

**Guild Council**  
**Monday 13 January 2021, 14:00**  
**Microsoft Teams Online Meeting**

**Welcome**

The Guild Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

**Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Present: Guild President, VP Activities, VP Education, VP Welfare and Diversity, CO-SSIS, and CO-Hums (Guild Chair).

Apologies: CO-CHM.

In attendance: Interim Director of Membership Engagement (IDME), Student Voice Manager, Student Governance Coordinator, and Academic Impact Coordinator.

The meeting was declared quorate.

**Notification of any other business**

The Guild President notified an item of other business concerning a proposal for an Honorary Lifetime Membership.

**1. FOR DECISION: approval of the minutes from the last meeting.**

Council voted on the minutes from the last meeting. The result was:

YES: 5

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The minutes of the meeting of 7 December 2020 were therefore approved.

**2. FOR DECISION: ratification of byelaw changes (elections and officer roles).**

VP Activities reminded Council this was discussed at the last meeting. Council needs to pass some byelaw changes and invited IDME to provide further information. As Council is aware, the Guild has been working on democratic structures and governance for after this transition year. These byelaws (Byelaw 3: Elections, Referendums and Voting; Byelaw 4: Elected Officers and Representatives) are the first to come out of that. Need to pass now as the election starts on 8 February.

IDME continued: Byelaw 3 is slimmed down and remove bureaucracy and now flexible. Byelaw 4 scales back the officer descriptions and focus on representative and activist and remove operation aspects but broader in remit. Main changes include role titles (VP Activities to be VP Opportunities and Trustee Board asks Council to decide the title to replace VP Welfare and Diversity) and all College Officers will be paid part-time officers (would count towards a student's two-year limit as a paid student union officer under Education Act 1994). Changes made to 'no confidence' so clearer and transparent.

CO-SSIS asked when the changes would come into effect. IDME answered that Byelaw 3 takes effect immediately and Byelaw 4 will take effect in June. They need to be passed now so can elect into new roles in February election.

The options for VP Welfare and Diversity new title include:

- Equality
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity (existing initiatives but long title, shortened to acronym)
- Diversity & Inclusivity
- Student Rights
- Lifestyle (unclear, too casual, like a magazine 'lifestyle column')
- Liberation (used by other SUs, encompassed more than just EDI, not clear what role does, not widely used in universities as a campaigning term, disconnected)
- Liberation & Equality (used by NUS, gives context to 'liberation')

Council voted on adopting the title VP Liberation & Equality:

YES: 5

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The proposed Byelaw 4 was amended accordingly, with Trustee Board having delegated choosing this role title to Council.

Council voted on the proposed amendments to Byelaw 3 (to take immediate effect) and Byelaw 4 (to take effect in June 2021):

YES: 5

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The byelaw amendments were therefore passed by Council. As Trustee Board has already passed them (11 January), Byelaw 3 takes effect immediately and Byelaw 4 will take effect in June 2021.

### **3. FOR DISCUSSION: Continued impact of COVID-19 on education.**

With the new national lockdown and the further delayed return to campus, there needs to be further discussion around what policies (relating to mitigation and communication) are required for students.

CO-SSIS gave an update: issued a joint statement with CO-Hums in response to the Registrar's email saying that they support students and would take concerns to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). This was after a Russell Group statement rejecting no detriment policy based on current algorithmic basis. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor said the University would be introducing a scaling system.

CO-Hums added that there is a lot going on, lots of students want a no detriment policy and lots of students getting in touch about this. A student also wanted to raise the rent strike. But are appreciate of the rent rebate from the University. The Guild President and VP Activities will be meeting with the rent strikers that evening.

CO-Hums went on to say another issue is the University's communication and students: it is unclear and some issues the University is trying to brush off. The University cannot simply ignore certain things. The IDME added that when an issue is raised with the University there is a natural time lag before it is in a position to respond – but Guild has raised that it needs to share as much information as soon as they can (be transparent).

CO-Hums raised they've heard of a disability campaign. VP Welfare and Diversity said they've meant a lot with the Disability Campaign and offering support. In terms of wellbeing, hoping to set up some kind of forum to get feedback from students. Wellbeing at forefront of minds.

CO-SSIS the issue of opening hours of library and study spaces, which has been raised with the Registrar (will discuss with colleagues). Important for student who rely on its resources and space for study. IDME expects opening hours of buildings to be signed-off this week (understands that the library closes overnight due to staffing to ensure covid compliance). Likely to be reviewed regularly, so if students demand it will inform reviews. CO-Hums asked if the justification could be communicated to students, IDME will push for this.

#### **7. Any other business.**

The Guild President proposed that an honorary lifetime membership of the Guild be offered to Sir Steve Smith (recently retired as Vice-Chancellor) as have not had a chance to offer anything earlier due to the pandemic. This is a gesture, rather practical. This honour is for people who have contributed to the student experience and is a sector norm.

Sir Steve Smith comes from a disadvantageous socio-economic background, and Exeter does not have many diverse role models. Class is often overlooked when it comes to diversity. He introduced £1 million scholarships for disadvantaged student to come to Exeter – he contributed from his personal finances. He raised Exeter into the Russell Group which makes students more employable. Increased the Guild's black grant by £0.5 million – others in the University said was too much, but he listened to Officers - (fantastic for the Guild). As a professor of international studies, the celebration of international cultural events and festivals began. This would also be an olive branch to the University with current discussions. Some University staff may not be happy with this proposal due to the strikes, but Council looks at this from a student perspective.

The Guild Chair added they personally appreciated the University marking international and cultural festivals.

CO-SSIS agrees with the proposal.

The Guild Chair asked how the Guild would respond to criticism from University staff. The Guild President said the criteria for this membership was contribution to student experience not staff perspective. Will not always agree with everyone. Only a chance it could happen. The benefits of this move (politically, atheistically, pragmatically) outweigh risks. If does happen, would work with the Comms team.

Council voted on whether to offer Sir Steve Smith an honorary lifetime membership of the Guild in recognition of his service to students:

YES: 5

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The proposal was therefore accepted, and the Guild President shall offer the Honorary lifetime membership of the Guild to Sir Steve Smith in recognition to his service to students.

The IDME reminded Council that we are expecting Articles (highest level documents) to come to Council in February – Nick Smith has been at an earlier meeting of Council to explain.

The IDME also reminded the College Officers of the upcoming election period and encouraged them to consider nominating themselves for roles and to talk about their roles to students to encourage people to nominate themselves and to vote. Will be doing tailored communications, officers can be involved.

CO-SSIS asked if can endorse a friend who is a candidate. IDME said cannot use benefits of their role to give them an advantage but can endorse personally. The Student Governance Coordinator added that could not use Guild IT accounts to do so. VP Education asked if Societies Council's decision to ban society endorsements still stands. IDME responded that all regulations for the election are set by the Deputy Returning Officer to create a fair election, Council does not need to consider this issue but will consult the Officers.

*The meeting ended at 14:45.*