

Council Minutes

7th Week Hilary Term 2014

7th Week Council took place at 5.30pm on Wednesday 5th March 2014 at St Peter's College Junior Common Room.

- a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- b. Matters Arising from the Minutes
- c. Ratifications in Council
- d. Elections in Council
- e. Passage of Motions Nem Con
- f. Motions of No Confidence or Censure
- g. Emergency Motions
 - 1. Support of Open Letter
- h. Motions Authorising Capital Expenditure
- i. Other Motions
 - 2. Local Election Hustings
 - 3. NUS Referendum Cancellation
 - 4. Exeter Hall Boycott Motion
 - 5. Sabbatical Officers Participation in a Sexual Consent Workshop
 - 6. Living Wage Accreditation
- j. Any Other Business
 - 7. Electoral Review Group

a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

There were no issues raised with the minutes.

b. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None

c. Ratifications in Council

None

d. Elections in Council

- 2 Positions for Steering Committee - no nominations
- 1 positions on Scrutiny Committee - no nominations
- 1 Positions for Budget Sub Committee - no nominations
- 3 Positions for Complaints Committee - no nominations
- 1 Positions for Internal Affairs Committee - no nominations

e. Passage of Motions Nem Con

2. Local Election Hustings

Council Notes:

1. The City Council Elections are taking place on Thursday 22nd May 2014 (4th Week Trinity Term 2012).
2. That half of the city's 48 councillors are up for re-election.
3. There are 24 City Council wards.
4. That students live across Oxford but are concentrated in the Carfax and Holywell wards. (These wards encompass the entire city centre from the Magdalen Bridge to the fork in St Giles)
5. In May 2012 candidates from the Conservative Party, the Green Party, Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats contested all of the wards containing Oxford colleges.
6. That candidates have until 4pm on Thursday 24th April 2014 to submit their nominations to the City Council's Returning Officer.

Council Believes:

1. City Council elections are important, the City Council is projected to have a budget of £23 million in 2013/14 and how the city council's budget will be spent over the next few years will be, in part, determined by the Councillors that are elected.
2. It is important to engage the student body and common room representatives with the city council elections.
3. OUSU Council provides a unique opportunity to engage with common representatives and students.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate the VP C&C to write to the Oxford branch of any political party that is fielding a candidate in a ward in Oxford that contains at least one Oxford College, to invite them to a Student Hust based on the criteria below:
 - a. The student hust will take place on Wednesday 30th April (1st Week Trinity Term)
 - b. The hust will begin at 5.30pm and last approximately 45 minutes, and certainly last no longer than an hour
 - c. Each political party contacted will be able to select one candidate to represent them at the hust.
 - d. This candidate must be from a ward containing at least one Oxford College.
 - e. Candidates will have a maximum of 2 minutes each to deliver a speech before allowing time for questions and responses to points raised by other candidates.
 - f. The hust will be chaired by the VP C&C
2. To shift the start of 1st week OUSU Council in Trinity Term to 6.30pm in order to accommodate Council Resolves 1b)

Proposed: Daniel Tomlinson (University College)

Seconded: Emily Silcock (New College)

Motion passed Nem Con

6. Living Wage Accreditation

OUSU Council notes:

1. That OUSU's Living Wage Campaign has been campaigning for a Living Wage for a number of years.
2. That the Living Wage is currently set at £7.65/hour outside London.
3. The OUSU has been paying all of its directly employed staff at least Living Wage for a number of years.
4. That to become an accredited Living Wage employer all staff that work on your premises for more than two hours a day on any given day of the week, for more than 8 weeks a year must be paid a Living Wage.
5. That the cleaner of the OUSU premises is employed by the University of Oxford, not by OUSU, and over the past few years OUSU has been in discussions with the University on moving this cleaner to a Living Wage.
6. That as a result of a recent decision by the University the cleaning staff in many of the central administration buildings, including 2 Worcester Street (OUSU's current location), will be paid a Living Wage from May 1st.

OUSU Council believes:

1. That OUSU Council notes 6. is fantastic news.
2. That if OUSU fulfills the criteria to become a certified Living Wage employer then it should apply to be one.

OUSU Council resolves:

1. To mandate the Vice-President (Charities and Community) to apply to The Living Wage Foundation for Living Wage accreditation for OUSU in order that OUSU can become a certified Living Wage employer.

Proposer: Daniel Tomlinson (University College)

Seconder: Tom Rutland (Jesus College)

Motion passed Nem Con

f. Motions of No Confidence or Censure

None

g. Emergency Motions

1. Support of Open Letter

Council Notes:

1. In June last year, Charlotte Coursier, a philosophy graduate student, committed suicide.
2. Last week, the coroner was told that, before she died, Charlotte had been struggling to cope with 'a campaign of harassment'.
3. The alleged harasser was Jeffrey Ketland, a member of the philosophy faculty.
4. Dr Jeffrey Ketland was issued by with a harassment warning under the Harassment Act before Charlotte died. He remains a university employee.

5. Many students are profoundly unhappy with the way the university has responded to Charlotte's death
6. That a group of directly affected students wrote an open letter expressing their concerns with these events, and the university's response to them. (Please see Appendix A)
7. That this group of students approached the VP (Women) for support on this, and sought the support of the Women's Campaign and It Happens Here.
8. That the letter went public today (Wednesday the 5th of March), and so signatures from JCRs, MCRs or other groups are only just being sought.
9. The university has a duty of care towards all students.
10. The University has codes of practice, which allow for suspending staff during a review process. We refer to University Statute XII: Part D, 19 (4) and section 8.2 of the Staff handbook

Council Believes:

1. That the university has a responsibility to act so as to best manifest this duty of care.
2. The lack of information communicated to directly affected students is concerning.
3. The decision to keep Dr Ketland in institutionally mediated contact with students after the review began did not have to occur.

Council Resolves:

1. To express support for the letter voicing these concerns.
2. To add OUSU Council to the list of signatures.

Proposed: Sarah Pine (Wadham College)
Seconder: Jacob Williamson (Somerville College)

Sarah Pine (Wadham) - Explained the motion had been forwarded as an emergency as the letter had only gone public today.

Jacob Williamson (Somerville) - Explained the situation regarding the student who took her own life the previous summer. Explained that students have not been well informed about the situation, and many only learnt about it in the National Press. Informed Council that the VC has the power to suspend staff with full pay while harassment allegations are investigated, however the staff member in question has remained in mediated contact with students. Provided a summary of the letter and reported that it had 135 signatures yesterday.

AMENDEMENT RECEIVED:

In Council Notes 1) - replace the wording 'committed suicide' with 'took her own life'. (Proposer: Sarah Pine, Wadham; Seconder: Jacob Williamson, Somerville)

Amendment accepted as friendly.

Stuart Sanders (Trinity) - Asked what level of openness is being requested.

Sarah - Explained that they are aware of confidentiality issues however the lack of information communicated to students is worrying, with close friends prevented from discussing the tragedy. The letter urges further information for concerned students.

Margery Infield (St Edmund Hall) - Asked if students are still able to show support by signing the letter.

Jacob - Explained that they are hoping for a response to the letter by the following week however if this fails, or the response is unsatisfactory, the letter will then be open to further signatures.

Sarah - Explained that the signatures currently on the letter are those of the people most affected.

Sarah - Responded to a question regarding further action against the professor in question and confirmed that this would be libelous and would not happen. Explained that they are just requesting more information and the suspension of the professor while the investigation takes place.

Motion passed with no opposition.

h. Motions Authorising Capital Expenditure

None

i. Other Motions

3. NUS Referendum Cancellation

OUSU Council Notes:

1. The motion passed in 7th Week Council of Trinity 2013 to have a referendum on affiliation to the NUS.
2. Without a referendum, the decision as to whether to re-affiliate would devolve to Council.
3. The existence of Special Council, which requires Common Room representatives to seek a mandate from their Common Room, and which must happen between 14 and 21 days after it is called.
4. In a Special Council, the only people who can vote are Common Room representatives who have a mandate from their Common Room.

OUSU Council Believes:

1. It is important that current Council members consent to the referendum taking place.
2. It is important that the maximum number of students are engaged with the debate around NUS affiliation.
3. Common room meetings are an excellent space for students to have a free and frank debate on issues that affect Oxford students.
4. Special Council provides an opportunity for the view of every student to be represented in a way in which students can more easily engage than a cross-campus referendum.
5. We can engage students in the important question of whether to reaffiliate to the NUS in an equally democratic way, while saving sabbatical officers' time and the Student Union's money, by having a vote in Council after discussions in Common Rooms.

OUSU Council Resolves:

1. To cancel the referendum called in 7th Week Council of Trinity 2013.

Proposed: James Blythe (Brasenose College)

Seconded: Josh Platt (Hertford College)

James Blythe (Brasenose) - Informed Council that he is not bringing this motion with any intention of affecting the result, but simply wants Council to have an important discussion about an important decision in the most democratic way possible. Believes that Council have a right and arguably a duty to decide how the decision should be made. The intent is not to use OUSU to frustrate the will of students, but to engage students with the issue.

Leo Gebbie (Jesus) - Asked what the general turnout is to elections?

Alex Walker (Wadham) - Provided an example of RAG at approximately 3.5%.

James - Claimed that he is certain that the referendum would be even lower.

Margery Infield (St Edmunds Hall) - Asked how disaffiliated students would express their thoughts.

James - Explained that they would be unable to vote however they have made the choice to deprive themselves of this right by disaffiliation.

AMENDMENT RECEIVED:

In Council Notes: Remove 3) and 4) and

In Council Believes: Remove 4) (Proposer: Sarah Pine, Wadham; Seconder: Lucy Delaney, Wadham)

Amendment not accepted as friendly.

Sarah Pine (Wadham) - Claimed that there should not be a steer towards either special or ordinary council, and that the decision should be based solely on whether or not to hold a referendum.

James - Proposed that Council Believes 4) is removed but Council Notes 3) and 4) both remain, as deleting all reference to special council denies students any knowledge of this.

Amendment now reads:

In Council Believes: Remove 4)

Amendment accepted as friendly

Jack Matthews (Trinity) - Stated that whatever Council this goes to it is fundamentally wrong, as Council does not reach its potential and there are many that feel unable to speak. Commented that people have already spoken and 22,000 students deserves their say.

Henry Zeffman (Brasenose) - Commented that cancelling the referendum would look terrible in terms of public relations and also that it is unacceptable to disenfranchise disaffiliates.

Tom Rutland - Confirmed that he will be abstaining.

Move to vote called by chair following repeated points regarding the necessity of granting students a say, as Council was under considerable time constraints due to a last minute change of venue.

Move to vote opposed by Dan Tomlinson (University)

Vote on move to vote - Majority in favour of move to vote.

Motion fell:

For - 13

Against - 44

Abstain - 15

4. Exeter Hall Boycott motion

OUSU Council Notes:

1. Exeter is the most expensive undergraduate college in Oxford, with base annual living-in battels totalling over £4000: 20% higher than the median. It is consequently ranked bottom for living costs satisfaction, according to the Student Barometer.
2. Students living out (that is, half of the JCR and almost all of the MCR) pay approximately £370 p.a and many never once use Hall.
3. As a way of raising awareness of their dissatisfaction amongst the SCR, and to state their opposition to the high cost of living, Exeter students have been boycotting Hall and staging regular protests for the past three weeks.

OUSU Council Believes:

1. The £840 p.a catering charge for students living in is obscenely high.
2. College did not negotiate properly on rent last year and have been completely intransigent on the catering charge issue. Further discussion with College is futile until they start listening.
3. High living costs have a considerable effect on Access success, and Exeter receives one of the lowest numbers of state school applications.
4. Reduced hall turnout need not lead to staff cuts, as their pay is guaranteed by the catering charge, which College levies on every student regardless of hall use.

OUSU Council Resolves:

1. To express support of Exeter's student common rooms in their struggle.
2. To call on Exeter College to shoulder more of the burden for Hall running costs.
3. To mandate the OUSU President to wear a #CTCC (Cut The Catering Charge) T-Shirt to meetings with members of the University for the rest of the term, to raise awareness of the charge in the wider University.

Proposed by: Tom Rutland (Jesus College)

Seconded by: Louis Trup (Brasenose College)

Motion passed with no opposition.

5. Sabbatical Officers participation in a Sexual Consent workshop:

Council Notes:

1. OUSU co-ordinates the training and provides resources for MCRs and JCRs to run sexual consent workshops in their communities.
2. Feedback on the workshops is overwhelmingly positive.
3. That several common rooms have made these workshops compulsory for incoming students.
4. That sexual consent is necessary, not optional for sexual interactions

Council Believes:

1. That student leaders and representatives have an equal responsibility to understand sexual consent.
2. That student leaders and representatives have an additional responsibility to lead by example, and should not support programmes making workshops compulsory without having first gone to them themselves.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate all Sabbatical Officers to attend a consent workshop
2. To make these consent workshops available to all members of the part-time executive, divisional board representatives, NUS delegates and student trustees in their capacity as elected representatives of OUSU.

Proposer: Lucy Delaney (Wadham College)

Seconder: Eden Tanner (St John's College)

Lucy Delaney (Wadham) - Explained the motion and stated that student leaders should lead by example - if they are support workshops, they should be attending them themselves. Commented that the sessions are to facilitate, not to instruct and are discussion based. Assured Council that the motion is not aimed at any particular individuals.

Amendment Received:

In Council Resolves 1) reword to included 'To mandate all Sabbatical Officers and Part-Time Executives to attend a Consent Workshop' (Proposed by: Xavier Cohen, Balliol).

Amendment accepted as friendly.

Amendment Received:

In Council Resolves 1) to add in 'outside of term time' (Proposed by Dan Tomlinson, Univeristy).

Amendment accepted as friendly.

Motion passes with no opposition.