

# Liam Michael Plimmer

## for Union Development Officer

### ENGAGED. TRANSPARENT. DEMOCRATIC.

As LGBT+ Officer at Downing, and having voted at CUSU Council as proxy for Downing's JCR President, I am not new to Cambridge student politics; I am familiar with how things work (and how they don't). Especially in my dealings with College regarding issues such as the provision of gender neutral bathrooms, and those relating to drinking societies, I have come to see the importance of efficiency in a university structured to be anything but efficient.

Because of this, I realise how difficult it is for CUSU to make meaningful change; and as such, I can understand why CUSU's perception is not always favourable. The recent controversy surrounding the Michaelmas I Council Meeting compounds that. It also demonstrates a lack of awareness about how CUSU works, what it does, and what its purpose is. And yet it is precisely because of such issues that I constantly implore others to do exactly what I have been doing, and am doing now: getting involved, making a difference, and standing for election. It is amazing how many people I tell to come to CUSU Council who don't even realise that they can.

But meaningful change is possible: CUSU has demonstrated that. From its work regarding the living wage and its stabilisation of its own finances, to BME mental health provision. And such change would be even easier, and even greater, if a larger proportion of the student population got involved in CUSU's campaigns. That is why CUSU needs to be more engaging.

Accountability is another of CUSU's main image problems. CUSU is often seen as irrelevant, either because of the issues I outlined above, or because it is viewed as unaccountable to the student body. Of course, all voting members of CUSU Council have a mandate; they are either elected in individual college elections, or in university-wide elections. So the solution is not necessarily about making CUSU more democratic (although that is still a goal towards which we should always be striving): it is to make its democratic processes more widely publicised, and more transparent. We must be committed to widening participation in CUSU, and knowledge of its workings, if it is to become better respected, both within the university and beyond.

- **ENGAGED.** More regular correspondence, meetings, and consultations with Common Rooms and the wider student body on important issues. Suggest presence at Common Room meetings to foster cooperation. Extend correspondence from social media to flyers and term cards. Drop-ins for students to discuss important issues.
- **TRANSPARENT.** Wider publicity of elections, both with regards to running and voting. Achieved through direct contact with individual Common Rooms, maximised utility of social media, and similar methods as above.
- **DEMOCRATIC.** Reviews and consequent revisions of the Union's constitutional documents (with the aim of improving both democracy and efficiency), alongside wider publicity regarding these. Constant recourse to consultation and conversation with the student body to reinforce democratic mandates.