that she doesn't think that Abortion Rights have a public opinion on whether they actually support sex selection abortions.

Kristina – Added that this was the first time in history that a bill relating to abortion referred to the foetus as a child, which was unprecedented.

Jacob Page (St Catherine's) – Asked if Abortion Rights are taking any steps to improve on the issues that have been raised.

Anna – Answered that it is complicated as it is a relatively small organisation, and there are some people that are more receptive than others, but noted that she believes that they have shifted to a slightly better place, for example, at their conference, they had a whole panel which considered abortion rights and disability, which was unprecedented and really great. Added that as they are now far more actively involved in the student movement, we can push them further on these things.

Jacob Williams (Exeter) – Asked if they wanted to change term limits for abortion.

Anna – Answered that they oppose any attempt to lower the limits.

Keble student - Asked what Abortion Rights are likely to spend the £50 affiliation fee on.

Anna – Answered that no money that we provide will be spent on actual abortions, but noted that they work with another organisation that raises money for travel to abortions, however Abortion Rights does not perform abortions, is not full of medical practitioners, and is about enabling choice, rather than being a medical clinic.

Amendment received:

To include in resolves:

“To mandate the LGBTQ Campaign to run an awareness-raising event on trans abortion and reproductive rights.” and

“To mandate the LGBTQ Officer to write to Abortion Rights highlighting their lack of inclusion of LGBTQ people, and in particular trans people.”

Proposed: Jenny Walker (Wadham)

Seconded: Lucy Delaney (Wadham)

Anna – Asked to change mandate to recommend so we are not mandating liberation groups.

Agreed by the proposers.

Accepted as friendly and received no opposition.

Motion passed with no opposition.

5. NUS Affiliation

Council Notes:

1. That OUSU is currently affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS).
2. The cost of affiliation is currently £27,949, but this will rise in proportion to OUSU's block grant.
3. Through the sale of NUS Extra Cards, OUSU has earned £13,169. This would not be possible were OUSU to not be affiliated to the NUS.
4. Through its various campaigns and projects, the NUS has continued to support OUSU in its work on liberation, international students issues, fossil fuel divestment, the annual quality report, voter registration, accessibility and more.
5. Since last year's NUS referendum, officers at OUSU have worked hard to ensure concerns voiced by Oxford students are relayed to the NUS leadership and acted upon. This has produced results:
 - a. Following concerns voiced by many Oxford students that the meetings of the NUS National Executive Council were not open enough, the OUSU sabbatical officers wrote an open letter to the NUS Leadership asking for more transparency. As a result of this letter and subsequent discussions with NUS officers, the meetings of the National Executive Committee have been live tweeted, agendas put out publically and those elected to the committee have thus been better scrutinized.
 - b. Some have argued that the NUS does not care about institutions like Oxford. Taking this forward, the OUSU President worked with staff and the Vice President for Union Development at the NUS to create a conference for student unions in collegiate universities. Alongside OUSU, representatives from York, Durham and Lancaster Student Unions attended, and issues specific to our institutions were discussed.
 - c. Concerns that the political standpoints of the NUS are not influenced by OUSU sufficiently are slowly being alleviated as two of the motions submitted from OUSU Council to the NUS conference passed and a third may get passed at the next meeting of the National Executive Council. As well as this, there are now two OUSU members on the National Executive Council. Additionally, the OUSU President was invited by the NUS to speak to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Students on behalf of student unions, highlighting how OUSU has, in some cases, led the NUS politically.

Council Believes:

1. That the NUS, although not perfect, is an organisation that supports the work of OUSU.
2. That the students of Oxford need representation in the spheres that make decisions affecting them.
3. That one of these spheres is the national sphere, within which the NUS is the best organisation to represent Oxford students.
4. That OUSU's relationship with the NUS has improved this year.

Council Resolves:

1. To affiliate to the National Union of Students for the year 2015-2016.
2. To not be too whiney about it (though still hold elected officers to account).

Proposed: Louis Trup (Brasenose)

Seconded: Becky Howe (Pembroke)

Louis Trup (Brasenose) – Stated that what we have been doing today is coming together as disparate groups and making policy stances on issues that we believe affect students, and for that reason, proposed that we re-affiliate with the NUS. Argued that there are issues which affect students nationally, be they the laws on tuition fees, or be they laws on abortion rights, and that any issues which affect students, should have students at the decision making table. Urged that students must be represented when there are issues that affect them, and therefore need the NUS, who are best placed to do that for us. Acknowledged the argument that we can do it ourselves, and agreed we can and should fight ourselves, but insisted that there is no better place to have our voices heard than through a body which is made up of the majority of student unions in this country and through shaping that, shape the way that students are represented nationally, Noted that there are of course flaws with the NUS, however the motion talks about previous issues with the NUS, and how we this year have tried to change that. Claimed that they have listened to us. Explained that when we told the NUS they don't do enough for Universities like Oxford, they set up a conference for student unions in collegiate universities, and that when we told them we wanted more transparency, they started live tweeting all of their national executive council meetings. Concluded that this affiliation represents a student voice at the highest level of power.

Jacob Page (St Catherine's) – Asked what was meant by council resolves 2.

Louis – Answered that we need to complain about what the NUS do, not the NUS themselves.

Opposition to the motion.

Jack Matthews (University) – Stated that he is incredibly proud of council today, as we have discussed delicate issues, and have listened to those we may not necessarily agree with respectfully prior to making a decision. Argued that NUS offers us that same respect, explaining that he has never felt so uncomfortable in a supposedly democratic surrounding as when attending NUS Conference, when someone he had a lot of respect for died. Explained that his movement turned on him. Argued that solidarity should mean something, and that when we commit to other student unions, it should not just be a tokenistic gesture. Continued that we have solidarity regardless for others in education, and who want education in this country and around the world, however that this is not the case for our delegates and the NUS, and for himself at other NUS events, following attempts to explain the unique issues surrounding Oxford access. Explained that he has been told that he is wrong by those that are not involved and has witnessed people acting in direct opposition to what our officers are doing on issues surrounding bursaries and fee waivers. Insisted that NUS are not supportive, and that affiliation to them comes with a price, one that is already £27,000, and will be increasing to £40,000 over the next few years. Stated that solidarity cannot have an unlimited price tag, and that we should detach solidarity from this, as regardless of our affiliations, we will have solidarity with those who have issues in this country and around the world. Informed council that when he came into this job, he expected to finally see exactly what NUS contribute for the amount that we pay to them, however claimed that the good work that OUSU does is based on the work of our

officers, and our staff, and that when we have needed the NUS, they have not been there. Stated his belief that we really can stand on our own two feet, and that we simply cannot change an organisation that is so entrenched in its views and actions. Concluded that he wants to belong to a national movement that genuinely represents all students, but does not believe that this will happen until we start to take a stand.

Christina (St John's) – Read out a statement from a member of St John's JCR who was unable to attend council: "On the issue of OUSU's affiliation to the NUS, the real question we should be asking has gone too long unanswered. 'What do students think of NUS?' The last referendum on this issue took place in 4th week of Trinity Term 2014, and was not OUSU's finest hour. The problem remains that this referendum was declared null and void, and even a year later has not been replaced with an equivalent referendum. The views of students were therefore not properly consulted, and in lieu of anything, the status quo was maintained. There is an argument that if referenda on issues such as these should become more common place for OUSU, as they seem to have done recently with the issues such as whether elections should be held in Michaelmas or Hilary, and sub fusc, the case for having a referendum on NUS is very strong indeed. Now seems to be a more appropriate time than ever to have this debate, with the divisive 'Liar Liar' campaign, and the failure to pass the motion to support the instatement of a full time trans officer in the NUS gracing the headlines of student newspapers and campuses across the country. There are strong views on both sides of the argument, and it seems a shame to gloss over them in a closed forum such as OUSU council. Let us have a proper debate about this issue."

Nick Cooper (St John's) – Clarified that in Trinity 2014, there was a referendum on OUSU's affiliation to the NUS, which was nullified after it was found to be completely rigged.

James Blythe (Brasenose) – Responded to the point made that OUSU council was a closed forum, and argued that it should be the complete opposite of that, with members representing their common rooms. Added that if people don't feel that are accurately representing the views of their common rooms by voting on this motion, we shouldn't be talking about that, as that is a separate question to that of the NUS. Informed council that he has found the NUS completely useless for his portfolio, but knows that other sabbs have found them very different.

Aliya Yule (Wadham) – Informed council that she attended NUS womens' conference earlier this year, and knows a number of different liberation officers who went to LGBTQ conference, and trans conference, as well as the number of people in this university who sit on national committees for different liberation groups. Highlighted that for liberation groups, NUS do so much and provide many materials and resources, run workshops, support our events, and have the opportunities to meet so many other officers from liberation groups which is so important.

Mansfield student – Explained that he comes from Durham who did disaffiliate, and claimed that it was really hard work without them. Stated that we had officers with very little support and very limited peer networks, adding that what we should be doing as a student population, is working together to enable us to get the best results nationally. Informed council that he was a

living wage campaigner when Durham disaffiliated, and that it was then exceptionally hard to get to other universities when not a part of the NUS. Argued that we need to be in it to improve it.

Jacob Page (St Catherine's) – Stated that he did not believe that disaffiliating from the NUS would be a good idea, and that to make the changes we want to see within the NUS, we need to be a part of it. Added that council is the place to bring those motions before they go to NUS.

Hossein Sharafi (Keble) – Informed council that within his JCR, they did a motion on this, and abstentions won by 30 votes. Encouraged people to abstain if they are indifferent to the NUS.

Anna Bradshaw (Wadham) – Noted the previous suggestion that the nullified referendum meant that no decision was made and argued that this was not the case, as the motion was still discussed in council, and was widely publicised due to the issue with the referendum.

Lucy Delaney (Wadham) - Reiterated Aliya's point that it is not that NUS is perfect or ideal, but it is necessary. Responded to the suggestion that NUS is some kind of left wing feminist echo chamber, arguing that this is not the case at all, and there are issues with it on so many levels, but without it, so much of the liberation work which takes place would not be able to happen.

Jack – Clarified that his earlier points were not about politics and he did not mean to give that impression. Explained that he does not come to council to get support for his own views, but to represent others. Stated that he does not expect people to agree with him, but he does expect to be heard, as he can be heard here, but does not get heard at NUS conference. Informed council that regarding reform in the NUS over the last five years, we have written letters from the sabbatical officers and the exec, we have passed motions, and we have taken things to conference specifically asking for reform, and every time, even when conference voted for it, they still didn't do what they were mandated to do. Added that he had looked into how much the NUS officers do following what they have been mandated to do, and depending on which officer, it is usually between 30% and 40%. Noted that he does not see the move from those who support our affiliation pushing for reform once we have passed this, and the changes just never happen.

Move to vote.

Objection.

Alex (Oriell) – Explained that he is conscious of time and everyone has already made up their mind.

Peter Elliott (St John's) – Argued that given the comment about the number of abstentions made in a JCR, it is clear that not everyone has made up their minds about this.

Vote on move to vote:

For – 35

Against – 13

Abstain – 8

Debate continued.

Henry Holmes (Wadham) – Reiterated that it is very important for the LGBTQ campaign. Quoted from a BBC article produced last year on the NUS referenda: “The ‘no’ campaign had received a total of 1780 votes. And once the invalid votes were removed, it emerged Oxford students had voted by a margin of nearly two to one to remain affiliated to the NUS.”

Ruth Meredith (Brasenose) – Reminded council of the numerous weeks in which she told them about her work to change voter registration, and explained that when she did this work, she did it with the NUS, without whom she would have never had known what best practice was, would not have known that it could be integrated with university registration even at a collegiate university, and would not have known that we were the odds ones out, and we’re not leading the way on this, and would not have been able to apply the pressure she did to the university without the support of the NUS. Continued that without NUS, she would have no one to go to with the stupid questions that are a bit embarrassing when working to reform RAG.

Peter Elliott (St John’s) – Responded to an earlier point from James, and claimed that we were promised a referendum, and in the integrity of OUSU, a referendum should be provided when promised to us.

Anna – Emphasised the fact that being a sabbatical officer is really hard work, and involves very long hours and lots of challenges, and to do it well is even harder. Explained that having access to a support network, whether or not you use it, and having access to training, advice booklets, handbooks etc. is really important, and that from a personal point of view, it is particularly useful, considering that there are only ten people in the UK that are full time womens’ officers to have a way to bring them together. Further urged council to consider what it would say about Oxford, to lots of other people, including lots of prospective applicants, if we were to say that we are better than this kind of solidarity, and we are better than being in a national movement, and we want to do it ourselves because we don’t think others are relevant.

Eden Tanner (St John’s) - Noted that a referendum is costly and time consuming to run, and we should think very carefully about what issues we want to send to referenda.

Move to vote.

No opposition.

Louis – Suggested that from what we have seen, the NUS are not always great. Added that we did have a referendum in a way, and that after it was voided he and Jack brought a motion to

council proposing another one. Clarified that this motion fell. Acknowledged that Jack has been an amazing campaigner within the NUS for years, and has been treated badly based on his political views. Added that to a lesser extent, so has he, just because he is from Oxford. Agreed that this is not acceptable, but argued that we really need to be there telling these individuals that it is not ok, and calling them out. Added that we also need to be showing the solidarity that he believes they have been starting to show us.

Jack – Questioned how many times we will have this same debate where most of the sabbatical officers are on one side, starting the same speech with “I know it’s not perfect but...” Asked why nothing has changed in all of this time, and argued that if the same result comes out again today, the proposers finally have to stand on the words which they have said before council and deliver the changes that we actually need, because we should have a NUS where every single student can go there and be heard, and be confident that they had their moment, and were heard, even if most disagreed. Noted that this is fine, because they have been listened to and enabled to speak, regardless of the result, something that the institutionally broken NUS just cannot achieve.

Vote:

For – 37

Against – 4

Abstain – 13

Motion passed.