

Governance Committee Report
Council Chair – Paul Beaumont

Executive Committee

Council voted by the two thirds required to alter the Executive Committee's Standing Orders to read (exactly):

The Executive Committee has no function and no membership as agreed at the meeting of Union Council 28 October 2014.

The Council may amend these Standing Orders.

This effectively kills the Executive Committee (who's functions have been subsumed over the years back to Trustee Board, Leadership Team and Council, as appropriate). Formal removal of the committee from the Bye-Laws can happen during the Democracy Review (which would require Board approval too; Council on its own just has the remit to change the Standing Orders).

Council agreed to form more ad-hoc sub-committees that may be appropriate to replace Exec. For instance, previously Exec may have considered policies on the web servers, or minibuses, and the student attending by their defacto membership of Exec may not, necessarily, have had any interest in these matters. Now, a more interested subset of Council may be found to sit on these ad-hoc committees, and can meet to approve these - if Council so delegates - or form a working group to report to Council which then approves the policies.

Council has been informed of impending work on a Democracy Review.

Recording of Votes

This appears to be an issue that is divisive. As well as technical issues, there doesn't appear to be enough support in Council for this at this time, but it has taken up a good proportion of discussion time.

Greater clarity on 'the correct procedural motion' (and overhang from the old Constitution) required for other forms of voting to show of hands (secret ballot) etc may help put this to rest.

Idea that direct democracy equals better democracy

Something that sits a little uncomfortably with me personally and I thought best to raise is the notion that 'direct democracy is required to have full democracy', when I would argue more informed democracy is better and is – realistically – not achievable through direct democracy.

Segueing from this, we currently have strict requirements for calling a Referenda and event stricter for calling a General Meeting, but I think that it may be worthwhile discussing whether which is better, more preferable and whether a General Meeting call should be more accessible to Council than a Referenda call.