**EQUALITIES COUNCIL**

7 May 2019 // MINUTES

Time: 18:00

Venue: Students’ Union

**Present:**

Willow Wong, VP Welfare and Diversity (Chair)  
Rhys Jones, LGBT Society Secretary  
Chris Keane, Disabled Students Rep  
Sophie Bury, Women’s Rep  
James Sullivan, Mental Health Network Chair  
Lucy Simpson, Mental Health Network Vice Chair  
Clem Jones, President  
Becky Don, FemSoc Secretary  
Phill Dowler, Democracy Coordinator (Secretary)  
Marcelina Rejwerska

**Renee apologies**

* **Welcome and introductions**
  1. WW welcomed all members.
  2. Introductions with pronouns were given.
  3. Apologies from Renee Landell (BME Rep) were received.
* **Communications (Section for anyone to share events/updates)**
  1. *Communications moved to be part of AOB.*
* **Officers report (Willow Wong)**
  1. Democracy Review – Covered in items for discussion.
  2. Women’s History Month:
     1. Thanks was given to SB for organising a series of really engaging events.
  3. Mental Health Training:
     1. Delivered to staff and students.
     2. Last one taking place on 15 May 2019.
  4. GP Surgery:
     1. Discusses the NHS app and highlights that talking to GPs online with alternative apps, aren’t actually run by the NHS so seeking support from NHS directly is always advised.
     2. An update on PPG was provided.
     3. SB adds that the GP clinic doesn’t stock the hormones that trans folk are waiting for and this isn’t being communicated to those on waiting lists at the GP for treatment.
  5. London Nightline:
     1. Attended their affiliate committee in London.
     2. Entering a process of re-considering our affiliation fees.
     3. Questions posed:
        1. Does it benefit Royal Holloway students?
        2. And if so, who benefits from London Nightline – those who use the service or those who volunteer?
        3. Do the benefits justify how much we are paying to access this service?
     4. Discussions were opened up to the group.
        1. MR highlighted that Nightline is accessible for lots of students, some would rather talk to other students and would rather Nightline than alternatives such as Samaritans.
        2. SB added that when you move to Uni and at night when things are hardest, having Nightline there is reassuring which as a service is beneficial. The Union should also be promoting how students engage with Nightline for volunteer opportunities.
        3. LS clarified that there are alternative services that provide non face to face services such as through text or instant message services. Agreed that the Union could do more to promote volunteering opportunities with Nightline and questioned whether the Union should investigate bringing a branch to Royal Holloway.
        4. WW concluded broad agreement in favour of Nightline and thanked members for contributions on this topic.
  6. TSEP:
     1. The BAME Student Researchers completed 60 hours of interviews investigating the experiences of BAME experiences at Royal Holloway.
     2. It is too early to conclude but there will be a report outlining findings by August which will link to the work of the BAME Student Collective.
  7. International Strategy
     1. Contributed to the College’s strategy on growing the number of international students.
     2. Interesting because it’s a very financially-driven decision; implications for EU students.
     3. Highlighted a need to support international students beyond the stage of recruitment.
     4. There is opportunity to link to the International Student Collective.
  8. Alcohol Impact:
     1. Making the Union more inclusive and looking into alcohol-free flats in halls.
  9. Other:
     1. Promoting Laurels awards. Nominations close Sunday 12 May with the event taking place Thursday 30 May.
     2. Last day in office 12 July so will be a handover period with incoming VP Welfare & Diversity (LS)
  10. Q&A – No questions were submitted
* **Equalities Rep Reports**
  1. Mental Health Network provided an update on how the Network will handover and restructure in line with proposed changes of the SU Democracy Review.
  2. FemSoc & Women’s Rep provided an update on the activities run as part of Women’s History Month, including a Zine made alongside LGBT Soc which will become part of RHUL archives.
* **Items for discussions**
  1. Democracy Review Update provided by WW:
* Policy Enquiry – Union wide research approach rather than localised assumptions or research. Investigative research. Concrete actions.
* Executives & Collectives (Wellbeing Specific) – Create Collectives as part of the constitution because it binds the union to ensure the spaces should always exist. Staffing and actual budgets. The Collectives will have three convenors each so more distributed responsibility, deliberation and common agreement. The chair would sit on the executive council. Explaining the membership differences. The Exec works as a close network supporting the relevant VP. Will act as representatives of collectives.
* Changes will take place by September led by students. It relies on students to shape and take up these spaces. They will be student directed and led.
* Referendum promotion – WW advised it would be beneficial however to make own informed decisions. Encourage others to vote neutrally.
* CJ clarified quoracy – As it changes the articles and rules, the referendum needs 5% of members to vote. Even if majority to vote for, if it doesn’t hit quoracy then it isn’t a valid vote. Encourages people to vote for the referendum regardless of thoughts.
* RJ asked whether it can be critiqued, or do we deliver a balance when promoting.
* WW encouraged a balanced and fair discussion.
* BD queried how are the convenors of Collectives are decided.
* WW clarified that they are decided through elections by members up to a point in time. The candidate with the most votes gets first pick at chair but it can be passed up.
* RJ queried how the voting will take place
* PD clarifies it will be through STV.
* CK enquired whether you have to pay to join Collectives.
* WW explained that collectives will be their own dedicated groups constitutionally. Different from student groups and will not require payment to join.
* SB asked how communication will be facilitated between collectives and chairs.
* WW explained there will be a mailing list. Given each collective has its own budget it’s up to each of the chairs. Each will function differently depending on the members of the collective.
* CK asked how new Collectives would be created.
* WW & CJ clarified that by-law can be amended to change the collectives. Trustee board would only step in if it broke law & governance. Execs are to exist to allow it to grow.
* LA added that the Mental Health Network doesn’t know where it’s going yet. If someone proposes a Collective, action groups (ad hoc groups) might be more appropriate for certain issues.
* WW & CJ added to this and explained further including the role of Contemporary Resolutions also highlighting the need to reduce barriers to participate in the union.
* CJ asked for a feeler of who supports the proposed constitutional changes which gauged mixed responses.
* SB raised concern over the risk of death to societies that are similar to collectives. It could be quite useful for them to be separate if they are doing different things. If they are doing the same thing then there is some concern. Suggestions for others to clearly define differences.
* RJ explained that some planned social events relies on membership fees. There would have to be some collaboration with the collectives from societies but overall has to weigh up the benefits of each.
* WW highlighted the benefits of collectives including principally bringing people together and facilitating student voice of those groups which can lead to more cohesive campaigns. CJ added that Collectives and Socs will require themselves to outline their differences. It’s not cut and dry but in the way you advertise yourself it highlights what is unique and different.
* CK added that for people trying to build from ground up is difficult. Some form of structure and support would prove beneficial. Especially some sort of equality across the groups.
* SB explained that having others to rely on and make decisions really helps. It depends on your goals on what you expect the union to be doing. For FemSoc the review achieves their goals. It might not fit in with everyone’s goals so people should think about that.
* WW closed this discussion
* **Any other business**
  1. MR asked for an update in regards for the motion to support student sex workers which passed. CJ responded that a meeting was set up with the proposer which led to discussion of some concerns, opportunities for myth busting and how our web pages can be updated with more information. There has also been some research into the decriminalisation movement. WW added that there is some work being done with Halls and although there isn’t any concrete commitment from the College, there has been some progress.
  2. WW and CJ offered separate meetings to be held with people who want to ask further questions about referendum.
* **Close of meeting and thanks to all for attending.**