



the DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE Minutes – Wednesday 30th October 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 Hyde minuting.

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

The President ceded the chair to Miss Paton.

Miss Paton invited the Returning Officer, Mr Perry, to deliver his extraordinary report.

Mr Perry began his report explaining the original intention to run the Easter Presidential Elections on paper ballots because the online system was not working. Mr Perry stated that due to exceptional work by Seb de Lemos, the system was now working. Mr Perry stated that there would be a public relations disaster if the election continued with paper ballots despite the working online system. Mr Perry explained that, with approval from both candidates, the election would be ruled out of order and would be re-run at a later date with electronic voting.

Miss Paton then opened the floor for questions.

Mr Enamorado asked when the link for the online voting portal would be published.

Mr Perry stated that the link would be ready 5-6 days before the voting.

The President interjected to explain that there would be a link that would take members to the voting system.

Mr Pasriccha asked whether nominations would be re-opened.

Mr Perry asked this question.

Mr Pearce thanked both Mr Perry and the Union for making the decision.

Mr Cresswell inquired whether the Union would release a statement

The President replied by stating that this would be the case. He further noted that the hustings on Wednesday were cancelled. The President then explained that existing problems would not remain once new members are signing up to the website.

Miss Paton ceded the chair to the Returning Officer, Mr Perry, who read out the valid proxies for the meeting.

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

1. Miss Amy Mitchell, of The College of St Hild and St Bede, proposed by Fergus Barker and seconded by Lucy Jackson.
2. Miss Anasuya Narasimhan, of Van Mildert College, proposed by Rosie Vorri and seconded by Tristan Pahl.
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode.

The Returning Officer invited Miss Mitchell to begin her hust.

Miss Mitchell began her hust by introducing herself and highlighting that she was a first-year PPE student. She conceded that she had not held many positions in the Union but noted her experience as a member of the House Committee, where she said she had immersed herself in everything the Union had to offer. Miss Mitchell then explained that the Outreach Officer is tasked with reaching out to the community and said she had run a local charity collection for a food bank in sixth form. She said in her concluding remarks that the members of the committee were privileged to be where they were, and not everyone had the opportunity.

The Returning Officer then invited Miss Narasimhan to begin her hust.

Miss Narasimhan commenced her hust by introducing herself and mentioning her experience as a competitive debater for the Union. She said her experience in debating including being a mentor for charity debate competitions made her well qualified for the role. She said the Union should set up DBS checks for its members and gave examples of projects she intended to run. She further told the General Committee how she would continue with the plans set up by Miss Copley and concluded by expressing her desire to organise introductory workshops for new members.

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

Miss Jackson, noted that there had been no sign-ups for the Second Chance Debate this term, and consequently asked how the candidates proposed to rectify this.

Miss Vorri interjected to explain how the Second Chance Debate works.

Miss Mitchell said existing relationships with charities must be maintained.

Miss Narasimhan referred to what she had said in her hust and mentioned a link which her college provided.

Mr Fillippopoulos asked whether the candidates had outreach ideas other than debating.

Miss Narasimhan mentioned Durham Schools.

Miss Mitchell talked about a more long-term approach, including going to schools.

Miss Vorri asked on the nature of the fundraisers the candidates might oversee.

Miss Mitchell mentioned a possible debate which could be broadcast across the campus.

Miss Narasimhan could not think of anything at the present moment, mentioning the general notion of giving back.

Miss Herrington asked how aware the candidates were of local charities.

Miss Narasimhan referred to several debating programs based in the North East.

Miss Mitchell conceded that she hadn't been with the Union long enough to make such connections, but said she was happy to learn.

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

Mr Barker began his hush by noting that Miss Mitchell possesses great people skills and a great commitment to the Union. He further continued by saying she possesses the distinctive capabilities required for an Outreach Officer, such as organisational skills. He concluded by praising the attitude that Miss Mitchell would bring to the role.

The Returning Officer then invited Miss Vorri to propose Miss Narasimhan.

Miss Vorri began by talking about Miss Narasimhan's experience as a member of the Debates Committee and working with several charities. She further stated that getting children on board was essential. Miss Vorri concluded her hush by stating that Miss Narasimhan was keen to work with the Sponsorship Committee.

Both proposers having hushed, the Returning Officer opened the floor for questions.

Miss Price asked how the candidates were around children.

Mr Barker said Miss Mitchell was friendly with everybody she met.

Miss Vorri said Miss Narasimhan acts like a child at times, and that she is friendly with everyone.

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

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

1. Mr Rayan Bhattacharya, of St. Aidan's College, proposed by Samrat Passricha
2. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode.

The Returning Officer invited Mr Bhattacharya to begin his hush.

Mr Bhattacharya began by noting the importance of the Sponsorship Committee. He then talked about what he thought an Assistant Sponsorship Secretary should do and referred to his experience working as a legal secretary in London, where he had taken minutes. Mr Bhattacharya further talked about the need to democratise the choosing of the sponsors and spreading the perks of sponsorship to the broader student body. He also mentioned his desire to streamline the problem of acquiring sponsors. He concluded by stating that he had served in the Sponsorship Committee for three consecutive terms.

The candidate having hushed, the Returning Officer opened the floor for questions, of which there were none.

There being no questions, the Returning Officer asked the candidate to leave the room, and invited Mr Pasriccha to propose Mr Bhattacharya.

Mr Pasriccha began his hush by noting how honoured he was, to propose a candidate who was to change the very fabric of the Union. He said Rayan's experience and ideas qualified him for the role, particularly noting an event he ran in India. He said the candidate had learned more than several transferrable skills. He concluded by referring to the candidate's experience within the sponsorship committee.

The proposer having hushed, the Returning Officer opened the floor for questions, of which there were none.

There being no questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Bhattacharya had been elected.

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

1. Mr Steven Roy, of Van Mildert College, proposed by Samrat Passricha
2. Mr Benjamin Doerry, proposed by Helen Paton
3. Re-open Nominations, of no such fixed abode.

The Returning Officer invited Mr Doerry to begin his hust.

Mr Doerry began by highlighting his experience in managing servers. He said he had run his servers with a word front like that of the Union Society. He further said he had been the sound technician for his school assemblies. He conceded that he did not have any grand plans but offered to facilitate in any way he could.

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

Mr Roy began his hust by introducing himself and noted the lack of a long-term plan in the running of the Union Society. He further talked of his dedication to the Union, having designed an online election system. Mr Roy also noted that the Cambridge Union had employed him. He said he had founded two companies and had secured jobs for himself at some of the largest tech companies available. He further mentioned that he had analysed the proposed contract for the Union's website and had helped overhaul Cambridge Union's sound system.

The candidates having husted, the Returned Officer opened the floor for questions.

Mr Enamorado asked the candidates the current tech set-up.

Mr Doerry said that the audio-visual equipment did not present him with many problems.

Mr Roy said that the current tech was not conclusive to teaching people and had to be wired up by hand. He said this would help a handover.

Mr Pearce said the sound quality of the chamber left much to be desired and asked the candidates what they thought on the subject.

Mr Roy said a lot could be done for a small amount of money, and a more professional standard should be upheld.

Mr Doerry said Mr Pearce's proposition was certainly viable and talked of improving the technology in the chamber.

Mr Barker inquired about time commitments.

Mr Doerry said he was a first-year student and did not have many time commitments to interfere with the position.

Mr Roy said that he would adequately balance the Union work with his work life.

Mr Pahl asked about equipment for the bar and replacing the old speakers.

Mr Roy talked about his experience of setting up audio for a playhouse. He further noted that the Union lacked in technology in some places.

Mr Doerry said he had extensive connections with the various music societies around Durham.

Mr Amoils noted that the Union addresses and events used to be uploaded to YouTube and asked whether the candidates would be willing to start the YouTube Channel again.

Mr Doerry proposed an idea of streamlining the process of an event with a webcam and uploading recordings to YouTube or Instagram.

Mr Roy noted the £300 camera in the office and the live streaming being done from a phone. He said the disrepair of the YouTube channel was indicative of the lack of engagement with members on a meaningful level.

Miss Herrington talked about the Re-freshers fair.

Mr Roy responded that he could easily record the event.

Mr Doerry said Union videos should be backed up.

There being no further questions, the Returning Officer asked the candidates to leave the room, and invited Miss Paton to propose Mr Doerry.

Miss Paton began her hyst by reminiscing on a recollection of Mr Doerry coming to sign up in the Fresher's fair and continued by praising the dedication he had shown within the Union. She further mentioned such dedication from the time he worked in a company. She concluded by claiming that Mr Doerry would turn technology in the Union around, making it more user-friendly.

The Returning Officer then invited Mr Passricha to propose Mr Roy.

Mr Passricha commenced his hyst by stating that technology had long been discussed within the Union, and referred to Mr Roy's experience with the Union, and studying an integrated Master's in Engineering and Computer Science. He referred to several debate competitions where Mr Roy had demonstrated his technological proficiency and concluded by highlighting his recent internship for the Bank of England.

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

Mr Enamorado noted the Union's problem with technology and wondered whether the proposers would want to propose an amendment to create a Deputy Technologies Officer.

Miss Paton agreed that a single person could not do everything. She said that, while a deputy officer would be good, a technology committee would be even better.

Mr Passricha said that when everyone comes together, they can build something better.

There being no further questions, a vote was duly taken, and it was announced that Mr Roy had been elected by 35 votes to 23.

The Returning Officer ceded the Chair to the President.

The President invited Mr Perry to introduce his constitutional amendments.

Mr Perry then proposed his constitutional amendment to clarify the role of Returning Officer.

The amendment passed with a general aye.

Mr Perry then proposed his amendment to introduce a Deputy Returning Officer. He further explained the role and the duties such a position would oversee within the Rules Committee.

Mr Burman asked why the General Committee did not elect the Deputy Returning Officer.

Mr Perry said this was so that the position would be de-politicised.

The amendment was passed on a general aye.

The Returning Officer then proposed his amendment to add Deputy Returning Officer to the Rules Committee.

The amendment passed with a general aye.

The Returning Officer then proposed his amendment clarifying that a simple majority is required for a Vote of No Confidence.

The amendment passed with a general aye.

The Returning Officer then proposed the amendment to clarify the publications of elections as General Meetings.

The amendment passed with a general aye.

The President then invited the Secretary, Mr Hyde, to give his report.

Mr Hyde began his report, describing the new website and the way the Freshers used it, leading to incredible results. He then went on to note that Fresher membership increased by more than 250 because of the website. The Religion debate and the Jeremy Vine addresses were deemed a success by the Secretary, who noted the reasoning being the walk down organised from hill societies. The Secretary then stated that 423 members joined due to the walk down and the success of the events. The work e-mails are now in order, which the Secretary hoped would increase the turnover. The Secretary further noted that coding and handover documents were to be updated. Five hundred fifty-six members were noted to have joined this Michaelmas, which is to be considered a record. Mr Hyde concluded by highlighting his passion for the job he held.

The President thanked Mr Hyde for his report.

The President then invited the Treasurer, Miss Paton, to give her report.

Miss Paton commenced her report by noting a loss of over £3000 from Easter in the accounts. She pointed out that the use of student speakers in debates could mitigate the loss accrued. Miss Paton further noted that the Easter Ball had brought the most significant income within the term. She pointed out that the annual budget was around £33,427, further noting the drop in memberships compared to 2017/18. Failure to secure sponsorship led to a decline in the income and affected the Union's image. She particularly noted then the fact that Hotel Indigo charged the Union even in the cases where the speakers do not turn up. Miss Paton said we would be having six External debates going forward. She further stated that £3000 been secured for sponsorship. Miss Paton concluded by touching upon the university's taking of rent from the 24 North Bailey Club, the discussions ongoing about it, and the Treasurer's Treats program and its success with 15 local businesses.

Mr Perry reminded Rules Committee to stay after the meeting.

Mr Fillippopoulos reminded the members to offer crash for competitors of the Durham IV.

Miss Price reminded Sponsorship Committee an upcoming meeting.

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

Secretary: ***F. Hyde***

President: ***A. Sledge***