

The Board of Trustees response to the inquiry into CUSU Finances

The CUSU Trustee board would like to thank the members of the Inquiry into CUSU Finances for their report and welcomes student engagement in reviewing the Board's financial management of the Union. As a students' union who are responsible to their members, we believe that creating transparent, open communication, where possible, about all areas of Union functioning is important. As such, the Trustee Board accepts the spirit of the findings of the Inquiry and resolves to work towards resolving the problems identified in the report.

The Board of Trustees believes in the importance of maintaining Council as a forum for democratic debate by elected representatives. Trustees reviewed the purpose of Council and the Board of Trustees recognised that as well as acting as a forum to guide and scrutinise democratic leaders, it must also be allowed to provide guidance to trustees, including by way of inquiry. This requires greater, and improved, transparency and accountability to CUSU Council. However, it is important to note that the remit of CUSU Council and the Board of Trustees are different and that responsibility for financial accountability ultimately lies with the Board. As such, whilst the Board of Trustees recognises the importance of maintaining the confidence of members and encourages healthy scrutiny, attempts to do this must not undermine their legal duty to safeguard the resources of the Union. Broadly though the Board of Trustees is willing to accept greater scrutiny and to try to resolve identified communication problems.

Some improvements to the communication of Union finances have already been made since the Inquiry began. The first of these is the creation of a Finance Committee, a subcommittee of the Trustee Board to provide greater scrutiny of Union finances. It is chaired by a student trustee and student input is therefore central in this committee. We have also introduced the Mid-Year Review which provided an opportunity for Council to receive a report from the Trustees on the financial performance of the Union with in-year financial data up to Michaelmas Term. The Board believes it is important in matching the Inquiry's aims ensure there are no surprises to Council Members around the Union's finances. The Mid-Year Review will therefore be produced in all future years as well. Efforts were also made last year to engage more students in the Union's financial plans including the running of events. This year we will once again hold consultation events, in line with the Inquiry's suggestions, as well as using online methods to seek wider student consultation in the budget.

In addition to continuing these practices the Trustee Board also resolves to:

- Improve communication to Council by:
 - o producing an annual timetable of business, including of financial items, for Council members
 - o Ensuring Trustee Board minutes are uploaded online as soon as possible and are included in the paper for the proceeding CUSU Council meeting, where a standing item will allow members to ask questions. It may be necessary for answers to questions to be responded to at a following meeting, so that trustees at Council are not seen to speak for the entire trustee board.
 - o Produce a termly trustee report to Council

- Provide more proactive communications around the budget, including before the Mid Year Review, when relevant, to make sure issues are raised with members earlier
- Maintain the earlier development and presentation of the budget, allowing an additional meeting to review the budget, as took place in 2008
- Speak to Press under embargo about CUSU finances before relevant CUSU Council meetings
- Remove the embargo on Press questions at Council. Press will be allowed to ask questions throughout CUSU Council however priority in discussions will be given to voting members of Council over press.
- Encourage all Sabbs to continue attending CUSU Council and to use it proactively to shape the policy and decisions they make