Union of Kingston Students:  
Big Student Meeting 2020

**DATE:** Wednesday 22nd January 2020

**TIME:** 2:30pm – 5pm

**VENUE:** PR MB1099

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| Agenda Item | |
| 1 | **Welcome and Apologises**  Meeting started at 14:44 by the Independent Chair.  The Chair welcomes the students to the annual Big Student Meeting and explains what is on the agenda. The Elected Officers and Staff of the Union are introduced. Members are reminded of the rules for healthy debate.   Natalie Forrester explains staff procedure to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Union of Kingston Students (UKS) CEO Jamie Stratton, Sports Coordinator Kieran Dempsey and Sebastian Stoner who proposed the first motion. |
| 2 | **Minutes from Big Student Meeting 2018/2019**  No amendments were reported and minutes were approved. |
| 3 | **Annual Reports, Audited Accounts, Budgets & Auditors**  Presented by Feisal Haji   Legally required as a charity to provide accounts each year. This is done to provide students with the confidence that UKS is working the way they should.  Accounts are shown for last year because UKS follow the university’s financial year which starts in the summer.   This has been a huge year of change for UKS – they recharged the Officer system and invested money. This is in line with UKS ambition to be the best Union in the UK, which is further explained in the new strategy which details the Union’s 5 year plan.  To achieve this, UKS needed to sort out issues, including financial records. UKS took a loss of £25,000 due to investment and paying off old debts.  All money earned goes back to students as UKS is a non-profit company. 80% of our income comes from the University, which makes it hard for the Union to be independent. This is something UKS would like to reduce to 50% in the future by generating more income through merchandise in order to gain more independence. The remainder income comes from trading activities, charitable activities and other.   **Total Income reported for 2018/2019: £1,667,998.** There was a loss this year for expenditure due to investing in new staff and paying off old debts. Most money goes on student activities.   **Total Expenditure for 2018/2019: £1,747,414** Reserves are money held in case UKS goes bust. This would pay staff costs and money to our creditors. There is also restricted reserves which the Union can’t touch; these are put in place for sports clubs and societies.   **Currently UKS holds £185,120 in reserve and £82,322 in restricted reserves.**  There is a pension deficit on the books, which make UKS account look worse than they are. This was due to a mistake made by the company in the 1970s, which also impacted other Unions. The university pays off this debt, but has to be included in our accounts.  **UKS has a pension deficit of £1,151,071.** No questions are asked. FH passes back to the Chair.  The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the annual reports, audited accounts and budgets.   **All are approved. Vote passed.**  FH explains that UKS accounts have to be checked by external auditors. These were recently changed, which is good practice. The auditors have been changed to Goodman Jones, who had good reviews from other Student Unions and will save the UKS £6,000, which can go on student activities.  The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the new auditors.  **Auditors are approved. Vote passed.** |
| 4 | **Notification of External Affiliations**  UKS External Affiliations are presented by the Chair.  **Question from a student**: What do you mean by affiliations?  NF answers: Affiliations are companies that the Union pay membership subscription for and that helps with some of the work we do, such as Advice UK. Most of the affiliations we subscribe to are for sports and societies. As a charity we have to notify you who are the external affiliators are and then you can object to them by notifying the Trustee Board.   No more questions asked, |
| 5 | **Reports from the Union Full Time Officers**   1. **President: Feisal Haji**   Shows manifesto points on which FH was elected on and explains in more detail.  There was a General Election, so held 3 debates for local candidates at 3 campuses (Penrhyn Road, Kingston Hill and Roehampton Vale) as these were all in different constituents. All the candidates that attended won their election.  Made three videos for students.  Found out that the University makes promise to students at other University’s associated with Kingston, some as far away are Malaysia, that the Union are responsible for representing. We are working on this.   Reform the Union: Work visas brought in for International students so they can work for the Union.  Ensured that the prioritization of KU students in UKS recruitment processes.   Housing is not good, so working with Kingston Council to improve the housing for Students.  Making an impact in this borough (Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames). Every council has to have a London plan and working to get the Council to come to our library and consult with students to inform this plan, which would benefit future KU students.   Expanding our income through graduation merchandise and also expressing an interest in taking over the gym at the back of PR.   FH showed images of his work.  **The floor is opened for questions.**  No questions asked.   1. **Activities and Development Officer: Muna Ali**   Shows manifesto points that MA was elected on.  Trying to make sure a new funding system is in place to make funding fairer for socities – this is being written now. Worked with SWG/SWAG to conduct focus groups to understand the issues they face. Consultation will happen in the next 2 months but this should be introduced next academic year.  Introduced society and sports club of the month, which awards £50 to recognise good sports teams and societies every month.  Greater accessibility: ‘give a go program’ to allow students to do a one of event throughout the year, working with staff on this.   More inclusive Freshers: most successful freshers we’ve ever had. It was inclusive fun and creative and included non-drinking events which made more students take part. Wanted to keep up this momentum by having a refreshers.   Non-judgemental spaces – working on a new quiet room at PR with the Welfare Officer. Waiting for confirmation.  Created a Raising and Giving (RAG) committee for the Union.   Created new byelaws.  Working on Sustainability and working with estates on this.  Academic society’s research with Union staff – builds collaborations between staff and students.  **The floor is opened for questions.**  **Question from student:** You mentioned more finances directed to sport activities, but I feel liberal art societies aren’t getting much attention – is there an action plan for this?  MA replies: Working to have more funding for societies, which is part of my manifesto points. This is a transition year and working with SWG to make so there is a better system in place for next year.   No further questions.   1. **Education Officer: Muhammad Muneer**   Managing 600 course reps, but they feel that they are not being heard by the Uni – we are working to being them back under the Union so we can manage them as the Uni is partial.  Organised two course rep catch ups – one last semester, which was successful and one this semester.  Announced Course Rep of the Semester instead of Course Rep of the Month, Prize amount was increased which helped increase engagement.  Trying to get course reps to create a whatsapp group chat so they can discuss issues with each other before going to SSCC meetings.   Also working on changing the retake period – it’s late in the year which makes it difficult and then can stop students enrolling.   Increase Union presence by going to different campus and doing inductions.  Getting student council members to make whatsapp groups.  Have a state of borough debate.   Working on personal tutoring scheme.  **The floor is opened for questions.**  No questions were asked.   1. **Welfare Officer: Hamad Momin**   Thanks students, staff and fellow elected officers for all working hard together.  Managed and directed a range of events, such as Black History Month (BHM) and Islamophobia Awareness week. BHM had Akala, a famous poet, as the flagship event, which was sold out and well received.  Combating discriminatory policies by changing them. Previous guest speaker policy was quite racist and Islamophobic. Worked with policy experts and high up university staff members to create a fairer policy which is in line with our (UKS) values. This has made the time shorter to get speakers approved whilst still keeping students safe.  Launched an investigation into racism on campus, which can’t be discussed. Results are not surprising but it’s ground-breaking as the Uni has admitted to them and working with us to improve this.  Improve prayer facilities across all campuses and working to increase the capacity of the prayer room in PR. KP doesn’t have a prayer room but working with staff to correct this. KH is going to have a new faith space with quiet room. Uni is paying for the project and will be better.   KU Backer project used in annual charity week. This raised more money.    Will be working on mental health support and BME attainment gap this term.    **The floor is opened for questions.**  **Question from student:** Can you expand on support for mental health support?  HM replies: For the first time, this year we managed to set up a mental health working group in the university. I sit on that committee with MA and NF. However, this meeting has only happened twice due to the main lead leaving the Uni. Spoke to them today to find out what is happening so we can continue working on this.  We also do mental health campaigns all the time so if you would like to get involved with that speak with UKS Campaigns Coordinator.  We are trying to inform uni policy but that is working progress  No further questions asked, |
| 6 | **NUS Delegate Results**  NF announces that the nominations for Elected Officers and Student Trustees are now open.   NF explains that NUS delegates represent UKS at the NUS National Conference.   NF announces the elected NUS delegates to be: Feisal Haji, Muna Ali, Salam Aazam, Shane Simpkin and Leen Salah.  NF presents the results of the Student Council for open position to be Nabeel Qazi.   NF states that the breakdown of the results can be requested. |
| 7 | **Motions**  The Chair explains what motions are and what will happen in the next part of the meeting.   1. **Sport Wednesday Lecture Free: Proposed by Sebastian Stoner.**   Presented by MM in Sebastian Stoner’s absence.  Wednesday afternoons should be free for students to participate in extracurricular activities. There shouldn’t be any lecturers or tutorials on this time, or any academic activity so students can do extracurricular activities.  **Members are invites to speak against the motion. No one speaks against the motion.**  **The floor is opened for questions.**  A student agrees with motion because they have lecturers on Wednesday which mean they have to miss their football match on a regular basis. Should have Wednesdays free.  **Question from student:** What about trainers availability, as clubs often run on when they are available.  MM states that this is not really in our control  **Question from student:** Why Wednesdays?  MA answers. All courses agree to have Wednesdays free for sports, however, the accredited courses still have lecturers on Wednesday afternoon, so we need to work to have them keep Wednesdays free.  No further questions asked.  The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the motion.  **The members vote in favour of the motion. The motion passes.**   1. **Climate Emergency Motion: Proposed by Leah Debenham**   Presented by Leah Debenham.   The whole of Australia is burning which has led to 1 billion animal and 24 human deaths. This is down to one thing, climate change.  We recently did a petition in the Uni and received 200 signatures calling for this.  Following in the footsteps of other unis, we are asking to declare a climate emergency.  We are asking the Uni to look at all the companies they work with and stop working with companies who earn more than 10% of their income from fossil fuels.  Creating an assembly with staff and students to work together to achieve this.    Working towards making the Union and Uni carbon neutral by 2028.  **Members are invited to speak against the motion.**  MM speaks against the motion.   MM: Resolve 2 speaks about the type of business the Uni works with, but have you spoken with the engineering students who use these companies. Cutting them could put their future at stake for engineering.  **The floor is opened for questions.  Student question:** Why is there two motions called climate emergency?  LD answers and states the other motion will only be discussed if this passes. This is a framework the other one is about publicly declaring.  **Student question for MM:** Climate emergency is a massive problem – are you saying you don’t want this emergency to go through because you don t want it to affect your employability?  MM answers: if we cut with these companies then we won’t be able to work with them as Engineering. I’m doing a Masters in Engineering and we have a module on renewable energy. BP donates billions into climate change. I would like to do my research myself and decide who to work with. Anything in engineering requires movement and that needs fuel which is currently fossil fuels.  **Student asks room:** How many have read the UN Climate Change report?  No further questions.  **LD summarises motion.** If this motion is passed, we would lobby the university to get rid of their sponsors who make 10% of their money from fossil fuels, working towards carbon neutrality with the union and university.   The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the motion.  **The members vote in favour of the motion. The motion passes.**   1. **Publicly State our Climate Emergency: Proposed by Abby Grant**   Abby Grant presents the motion.  This happened so we can use the voice of students to publicise the climate emergency. We should write to MPS and publicise this.  **Members are invited to speak against the motion.**  A students speaks against the motion  I don’t think we should publicise this because the Uni has shown how much they spend on the sustainability. Releasing could hamper the Unis work on what they are doing around sustainability.  **The floor is opened for questions.**  **Question from MA.** MA congratulates the motion, however, states that the resolves, including number 3, are quite unrealistic and asks how we would work towards getting other unions to announce a climate emergency when we don’t mandate them. Speaking to politicians is good, but not other student unions.  AG: NUS does webinars and I attended one recently and I spoke with other unions. Some want to also declare a climate emergency and we could recommend to them how we did it for them.  **Question from student?** What has the human rights emergency got to do with the climate emergency?  AG: Well the climate emergency is also a human rights emergency, if we look at Australia people can’t go back to their homes which is against their right to a home. So they are same, it’s intersectionality.  No further questions.  **AG chooses not to summarise.**  The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the motion.  **The members vote in favour of the motion. The motion passes.**   1. **Referendum to remove Student Trustee Abigail Grant: Proposed by Feisal Haji**   FH presents the motion.  FH states that they didn’t want to do this but it has to happen. It is the first year we have had all BME Sabbs. We have to respect each other and work on a together as a united front, with the Student Trustees. She lumps us all together, making others feel uncomfortable. She has accused all Sabbs of being homophobic due to their faith and has discriminated against the other trustees. Trustee can’t speak about stuff outside of the board as we are trustees, which means we are trusted to be confidential. In public we have to be nice to her when someone is discriminate towards us. She believes white students are underrepresented.   **AG is invited to speak against the motion.**  AG states: I know how to act as I’m on another trustee board. Most the tweets are from before August, before when I started as a trustee. I think it’s a cheap shot to take this against me and criticise my freedom of speech. I feel and am underrepresented by the student body due to various factors. I do feel not represented by my student union. FH has revealed personal sensitive information about me without my consent.  **The floor is opened for questions.**  **Question from student:** Ask FH to explain the point he was going to say?  The tweet is form Oct 28th – reads out tweet. This talks about the accounts from trustee board – this is a confidential. There trustee board is made of lots of people from different backgrounds and they missed something which she didn’t.   **Question from student:** For AG, reference to tweet posted in December 2019. Part of being a trustee you have to follow the code of conduct – do you feel this tweet reflects this?  AG replies: This follows a student council meeting when my motion was rejected, I was upset. Been in climate change movement for a while and students did not release how bad the union is at sustainability.  **Question from student:** For FH, you said to me that you did not want a repeat of last year – I am shocked at the behaviour that is going right now – my question is why are you doing this? If you did not want people pushed out of their posts?  FH replies: You are talking about things that I can’t discuss without your permission. This is nothing to do about what happened last year, this is about someone who abuses people. We deserve to be treated with respect, and not judged by our skin. If someone has an opinion about me, they should ask, not assume. It’s now January, this first happened in September when she stated I was against same-sex marriage because I was Muslim. There’s been meetings. I gave them a chance, but they haven’t changed.  **Question from student:** do you think it’s a appropriate to discuss sensitive personal information without someone’s consent?  FH answers: We had this discussion yesterday. She used it as a statement and it is all over her twitter. Some people are happy to share and some people are not – you can’t change how you act to suit the people around you. I have a disability and I tell people – but others don’t, but they weaponise it and use it against others. I am annoyed that this is being brought up as we discussed this yesterday in the Union space.  **Question from student:** To FH, I don’t know you personally, but I feel that the previous motion wasn’t about climate change but was about being against AG. I don’t feel this behaviour is fair – we don’t know you or what goes on behind closed doors. Do you not think this is appropriate? It could be done privately with someone objectively. It seems like an argument.  FH responds: I understand, it could be different. This is the right forum as she was elected by students – this is something that happens in private but is made public. Students have the right to elect her and the power to remove them.  Student responds to FH: this needs to be done objectively and privately as we can’t make a proper decision as we do not know what has gone on behind closed doors.  AG responds: We are trying to do this and have a mediation meeting on Monday. I want it to be done privately.  **Question from Islamic Society president:** I amgetting responses from students who are uncomfortable by your behaviour and being the president of a society that represent Muslims, I would like to know why said at the Trustee training that being Muslim equals being homophobic?  AG responds: That did not happen.  MA rebuts this claim, stating she was present.  The Chair calls for order and reminds members not to shout out.  Student states that she would like MA to explain her point.  The Chair calls for order again.  The student and Chair have a back and forth. The Chair asks the student to leave. The issue is resolved and AG finishes her point.  AG: I am trying to change.  **The Chair asks for FH and AG to provide closing statements.**  FH: That did happen [statement regarding Muslims not approving of single-sex marriage], I am have tried and I’ve done through this for 6 months. It’s nice to say that have separate mediator come in but she was elected by students and they should have the power to remove her.  AG: I’ve tried to do mediation since August 1st. If we are speaking about the rules, then FH should not have been a trustee for 3 years, which is against the constitution. I am strongly asking you to reject this. Trustee board minutes should be made available. I am trying to be more transparent, FH has never done this.  The Chair calls the members of the meeting to vote on the motion.  Students ask for an anonymous vote. It is decided AG and FH asked to leave the room so vote can go ahead. Both FH and AG leave the room through separate doors.  **Members of the meeting vote.**  AG and FH are called back in the room to be told the result.  **The members vote in favour of the motion. The motion passes.** |
| 9 | **Any other business**  The Chair asks the members if they have any other business they would like to discuss, ]  No questions.  **End of meeting.** |