



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE Minutes – Wednesday 13th February

Present: - **Rahul Prakash**, *President* (RP)
Jack Perry, *Secretary* (JP)
Ben Cooper, *Custodian* (BC)
Martha Muir, *Director of Debating* (MM)
Sarah Kuszynski, *Social Secretary* (SK)
Connor Forster, *Sponsorship Secretary* (CF)
Dan Egglestone, *President-Elect* (DE)

Apologies: - **Sarina Rivlin-Sanders**, *Treasurer*

Meeting began in The Debating Chamber at 1:40p.m

RP in the Chair and JP minuting.

RP opened the meeting. He outlined the events coming up this week. He stated turnout today is looking worryingly low.

RP stressed the need to review the Presidential Election Regulations.

BC stated the recent election has dragged the Union into disrepute and set multiple terrible precedents. He stated the Union looks less welcoming than ever due to the Durfess abuse.

SK and **CF** agreed.

RP agreed the Durfess situation is difficult to resolve and noted anonymous complaints are an issue.

CF outlined all the lies perpetuated by Durfess.

BC noted the Rules were ignored because of political and PR considerations.

RP stressed it is also an issue of welfare.

MM stated she also doesn't like the idea of an anonymous platform. She asked if we can go to the University.

BC outlined how Durfess have broken their own rules, arguing we should publish a statement.

RP stated that Jonathan Moreland, the Chair of Trustees, has emailed the University.

BC and **CF** reiterated their irritation at the precedent that has now been set.

BC stated the actions of certain past Officers have been disgraceful and that they should know better than to get involved and try to fan the flames.

CF and **DE** agreed.

RP began a draft statement, clarifying that no-one acting on behalf of the Union has ever threatened legal action against Durfess. He included the fact we also never asked Durfess to censor all posts about the union, merely requesting that election related posts be removed. He alluded to other Student Societies and their election regulations. He outlined reasoning behind preventing election posts. He pointed to the Complaints procedure which will commence next Wednesday.

CF suggested including a note that we did approach them through both personal and official channels.

RP noted this should have been clear from previous statements.

CF stressed that Durfess broke their own rules and created an atmosphere of hate.

RP recognised Charlie Cowen's (**CC**) help with drafting statements recently.

The statement was further discussed and drafted.

RP read through the statement. He resolved to type it up, send it to **CC** and Standing Committee and then publish it tomorrow morning.

RP asked what we have learnt from the events of the past few weeks.

BC stressed the importance of coordinating action and taking our time to respond to these things.

RP outlined the applications for the Complaints Panel. He stated we should interview all of them.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed.

RP noted interviews will be on Monday and Tuesday next week. He asked what questions should be included.

Various suggestions were raised. [They have been omitted from the minutes, so candidates cannot see them in advance].

JP noted he has nothing to report.

BC stated open mic. night is looking good. He urged members to sign up to door shifts.

SK stressed the importance of checking members before socials. She noted getting more sensible members of Social Committee to mix the drinks. She stated the need to book a drum kit for the Gala Dinner.

BC and **SK** discussed logistics for this.

CF noted that the raffle went well and discussed the upcoming clothes and food drives.

RP suggested a food drive for Harvest Festival in Autumn.

RP noted the Durham Women in Politics meeting over speaker collaboration.

DE noted a meeting with Durham School over an agreement allowing pupils to attend debates and involving speaker collaboration.

MM noted Durham Schools and the Durham Open are doing well. She noted an alumnus, Katie Heard, is contributing £450 per year to their budget. She noted they are deciding on Euros selection. She pointed out that Worlds now has a gender quota for debate teams.

RP noted an email from Francis Sinclair on organising a human rights debate with an external adjudicator and involving students. He stated he will forward it to **MM**.

RP noted a position which elections don't do a service to which is Technologies Officer.

BC suggested allowing any member to run not just General Committee.

JP suggested any member could hust in front of General Committee for the position.

RP noted it is a long-term change which can be considered.

RP closed the meeting.

Secretary: **J. Perry**

President: **R. Prakash**