

## **1978 Making Council More Effective including an amendment to the Bye Laws**

Proposed: Tom Etheridge, Non-Portfolio Officer

Seconded: Amy Rust, Campaigns and Democracy Officer

Amended by Charlotte Earney (PG Assembly) prior to the meeting

### **Union Notes**

1. That Motion 1750 last year introduced an informal section to each Union Council where members could discuss a topic without formal debates or speeches.
2. The motion argued that the old format of Union Council did not include the opportunity for formative policy making discussions (ie an open ended discussion on a topic), only summative (ie a formal motion proposals).
3. That in the first year of informal discussions at council, analysis was carried that demonstrated that significantly more women participated and spoke at council as a result of their introduction.
4. NUS research in 2014 found that the "adversarial, grandstanding" nature of formal debate in policy making tended to exclude women, LGBT students and international students from participating more often than not.
5. Motion 1724 argued that "not all students are able to either make their way to the front of the lecture theatre or feel comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people"
6. That at many meetings of council there is not enough time for the motions submitted.
7. That at the last meeting of council elections to committees took a full 90 minutes.
8. The constitution defines policy as "statements which describe that which is in the best interests of Students"
9. The bye laws state that Non-voting members are allowed to speak at council with the permission of the chair

### **Union Believes**

1. For policy making to be effective and legitimate it is critical that there is sufficient time on the agenda of each council to ensure that informal, formative discussions are held on key issues.
2. It is also crucial that where there are large numbers of formal proposals that there is sufficient time to debate them and ways in which the council might prioritise them.
3. Elections to committees can easily be held on online and take up a disproportionate amount of council time.
4. That students and councillors shouldn't have to write motions and make speeches to make easy, practical changes happen in their own union.
5. Many of the open discussion points last year could have been submitted via a suggestions box
6. Council can often be inaccessible due to its timing and how long it goes on for. This is a huge commitment for students with full time degrees,

part time jobs or other outside commitments and we could risk losing councillors as a result of lengthy presentations and discussions that are irrelevant to other points on the agenda.

### **Union Resolves**

1. Amend bye law 2.35 to state: "Any Union or University member of staff can attend council, however to speak they must be approved by the council via vote"
2. Amend bye law 2.20 to add "There shall be no summation if there has not been a speech against"
3. To amend bye law 2.9.4 to add 'the Student Officer Committee should determine the subjects for Open Discussion at each meeting following consultation with Councillors. If no sitting Student Officer Committee takes place between Council meetings, a vote is taken online with a range of discussion topics. If it is felt that the time would best be spent discussing motions, then the open discussion section can be withdrawn.'
4. That the Chair should recommend to the proposers of motions before debate a guideline for the length of debate for that policy for speeches when considered a controversial issue
5. Amend bye law 1.10.4 to "to appoint, from amongst its membership representatives to university committees via online elections with resolutions of the university Council and/or Senate"
6. That an online ballot of councillors should be trialled to determine the order in which ordinary motions are discussed before each meeting. There is to be a second ballot for motions previously submitted or discussed at last council, which will be ordered before the next round of motions. The DPC is to decide whether this will be an effective method.
7. To issue a guide to students and councillors to the respective responsibilities of the elected officers so that people know whom to approach to suggest practical change.
8. Where a motion concerns an operational matter or staff matter that may be resolved without formal debate, the chair, in conjunction with the campaigns and democracy officer, should recommend to the proposer of the motion that it would best be resolved outside of council. Any resolution will be reported in the SOC report. The proposer retains the right to bring a motion to council if they so wish.