

Royal College of Science Union

Minutes of the 2nd Ordinary Meeting of the General Committee

Held at 18:00 on 19th February 2018 at the RCSU Office (Sherfield 214D)

PRESENT:

- Michael Edwards – RCSU President (ME)
- Michael McGill – RCSU Honorary Junior Treasurer (MM) - Chair of the General Committee
- Michael Suarez – RCSU Honorary Secretary (MS)
- Becky Neil – RCSU Vice-President (Operations) (BN)
- Shervin Sabeghi – RCSU Welfare Officer (SS)
- Alex Crew – RCSU Events Officer (AC)
- Rohan Kamath – RCSU RAG Champion (RK)
- Oscar Scrivens – RCSU Publicity Officer (OS)
- Ivan Tang – RCSU Web Communications Officer (IT)
- Ansh Bhatnagar – RCSU Science Challenge Chair (AB)
- Michael McGill – Maths Academic Departmental Representative (MM)
- Michaela Flegrova – Physics Academic Departmental Representative (MF)
- Felix Thompson - Chemistry Wellbeing Departmental Representative (FT)

APOLOGIES:

- Ayush Dharap – RCSU Vice-President (Activities) (AD)
- Lidia Ripoll-Sanchez – Biochemistry Departmental Representative (LR)
- Yizhou Yu – Biology Departmental Representative (YY)
- Katerina Stavri – Chemistry Departmental Representative (KS)
- Abhijay Sood – RCSU Academic Affairs Officer (AS)
- Pranavi Agarwal – RCSU Broadsheet Editor (PA)
- Matthew Stone – RCSU Sports Officer (MS)

ABSENT:

OBSERVERS:

- Peter Hull - Mathematics Wellbeing Year Representative, Yr 2 (PH)
- Lloyd James - RCSU President-emeritus, 2016-17, BAHFest Co-ordinator

Meeting opened at 18:03.

A. Chair's Welcome and Minutes

RECEIVED: MS and ME led this item

NOTED:

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1. MS and ME welcomed the committee to the meeting as Chair and President.
2. Minutes for the Emergency General Committee held in January were scrutinised.
3. Minutes for the November General Meeting are not available due to them not being written up. ME apologised.

RESOLVED:

- a. Emergency GenCom minutes passed unanimously
- b. ME to write up the November GenCom minutes before the next meeting

B. Executive Officer Reports

RECEIVED: The Executive Officers delivered their reports - ME, MS, MM, BN, AC (on behalf of AD), SS and MF (on behalf of AS)

NOTED:

4. The President's Report is outlined and written up formally in the Appendices.
5. MM outlined expenditures since the last meeting and offered to provide a written report for the appendices. Largely, taking into account upcoming expenditure, the Union is in strong financial health and will likely come in under budget.
6. MS outlined his activities and the administrative support given to the officers and representatives of the GenCom since the last meeting.
7. AC reported on Ents successes and the upcoming Revel event with DoCSoc and EESoc.
8. BN summarised the upcoming Operations events of the Union, including the Science Challenge Final and the BAHFest. Changes to the website and Representation were also discussed.
9. MF briefly outlined the ARN work that had been done, with upcoming consultation on compulsory Horizons, the Curriculum Reviews and the FoNS NSS-lite survey. UCU was mentioned but will be outlined in later item.
10. SS briefed the GenCom on the WBRN achievements and plans - the Wellbeing SSC is proving to be effective as a discussion forum. Welfare Week is upcoming with a range of events and the full WBRN team contributing to the campaign. Scientists of Imperial will be launching during this week and will be seeking contributions from students.

RESOLVED:

- c. To accept the Executive reports

C. UCU Pensions Dispute in FoNS

RECEIVED: This item was supported by ME and AB

NOTED:

11. Following the vote of the Union Council on 13th February, the Union as a body supports the striking staff in the UCU Pensions dispute. Support for the staff has been outlined in a stance on the Union website but the need to be coherent and united in our approach requires a discussion at this forum.

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12. Discussion generally gravitated on how to communicate to students that they can support the strikes as individuals or abstain, and wording of communications was discussed, as well as the strength of positions in different fora.
13. A vote was taken to adopt a stronger and more active stance than mandated by the Council resolution.
 - For - 6
 - Against - 5
 - Abstentions - 1
14. The importance of factually communicating the reason for the strike, as well as ensuring students are aware of the efforts of reps to mitigate the impact of the strikes on their learning experience was raised.
15. The importance of communicating across multiple media, including email and social media, was raised.
16. Members of the committee are planning to be heavily involved in supporting the action, but others raised concerns that this goes too far and suggest that they support the action as individuals and not representatives of the RCSU.

RESOLVED:

- d. To adopt a stronger and more active stance on the UCU Pensions dispute than mandated to by the ICU Council resolution.
- e. To communicate the factual basis behind the strike and why the Union is supporting it.
- f. To outline how students can support the staff.
- g. To communicate our stance over email and our social media platforms.

D. Update on the RCSU Strategy

RECEIVED: This item was delivered by ME

NOTED:

17. The draft text and points were presented to the committee. ME plans to come to all Boards and set 'homework' for all interested volunteers to contribute to the development of the Strategy - with questions on how roles can better deliver for the students of the Union and how we can be a more effective collective.
18. The lack of explicit mention to democracy was raised.
19. The focus on Science Communication was raised as an issue considering the large budget that is already spent on operations such as the Science Challenge. Despite the 20 % increase in entries, the general consensus is the money is inefficiently spent, and removing money from . Better ways to run Science Challenge are needed, and a cost-cutting process should be looked at. However, with the need for expansion and to reach more school students, an excessive budget reduction could harm development. Regardless a general consensus was that the dinner had limited contribution and was an unnecessary aspect.
20. Questions regarding the time required to do this work properly were raised, and the fact that work has been ongoing for two committees now was cited as evidence for the amount of work that has been put into this document.

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21. For a final round of consultation, the GenCom were asked to participate in a working group. The following members expressed interest - FT, AB, RK, LJ, and MM

RESOLVED:

- h. To carry out a further working group on the Strategy and bring a draft Strategy design (finalised) to the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 19:52.