

Solving Council's Quorum Crisis (The Carrot)

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The Union notes that:

1. Council has had a serious and ongoing issue with quoracy for at least the last two years.
2. That the good running of the Union has been negatively impacted by the inability of Council to hold quorate meetings.
3. Council has been extremely effective in the past when dealing with high impact issues, such as halls rent and potential EU stance. High impact issues are a common interest of most Imperial students.
4. Last year council saw a big increase in working groups. At the same time, quoracy was particularly bad last year.
5. Holding officers and committees of the Union to account is an essential role of Council. This is currently achieved by reviewing reports.

The Union believes that:

1. A large and diverse Council is important, in order to ensure the Union's paramount policy-making, scrutiny and accountability body is sufficiently representative.
 - 1.1. It is easy to fail to identify all stakeholders affected by a policy, and therefore a big and representative council is necessary. Ordinary members play a vital role in this diversity.
 - 1.2. That members not turning up (often without apologies) for so many meetings is deeply troubling and shows a disregard for the students by whom they were elected.
 - 1.3. Decisions that could be made in council sub-committees could also stand to benefit from input, oversight and accountability from people with different backgrounds and views. It is therefore important not to fully delegate policy making to these sub-committees - a balance is required.
2. It is possible to ensure that council has sufficient business to justify monthly meetings by:
 - 2.1. Better engaging with Members of Council and the wider student body - both by better informing students about Council and by making the process of bringing proposed policy to Council more transparent.
 - 2.2. Ensuring that important policy decisions aren't made at sub-committee level but rather that recommendations are made and passed up to Council to vote on.
3. The lack of attendance is driven by the feeling of members that their attendance is not of value and that council lacks impact.

- 3.1. The purpose of Council is for members to discuss and debate matters which are important to their constituents and to the Union's membership as a whole. Being involved in this discussion is what makes Council members feel their attendance is valued.
- 3.2. Ex-officio members of Council may tend to feel less valued as matters related to their constituency may be discussed less frequently than other areas of policy, making them less likely to attend.
- 3.3. Members of Council are more engaged by discussions of what the Union should do than by scrutiny of what has already been done. Council must therefore avoid the majority of its business being approving reports which are matters of fact.
- 3.4. The increasing number of working groups within the Union has directly impacted the quoracy of general Council meetings, whilst reducing the transparency of decision-making.
- 3.5. For members to be involved in discussion the seating arrangements of Council must be such that every member can reasonably see and hear every other member.

The Union resolves to:

1. Replace Officer Trustee reports to Council and committee reports to Council with papers consisting of two sections:
 - 1.1. A plan of what impactful actions they intend to do by the next meeting of Council; including significant expenditure, and policies they intend to lobby for. These plans are subject to the scrutiny of council and may be amended.
 - 1.2. A report of what has been done since the previous meeting of Council, in particular making reference to progress on the actions detailed in the previous plan.
2. Significantly reduce the number of working groups and increase their accountability.
 - 2.1. Formal standing orders for Working Groups should be created and approved by Council. These standing orders should include provisions for transparency, accountability, and integrity.
 - 2.2. Working Groups must have a clearly defined initial membership of a least 5 Members of Council, where this initial membership is agreed upon by Council.
 - 2.3. Further members may be added to the Working Group by a majority vote of the group's current membership.
 - 2.4. Meetings of Working Groups must be advertised to the members of that Working Group at least 3 clear College days in advance.
 - 2.5. Meetings must have minutes taken by a member of Union staff.
 - 2.6. Records of Working Group meetings, and any data and papers presented to them, must be made available on the Union website alongside Union Council and its sub-committees.

- 2.7. The Working Group may vote to redact or withhold information from public release, if the WG deems that the information is of a potentially sensitive or confidential nature.
 - 2.8. The purpose of Working Groups shall be to report back to Council with a list of viable options and the pros and cons of each, along with a recommendation agreed by the the WG. These options will then be considered by Council, and a final decision made.
3. Improve the engagement of the wider student body with Council.
 - 3.1. Inform the wider student body about the existence and purpose of Council, and ensure that students know that they are permitted to attend and where to look for information on meeting dates and locations.
 - 3.2. Advertise to students that they are able to submit a proposal for Council to debate and ensure that the information about how to submit a proposal is well publicised.
4. Reduce the delegation of high-level policy making to subcommittees. For the following types of decision, the role of the sub-committee should be to identify the viable options for the Union and their pros and cons, and present these to council for decision.
 - 4.1. Resolutions on the beliefs of the Union as an organisation.
 - 4.2. Proposal for a new policy.
 - 4.3. Major changes to an existing policy.
 - 4.4. Major changes to the organisational structure of the subsection of the Union within the remit of that sub-committee.
5. At the first Council meeting, a list of the policies due for renewal that year shall be made available to members. Members shall be made aware that these policies may be renewed or amended at any council meeting that year, and shall be encouraged to discuss a policy with a relevant sabbatical officer or the Council Chair if they are interested in proposing an amendment to it.
6. Ensure that Council runs as efficiently as possible to maximise the time available for meaningful discussion of policy.
 - 6.1. Arrange seating in council meetings must be arranged such that where possible, every member can easily see and hear every other member without turning their body, such as through a (semi-)circular or square arrangement.
 - 6.2. Mandate the Council Chair to ensure that decisions of little importance are made quickly and that discussion that does not meaningfully contribute to the business of Council is discouraged.