



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE Minutes – Wednesday 27th November 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, Returning Officer or the Union Society Office Manager.

The meeting began in the Debating Chamber, Palace Green at half past two o'clock.

Mr Sledge in the Chair, Mr Enamorado minuting.

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

The President began the meeting addressing what he viewed as the toxic atmosphere in the society as of late. He referred to the decision of the Debates Committee to stop attending Union events and the removal of the wall photos.

The President reminded the Committee that it would be easy for Debating to leave the Society and set up a rival society if they so wished. The President observed that since these events were publicised to the wider student body, the purchase of new memberships had slowed to almost zero. He stated that it is difficult to sell a society that is viewed as toxic by the student body. He appealed to the Committee to change its behaviour and promote an atmosphere of harmony.

The President stated that the Standing Committee along with Rules Committee was in the process of drawing up a Code of Conduct for Officers of the Society and he hoped that this would go some way to dealing with the problems that the society had faced.

Miss Narasimhan raised a point of order asking the Committee to discuss the issues that had brought it into disrepute and describing what she viewed as unacceptable alleged comments during the Mo Mowlam debate.

Mr Page raised a point of order relating to the alleged comments during the Mo Mowlam debate.

Mr Pasriccha concurred with Miss Narasimhan's remarks and called for greater unity in the Society.

Mr Amoils urged the Committee to move on from the unfortunate events of the term and reminded members of the constitutional avenues available to them if they wished to bring a complaint against another member.

Miss Price further explained the plans of the Standing Committee to introduce a Code of Conduct.

The President asked if the draft Code of Conduct could be shared on the General Committee Facebook page for members of the Committee to view.

Mr Wroe stated that he had shared the draft Code of Conduct on the Facebook page and that members could now view it.

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

The Returning Officer then opened nominations for two positions on Rules Committee, with the following candidates being nominated:

1. Miss Lucy Jackson, of University College, proposed by Sarah Peart.
2. Mr Samrat Pasriccha, of St Cuthbert's Society, proposed by Anasuya Narasimhan.
3. Miss Kristen Price, of St Cuthbert's Society, proposed by Tristan Pahl.
4. Mr Fergus Barker, of Trevelyan College, proposed by Rayan Bhattacharya.
5. Mr Theo Burman, of Grey College, proposed by Ryan De Vere.

The Returning Officer invited Miss Jackson to begin her hust.

Miss Jackson began her hust talking about her experience on the Standing Committee. She talked about the importance of open and fair elections and making sure that these were publicised to everyone. Miss Jackson referred to the reforms she had implemented as Social Secretary and the increased transparency of the role through the introduction of reports which detail social expenditure. She concluded by stating that she would bring this same transparency and honesty to Rules Committee.

The Returning Officer invited Mr Pasriccha to begin his hust.

Mr Pasriccha noted his experience as Returning Officer of St Cuthbert's Society JCR and stated that this made him well suited to the role. Mr Pasriccha promised that Rules Committee decisions would be more widely publicised.

The Returning Officer invited Miss Price to begin her hust.

Miss Price referred to the President's previous statements regarding the implementation of a Code of Conduct for Officers and stated the importance of this policy. She further referred to the idea of a Duty of Care for how members interact with each other.

The Returning Officer invited Mr Barker to begin his hust.

Mr Barker described the importance of establishing a welcoming atmosphere and on keeping an impartial position as a member of the Rules Committee. He promised authenticity and stated that the Union should be about ideas and not about individual personalities.

The Returning Officer invited Mr Burman to begin his hust.

Mr Burman introduced himself as a historian and keen member of House Committee. He promised impartiality and referred to his experience as a debating judge. He proposed better explanation of the constitution and to cut through the 'jargon' that makes the document difficult to understand.

All of the candidates having husted, the Returning Officer opened the floor to questions.

Mr Roy asked the candidates what their favourite Standing Order of the Constitution was.

Miss Jackson referred to clauses dealing with the relationship between the Social Secretary and Assistant Social Secretary.

Miss Price referred to the clause permitting the co-opting of members onto committees.

Mr Barker referred to Standing Order V, relating to election regulations.

Mr Pasriccha referred to the annexes relating to 24 North Bailey Club and the sections relating to the role of Steward.

Mr Burman referred to the description of the Society at the beginning of the Constitution.

Mr Bhattacharya asked the candidates about their approach to making decisions as a committee and about consistency.

Mr Burman highlighted his idea of moving beyond precedent.

Miss Price talked about using UK case law and legislation and to interpret on a case by case basis.

Mr Pasriccha referred to the importance of respecting the democratic will of members.

Miss Jackson stated the importance of respecting the established precedents of the Committee.

Mr Barker highlighted the importance of engaging with the membership before coming to a conclusion on rulings that could be seen as controversial.

Mr Sledge referred to 'joke rulings' that previous Returning Officers had made and what joke ruling each of the candidates would like to implement.

Mr Barker stated he would ban the wearing of a Spurs shirt on Union premises.

Mr Pasriccha stated that the President should dance at the Farewell Debate.

Miss Jackson stated that she would rename the role of the Assistant Social Secretary to 'Chief Drinks Mixer' in the Constitution.

Mr Burman stated he would make the eating of pineapple pizza a dismissible offence.

Miss Price stated she would alter the hierarchy of Full Officers of the Society to put the Sponsorship Secretary above the President.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Pasriccha and Miss Jackson had been elected.

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

1. Mr Steven Roy, of Van Mildert College, proposed by Alexander Broadbridge-Kirbitson and seconded by Rayan Bhattacharya
2. Mr James Wroe, of St Chad's College, proposed by Kristen Price and seconded by Tamara Herrington
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

The Returning Officer invited Mr Roy to begin his hust.

Mr Roy began his hust stating that he believed that the Union was at an important turning point in how it was viewed by the wider student body. He stated he would implement mechanisms to improve the reputation of the society and to reform Consultative Committee. He stated that he would bring significant change to the Committee to force it to genuinely engage with the student community. Mr Roy also stated his desire to ensure more transparent rulings and to make minutes more accessible to ordinary members. He concluded by stating that the Union must be a platform for ordinary members to discuss and express their views.

The Returning Officer then invited Mr Wroe to begin his hust.

Mr Wroe began his hust, introducing himself to the Committee and outlining his experience as Steward. He stated that he wished to bring significant reform to Consultative Committee and opined that they are the greatest underused resource in the Society. He stated that those on Consultative Committee would become a genuine first port of call for members of the Society in the respective colleges. Mr Wroe further stated that he would make the minutes of meetings more widely available and that fixing the website would be his first priority. Mr Wroe referred to the importance of the

Epiphany Re-fresher's drive and proposed the use of high-quality production videos to promote the Society. He further explained that he wanted to use paid Facebook advertisements to promote Union events and explained that as Deputy Returning Officer, he is an impartial figure and so is well suited to the role of Secretary.

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

Mr Barker made a question relating to the publication of Rules Committee decisions. Mr Perry interjected to state that Mr Barker's question was factually incorrect. Mr Barker withdrew his question.

Mr Pearce referred to his experience as Ustinov Consultative representative and asked what the candidates would do to increase attendance.

Mr Roy discussed the practical issues of engaging with students from Ustinov College and the importance of strengthening links with Ustinov.

Mr Wroe stated that he greatly enjoyed Mr Pearce's meme page and thanked him for setting it up. He stated that his ideas for reforming Consultative Committee would help to deal with the problems that Mr Pearce outlined but that he nonetheless understood the difficulties with engaging with Ustinov students.

Mr Raju asked the candidates about their secretarial experience.

Mr Wroe referred to his work minuting Rules Committee as Deputy Returning Officer.

Mr Roy highlighted personal experience outside the Union.

Mr Pahl asked how the candidates would improve attendance at 24s events.

Mr Roy responded that this would be achieved through better use of social media and improved public engagement.

Mr Wroe referred to the potential for Consultative Committee to better publicise events and to attain better information regarding what members want.

Mr Pasriccha asked about the candidates' approach to a Union Review.

Mr Wroe stated he would work with the Easter President, Mr Enamorado, to implement such a policy.

Mr Roy concurred and further stated that such a policy is needed to better publicise the Union and improve its public image.

Miss Herrington asked about the commitment of candidates to the role if elected.

Mr Wroe guaranteed his complete commitment and referred to his work as Steward as evidence of this commitment.

Mr Roy noted that attending events is not enough to prove one's commitment. He stated that he gives much of his time to the Society and outlined his work with the Society outside of the purview of official positions.

Mr Raju asked about candidates' experience with Debating.

Mr Roy highlighted his experience on Debates Committee and at many competitions.

Mr Wroe outlined his experience as a debater and at debating competitions. He also referred to his experience as Steward and how this related to Debating.

There being no further questions, the Returning Officer asked the candidates to leave the room, and invited Mr Broadbridge-Kirbitson to propose Mr Roy.

Mr Broadbridge-Kirbitson proposed Mr Roy and outlined his qualifications to improve public engagement. He described his experience as the founder of Durfess and that his character and high profile would attract members to the Society. Mr Broadbridge-Kirbitson stated that Mr Roy had the skills to make the Society a better place.

The Returning Officer then invited Miss Price to propose Mr Wroe.

Miss Price proposed Mr Wroe and described his experience across all areas of the Society from Debating to Sponsorship. She described his impartiality as Deputy Returning Officer and approachability as a person. Miss Price referred to Mr Wroe's leadership experience in managing House Committee and stated that he is the right individual to promote reform of Consultative Committee.

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

Mr Pasriccha asked about the candidates' experience with publicity and social media.

Mr Broadbridge-Kirbitson referred to Mr Roy's experience with Durfess and general success with social media.

Miss Price reiterated Mr Wroe's commitment and experience across the Union. She stated he will work well with the Publicity Officer, Miss Herrington.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Wroe had been elected by 31 votes to 29.

Mr Broadbridge-Kirbitson made a brief statement regarding Debates Committee and the internal problems in the Union.

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

1. Miss Amy Mitchell, of The College of St Hild and St Bede, proposed by Lucy Jackson and seconded by Ryan De Vere
2. Mr Emir Funes, of St Aidan's College, proposed by Rayan Bhattacharya, and seconded by Tamara Herrington
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode

The Returning Officer invited Miss Mitchell to begin her hust.

Miss Mitchell began her hust referring to her experience in House Committee. She stated the importance of increasing attendance at Union events and proposed having 'mini-socials' before events took place. Miss Mitchell stressed the importance of 'walk-downs' from the Hill to improve attendance at events. She stated her desire to modernise the minuting and to delegate the writing of invitations from the Secretary to the Assistant Secretary.

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

Mr Funes began his hust by highlighting his commitment to the Society. He stated that the Consultative Committee needs a better physical and media presence. He stated the importance of updating minutes regularly and the importance of collaborating to make the Society more transparent and accountable.

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

Mr Pearce joked that the Society should have a 'TikTok' account and asked the candidates' views on this.

Both candidates concurred with Mr Pearce's suggestion.

There being no further questions, the Returning Officer asked the candidates to leave the room, and invited Miss Jackson to propose Miss Mitchell.

Miss Jackson proposed Miss Mitchell, stating that she is one of the most hard-working first year students in the Society. Miss Jackson highlighted Miss Mitchell's skills and her experience outside of the Union. She stated that Miss Mitchell will adapt and improve the Society and will engage with members personally. Miss Jackson stated that Miss Mitchell will work with the Technologies Officer to improve the content of the weekly email. Miss Jackson concluded by stating that Miss Mitchell has the dedication to make the Society better.

The Returning Officer then invited Mr Bhattacharya to propose Mr Funes.

Mr Bhattacharya proposed Mr Funes and referred to his personal experience with him in college. Mr Bhattacharya stated that Mr Funes has good networking skills and has contacts with interesting speakers. Mr Bhattacharya stated that Mr Funes' legal experience makes him well suited to the role and he has good minuting skills. Mr Bhattacharya concluded by stating that Mr Funes was a man with little ambitions but a huge commitment to help the Society.

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

Miss Buckroyd asked how the candidates would engage with members.

Miss Jackson stated that Miss Mitchell is a 'fresh face' around the society and that she conveys a great sense of approachability.

Mr Bhattacharya highlighted Mr Funes' experience as representative from St Mary's College and on Presidents Committee.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Funes had been elected by 29 votes to 28.

The Returning Officer ceded the Chair to the President.

Mr Pahl made a statement regarding the recent 24 North Bailey Club Annual General Meeting. He asked members to bring any suggestions they may have to him and reminded them of their obligation to sign up for Door Shifts. He stated that Sunday would no longer require someone to do the door shift and that the checking of I.D. would be done by the bar staff.

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

Secretary: **J. Wroe**

President: **A. Sledge**