

AGENDA ITEM NO.	
TITLE	Council Chair Report
AUTHOR	Owen Heaney, Council Chair
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Council has had a successful year, with many important items of business having been presented and discussed. The main events of the year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Governing Documents could unfortunately not be passed due to inquoracy – these will be reconsidered at the second meeting of next year • Standing Orders were adopted, putting Council procedure on a much firmer footing • A vociferous debate over the possibility of creating a Social Mobility Liberation Officer, which I expect will continue into the next academic year, has attracted substantial engagement from students outside Council • Council voted to create a petitions system to allow more effective engagement of students on important issues <p>While there has been significant success at Council this year, there has also been a particularly divisive and unfriendly culture at the meetings, which may serve to drive away future students from engaging effectively in the Union’s democracy. This is an issue which ought to be monitored going forward should a similar atmosphere prevail in the upcoming academic year.</p>
PURPOSE	To update the Board on Policy decisions taken by Union Council since the last full meeting and review the year at Council
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	None

Council Chair Report

Owen Heaney

Since the last meeting of the Board, there has been one Ordinary Meeting of Union Council. However, due to my academic commitments I could not supply a report to the May Board meeting so earlier meetings will be described briefly here as well. If you have any questions regarding this report or Council business in general, I am happy to answer them at the meeting or via email at chair@ic.ac.uk

13th February

- The most significant decision was the vote to support the UCU strike action. This was passed by roughly 75% of those in attendance, displaying the Union's strong commitment to maintaining Imperial's high teaching standards and supporting the academic staff who deliver it.
- Another motion, calling for the creation of a petitions system for raising issues to Council, was adopted. From discussions with Officer Trustees, it is expected that this system will be in place for the upcoming academic year.

20th March

- The meeting ratified Graham's appointment and Kate's re-appointment as External Trustees, but unfortunately decided not to ratify the re-appointment of Lynn. Honorary Lifetime Associate Membership of the Union was also granted to Neil Sachdev in recognition of his contribution as Chair of the Board.
- An updated Constitution was presented, but was not passed as Council members felt that the document was distributed too soon before the meeting to allow for effective scrutiny.
- The proposal to create a Social Mobility Officer role to represent students from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds returned, and was supported by a substantial delegation of non-members of Council. An amended motion, committing the Union to wide-ranging consultation on the proposed role, was passed after a fairly lengthy debate. I would expect this topic to return to Council next year after the completion of this consultation.
- This meeting was noteworthy for an especially bad atmosphere; many non-members of Council who attended to support the motion on the Social Mobility Officer told me that they did not speak in the debate due to the overbearing nature of the meeting. The mood was factious throughout, and points-scoring abounded, which I feel was harmful to effective debate and decision-making.
- I would like to thank Jill for attending and making some excellent suggestions as to how Council might be improved going forward.

15th May

- The finalised Constitution and Bye-Laws were presented, but unfortunately the meeting did not reach quorum so these could not be passed.
- A motion proposing harsher penalties for perpetrators of serious or repeated sexual misconduct was also received. Again, this could not be passed due to Council's inquoracy, but the motion will return to Council next year along with the Constitution and Bye-Laws.

19th June

- A final attempt was made to pass the Constitution and Bye-Laws at this meeting, but it was far from reaching quorum so this was unsuccessful.
- A presentation from Hannah Bannister (College's Director of Student Services) on the incoming Student Support Strategy was gratefully received by those who were present.
- Outstanding items of business which do not require a 2/3rds majority vote will be put to an email vote in the coming days.

Overall, I feel that this has been a highly successful year for Council, and a number of significant decisions have been taken. However, despite this, Council remains overbearing and inaccessible to the vast majority of the student body. While positive steps to make the submission of ideas for consideration easier, such as the petitions system, have been adopted, I do feel that the culture within Council will remain a substantial blockage. This year the meetings have frequently devolved into petty points-scoring, and the Union has felt more divided than I have ever seen in my time here. I would recommend to the Board that this negative trend is monitored over the upcoming academic year, and if the atmosphere remains so uncondusive to effective debate that actions be taken to try to reduce the tensions.

It has been a year of ups and downs, and while I cannot say that I have enjoyed every moment of my role this year, it has been a great privilege and pleasure to chair Council and sit on this Board and its subcommittees. There have been some very significant accomplishments this year at all levels and it has been wonderful to play a part, even a small one, in this success. I wish my successor and indeed all the incoming and continuing Trustees the very best of luck for the upcoming year.