



## *the* DURHAM UNION

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 7TH JANUARY 2026

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**Present:**

Mr Joshua Doherty – President

Ms Molly Purcell - Treasurer

Mr Oliver Cox – Secretary

Mr Adam McIntyre - Custodian

Ms Darcy Duhra – Social Secretary

Mr Robbie Bono – Equalities Officer

Mr David Pegler – Publicity Officer

Ms Haya Chaudhri - Director of Debating

Ms Louise Brown - Debating Treasurer

Mr Edward Tye - President-Elect

Mr Callum Oxley - President Emeritus

**Apologies**

N/A

The meeting is taking place virtually, on Google Meet.

The meeting began at 17:07; the Secretary is taking the minutes.

### **Item One: Term Card Update**

The President opened by thanking the Publicity Officer for his work on the term card. He explained that trustee confirmation is still pending before the term card can be printed, but confirmed that the digital version will be released on Friday.

The Publicity Officer noted that he had emailed the printers to apologise for the delay and asked the President for clarification on the expected timescale for trustee confirmation. The President replied that, according to the Office Manager, confirmation “will not be too long”.

The Publicity Officer expressed strong satisfaction with the term card and its design. The Treasurer sought confirmation on the quantity ordered, to which the Publicity Officer confirmed that 400 term cards have been ordered.

The Secretary asked when the term cards would be delivered, given the imminence of the refreshers’ drive. The Publicity Officer responded that delivery is expected on Wednesday.

The President further noted that he and the Secretary had agreed that QR codes linking to the online version of the term card would also be distributed while awaiting delivery.

The President Emeritus raised concerns regarding the relatively high number of term cards ordered, noting that a significant number remained unused in Michaelmas. He recommended that the House Committee distribute term cards at the first debate of term. The President confirmed that he would liaise with the Steward to arrange this.

### **Item Two: Ball Update**

The Social Secretary confirmed that Beamish Hall has been successfully booked for the Ball and expressed satisfaction with the level of engagement on the announcement post. She stated that tickets will go live next week.

Ticket prices were confirmed as follows:

- Members: £68
- Non-members: £80
- Access tickets: £58

The Social Secretary expressed satisfaction that prices are lower than those in Michaelmas, noting that the overall budget is smaller. She explained that the aim is to sell 120 tickets, as the cost of buses is the same whether targeting 100 or 120 attendees. She further stated that, given the lower ticket prices, it is likely that sales will reach the upper target of 120 tickets.

The Publicity Officer asked for confirmation of the publicity schedule for Ball-related information. The Social Secretary replied that it would closely mirror the publicity approach used in Michaelmas.

### **Item Three: Refreshers Drive**

The Secretary reported that 29 individuals have signed up for leafletting, exceeding the 24 who participated in the fresher's drive. The Secretary expressed satisfaction with this level of engagement and confirmed that the leafletting timetable has now been published.

The Secretary further noted that approximately 1,000 leaflets remain in the office from the fresher's drive. In addition, with 400 term cards currently on order, the Secretary affirmed that the Society has sufficient resources to conduct an effective refreshers' drive.

The Secretary explained that leafletting will take place across Market Square, Elvet Bridge, North Bailey, and the TLC/Library area. The relocation from Kingsgate Bridge to Elvet Bridge was described as an experimental change, grounded in considerations of general footfall and the proximity of North Bailey and Kingsgate Bridge, which makes simultaneous leafletting at both locations inefficient.

The Secretary confirmed that the Market Square booking has been secured for Monday to Friday, with a gazebo, tables, and chairs provided. The Secretary stated that he will set up the stall each day, except Wednesday due to an exam, on which day responsibility will be delegated to the President-Elect.

The Secretary also noted that the new Members' WhatsApp Community will be publicised at the start of the first week of Epiphany. He outlined ongoing discussions with the Publicity Officer regarding the most effective method of promotion, and confirmed that the Publicity Officer has agreed to produce a graphic for this purpose. The Publicity Officer confirmed his agreement. The Secretary further committed to producing a QR code to be distributed alongside leaflets and term cards to facilitate joining the community.

The Custodian asked for clarification on the purpose of the WhatsApp Community. The Secretary confirmed that it will act as a central announcement

space, including information on debates, addresses, socials, elections, and other Society matters.

The Director of Debating asked about the re-use of leaflets from Michaelmas. The President Emeritus noted that the high number ordered reflects their universal nature, as they are not limited to a single term. The Secretary concurred.

The Social Secretary raised concerns about the potential for “bots” in the WhatsApp Community. The Secretary confirmed that it will be an admin-only community, with all members of the Standing Committee and the Returning Officer initially designated as admins.

#### **Item Four: Social Access Tickets**

The Equalities Officer relayed feedback received regarding access tickets for socials, noting that a statement by the Social Secretary has been shared with the Equalities Committee and will be provided to those with concerns.

The Debating Treasurer asked for more specific detail regarding the conversations referenced. The Equalities Officer stated that some members feel “priced out” of socials. He acknowledged the logistical and practical constraints involved, while reaffirming the importance of clear and effective communication with those raising concerns.

The President agreed that the points raised were important and valid, and the Equalities Officer noted that this issue would be revisited.

The Social Secretary explained that the decision not to introduce access tickets for socials is based purely on logistical considerations, while confirming her understanding of the concerns raised. She reiterated that tickets are priced as cheaply as possible. The President Emeritus added that the Michaelmas social budget had been constrained by the provision of free socials for freshers at the beginning of term.

The Treasurer suggested the possibility of introducing one-time-use codes on Fixr. The Social Secretary responded that while promotional codes do exist, she is not currently aware of the availability of one-time-use codes, but would investigate further. She questioned whether the additional logistical complexity would be justified for a social that might have low attendance.

The President proposed that the discussion be deferred to a future Standing Committee meeting to allow for more detailed consideration. The Committee agreed.

### **Item Five: Active Listening Training**

The Equalities Officer reported that although many individuals signed up for Active Listening Training, not all were able to complete it. He stated that he has contacted the organisation providing the training and that a one-hour workshop is being arranged to ensure that everyone who signs up is able to participate.

The President emphasised the importance of this training for relevant officers, particularly given its inclusion in the EDI Plan. The Committee expressed its agreement.

### **Item Six: Any Other Business**

The President asked the Director of Debating and the Debating Treasurer to provide an update on Durham Debating plans for the term.

The Director of Debating confirmed that Durham Schools will take place on the 28th & 29th of March. She stated that venues have been booked and that plans are developing to begin outreach to schools shortly. She further noted that she is liaising with the Sponsorship Officer to secure funding. Accommodation for 90 individuals has been arranged, with additional rooms being explored in anticipation of approximately 250 attendees.

The Debating Treasurer further noted that the Debating Social Secretary will be in contact with the Custodian regarding a social event at 24s on the same weekend.

The Director of Debating also confirmed that Monday novice sessions will be discontinued, citing limited improvement due to novices debating only other novices. She explained that novices and advanced debaters will instead begin debating one another.

The Debating Treasurer asked the Publicity Officer to liaise with the Debating Publicity Officer to establish an effective publicity strategy, and also requested access to the Union camera. The Publicity Officer confirmed his agreement and stated that he would share the publicity schedule with the Director of Debating and the Debating Treasurer.

The Treasurer raised the issue of improving outreach to state schools for potential collaborations. She reported that she has met with Durham Sixth Form Centre, which has expressed interest in partnering with the Society. She also noted that Barnard Castle School is interested in another “Welcome to University Debating” session and that their debating society is well-established. The Debating Treasurer

expressed her support for this initiative and suggested a potential Durham Debating delegation to these schools.

The Custodian confirmed that there has been no change to the capacity issue at 24s, which remains capped at 60.

The Social Secretary asked for an update on the status of the Pemberton Building. The President confirmed that completion is currently scheduled for the Easter holidays and indicated that the President-Elect will have access to the building during his term.

The Equalities Officer asked whether minutes from meetings could be published on the Society website going forward. The Secretary confirmed his intention to publicise minutes both on the General Committee group chat and on the Society website going forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 17:55.