Annual Student Meeting Accountability Board Chair Report

I was elected to the position of chair of the accountability board after the election in September. Since then, my board has endeavoured to fulfil the points of our manifestos that we were elected on and to fulfil the role of the board as that of the disciplinary and occasional advisory body of Union Council. When I stepped into the role, I found that students have been unaware of the role of the board and the council and that when they did know of them both they associated them not with students but with the Union itself who they feel was out of touch with students and their needs.

The Accountability Board is there to scrutinise the elected officers and student led meetings to ensure they are being as fair and representative as they could possibly be, and to hold them to account. This breaks down into four main areas:

* To hold meetings with the Sabbatical Officers to hold them to account
* Observing and scrutinising Representative led meetings, such as forums, to make sure they stay democratic and that members of the community being represented are being listened to and treated fairly.
* Observing the Union Council and making sure the decisions made are fair and representative.
  + Making recommendations about the most appropriate course of action
  + Suggesting as well when the Council is stirring off course from their intended discussion point
* Assessing policies submitted by students and making sure they are being progressed.

Within the board I, as Chair of the Accountability Board have the added reasonability’s of:

* To attend Union Council to monitor debate to make sure it is fair and unbiased. They can also make recommendations as to the appropriate course of action, for example, suggesting the matter in question goes to referendum of the whole student body or deferring voting pending further research.
* With the support of the Student Voice Team, the Chair also has the responsibility to investigate any allegations of misconduct or unfair/biased decision making by elected representatives, should these arise.
* To closely with the Union Council Chair to identify and chase action points arising from Union Council

The board in its entirety believes in the democratic principles that lie at the heart of the Student Union and the Union Council. To that extent we as well as having supported the Chair of Union Council and its members, have worked towards the achievement of our manifesto points.

To name but a few:

* To ensure a democratic election that takes place according to the bylaws set out
* To publicise why the Sabbatical Roles of Society and Supports VP were merged to Activities.
* To publicise the role of the Accountability Board and the Union Council

In terms of these, the board helped the Student Voice team with the discussion with moving the Sabbatical Officer elections online, as well as ensuring that any issues that could arise are delt with by the right officials.

With regards with the merging of the Society and Support roles, a member of the board, found out why, and then publicised the reasons as to why the roles were merged by the trustee board, further onto this the board member revived insurances from the relevant Union departments as to the keeping of the separation of the society and sport departments, an issue that was brought to us by students and so done to ensure that the students worries were eased.

In regard to publicising the Board and the Council, we have worked with the Student Voice team and comms in consultation regarding the publicising of the board and council, this cumulated in the by-election of more members to the Board. In regard to the other manifesto points of members of the board, these are all available on the website or can be requested to be shared to you by any member of the Board, or the Student Voice team.

I’d like to end this report with a call to the student body. This year we have heard lots on social media with people loving what the student union have done and people loathing it. Like marmite the student body either like or dislike the Union and there are points of both sides of the argument. So, to all students, no matter what side of the argument you fall, I will say this. RUN. There is nothing more you can do for your student union then take an elected role and help run the union, whether that is as a Course Rep, a School Rep, a Part-Time Officer, a member of the Board or as a Sab. There is nothing greater you can do to help the student body then representing those who elect you, so you can go on and help lobby the university for the change and the issues that the student body want. This year, I truly believe the elected students who are giving up their time to volunteer for their roles are some of the most dedicated and passionate students that I have honour of knowing since coming to university. So, I hope that hearing what some of them have been up to will inspire you to run next year and to help make the student union a place of change, a place that puts the students at the forefront and that deals with the issues that we as a student body face on a daily basis.