

Meeting of CUSU Council Lent 3, Wednesday March 2 2005, The Union

In the Chair: Sarah Kaiser
Secretary: Mark "Moz" Morris

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:35pm, and welcomed everybody present.

1) Corrections to Minutes of Last Council

There were no corrections

2) Matters Arising from the Minutes of Last Council

Laura Morley, Clare College, said that she had not actually received any minutes from the last council

The secretary said he would look into the matter

3) Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Council Lent 4, March 16, 7:15pm, venue tbc

4) Announcements by the Executive

Ben Wheeler, CUSU Communications and Building Officer, apologized for the slight delay in releasing the Union and Building report, which had been featured in tcs. He said that both he and the Services Officer had been in numerous meetings with members of the University surrounding the matter, and promised to keep council updated of the progress

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, announced that he had attended the successful international student visa demo the previous week, followed by a very productive lobby, and reported that the early day motion submitted by Anne Campbell on this topic now had 150 signatures. He also announced that he had been to a less successful NUS education lobby earlier in the day where the issues of PGCE top-up fees and HE funding had been overlooked on a very quiet day in Westminster, but he was still working closely with Homerton Union of Students to fight the proposed fees

The President also reminded council that hustings for the executive elections would be taking place following council, and asked everybody to stick around

Naveed Anwar, CUSU Access Officer, told council that he had been running the shadowing scheme for the last few weeks, which had been very successful with 240 sixth form students attending. He said that the Target Schools campaign would begin in two weeks, and told people they could register their help when the website was launched

Jo Read, CUSU Women's Officer, said that liberation training for all College exec members would be taking place this weekend, and that people should email her to book places. She also said that the following week would be international women's week, with many talks and workshops occurring, and encouraged people to visit the event which were open to everyone

Richard Reid, CUSU Welfare and Graduates Officer, informed council that the manifestos and hustings lists for the exec elections would be appearing in the following day's tcs, and that e-hustings for the sabbatical candidates would take place on Sunday from 1 thru 3, with questions and answers being posted on the CUSU forum

5) Questions to the Executive

Dave Hawkins, Homerton College, asked why Homerton had been excluded from the shadow scheme. He said that he been informed it was because Homerton could not provide any rooms for shadows, but that other Colleges with the same problem had still been included

Naveed Anwar, CUSU Access Officer, replied that he was able to arrange alternative accommodation in nearby residences for shadows in Colleges that did not offer any rooms; this had not been possible with Homerton as there was no suitable alternate accommodation within close proximity. He said he was also sorry that this had been the case, and had tried to find a solution but was unable to do so

6) Objections to the order paper

There were no objections

7) Ratification of Open Meeting Motions

This was unnecessary as the Open Meeting had not been quorate

8) Motions requiring a Second Vote

a. changes to the standing orders on elections

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, speaking for the motion, said that they were minor and logical changes, relating to fly-posting and gifts etc

The chair called for a vote, and the motion passed with thirty-nine votes in favour, none against, and one in abstention

b. proposed changes to the constitution

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, speaking for the motion, said that these were more controversial changes to the constitution, and would be voted on at a referendum held alongside the CUSU elections. He said that the motion had been subject to a number of amendments, but still affected issues such as the scrapping of quorum at open meetings and changing the way in which autonomous campaigns were conducted

At this point an amendment was tabled to strike 'CUSU resolves' point two

Robin Sivapalan, Homerton College, speaking for the amendment, said he did not want to see the executive being mandated to effectively push a policy; it would be undemocratic and unfair

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, speaking against the motion, said that they were simply asking people to support policy and not forcing them to do anything

Sam Caldwell, King's College, speaking for the motion, said that he would personally be unhappy with being asked to support some policies, and that it was definitely unfair to uphold a policy that had not been decided by a democratic process

Caroline Hibell, Homerton College, speaking against the motion, said that council itself was the democratic, and mandating the exec to act in this way was to simply support the resolutions of council

John West, Jesus College, speaking for the motion, said that the purpose of the executive was to execute policy, and that the executive should not be mandated to support a students' union policy if it had not been through the proper democratic process

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, speaking against the motion, said he was not mandating the executive to vote in a particular way, but to campaign in this way

Robin Sivapalan, Homerton College, speaking in summation, said that council did not have the right to levy the executive's power

The Chair called for a vote, and the amendment failed, with fifteen votes in favour, and sixteen against. The motion remained unaltered, and debate returned to the motion itself

Sam Caldwell, King's College, speaking against the motion, said he believed that although the figure of 100 for quorum was arbitrary, a sensible value was required otherwise as few as three people could feasibly decide CUSU policy

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, speaking for the motion, said that open meetings were small, the figure of 100 being small for a union of over 18,000 students, and that he accepted open meetings could not make policy by retaining the need for ratification

Robin Sivapalan, Homerton College, speaking against the motion, said this showed a fundamental disrespect to the concept of open meetings as the size of council could sometimes be less than an open meeting

John West, Jesus College, noted that the proposals were to replace the one scheduled open meeting, and asked whether there would still be any open meetings

Liam Wren-Lewis, Caius College, replied that there would still be open meetings on a regular basis

Drew Livingston, CUSU Academic Affairs Officer, speaking for the motion, said that he had spent a lot of time sitting in open meetings of a handful of people who pass policy only for it to be deemed worthless, those people then lose faith in the open meeting. He said he believed quorum did not make sense

Jo Read, CUSU Women's Officer, said she thought the motion was antidemocratic, and that a one member one vote meeting that was respected was essential

Following a speech in summation, the Chair called for a vote. The motion passed with twenty-two votes in favour, eleven against, and nine in abstention

9) Ordinary Motions

a. hustings

Jo Read, CUSU Women's Officer, speaking for the motion, said that she would like to see more inclusive hustings where the candidates were respected, and that she believed it was unfair if a candidate could not attend hustings because of accessibility. She said the guidelines needed changing so that candidates were respected, and the Colleges made the effort to provide accessible venues

Laura Morley, Clare College, asked what impact this motion would have as the hustings venues had already been decided

Jo Read, CUSU Women's Officer, replied that it would raise awareness for the situation next year

Peter Parkes, Emmanuel College, said he felt hustings in bars brought them to an audience that would otherwise be ignored, and that surely this was good

Jo Read, CUSU Women's Officer, replied that getting more people attending hustings was desirable, but felt this could be done by Colleges making a greater effort to provide an accessible venue and promote it more fully

Matt Sims, Robinson College, asked why the hustings schedule had not appeared on the website earlier

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, acknowledged that this was bad, and would make recommendations for next year's elections committee

Naveed Anwar, CUSU Access Officer, speaking in summation, said this was both important and necessary so that all candidates could attend all hustings

The Chair called for a vote, and the motion passed with twenty-four votes in favour, four against, and thirteen in abstention

b. drugs and alcohol

Richard Reid, CUSU Welfare and Graduates Officer, speaking for the motion, said that the major source of problems in Cambridge was with alcohol, and that whilst the motion was not intending to clamp down on drinking, he hoped

it would help promote responsible drinking. He said he wished to work with senior tutors and the Portman Group to develop a positive attitude towards the issue

There were no other speeches or questions, so the Chair called for a vote. The motion passed, with thirty-nine votes in favour, none against, and one abstention

c. Oxbridge applications

Laura Walsh, Fitzwilliam College, speaking for the motion, said there was often little assistance for sixth form students wishing to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, and this company was trying to capitalize on those students. She said this was wrong, it undermined the work done by CUSU's access and target initiatives, and that CUSU could provide the same advice for free. She said the motion would promote the fact that CUSU does not work with Oxbridge Applications

Sam Caldwell, King's College, asked how this would be done

Laura Walsh, Fitzwilliam College, said that it would be publicized thru the JCR and College networks

Kay Ward, Pembroke College, said she believed her sixth form had employed this company, that they had spent a day at the school giving interview training, and asked how the motion would address the viewpoint from schools that this company was legitimate

Laura Walsh, Fitzwilliam College, said this would be dealt with by mailing high schools and sixth form colleges, but agreed to investigate the matter further

Laura Morley, Clare College, asked if CUSU hadn't passed a similar motion in 2002

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, replied that they had, but this motion was more detailed in working with schools and colleges

Emily Mott, Sidney Sussex College, asked what was being done about other companies who performed a similar service

Naveed Anwar, CUSU Access Officer, replied that the previous motion from 2002 had addressed the issue to all such companies; this motion was more specifically focussing on Oxbridge Applications

Following a speech in summation, the Chair called for a vote. The motion passed with forty-one votes in favour, none against, and none in abstention

d. general elections

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, speaking for the motion, said that the general election would probably occur on May 5 or thereabouts, and that this motion was not about telling people who to vote for, but to raise awareness. He said there were several issues concerning where a student was eligible to vote, that young people were generally bad at voting and therefore largely

ignored by MPs, and that people may be unsure how to go about voting. The President said that this motion would promote the elections impartially

Dan Swain, King's College, asked how this would relate to the BNP

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, replied that under both the education act and charities act, CUSU was a non-political body and as such will not campaign for or against any specific parties

Sam Caldwell, King's College, stated that the charities act did not prevent CUSU from producing educational information on fascist parties

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, said they would be investigating the policy again, but there was a big difference between what charities could do, such as provide information about certain parties or policies, and what they could not, such as run a blanket campaign against a particular party. He stressed the importance of acting within the law and not patronizing students, something the working party would investigate thoroughly

Jamie Shaw-Stewart, Pembroke College, speaking against the motion, said that his College had discussed the motion, and decided to oppose it on the grounds that all that CUSU did the previous year was to produce a leaflet that had inaccurate times and dates on, and this was viewed as a waste of time

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, speaking for the motion, responded by admitting the previous year's information had been poor, but this year would be better and that CUSU were working with other groups such as amnesty in order to promote the elections in a positive manner

Sam Caldwell, King's College, asked if it would be possible for trustees to overturn a motion such as this, given that the trustees power to veto motions had been amended as part of the constitutional changes

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, replied that because of the legal implications, and since the trustees were personally liable, it would be unreasonable to expect them to do things without an option to get out, although he would expect to see substantial reasons why this might be the case

Tom Hannan, Churchill College, asked for clarification as to what 'CUSU believes' point seven related to

Wes Streeting, CUSU President, replied that they certainly would not be re-writing party's policies and presenting them to students; that the information would have to be unbiased and should not promote any particular party. He stressed the importance of treading carefully, but that it was important students were well informed

Following a speech in summation, the Chair called for a vote. The motion passed, with thirty-five votes in favour, three against, and three in abstention

10) Emergency Motions

There were no scheduled emergency motions, but a member approached the bench regarding a procedural motion to suspend the constitution in order to

hear an emergency motion relating to the evenings proceedings. Council broke for fifteen minutes in order to fully consult the constitutional requirements, before resuming to discuss the procedural motion

John West, Jesus College, speaking for the procedural motion, said that council had earlier voted to mandate the executive to campaign for a 'yes' vote in the referendum on the constitutional changes, that this was wrong and undemocratic and should not be allowed. He stated that this was an emergency, and requested the constitution be suspended in order to bring an emergency motion before council

Laura Morley, Clare College, speaking against the procedural motion, said that council had already voted on this issue, and it would be unfair to ask them to vote on it again

The Chair called for a vote, and the procedural motion failed, with five votes in favour, twenty-six against, and none in abstention.

There were therefore no emergency motions

11) Any Other Business

There was no other business