



# *the* DURHAM UNION

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## MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE Minutes – Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019

*Please note: - Details relating to attendance may be found in the General Committee register, housed at the Union Office on Palace Green. Permission to access the register may be granted upon request by the Secretary, Deputy Returning Officer or the Union Society Office Manager.*

*The meeting began in the Debating Chamber, Palace Green at three o'clock*

*Mr Sledge in the Chair, Mr Funes minuting.*

The President, Mr Sledge, opened the meeting, thanking members of the committee for their attendance.

The President invited the Social Secretary, Miss Jackson, to begin her report.

Miss Jackson began her report, detailing the Transparency Reports she had made for Oktoberfest and for other events. She detailed the revenue from the Oktoberfest social and the profit of approximately £320. She stated her desire to make it a yearly event and spoke of the importance of getting sponsorship for such events. Miss Jackson then went on to discuss the Michaelmas Ball. The ball made a profit of £2000, £1000 more than expected, which could be attributed to various cost-cutting measures and prior relationships with various entertainers. Ticket sales were strong and more non-members than expected had attended. She stated that better publicity for social events was necessary and was open to ideas as to how to achieve this. Miss Jackson stated the need to improve the table sign-up process for future balls and encouraged all General Committee members to come to social events.

The President then opened the floor to questions.

Mr Pahl asked who Miss Jackson thought could sponsor social events.

Miss Jackson answered this question.

Miss Kuszynski asked how the profits from socials would be re-invested.

Miss Jackson stated that the funds would be used on the socials in the upcoming year and anything left over would go into reserves at the end of the year.

The President thanked Miss Jackson for her report.

The President ceded the chair to the Deputy Returning Officer, Mr Wroe, who read out the valid proxy votes for the meeting.

The Deputy Returning Officer then opened nominations for one position on Rules Committee, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Mr Emir Funes, of St Aidan's College, proposed by Tristan Pahl
2. Mr Fergus Barker, of Trevelyan College, proposed by Rayan Bhattacharya

The Deputy Returning Officer invited Mr Funes to begin his hust.

Mr Funes began his hust, outlining his experience outside of the Union that made him well suited to this role. He referred to work experience that he had undertaken that was relevant to electoral matters.

The Deputy Returning Officer invited Mr Barker to begin his hust.

Mr Barker began his hust noting his desire to reform the rules in the Constitution, particularly around the area of 24 North Bailey Club. He stated that he would be strictly impartial in everything that he did on Rules Committee and would promote unity in the Society.

Both candidates having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Mr Page asked if the candidates prefer to follow conventions or the letter of the Constitution.

Mr Funes responded that he would always try to stick to the letter of the Constitution but understood the need for flexibility in some areas.

Mr Barker referred to the importance of regularly updating the Constitution so that the letter and the spirit of the document were one and the same.

Mr Enamorado asked what the candidates would do to ensure that they are trusted by the members.

Mr Barker referred to the importance of strictly upholding the rules without fear or favour.

Mr Funes stated that trust comes from the impartiality of members of Rules Committee.

Mr Adamson asked about the role of Rules Committee in improving the image of the Society.

Mr Funes stated that Rules Committee should not be too public and ensure impartiality is upheld.

Mr Barker expressed that members of Rules Committee should be approachable to members.

Mr Skalinski asked about upholding the rules.

Mr Barker reiterated the importance of upholding them without fear or favour.

Mr Funes concurred and referred to the need to streamline aspects of the Constitution.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Barker had been elected by 24 votes to 7, with 1 spoilt ballot.

The Deputy Returning Officer then opened nominations for the position of Equalities Officer, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Miss Allannah Life, of Trevelyan College, proposed by Lydia Buckroyd and seconded by James Adamson
2. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

The Deputy Returning Officer invited Miss Life to begin her hust.

Miss Life began her hust, introducing herself, and stating her desire to get more involved with the Society. She noted her experience in Social Committee and stated that she has shown her commitment to the Union. She stated her belief in the importance of representation and how it could open up the Union to new groups. She stated that she was willing to put in the time and effort to make the Equalities position a success.

The candidate having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Mr Pahl asked what Miss Life would write in e-mails to prospective speakers.

Miss Life referred to many things that should be included but referred to particularly to the importance of using inclusive language in e-mails.

Miss Herrington asked what Miss Life would do to attract speakers from working-class backgrounds.

Miss Life responded that she would work with relevant student organisations to achieve this and that those with the most interesting things to say are rarely those with the most money.

Miss Kuszynski asked about how Miss Life would work with the Speakers Secretary and about the upcoming LGBT panel.

Miss Life referred to the importance of making sure that the LGBT Association is aware that their members can attend the event, even if they are not Union members.

Mr Page asked about Miss Life's opinion of quotas.

Miss Life stated that quotas encourage thinking that speakers are simply invited for the sake of diversity and not for what they have to offer to debate. She stated we should look to invite the most interesting speakers from a diverse array of backgrounds. She also referred to the wheelchair inaccessibility of the chamber.

There being no further questions, the Deputy Returning Officer asked the candidate to leave the room, and invited Miss Buckroyd to propose Miss Life.

Miss Buckroyd proposed Miss Life, stating the qualities that she possesses that make her well suited to the role. She stated that Miss Life has good connections and an excellent understanding of how the Society works. Miss Buckroyd referred to Miss Life's previous involvement with many university societies, including the LGBT Association, and stated that she will work well with these societies in the role of Equalities Officer. She also referred to Miss Life's role in the Theology Society and her ability to successfully organise events.

The proposer having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Miss Herrington asked about how the candidate would improve relations with the LGBT Association.

Miss Buckroyd referred to Miss Life's previous strong relationship with the association. She promised that if Miss Life is Equalities Officer, the concerns of the LGBT Association will be listened to.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Miss Life had been elected by 20 votes to 13, with 1 spoilt ballot.

The Deputy Returning Officer then opened nominations for the position of Outreach Officer, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Mr Harry Troise, of St John's College, proposed by Tristan Pahl and seconded by Theo Burman
2. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

The Deputy Returning Officer invited Mr Troise to begin his hust.

Mr Troise began his hust, highlighting his experience within and without the Society. He referred to the work that he had already done with local charities and how he would build upon this in the role of Outreach Officer. He stated his desire to work more closely with Consultative Committee and to encourage young people to participate in debating.

The candidate having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Miss Buckroyd asked how Mr Troise would increase engagement with outreach events.

Mr Troise referred to the importance of choosing topics that interest students.

There being no further questions, the Deputy Returning Officer asked the candidate to leave the room, and invited Mr Pahl to propose Mr Troise.

Mr Pahl proposed Mr Troise, explaining why he is an excellent choice for the role. Mr Pahl referred to the history of the position and the good work previous occupants of the role have done. Mr Pahl highlighted Mr Troise's previous experience and ability to work with everyone. Mr Pahl concluded by stating that Mr Troise's election would lead to greatly improved engagement between the Society and local charities.

The proposer having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions, of which there were none.

There being no questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Troise had been elected by 29 votes to 5.

The Deputy Returning Officer then opened nominations for the position of Steward, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Mr Ryan De Vere, of Hatfield College, proposed by Tamara Herrington and seconded by Fergus Barker
2. Mr Theo Burman, of Grey College, proposed by Rayan Bhattacharya and seconded by James Adamson
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

The Deputy Returning Officer invited Mr De Vere to begin his hust.

Mr De Vere began his hust, introducing himself to the Committee and stating why he believed he was the best candidate for the position. He stated that he would continue the policy of a rota system for House Committee members and pledged neutrality in the position. He referred to his position on the Committee over the past term and stated that he would prepare House Committee members to be more effective in their role as serjeant-at-arms.

The Deputy Returning Officer then invited Mr Burman to begin his hust.

Mr Burman began his hust, expressing his love for the Committee and urging the current contingent to run for re-election next term. He highlighted several instances which showed he had the capability to be a reliable in a crisis. He stated that he would also keep the rota system in place and stated that he would introduce rewards for House Committee members.

Both candidates having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Miss Jackson asked what keyring the candidates would add to the Steward's keys.

Mr De Vere favoured a wooden block.

Mr Burman proposed a torch or bottle opener.

Mr Adamson asked how the candidates would work to improve the image of the Union.

Mr Burman noted the need for positive people and a positive attitude on House Committee.

Mr De Vere stated he wanted to maintain House Committee's neutral image.

Miss Herrington asked the candidates' preferred Reading Room drink.

Mr De Vere stated his preference for red wine.

Mr Burman favoured cranberry juice.

Mr Barker asked the candidates' opinion on black tie.

Mr Burman stated that he liked black tie but would make concessions to members of the Committee who could not attain it for whatever reason.

Mr De Vere stated that black tie was the uniform of House Committee, although he conceded that it can be expensive.

Mr Adamson asked how the candidates would make the chamber accessible.

Mr De Vere stated he would provide whatever assistance was necessary to help people access the chamber.

Mr Burman concurred and referred to the importance of wheelchair access.

There being no further questions, the Deputy Returning Officer asked the candidates to leave the room, and invited Miss Herrington to propose Mr De Vere.

Miss Herrington proposed Mr De Vere, stating that his hard work and cheerful demeanour made him well suited to the role of Steward. She stated that he has proven his ability on the Committee and has external experience with running a debating society.

The Deputy Returning Officer then invited Mr Bhattacharya to propose Mr Burman.

Mr Bhattacharya proposed Mr Burman, stating that the role of Steward is a great one with considerable responsibility. He praised Mr Burman's engagement with the Society and his hard work and urged members to vote for him so this hard work could continue. He stated that Mr Burman is capable of dealing with the heavy workload and described his experience outside of the Society.

Both proposers having husted, the Deputy Returning Officer opened the floor to questions, of which there were none.

There being no questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr De Vere had been elected by 23 votes to 11.

The Deputy Returning Officer ceded the Chair to the President.

The President invited Mr Pahl to move his amendment relating to the Annex on 24 North Bailey Club.

Mr Pahl stated that the annex was greatly out of date and required updating as well as clarifying some aspects and removing certain archaic sections. He also stated that the sections relating to the ballot procedure for 24 North Bailey Club is too vague and needs to be clarified.

Mr Pahl listed his amendments in turn. All were taken on a general aye.

The President ceded the Chair to Mr Wroe.

Mr Wroe invited Mr Sledge to move his first amendment.

Mr Sledge rose to propose an amendment to alter the procedure for elections at General Committee meetings. He proposed that there should be one large General Committee meeting in the middle of each term, at which all elections for officers who have served their term come up. He also proposed changes to the hustings so that proposers do not hust for elections to officerships, except if the election is to be a Full Officer of the Society.

Mr Barker asked for a clarification.

Mr Sledge answered this query.

Mr Page rose in formal opposition to the amendment.

Mr Page stated that the amendment is exclusionary and that it does not solve the problem of General Committee meetings being too long.

Mr Wroe opened the floor to general discussion on the amendment.

Mr Adamson asked how this large General Committee meeting would be advertised and if it would be suitably in advance for all members to ensure that they could attend.

Mr Sledge stated that it would be well advertised, and that he would support amending the Constitution to that effect if it would help.

Mr Adamson asked when the large General Committee meeting would take place.

Mr Sledge answered this question.

Miss Jackson asked about the problems if all Standing Committee positions changed in one day.

Mr Sledge stated this would not happen because Standing Committee members would be elected at different times and that the President and President-Elect would remain on Standing Committee.

Mr Wroe asked if the amendment would not considerably vary the terms of officers from the one year currently set out in the Constitution.

Mr Sledge conceded this was possible but stated that it did not matter very much if the term of an officer varied by a few weeks from the current one-year term.

Miss Jackson asked if it would be better to have the large General Committee meeting earlier in the term, so as to ensure better handovers of officerships.

Mr Sledge urged the application of common sense in these circumstances and stated that he trusted Rules Committee to exercise this common sense.

Mr Page agreed with this point.

Mr Buxton-Carda asked how many elections would be in the large General Committee meeting.

Mr Sledge stated that he believed there would be around five, but that the amendment abolishing proposal speeches for most elections would save time.

Miss Jackson noted the problems with junior officers running for Standing positions and leaving many vacancies for the General Committee meeting after the large General Committee meeting.

Mr Sledge reiterated the terms of the amendment and why he believed this was not the case.

Mr Page stated that attendance would be a major problem at the large General Committee meeting.

Miss Jackson proposed that a timetable be published so that people know when different officerships come up for election.

There was general discussion on this point.

Mr Barker made a comment relating to faith in the Union with scheduling all elections on one day which some members who may wish to run for election may miss.

There was general discussion on this point.

Mr Pahl proposed a procedural motion that the committee move immediately to a vote on the amendment. This was passed on a general aye.

The committee moved immediately to a vote on the amendment. In this vote the ayes were 14, and the noes were 19. Two thirds of the votes of the members of the committee having not been in the affirmative, the amendment was not approved.

Mr Wroe invited Mr Sledge to move his second amendment.

Mr Sledge moved his second amendment which would increase the threshold for a Vote of No Confidence from twelve members of the General Committee to one third of the General Committee.

Mr Adamson sought clarification regarding how the third would be calculated.

Mr Sledge explained this.

The amendment was taken on a general aye.

Mr Wroe invited Mr Sledge to move his third amendment.

Mr Sledge moved his third amendment relating to the timetable for elections to President's Committee. The amendment would prevent by-elections immediately before the term was about to begin.

Mr Skalinski proposed a second-degree amendment.

This was taken on a general aye.

The whole amendment was taken on a general aye.

Mr Wroe invited Mr Sledge to move his fourth amendment on behalf of Mr Enamorado.

Mr Sledge moved his fourth amendment relating to the creation of a Deputy Technologies Officer and a Technologies Committee.

Miss Kuszynski enquired as to why the Deputy Technologies Officer was an Official and not an Officer and proposed a second-degree amendment to that effect.

This was passed on a general aye.

Mr Pahl asked why there should be a deputy and not simply Co-Chairs of Technologies.

Mr Funes proposed a second-degree amendment to include the Assistant Secretary in the Technologies Committee.

This was passed on a general aye.

The whole amendment was taken on a general aye.

Mr Wroe ceded the Chair to Miss Kuszynski.

Miss Kuszynski invited the President, Mr Sledge, to give his report.

Mr Sledge gave his report referring to the large number of dropouts the term had suffered, attributing this to Brexit and the general election. Mr Sledge stated that he had overbooked speakers, foreseeing just such a situation. Mr Sledge particularly mentioned the addresses from Guy Mowbray and David Moyes as being particularly successful, stating that Mr Mowbray had been keen to come back soon, and the Society should take him up on this offer. He stated that attendance had been strong but had been declining toward the end of the term.

Mr Sledge stated that his advice for future presidents planning events was to build their debates around 'star' speakers and choose dates that they can do, building in other lesser known speakers around them. Mr Sledge referred to the success of competitive debating and stated that Durham will do well at the upcoming World Championships. He stated that the socials had been terrific and that the Union puts on the best balls in Durham. He stated that he looked forward to the Alumni weekend.

Mr Sledge thanked Mr Pahl for his work as Custodian, and for making 24 a friendly and welcoming environment.

Mr Sledge thanked Mr Barker for his work on the Alumni Weekend and for revitalising the role of Alumni Officer.

Mr Sledge thanked Mr Wroe for his work as Steward and Secretary. He stated that he showed great dedication and had managed House Committee well.

Mr Sledge stated that Miss Kuszynski will make an excellent president and stated that the speakers for her term were looking excellent.

Mr Sledge thanked Miss Herrington for her hard work and perceptive questions during events.

Mr Sledge thanked Miss Buckroyd for her management of President's Committee – stating she will go on to do great things.

Mr Sledge referred to his experience as Equalities Officer and stated that Miss Life will be terrific in the role.

Mr Sledge referred to the many freshers he had been able to meet in the term and his confidence in their ability to take the Society forward.

Mr Sledge paid tribute to the success of Mr Buxton-Carda's pub quizzes.

Mr Sledge handed over the president's gown to Miss Kuszynski.

Miss Kuszynski proposed a Vote of Thanks to Mr Sledge, seconded by Mr Wroe. This was taken on a general aye.

Miss Kuszynski ceded the Chair to Mr Sledge.

Mr Sledge invited the President, Miss Kuszynski, to give her report.

Miss Kuszynski began her report stating that it had been a rollercoaster of a term, referring to such highlights as Guy Mowbray's address and the Wikileaks debate. Miss Kuszynski referred to her upcoming term, stating that she had 8 Friday night debates planned as well as addresses from speakers such as Bill Bryson, Rachel Kelly and Paul Mason. Miss Kuszynski stated that her term will be a diverse term, particularly noting that around 40% of speakers will be female. Miss Kuszynski referred to the upcoming Re-fresher's drive, which was a first for an Epiphany term and to the Alumni Weekend.

Miss Kuszynski thanked Miss Jackson for her work as her successor in the role of Social Secretary.

Miss Kuszynski thanked Mr Barker for his work on the Alumni Weekend.

Miss Kuszynski thanked Mr Sledge and stated the two of them had worked well together for a long time.

Miss Kuszynski wished the committee a Merry Christmas.

There being no further business, the President closed the meeting.

Secretary: **J. Wroe**

President: **S. Kuszynski**