



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS
of the first emergency meeting of
the **Council** of the
Imperial College Union in the 2014/15 Session

The emergency meeting of the Council was held in the Union Dining Hall on the 10 March at 17.00

Present:

Council Chair	Paul Beaumont
President	Tom Wheeler
Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)	Abi de Bruin
Deputy President (Education)	Pascal Loose
Deputy President (Finance & Services)	Alex Savell
Deputy President (Welfare)	Chris Kaye
ICSMSU President	Dariusz Hassanzadeh-Baboli
CGCU President	Tim Munday
RCSU President	Serena Yuen
ACC Chair	Oliver Benton
A&E Chair	Jonathon McNaught
Media Group Chair	Cem Hurrell
RCC Chair	Richard Cameron
SCC Chair	Tom Rivlin
CAG Chair	Michael Chung
RAG Chair	Ben Fernando
ICSMSU Welfare Officer	Jennie Watson
RCSU Welfare Officer	Akash Jyoti
RSMU Welfare Officer	Rachael Shuttleworth
CGCU Academic Affairs Officer	James Murphy
ICSMSU Academic Affairs Officer – Science Years	Cyin San
GSU Physical Sciences AWO	Stuart Haylock
GSU Life Sciences AWO	Rachel Vaux
International Officer	Katherine Chio
Interfaith Officer	Shamim Ahmed
Non Faculty Ordinary Member	Philippa Skett
Engineering Ordinary Member (UG)	Lachlan Price
Engineering Ordinary Member (UG)	Oliver Ford
Engineering Ordinary Member (UG)	George Butcher
Engineering Ordinary Member (PG)	Richard Simons
Engineering Ordinary Member (PG)	Meng Guo
Natural Sciences Ordinary Member (UG)	Jasper Menkus
Natural Sciences Ordinary Member (UG)	Klas Wetterberg
Natural Sciences Ordinary Member (UG)	Philip Kent
Natural Sciences Ordinary Member (PG)	Andrew Tranter
Natural Sciences Ordinary Member (PG)	Siyuen Chen
Permanent observers	
Governance and Administration Manager (Clerk to Council)	Rebecca Coxhead

Apologies: GSU President Nida Mahmud RSMU Chair Ben Warnick CGCU Welfare Officer Juliet Kernohan Engineering Ordinary Member (UG) Ze Tan Gender Equalities Officer Madeleine Maxwell, BME Officer Shiqu Qiu Medicine Ordinary Member (PG) Abel Tesfai, GSU Business AWO Alex Derrick GSU Medicine AWO Mike Asavarut RSMU Academic Affairs Officer Emma Toms Campaigns Officer Xiaoyang Zhao LGBT Portfolio Officer Kyle Hellemans Disabilities Officer Dimitrios Karponis Ethics & Environmental Officer Rhiannon Holden

Not present: RCSU Academic Affairs Officer Zoe Hsu, ICSMSU Academic Affairs Officer – Early Years – Usama Asif, ICSMSU Academic Affairs Officer – Clinical Salma Haddad

1. Union's Stance on College's Decision to Close Weeks Hall

RECEIVED: The paper was presented by Guy Riese

NOTED:

- a) It is the opinion of the proposer that Council made the wrong decision when supporting the closure of Weeks Hall.
- b) There was no consultation with the current occupants and Warden Team from College before presenting the paper on Transparency Within First Year Halls of Residence to the last meeting of Union Council.
 - i. Council was under the assumption when passing the paper that those affected by it had been consulted.
- c) It was suggested that students with disabilities would be disadvantaged as they may not be able to afford to live on South Kensington campus which then becomes a welfare issue.
- d) It was noted that ICaProblem has been passed as a campaign.
- e) It was stated that Weeks supplies a small number of rooms which are currently inadequate and a refurbishment will make the hall much more expensive when then goes against the affordable accommodation the Union supports.
 - i. The Hall was built for optimise the interaction with students and it is a listed building which contains the second glass lift to be built in the UK.
- f) Halls communities come and go and there is opportunity for with Woodwood at Acton to build this.
- g) The President stated that the Union does not have the power to close halls and it needs to be pragmatic with how it chooses the 'battles' to take on with College.
 - i. Decisions are ratified at meetings and are shaped in advanced through lobbying the right bodies in advance of the meeting.
- h) Garden Hall has now been closed for 2 years and the space has been used extremely inefficiently.
- i) Weeks is not in a state of disrepair so there is a question as to why they are being closed now?
 - i. There is also a question in regards to what is the plan for Pembridge Halls. The President is meeting with College to discuss this next week.
 - ii. College's Accommodation website states that Pembridge will be open for the next three years, Weeks will close at the end of this year and Evelyn will go but there is no time frame attached to that as College is still in negotiation with the Welcome Trust.
- j) It was queried as to why College presented a paper to Council which included the rents of Weeks Hall for 2016 but they were planning to close this which was devious of them.
- k) Students want a justification as to why Weeks is being closed and what the essential renovation is.
- l) It was queried if the Union campaigning against the closure would actually make a difference.
- m) Council moved to a vote on passing the Beliefs of paper and the votes are as follows:

Belief 2.1 FOR 30 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 1	Belief 2.2 FOR 29 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 2	Belief 2.3 FOR 27 AGAINST 1 ABSTAIN 3	Belief 2.4 FOR 23 AGAINST 2 ABSTAIN 6
Belief 2.5 FOR 26 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 5	Belief 2.6 FOR 27 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 4	Belief 2.7 FOR 23 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 8	Belief 2.8 FOR 13 AGAINST 4 ABSTAIN 13

All Believes Pass

- n) Council moved to a vote on passing the Resolves of the paper and the vote are as follows:

Resolves 3.1 FOR 19 AGAINST 2 ABSTAIN 9	Resolves 3.2 * FOR 29 AGAINST 0 ABSTAIN 1	Resolves 3.3 FOR 22 AGAINST 2 ABSTAIN 6
--	--	--

All Resolves Pass

****The passing of Resolve 3.2 makes Resolve 4 (The Union accepts the need to close Weeks hall and to convert this space for non-accommodation use to improve the provision of both academic and non-academic space) from the Stance on Transparency within First-Year Halls of Residence redundant***

o) The President was actioned to bring an update to the next meeting of Council

ACTION:

1. **The President to bring an update on the campaign to the next meeting of Council.**

APPENDIX

Union's Stance on College's Decision to Close Weeks Hall

Proposer: Guy Riese (MechEng, UG), W&W Hall Committee Chair

Seconder: Robin Saaristo (Aeronautics, UG), W&W Hall Committee Member

1. The Union Notes:

- 1.1. On Feb 10th, the Union Council voted in favour of point 4a of the paper "Transparency within First -Year Halls of Residence" : *The Union accepts the need to close Weeks hall and to convert this space for non-accommodation use to improve the provision of both academic and non-academic space.* Neither the hall committee nor the wardening team were informed about College's decision to close Weeks Hall or the proposed Union paper regarding this decision. No precise statement was given by the College on the reasons for the closure, nor its timeline.
- 1.2. According to the non-binding Consultation Framework signed by the College and ICU, the closure of an old hall of residence constitutes a Major Impact, category RED. The Consultation Framework sets out the following methods to follow before a decision is made:
 - Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply
 - Work with student reps to devise appropriate questions to ask users
 - Work with student reps to gather student opinion
 - Officially present and seek opinion at a relevant Union committee or Union Council
 - Seek the opinion of the Union President or one of the Deputy Presidents

None of these have been followed by College in the case of the proposed closure of Weeks Hall.

1.3. In the Partnership Agreement, a binding framework, between College and ICU, the following is agreed:

- 2.4.1 Full, open, regular communication on relevant issues, in particular issues likely to have an impact on the other party, the student population and/or other joint stakeholders.
- 3.1 The College will ensure that students are consulted in the development of its strategic plans through engagement with the Union

1.1. Weeks Hall is a valuable contribution to Imperial's accommodation portfolio because:

- Welfare students: Without Weeks hall, students with disabilities may find themselves in Acton or Paddington due to financial constraints, away from the health centre and support services on campus, putting their well-being at risk.
- Weeks could provide a middle ground for Under-18s with regards to living on campus in relatively cheap accommodation.
- The social space of Weeks Hall is shared with Wilkinson and Gabor, the student-run cafe Bonkies and the common room are used for most of the big joint events by a total of 376 students.
- Weeks will help to counteract the polarization of rents for on and off campus accommodation.
- Weeks is most suitable as a student hall of residence, since this is what it was purpose-built for.

2. The Union Believes:

2.1. The decision about Weeks Hall has not been made in a transparent manner, and has not been communicated well by the College. The decision-making process concerning issues affecting students directly has to improve.

2.2. The College has put the Union in a very difficult position by informing it about the planned closure of Weeks Hall only after the decision had been made, and created the impression that the decision was taken by the Union. Currently, a lot of criticism around the closure of Weeks Hall has been directed towards the Union (as the news broke from a Union Council meeting). These reactions should be directed towards the College for not being transparent.

2.3. The College did not inform the wardening team, the residents of the hall or the student body. The Union should push for the College to be transparent with the whole community, and ensure that the College assumes responsibility for informing those affected by its decisions, as

opposed to relying on the Union to be the only channel of communication.

- 2.4. The paper “Transparency within First -Year Halls of Residence” addressed many big decisions and changes around Imperial’s accommodation portfolio, with very little background information on these decisions. The Union has not been given sufficient information by the College about the reasons for closing Weeks hall and its future use to be able to make an informed decision. A democratic body like the Union Council should not be making decisions with so little information available. The Union should be pushing the College for more information and transparency.
- 2.5. The College has not respected the Partnership Agreement with ICU when taking the decision to close Weeks Hall. The College did not follow the consultation framework that it had agreed to. The Union should be pushing back on the College to postpone any decision until the agreed consultation has been carried out.
- 2.6. The Union should assess how the closure of Weeks Hall and change in hall rents would affect students with disabilities requiring them to live on campus.
- 2.7. The Union should lobby College to maximise affordable accommodation in walking distance to the main campus.
- 2.8. The Union should not compromise, but lobby on every issue it believes is important to the students. The Union should represent the interests of all of their students, including the 64 potential residents of Weeks Hall.

3. The Union Resolves:

- 3.1. To oppose College’s decision to close Weeks Hall.
- 3.2. To ask College to delay the closure of Weeks Hall and the decision on the future purpose of Weeks Hall until a full transparent consultation has been conducted.
- 3.3. To support the campaign *#ICaProblem* to address the lack of consultation, communication and transparency that College displayed towards its students in important decision-making processes that affect student’s experience at Imperial.

Appendix: #ICaProblem

The Campaign aims to address:

- **Consultation:** The College should take student’s views into account for decisions affecting the student body. When student’s opinions have been voiced, either through campaigns, through the Union, or via direct

consultation of students, they have been largely ignored by College in significant decision-making processes.

- **Communication:** It should be the College's duty to inform the students and staff about the long-term decisions that may affect them – before they are irreversible, before they have been implemented, and at a time of the academic year where they can respond.
- **Transparency:** Through consultation and communication a higher degree of transparency can be achieved. Justified and well-communicated decisions will build the trust and support between College and the student community. The decisions, their impact and their outcomes would be better and more transparent.

Student's Input on Accommodation and Rent: As part of the "First Year Guarantee", College promises to provide comfortable, safe, fairly priced accommodation *within reasonable commuting distance* of the South Kensington campus for all first year undergraduates. College's restructuring plan of Imperial's UG accommodation portfolio has effectively reduced affordable accommodation within walking distance of the South Kensington campus. For several existing halls a huge 9% or 10% rent increase on average will occur next year. Average hall rent has remained the same at £166 per week whilst the quality of the overall accommodation portfolio has gone down with more students now having to commute further. College respected the student's decision of the redistribution of rents, but what should have been discussed is the fixed average rent of £166. College should bear the costs for the unpopular North Acton plan, and not the students.

Motivation of the campaign

There is at this point a considerable track-record of College disregarding student views on topics that significantly affect the student experience. Examples include: North Acton, closure of Garden Hall, planned closures of Evelyn Gardens' Halls, Pembroke Hall and Weeks Hall, the replacement of the Holland Club by h-bar, the replacement of the Teddington sports grounds by Heston, the cuts of Life Sciences etc. Students feel increasingly powerless and become more disengaged, thereby leading College to ignore them more. We need to break this cycle.

The announced closure of Weeks Hall is the latest example of the lack of consultation, lack of communication and lack of transparency which has characterised several decisions made by College recently.

Goals the Campaign hopes to achieve:

- Delay the decision on the time of closure and future purpose of Weeks Hall until a full transparent consultation has been conducted. College should justify its reasons for closing Weeks Hall.
- Hold the College to account for not holding a consultation on the closure of Garden Hall despite promising to do so. Ensure the huge space of Garden

Hall is used productively for College or else refurbished and re-opened as a student hall.

- Conduct the consultations that have been promised, and hold the individuals/committees accountable that have dismissed existing promises and agreements.
- Communicate information on the masterplan for the North side of Prince's Gardens.
- Communicate the current situation of Evelyn Gardens and the response of the Wellcome Trust with respect to its lease.
- College should be made aware of the fact that low student satisfaction will ultimately have an impact on Imperial College via NSS results, student intake, and endowment levels.
- Communicate to representatives of the decision-making bodies at Imperial College the detrimental effects on students of some of the decisions that have been taken, and discuss how these effects may be counteracted.
- Increase student representation on committees and boards that are involved in decision-making, particularly with regard to decisions that have a long-term impact on the student experience: there should be a student representative on the College Cabinet and the Provost Board.
- Accommodation and Rent: The average rent price should go down since the overall quality of accommodation has decreased for students. College should consider subsidising halls of residence, possibly with the profit made from halls during the summer holidays. Another option would be subsidising travel cards for students living in Acton. Revaluation of rent prices, in particular the extortionate increases in Princes Gardens to effectively subsidise Acton. Give students the possibility to swap rooms after they have been allocated. The Union should push the College for an agreement not to increase rents by more than the inflation rate.
- Make a detailed breakdown of average rent (per hall of residence) available, including how capital, wardening and "other" costs are calculated. The breakdown seen by the Union is very brief.