

Royal College of Science Union

**Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the General Committee**

Held at 19:00 on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 at Lecture Theatre 2, Blakett Laboratory

**PRESENT:**

- Lloyd James – RCSU President (LJ)
- Griffin Farrow – RCSU Honorary Junior Treasurer (GF) - *Clerk*
- Michael Edwards – RCSU Honorary Secretary (ME) - *Chair*
- Charlotte Hampson – RCSU Vice-President (Activities) (CH)
- Sina Lari – RCSU Vice-President (Operations) (SL)
- Sinziana Giju – RCSU Academic Affairs Officer (SG)
- Charlotte Hampson – RCSU Events Officer (CH)
- Isabella Withnell – RCSU RAG Champion (IW)
- George Brooks – RCSU Sports Officer (GB)
- Kate Chandler – RCSU Welfare Officer (KC)
- Ben Collier – RCSU Publicity Officer (BC)
- Rani Mehta – RCSU Science Challenge Chair (RM)
- Georgios Santis – Biochemistry Departmental Representative (GS)

**APOLOGIES:**

- Raven Connelly – Biology Departmental Representative (RC)
- Maximillian Moser – Chemistry Departmental Representative (MM)
- Emma McCracken – Maths Departmental Representative (EM)
- Abhijay Sood – Physics Departmental Representative (AS)
- Ben Sharpless – RCSU Broadsheet Editor (BS)

**ABSENT:**

- Zack Xiang – RCSU Web Communications Officer (ZX)

**OBSERVERS:**

- Owen Leech – Chair, RCS Motor Club (OL)

*Meeting opened at 19:05.*

**A. Chair's Welcome**

**RECEIVED:** ME delivered this item.

**NOTED:**

1. ME stressed the importance of this forum for wider discussion of the direction of the RCSU, and encouraged officers to have input outside of their portfolios, as any suggestions would be welcomed warmly.

**B. Approval of the minutes of the last minute**

**RECEIVED:** ME delivered this item

**NOTED:**

2. LJ still needs to arrange for keys and access to the office, based upon the minutes of the last meeting – he has a useful contact for swift handling of the issue.
3. The item was moved to a vote
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN - 0

**RESOLVED:**

- a. To accept the minutes of the last meeting

**C. Matters Arising**

**RECEIVED:** ME delivered this item

**NOTED:**

4. The postponement of Sports Day has led to some animosity with CGCU but the issues have largely been handled. It has been scheduled for March and it is required that we ensure no clash occurs with the ICU Varsity.
5. The Sports Day will be placed into the RCSU Sports Focus group for further discussion and engagement with the DepSocs.
6. KC suggested working the sports day into Welfare Week – there was general approval of this notion.

**RESOLVED:**

- b. To discuss RCSU Sports Day at focus group, including working into the Welfare Week provision.
- c. GB to outline his availability for the focus group.

**D. President's Report**

**RECEIVED:** LJ delivered this item verbally – there is no written report.

**NOTED:**

7. Most of the content of this report is in the Council report for 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and can be read on the Union website. LJ reported as follows:

## Minutes

### General Committee (What Meeting)

8. RCSU has a full Executive Committee following the October By-Elections, and welcomes SL, GF and CH as our VPO, Treasurer and Interim VPA respectively.
9. LJ is drafting a 'Five Year Strategy' for RCSU, which is to be discussed as a later Agenda item.
10. In a meeting with the Dean, funding of £15,000 for our operations was negotiated and agreed, and more can be sought if required. This has yet to clear the Union, and will be chased up.
11. As an action to get more people engaged with RCSU activities, the following actions have been taken: Dep-Reps are required to have meetings with their Rep Teams in the RCSU Office, and more RCSU-linked volunteers are invited to General Committee, including the Year Reps and DepSoc committee members. This has not worked initially, but will continue to be worked on.
12. The report was moved to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN - 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- d. To pass the report.

### **E. Finance and Administration Report**

**RECEIVED:** ME delivered this report, as per the report in the appendix, in his role as Interim Treasurer as handover to GF.

#### **NOTED:**

13. SL raised the possibility of DepSocs requesting funding from the RCSU for activities and operations of their own. LJ stressed the line in the previous Clubs and Activities meeting – that regular and emergency funding comes from the Central Union, through avenues such as the Harlington and Activities Development Funds. RCSU is a *last resort* for catastrophic circumstances and will consider requests on a case-by-case basis.
14. The report was moved to a vote:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- e. To pass the report

### **F. Vice President (Activities) Report**

**RECEIVED:** CH delivered this in her capacity as Acting VPA as per the report in the Appendix.

Minutes

General Committee (What Meeting)

**NOTED:**

15. Tea Party was handled by ME and was not written – ME report as follows. The event was slightly oversubscribed – 120 people were predicted and 130 attended. In terms of delivery the Tesco delivery messed up on the morning, causing unnecessary stress – advise for future years to book delivery for day before to make easier. The cost of the event was c. £300 and received a widely positive response.
16. After CH had presented, OL was invited to contribute in his capacity as Chair of the RCS Motor Club and driver of our valiant Mascot, Jezebel. His points were as follows:
  - o The Jezebel team are happy to do more events throughout the year and will take students if they are not too drunk. They simply need advance notice, and of course donations for fuel are more than welcome.
17. RM asked OL if their insurance enabled them to carry under-18s – OL stated there was some uncertainty but the cut-off was assumed to be 16, as per general Union rules.
18. LJ asked when the request for new Ordinary Members for the Entertainments Board would be sent round – ME and CH requested that LJ put it in his next newsletter.
19. SL suggested that each officer should have deputies as per the RAG system. ME raised that constitutional change would be required in any case for any changes made. A further suggestion was made to have a system of RCSU casual volunteers who had no set portfolio but worked on projects that interested them on a casual basis – the case for lay student input on Science Challenge was made by RM and expanded on by SL as per before.
20. The report was put to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

**RESOLVED:**

- f. To accept the report
- g. Exec to consult with Central Union volunteering bureau about process or case for creating RCSU Casual roles.
- h. Exec to consider relevant Constitutional change for point G.
- i. CH to raise Actions at next Ents Board (08/11) for next steps on Tri-Union Bar Night and Winter Ball.

**G. Operations Report - Welfare**

**RECEIVED:** *Since SL is still fairly new to the role, the independent Officers were asked to deliver their reports separately. KC delivered this as per her report in the appendix.*

**NOTED:**

21. The first draft of the quiz and contact system is planned to ready for inspection at the end of next week (week of the 7<sup>th</sup>).
22. GB and KC are agreed that Sports and Welfare should work together to get the maximum benefit for the event. GB also raised that as well as an inter-CU sports day, we could hold an

## Minutes

### General Committee (What Meeting)

inter-DepSoc competition. This will also be raised at the Sports focus group next Friday (11/11)

23. KC will also seek to clarify whether the association with the organisation offering 'free condoms' is appropriate for the RCSU to seek.
24. The report was put to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- j. To pass the report
- k. KC to chase up the 'free condoms' people.
- l. Sports and Welfare to be raised at the RCSU Sports Focus Group.

#### **H. Operations Report – Science Challenge**

**RECEIVED:** *Since SL is still fairly new to the role, the independent Officers were asked to deliver their reports separately. RM delivered this as per her report in the appendix.*

#### **NOTED:**

25. On top of the report, the following actions require reporting: RM and ME visited two venues to consider for the final – Kew Gardens and the Freemason's Hall in Covent Garden. Both were appropriate and more needs to be discussed regarding what we want from the event.
26. It was stressed by RM that the priority now was to set questions, invite judges and start formulating publicity.
27. ME and RM asked for General Committee members to assist in the organisation of the event. Aspects such as the questions need a larger forum to get the best result. An invite will be sent around with an appropriate time, and all those interested should come along. There were calls to accept volunteers from outside the committee to help out, which received a generally positive response.
28. LJ and RM reported back on their meeting with Lord Winston regarding the questions and how they should be addressed – the feeling is that there should be a more creative spin on the entries rather than technical questions. SG suggested the replacement of the poem aspect with a podcast element. LJ responded with Lord Winston's desire to develop effective writing and presentational skills over diversifying the media over which it is presented. Formats of writing are to be considered priority over other media, but there could be space for a digital category, such as a video or podcast.
29. The report was put to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

## Minutes

### General Committee (What Meeting)

- m. To pass the report
- n. ME to organise a meeting for Science Challenge in the week of the 7<sup>th</sup> November, and invite the entire General Committee.

### **I. Operations Report – Academic Affairs**

**RECEIVED:** *Since SL is still fairly new to the role, the independent Officers were asked to deliver their reports separately. SG delivered this as per her report in the appendix.*

#### **NOTED:**

- 30. The issue with the Biochemistry Departmental Representative has been resolved – ME noted the attendance of GS and welcomed him formally to the General Committee.
- 31. There has been no feedback on the DepRep Drop-Ins as yet. LJ made clear the official stance has changed – drop-ins can now happen in departmental spaces, but rep meetings remain in the Office.
- 32. The report was moved to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- o. To accept the report.
- p. SG to seek DepRep feedback on Drop-In sessions.

### **I. Clubs and Activities Report**

**RECEIVED:** LJ delivered this report as per the appendix.

#### **NOTED:**

- 33. LJ noted a difficulty with a new club – SynBIC, or Synthetic Biology. He has resolved to work closely with them to ensure they succeed, since they currently have limited finance and membership is low.
- 34. The report was moved to a vote for passing:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- q. To accept the report.
- r. LJ to work with the RCSU Synthetic Biology committee to support their operations.

### **J. Consultation on the RCSU Five Year Strategy**

**RECEIVED:** LJ delivered this as per the appendix item.

**NOTED:**

35. The aim is to reframe the core objectives of the RCSU as a Constituent Union.
36. LJ will be consulting all relevant Union parties in the coming months, and the Faculty are largely happy with the items raised by LJ to place in the Strategy.
37. Thoughts from the General Committee were welcomed.
38. KC raised the question of how achievement of the objectives would be measured. LJ plans to have the Faculty and the Union act as our accountability on the Strategy, which is the reason for engaging them at this early stage. Reporting on the Strategy would also help shape the start and end of year reports to Council and Union bodies for the RCSU President.
39. There were no more thoughts on this matter raised – ME and LJ stated that all suggestions would still be accepted outside of the forum of the General Committee.
40. No vote was held on this as of yet – there is no concrete strategy informed by Union consultation and thus it was tabled

**RESOLVED:**

- s. To postpone a vote until such a time as consultation has been completed.

**K. Stance on the Union-approved College expenditure on the Consent Matters software**

**RECEIVED:** LJ and SL delivered this item verbally.

**NOTED:**

41. The Deputy President (Welfare) has lobbied College to obtain software for education on consent to embed in the Blackboard Learn system. It has been predicted to cost £5,000. LJ raised the concern that it is unlikely that people will voluntarily engage with the software, or that the proposed use of the software as a disciplinary measure is inadequate as a preventative measure to tackle sexual assault and harassment.
42. SL raised that the quality of the resource, namely a 60 minute core quiz with exercises and an optional module, is bad for the money spent, which represents a budget ten-times the RCSU Welfare budget provision.
43. SL and LJ proposed a motion to take an official Constituent Union stance on this matter. The wording of the motion is as follows:
44. "The Royal College of Science Union condemns the spending by College on the Consent Matters software which we believe to be a wasteful and ineffective method of informing students on the important matters of consent."
45. KC raised that we should add a further line outlining our belief that the spend would have been more worthwhile invested in Constituent Unions, providing a solution as well as a criticism.
46. The money has already been paid for a one-year subscription as a trial run of the software, and therefore the software is not formally in place.

## Minutes

### General Committee (What Meeting)

47. The question of whether other Unions had raised this was raised by BC, and a response could not be given.
48. The stance will be raised as AOB at Council by LJ, since the DPW will be absent at the next Council. There will also be an article in Felix highlighting the spend and raising questions about sabbatical officer accountability.
49. CH raised the question of what action we would like to see from this motion. LJ stated his view that the spend will not be repeated or will at least be more heavily scrutinised by student Welfare officers at the Union, and more money will be invested from the central College in this year and in coming years to fund campaigns to address consent as a matter of urgency.
50. The motion was put to a vote – LJ, KC and SL were authorised to draft a second sentence as per Point 45. The results were as follows:
  - o FOR – 11
  - o AGAINST – 0
  - o ABSTAIN – 0

#### **RESOLVED:**

- t. To adopt, as a Constituent Union, the stance as per Point 44 with amendment as per Point 45, and raise it to the Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

#### **L. AOB**

#### **NOTED:**

1. SL and LJ proposed expenditure from the office budget on a water cooler to replace the broken one. This was put to a vote:

- o FOR – 10
- o AGAINST – 0
- o ABSTAIN – 1

The motion passes.

2. SL asked whether there should be a wider Faculty invite to the General Committee. LJ stated that since our minutes are circulated online for scrutiny, this was an interesting idea but for discussion outside of the meeting.
3. CH sought wider feedback on the choice of venue for Winter Ball from the attending officers, voicing concern that Hoxton Square Bar might be too far for students to travel.
  - o General consensus – if the tickets and drinks are cheaper, then it's not a massive concern.
  - o LJ and several officers raised the popularity and central location of Loop as an aspect in its favour.
  - o A poll was proposed on the GenCom page on Facebook.



## Minutes

### General Committee (What Meeting)

- o The event should be more casual than the Autumn Ball – dress code was discussed and agreed to be formal ‘with a hint of festive cheer’, to offset the general assumption that all our events are black-tie.
- 4. The possibility of a second, informal event in December was raised, although general consensus was that people would be bombarded with events and would be unlikely to go to both.
- 5. The importance of having cheap drinks at the Winter Ball was stressed as priority – or at least cheaper than the Autumn Ball, where drinks were unaffordable to the vast majority of students and the afterparty venue’s mismanagement made drinks more expensive.
- 6. ME thanked the officers for attending, and reminded them to check their calendars for their next Board meetings. The next General Committee will be set for between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, or the last fortnight of term.
- 7. The meeting was closed.

### **RESOLVED:**

- u. ME to source and purchase a water cooler with the net budget of £100.
- v. CH to take event concerns to next Entertainments Board.
- w. ME to schedule the next General Committee as per point 6 in AOB.

*Meeting closed at 20:08.*