

UPSU Annual Student Meeting 2021  
23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.



Transcript

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**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Welcome everyone to the Annual Student Meeting of UPSU and thank you all for coming, my name is Robert I was elected by your Union Council as the chair for this meeting tonight.

This meeting represents an opportunity for all members of UPSU to submit changes to the unions governing document the memorandum and articles association or M&S's, if you prefer, and there are several changes being presented this evening, for your consideration and approval.

Students are also able to propose policies which, if passed, will be binding for two years, there weren't any policies submitted prior to this date.

As charity UPSU has a legal requirement to present our accounts to our members each year, there will also be reports from Union Council the Accountability Board and the Board of Trustees.

The Sabbatical Officers will also give an update on their activities, this is an extremely fundamental opportunity of democracy for you scrutinize the work of your students' union and check that it is indeed being run in your interests and representing the generality of the students, so do feel free to ask any questions of the Trustees and student elected representatives.

Before we get into it, I would like to run through some general information this meeting is being recorded. If you could use the Q and A function to ask questions, and this is moderated so questions that aren't relevant will be deferred, or they will be removed. Respect the opinions of others and their right to speak. If you do get involved in debate, question the issue and don't get personal, any inappropriate language or behaviour will not be tolerated and anyone being inappropriate or offensive will be removed from the meeting.

All full members of UPSU can speak and vote on any issue any other people present may speak, but cannot vote. All students are currently registered on a UoP course are full members of the Union unless they have opted out in writing.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the UPSU Memorandum and Articles, its byelaws laws and any other relevant UPSU governing documents and policies.

We are joined this evening by our very special guest Jackie Weaver and Jackie is going to give a short introduction and then the floor will be opened to questions to her, which, as I mentioned, if you'd use Q and A function to ask them, that would be excellent.

So everyone, Jackie Weaver if you would take the floor, please.

03:15

**Jackie Weaver:** Thank you. First of all, it's a pleasure to be here with you this evening, one of the things that I have been very clear about since my meteoric rise to stardom just over a month ago, was that I wanted to use this platform to reach out to younger people and I guess you do get quite a few younger people in a university so it's a really good place for me to be.

I use the platform that I currently have to encourage people to get involved in local democracy, I prefer the term local democracy to local politics, because I think that democracy is something that touches us in all walks of life and never more than you have seen and laid out for you this evening by the chairman.

I also feel very strongly that everyone has a part to play, and by that I mean it's not about everybody wanting to stand for election it's not about everybody wanting to be a politician.

As your Chairman spoke earlier this evening about it's even about the important role that you play if you do no more than bear witness, and that is about turning up and making sure that things are done properly and giving your support, and that can be as valuable as standing for election or standing to be an officer. So I guess that I was further impressed by the fact that your questions are mediated this evening.

Again, a good example of just setting excellent standards when it comes to any form of engagement with people and it's not a bad thing to start out as early as possible as you're seeing unfortunately, it doesn't matter what age, you are, you can still behave incredibly badly, so encouraging to see that it's something that we take it seriously.

I'm mindful that you have, I hope, a lot of questions that you would like to ask this evening, so I propose to offer no more by way of introduction, but I'm happy to hear your questions.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** we've got nothing come through on the Q and A as yet.

**Jackie Weaver:** In the meantime, it might be helpful to offer just a little bit of background Robert, in terms of why I do what I do. It's tempting to think that Jackie Weaver didn't exist before the beginning of February, but that clearly wasn't quite the case. And in fact I've been involved with local councils that's, town and parish council for some 25 years. One of the difficulties we face, and I don't just me me, I don't just mean Cheshire, it's something we have difficulty with across the whole country, is actually making people aware of what town and parish Councils do.

So we're actually kind of saying to people get involved, but we're starting from a much lower base than that, by having to tell people what we do and then why they might want to get involved and I guess for me, one of the beauties of local councils or town and parish Councils is that they are local. By definition, that the power that influence their sphere of interest is no greater than their geographic footprint.

They are a tax raising body, but it means that every penny of tax that is raised by a town or parish council has to be spent in its area. And again, be very keen to try and encourage young people, and you know, I kind of mean young people from 16 upwards, perhaps to get involved with a local council to help. Help a Council better understand what it is that young people need because town and parish council can deliver services for young people. But I think often we have very little understanding of what young people want if in fact they don't want the skate park.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Yes, I would say, those sentiments are shared very much by the students' union here, it's about engagement and learning what the students wishes are and how we can best implement those.

**Jackie Weaver:** But, of course, one of the challenges, there is of course, it has to be a two way conversation.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** yes.

**Jackie Weaver:** Because it's, you know, as I said in my in my brief introduction if people don't engage with you, then you are in fact talking to an empty room. And although you know clearly you are representative, because you are a student and you are at the university, and you know, your needs may be very different from the

audience that you are trying to address so participation is incredibly important, and often very difficult to achieve.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** We've had a question come through for you Jackie.

09:18

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** How have you coped with the fame that has come your way, as a result of that meeting back in the beginning of February, and what might you do with it to further local and other democracies?

**Jackie Weaver:** How I have coped with it has been a question, I don't devalue it for the frequency, it's a question I'm often asked. And, in some ways...I guess it happens so quickly, and it is so incessant that you don't really have time to stop you know stop and take stock of it.

I remember saying to my husband, when this is all over remind me how much I enjoyed it because it's kind of as you're living it and you are so busy you're, not really noticing it, I mean my diary, and I also still work full time, is just so incredibly busy. You know it's where is the gap that I'm going to have lunch and tea.

So yeah really busy, what do I want to do with it, I want to do what I've been trying to do with colleagues for 25 years. Which is to really encourage people to get involved doing whatever, but just get involved with local democracy, I think that we've had a period of probably 15 to 20 years where people have felt less engaged with politics, party politics, and less able to influence politics and policy than ever before, and I think that's something that's really switched us off and what I'm trying to say to people is, I don't know about that I am not a party political creature I don't have particularly strong views on government policy, some of them, some of them I don't like. But what I do know is that local level, you most definitely can influence policy and, indeed, who better to influence policy in the local area and the people who live there, but we still need to make that connection between the communities and their Councils.

11:40

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Excellent, and do you have any advice for young people who want to get involved with their local councils?

**Jackie Weaver:** I think before I would offer advice, I would ask them why they want to get involved with the local councils. I think there are a number of reasons, I mean whether they're good reasons or not, it's not for me to judge. I think people might get involved with their local council, because they genuinely want to make a difference to the area they're in and they may aspire to do no more than that, and that that in itself is entirely worthwhile. But others do it as a means by which they, they will get a grounding, if you like, it's like you're doing the student Union, in the

kind of procedures and things that you'll come across in local politics and sometimes they do to town and parish council level, because it gives you...

One it's easier to get a seat and two, you don't need to go in under a party banner, so you can get involved before you've actually come and nailed your colours to the mast and it's often a very good grounding for people who do want to go and have a political career. So it depends on why you are interested.

13:04

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** What are the benefits of being involved in a democracy locally and within a university?

**Jackie Weaver:** Well, I think you're better placed than I am to say what the benefits are about being involved in democracy at the university, I mean I'm sure nobody has noticed that I might be a year or two older than you and it may have been some time since I've had much experience of being involved with a students union or university, for that matter, but what are the advantages of being involved in a local council, in some form of local democracy, I think the advantage is huge.

I think there are advantages for your community, I think the community value benefit from having a diverse group of people who are in the Council, the whole community benefits from that, but I think you as a person benefit from it, I think that it's again an ideal place to define,

It's a bit corny to say to find yourself, you know, a place where you take ideas, a place where you debate ideas, a place where you push for your ideas and a place where you failed miserably and have to go with somebody else's ideas, but it is it's kind of... I think it brings lots of opportunity for personal development. And it definitely also brings opportunities for you to give to the community, so that seems like a win, win to me but I'll have to leave the student view to you.

14:47

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** And, as a previous Deputy, this isn't me, by the way, I'm just saying the question of this as it's been written.... as a previous deputy mayor at the age of 19 in Devon, we attempted to run a Youth Council. Unfortunately in our area we found it difficult to get our youth engaged and involved. In a more national perspective, how would you suggest getting youth interested in their local parish Councils?

**Jackie Weaver:** Well congratulations on achieving Deputy Mayorship at the tender age of 19, I think we had one in Cheshire who managed by the 19 so it shows that there is support from the local councils in being able to achieve that, because you can't do it on your own. And certainly in Cheshire, which is where my main

experience comes from. We have had Youth Council set up, Youth Parliament set up and they always felt disappointing.

When they when they first came on board, I thought they were going to be bright shiny and new and something really different and what they turned out to be were local councillors they were just mini me's, they even dressed all like councillors, so it kind of felt like a complete failure because all we've done was kind of swap out the bodies, if you know what I mean, nothing really changed, and certainly locally my experience was that it really took an older member and established member to continue to drive the Youth Council, the Parliament and when they stepped back it kind of chugged along a little bit, but eventually stopped.

So in my personal opinion, I don't think creating a similar construct and calling it Youth Council actually works for me, I think it comes back to the fundamental point of what are they trying to achieve and I think the bit that we missed when we set up these youth councils initially was that the end game was setting up the Youth Council.

I think that's why they failed, and what we should be looking at is, what are we trying to achieve and what is the best structure or mechanism for young people to help them achieve it. But they did look Nice in suits

17:27

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Speaking of looking Nice, the next question; hi you both look great this evening, and thank you very much for being here Jackie.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** We work very hard in our student union to represent our students, but sometimes as a Rep I struggle to get engagement, what do you recommend I do to combat this?

**Jackie Weaver:** I think first of all, again take a step back and know that seems counterintuitive when you're when you're trying to get people and trying to engage with it, take a step back and see whether or not what you're trying to do is realistic. You know, are you trying to engage with the right people over the wrong issues or the wrong people over the right issues.

Actually, maybe you are succeeding perfectly well it's just that you've set yourself some targets or some objectives that are perhaps not reasonable for the audience that you have, and really consultation and engagement is about an offer, it's about making sure that people know how they can get involved, making sure it's available if they want to do it. But then, if they really don't want to engage, I guess that's about you being their representative because if you get it wrong you'll get plenty of engagement because they will come and tell you.

19:00

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Have you met with any discrimination in your position, due to the ratio of male to female councillors and do you have any advice on how to deal with these issues, based on your personal or career based experience?

**Jackie Weaver:** I'm quite lucky in in that there are very few people who do my job and that often puts me in a position of relative power, don't get me wrong, it's a very small pond and I'm still a very small fish but within that pond I'm quite a large fish if that makes sense.

So I don't tend to get the same level of challenge that perhaps some women might do in different occupations, but I do know of other women who have had challenges, particularly younger female councillors on an older, established, mainly male Council. I guess they report to me that the best advice they had was about not taking it personally and that's a very easy thing to say, 'oh don't take it personally' but there is a skill that can be learned in how you stop taking things personally and for me that's about focus.

It's about making sure that you are very clear on what it is that you're trying to achieve, you know a bit like your agenda for this evening, Robert, you know, what is the agenda item, what do I want to get out of this?

And a bit like you saw in the video back in December. You know, often people say how you know how calm I appeared, etc. I was absolutely clear on what was going to be achieved that night, that meeting was going to happen and everything else was noise. So that's how I deal with it, focus on what it is that you're trying to achieve then it's not personal, it's about the job.

21:18

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Well, that's the last of the questions for you, so thank you very much for being here, thank you for that amazing insight as well.

**Jackie Weaver:** You are well welcome

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Thank you for what you just said about Charing meetings, I'm sure that would be very useful for me.

21:51

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** If we now say goodbye to Jackie, of course you are welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting, and we go on to the notice of any other business, we have not received any. So we shall move on to the Matters to discuss.

There are seven changes proposed in all, after each one there will be a vote to approve that point. The voting in all of them shall be as follows, it will be votes for, votes against and then any abstentions. We will vote by the raise hand button on zoom which you can find in the participants window, which is down to the bottom left of your user interface.

I would like to hand over to KC, who is the UPSU President and Chair of the Board of Trustees to explain the changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Thank you Chair. Hello everybody, my name is to Chukwudi Kosi Ezenyi, you can call me KC and I first want to start whilst they have Jackie here to say extend more gratitude to you Jackie for the words of wisdom you have just shared with us there, it's very, very encouraging to hear such words, thank you for that.

Quickly, I'll be going... I'll be taking us through the proposed amendments to the UPSU Memorandum and Articles of Association. On this slide here is an overview of this document, and why it is that we're doing this change.

So the changes in this document have been proposed to see, that you know, it's more flexible and the Union is more student led, that's why we've done the changes to this document. So I would take us through the proposed changes.

23:34

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** And the first one is student petition, and so this was proposed by and the councillor at the Union council for, you know, the number of signatures required within the student membership for student petitions to go through. It's to be reduced from 400 to 1% of the student population, which would be much lower than 400 students. So I'll just give you a few seconds to read through it.

So Trustee type and Student Trustees. This this was proposed, this one is just basically to move the numbers of External Trustees from the articles to the byelaw and, by doing this, this will give both the Board and the Union Council power to make decisions on the number of External Trustees to be on the board, and also to know that, if this has been approved we're looking to increase number of Student Trustees on the on the trustee board from two to four.

The next slide

24:46

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** yes excellent, our Trustee term limits. So, this one is to give the Union Council more power to determine how long, basically how long an External Trustee can serve for. Also adding to this we're looking to reduce the current term



time of the external trustees by one year, so it's going to be a maximum of three terms, and each term is three years.

I'm sorry guys, if this is really boring but these are the things we need to do to ensure we're running a democratic Union, so please do engage whilst it's going on. The fourth one, removal of the trustees by Union Council. This also to recognize the power for the Council to be able to remove External Trustees since they are the ones that will be ratifying them to be part of the Trustee Board anyways so it makes sense for them to be the ones to be able to them, and not by referendum.

Next, please.

25:56

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Yes, removal of Student Trustees, so similar to the one before this is just recognize that it will still be the Union Council to decide on the removal of Student Trustees, before this used to be the Student body that would do this as the Student Trustee position used to be elected on upon before, but now it's been it's been done by the Union Council, it only makes sense for the Union Council to still be the ones to be able to remove them.

Next one, please.

Yes, and so motion of no confidence. This is another, this is another reduction in number of signatures required for petitions to be moved for motion have no confidence from the high number of 800 I was before, to 1% of the student membership (currently 184 students) the Board of Trustees thought this was a very high number, and it was not helping them to get across to get students to come to move motions, hence why proposed reduction in number.

And the last one.

27:03

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** So yes, again, this is a students, union governance committee, this is again about moving the list of committees from the Memorandum an Articles of Association to the Bylaws so again the Board of Trustees and Union Council can establish what committees could, could you know be required to run the student union properly.

So these are the proposed amendments, do we have any questions so far, please?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** I'm sorry that was extra boring but it is a necessity, so please do you have any questions.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** there has been a question asked and for the benefit of everyone 1% of the student population is 184.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Any questions.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** People are assimilating information and coming up with them.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** I understand, it's a lot of information that's the process through so please take your time and I'm happy to try and help you understand it, because that's essentially what we need is that you're the ones making these decisions.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Absolutely, if anyone needs any of the motions repeated as well.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Yes, or explained further do say.

29:19

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Why is the term for trustees three years?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Why is the trustees term three years um, well that's a perfectly good question I'll probably hand over to Anthony our CEO to give an answer to that question.

**Antony Blackshaw:** Thanks KC. Trustee positions in student unions, external trustee positions tend to attract longer terms, typically three or four years at a time, to provide continuity in in the Union, where the Officers change and the Student Trustees change on an annual basis. So it's just to provide that additional continuity for the Board.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** thank you for that Antony

30:22

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Were there any specific events or reasons that prompted a proposed reduction in required students signatures for petitions?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** there was no specific reasoning to that, as I was also a seconder to that policy.

But it just came off of the idea of you know, we are trying to get a more democratic Union, we have been saying we want more engagement from students, we want students to be more involved in decision making, so we thought that that number it was at before would be probably a difficult number to move motions if we always have to try to get 400 students to do that, So we thought that making more

reasonable, to reduce it to something that much easier for students can do some more things and faster.

31:34

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Okay, it doesn't look like there's more questions coming through so if we move to the vote on amendment one, which is the student petitions, changing from 400 signatures to 1% of the student body.

I will call for votes for, then vote against, then abstentions, if you could vote by the raise hand option in the participants window of zoo, that would be good because that's how we are voting.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Thank you KC

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Thank you Chair. Thank you everyone, I would just like to say to everyone to please do support this proposed amendments for more democratic... for the students to have more power, for your elected reps to have more power, oh yeah. Thank you.

32:25

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** So, votes for this amendment.

Those in favour of changing the required signatures for a referendum to from 400 to 1% of the student population.

Has everyone found the raise hand button, like that everyone, if you could all lower your hand.

Votes against if you raise your hands.

If you could lower your hands.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Yes, a reminder all full student Members are eligible to vote and any abstentions, please raise your hand. Thank you, if you would lower your hands

Now we move on to the voting of the second amendment. Trustee terms and Student Trustees, all those in favour of this amendment do please raise your hand. Against this amendment, please raise your hands. If you could lower your hands and any abstentions on this. Thank you.

38:28

Then three, Maximum term that Trustees can serve. All those in favour please raise your hand.

And while your votes have been counted it I'm going to go turn my light on because I look like a vampire.

Please raise your hands, if you could lower your hands. Thank you, if you could lower your hands.

40:53

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** So moving on to amendment for external trustees and student trustees being able to be removed by that body and not by referendum of students. If those in favour could raise their hands, please.

Against, you can lower your hands, and any abstention, lower hands. Thank you so, moving on to number five.

42:59

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** External and Student Trustees appointed by the Board of Trustees must be able to be removed by the Board all those in favour.

Thanks. All those against please raise your hand. Thank you, lower your hands. And if there are any abstentions, on this point. Thank you, if you can lower your hands.

45:31

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** On to number six, nearly there. This proposal seeks to reduce the number of signatures required to trigger a motion of no confidence in an elected officer from 800 to 1% of the membership, which is currently 184.

All those in favour, you can lower your hands. All those against. If you could blow your hands, and any abstentions. Thank you, if you could lower your hands.

48:15

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** And then the final one, number seven. A list of mandatory SU committees to be moved from the Memorandum and Articles of Association to the bylaws. This will allow the Board of Trustees, with agreement from the Union Council, to create whichever committees are necessary to properly govern the SU.

All those in favour. If you lower your hands. All those against. If you get a lower your hands and any abstention. Thank you, if you could lower your hands.

Excellent well that's all the amendments, I would remind everyone that while that's the end of the motions for this meeting, any student can submit an idea for an amendment or policy through student voice department or via the relevant elected representative on the on the Union Council, who will then motion it and will vote on it a Union Council on your behalf.

51:20

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** We're moving on to the accounts and finance report. So I would call on the SU interim Chief Executive, Antony Blackshaw. He will present the finance presentation and then he will be here to answer any questions you may have for him. So Antony, do please take the floor.

51:40

**Antony Blackshaw:** Thank you Chair, good evening to everybody, as Robert said I'm Anthony, I'm the interim Chief Executive, I have been here since the beginning of October. And I'm sorry, but this is also going to be very dull, but I hope it will make it as short as interesting as we possibly can.

It is a, it is a requirement constitutionally for us that we bring the financial affairs of the Union to the attention of all Members and there is some information here in terms of the basis upon which we operate in our governance, we are a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and it's important to note and remember that, the four elected Sabbatical Offices are full members of the Trustee Board and, together with the four External Trustees and currently two Student Trustees they make up the Trustee Board and the Chief Executive reports to, and is accountable to that Trustee Board.

We've slimmed down the information contained in the Trustees Report and financial statements of the student union which is a 46 page document, available to you on the website. to look at those in full down into a presentation that hopefully explains, some of the key headlines in relation to our finances.

I should say that we have deliberately....because this meeting is much later in the year than then would be normally the case because of COVID. What we've done, is we've taken the opportunity, not only to report on last year's formal final financial accounts, but also to talk about where we are up to in the year that we're currently in as well, so hopefully that will be of value.

And so, in terms of the year ending the 31st of July 2020. The headline figures of our total income from all sources was 4.9 million and our total expenditure was 5.4 million.

Now that would suggest that we made a loss of about 500,000 pounds, it is slightly more complicated than that, as will be explained in a little while, because included in that figure is a figure of approximately 900,000 pounds worth of additional pension deficits which are required to be shown on our accounts and I'll explain those when we get to that part of the report.

In fact, if we if we look at the year the student union actually recorded what we might what we call an operating surplus of 323 000. Although that does include, just for

complication, 178 000 pounds that were received as additional block grant for kitchen works, so those are those are the headline figures for last year.

Breaking that down a little bit just so that people understand. That income comes from two principal sources in normal years for which is the chance of activity, essentially our trading activities and associated activities and the block grant that we received from the University. Because we were in lockdown and because we closed in March, at the end of March last year in the last three months of the year... last four months of the year, sorry we were we were not trading and not able to function.

The block grant this year represents a much higher proportion of our total income, then would be normal and we will show that figure in a graph in a second. In this graph the other income of 251 000 shown on there was from COVID...the CGR.... the furlough scheme. The Governments furlough scheme that we have received for closed services with staff on furlough.

Moving on from there this this this graph shows how the union's income has gone over a substantial period of time and it's just it's interesting to note. The income that we received on the purple bars are the income that we generate ourselves and, as you can see, in recent years, up to 2019 that had stabilized, that a figure around 3.6, 3.7 million, which is, which is really, really, really substantial. That obviously, in the 2020 year, as you can see, that dropped quite substantially by over a million pounds and that reflects the fact that we were not trading from the end of March.

The block grant, that blue bar, you can see that the block grant has continued to rise. Although in recent years it has been more static and remember that that figure for last year, as we've already pointed out, that 2205 includes the this additional payment for support for kitchen works. That does not represent an increase in the base block grant which actually fell because our block grant is linked directly to student numbers and student numbers in the university fell last year and therefore we received less block grant. We are told that the university is expecting an uplift of around six percentage in student intake in the coming year, and therefore we will receive a small uplifting our block grant to match that.

56:52

So that's what the income that is, but what do we spend that money on.

These are the areas, the total spend...unfortunately, the total spend does include pension deficit, so rather than talk about the amount of is actually spent in each area, we're showing a percentage spend this year, obviously, running the commercial services, it's not all income, we have to show all the expenditure, the cost of cost of sales and the staffing for that area and that's 40% of our expenditure. Representation

takes a further 26%. Sports and Societies, including restricted money belong, which belongs directly to the clubs and societies accounts for another 26%. Welfare 4%, which includes the Advice service. Volunteering and Community 3% and then Governance of further 1% of the money that we spend in the Union.

Some more history, our financial journey, if we have a look at the first of these slides please, so this is to show our reserves and it is clear that the students union over the last 10 years or so, has done a fantastic job of ensuring that it had buffers and reserves to meet its outgoing and then recognizing the need it had to make sure that it could protect itself against the vagaries of the future, we couldn't have possibly predicted COVID but it's turned out to be very useful.

The current year that 2020 years shows the highest reserves figure of all so far. However, if we move on to the next slide, this figure does not include the pension adjustments. This slide gives the overall picture for the student union. Now this is slightly complex because the red bars are the level of pension deficit, which are required to be shown on the face of our accounts because of the way that the accounting standards apply.

There's no suggestion that that 2 million pounds that we have in deficit on the pension has to be paid off in a single go. We have a program to repay that money over the next 15 years, now, that is still not an unsubstantial amount of money that needs to be repaid every year. The trustees currently revising the reserves policy of the student Union to reflect the need to ensure that we always have enough in reserves to be at least a year ahead on the pension payments to make sure that we never get ourselves into difficulty in terms of repaying that pension.

In a normal year the pension payments are included in our standard profit and loss account. So you can see that the Union did a great job of building its reserves, up to the point at which the pension had to be listed and you can see then that we have stayed ahead.

This year, there was a... there was... we finally... the reason the pension deficit is increased by a million pounds is not anything to do with those us a student union, it is to do with it with an administrative problem that that that arose during a recent check of the scheme, it meant that every single Union in the, every union in the scheme, was subject to additional deficits that had to be added to that and therefore that's where that's where we're at but, at the minute our reserves are strong enough, and although this year and as we've as we've said in the report, that the fact that we have been closed for large chunks of the year and when we have been operating there have been substantially fewer students available on campus to use the services, means that we are projecting a loss this this year, even though we're making

maximum use of the furlough scheme, again, we are projecting approximately 200,000 pounds drop on the p&l (profit and loss) this year because of unavoidable loss of income, we are losing well over a million and a half pounds worth of income because of loss of sales and so those are the those are the headlines.

I know there's a hard to take in, and I see some questions coming in, which I will take and help hopefully have some clarity as I answer those questions. So just really to summarize it last year, saw us build continue to build reserves but because of this substantial increase in the pension liability means that at the end of the year, the balance sheet is in deficit, for the first time in many years it's minus 382 000 pounds.

1:01:41

**Antony Blackshaw:** but, as I say, that is not money that we have to repay, there is no, you know, there's no immediate requirement for us to repay that, we have a repayment schedule over the next 15 years, as do every single student union in the pension scheme. However, as we've said, the impact of COVID-19 and our closure on the current year, means that some of those reserves are going to have to be used to meet the shortfall in income that we've that we've had to put up with this year.

I hope that's useful I see some questions I should wait for the Chair to ask me those questions.

1:02:08

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** yeah just waiting for the questions come through on my chat.

Is the sharp drop in incoming Funds during 2020 the reason the SU decided to take on large sponsorship deals this year at the expense of overall student experience?

**Antony Blackshaw:** Those two things are unconnected, I hope everyone has seen that we have engaged very directly with the concerns that students have raised, particularly through Council.

In relation to the issues relating to sponsorship deals, and in particular I'm not going to name names, it would be inappropriate at this place, but a particular long term relationship with it with a an accommodation provider, which we listened very closely to Council and we got ourselves extricated from that agreement.

We continue to work with Council and the feedback we get from Council to make sure that that what the student Union is doing meets the demands of the students and that's not, we would not, that the idea is we would not use that way of softening the shortfall, we will take entirely appropriate, and I would hope ethical, responses to



help us through that difficulty, as I say, the reserves are comfortable are able to cope with that.

1:03:53

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Why has the Union allowed such a large pension deficit to happen?

**Antony Blackshaw:** So the pension deficit has nothing to do with the student union, just to be absolutely clear, it is a deficit of the pension scheme, of which, we are simply one employer, there are the majority of student unions in the UK were employer, individual members of that student Union superannuation scheme and, in common with almost all final salary pension schemes under the rules set down by the bodies that regulate this. There is a requirement to identify what the funding ratio of those schemes are and if the scheme falls below a particular funding ratio is deemed to be in a deficit. Our scheme is closed to entrants, nobody can join that scheme, but we are still dealing the historic fall out of the fact that we that there is a scheme which simply could not keep up with life expectancies in increasing out of all expectations of when the scheme was set up, and so, people are living a lot longer even though they're not working as long. And of course we when the when the scheme started interest rates were very high, as high as 15%, which meant that pension funds made enormous amounts of money just by simply by having big pots of money.

We now live in a very low interest economy and which means that there are those schemes are flat and cannot keep up with inflation, that means the deficit has continued to increase on the schemes, we continue to pay those schemes off. It will end, but it's nothing to do with the student union, it's nothing to do with any decision that was taken internally at all other than being part of the pension scheme which we are no longer in.

1:05:23

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** As the situation with coronavirus improves will UPSU you consider how it could adjust its existing business aspects, for example, the SU shop, to make these business aspects COVID secure and enable them to operate in a potential future where we yo-yo in and out of restrictions?

**Antony Blackshaw:** Absolutely, we're looking at all aspects, one of the things, there are many, many lessons have been learned as a result of COVID but certainly one of them is, you have to, we have to think about future proofing and how we would deal with these things so that in future. Even just beyond this, even beyond this pandemic it's about it's about how what can we do and how we do it to make sure that we can continue to operate. Whatever the operating scenario that we find ourselves in,

whether it be after Easter or even when we come back in September so yes, absolutely.

1:06:22

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** With this being second year of loss, what will change in the future, which will make the SU viable in the future. The previous year was not a pandemic influence year so this trend, cannot be entirely attributed to pandemic.

**Antony Blackshaw:** Okay, so for clarity when we talk about the loss that was made last year, we would be looking at the management accounts throughout the year. The actual operating...the students Union made an operating surplus last year. The reason we show a deficit on the accounts is simply because of the huge increase that we've got hit with this 900,000 pounds that we got hit with in terms of the pension.

So, in terms of the sustainable viability of the student union, last year was a very good year extremely good, year for the student union financially. This year will be, there's no question, this year will we will not breaking even this year. We will have to use some of those reserves to cover that shortfall but there's no suggestion that that's a trend that will be affecting the future and, in fact, there is an expectation that once we are back to normal, certainly the economy is expecting a bounce back and I think we, we would expect that too.

There are lots of people who have simply not had the proper student social experience this year at all, and the first years that will be arriving will also have been in lockdown and been unable to socialize for a large part of the year, and I think we are expecting next year, to be substantial and looking at how we can build additional capacity and support to enable, particularly our activities and student led activities, to flourish to meet that demand next year. I think we are sustainable, I hope that the graphs that show the way that the Union has built those reserves over time, show that it has been a sustainable model now for some time and we would expect that to continue.

1:08:13

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Will loss of income negatively affect the provision of financial support for clubs and societies in the next academic year.

**Antony Blackshaw:** No.

The intention is that there's an absolute line ruled off and I think we're all very clear on this one in the business, there is a clarity in the board and throughout the Senior Management.

This year, this year than one off year, we come, we continue to work with university to identify whether the university will support us through this difficult stage but not

surprisingly, I think they are taking the view that we have got reserves and therefore the Union can stand on its own two feet and I think you should as members of that Union be very proud of the work that's been done in the past to make sure that position is sustainable and is strong.

But no, next year's budgets will be based on operations, that is, that stands on its own two feet and will not have, it will not carry over from this year at all.

1:09:34

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** At what point did the SU sign up to the pension scheme 2 million pound liability seems large for such a small SU.

**Antony Blackshaw:** Yes, so basically the problem here is that most student unions signed up to their pensions in the 1980s. And at that time lots of student unions, including ourselves were running substantial commercial operations with substantial staff, full time permanent staff, which meant that everybody was in the pension scheme, it was a very expensive pension scheme, we now have far fewer staff in those areas because of the way that the market has gone.

So it does look odd now, and this is true for, for I do interim for... I should explain I am a professional SU interim, I've worked in eleven student unions in the last 10 years and, most of them have been in similar or worse situations. It's unfortunately a measure of how large we were the time we joined the scheme, rather than how large we are now and I completely agree it looks like a horrific amount of money to be to be facing, as I say, it does have to be read in the light of that works out to about 140,000 pounds a year that we have to find to repay, and that is within the margins of our expectations of surplus from our commercial trading activities at the moment.

And whilst that continues to be the case and the block grants will be used exclusively for student activities and student representation and not to worry to have to meet the short full on the pension, that will come from our commercial surplus and whether we can guarantee you that for the whole of the 15 years is challenging and we will continue to work on that, but yeah it's a huge amount of money and for those people who didn't live through that period it's a situation facing.... I mean if I tell you that the university's equivalent scheme is 17 billion in arrears currently and that is still open to people, people can still join that scheme and it's running a debt the US scheme, University Superannuation Scheme is running the deficit of 17 billion, at the minute.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Live Q and A open for another minute in cases any last questions. Okay

1:12:43

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Well, thank you Anthony.

So moving on to the affiliate section, and this is a requirement of the 1994 Education Act that affiliations are presented on annual basis, the affiliation costs to the national students Union ceased on the first of January 2020 and other items are listed in the subscriptions and memberships to sector support services, so this is, we just need a show of hands to ratify the subscriptions and membership section, the full accounts of those can be found online in the page that Antony mentioned in his presentation, so if those wishing to ratify these could raise a hand.

These affiliations they're things like training services support services, sector guidance, things like that. This is just a ratification vote. Basically, to say that these accounts that you can say, you can see, on your screen are a true reflection of the of the truth, the actual the actuality of the account. It's not a vote in favour for anything or against anything. Leave voting open for a few more seconds.

And we shall move on to, well before that, just a reminder that all the accounts and subscriptions or memberships can be found online on the SU website.

1:16:14

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** and moving on to the reports without a report from the board of trustees, so I will hand back over to KC to introduce this and then he shall be open to questions about it.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** So going into the Trustees Report we will be looking at the last 12 months as the last twelve months have been filled with a lot of COVID challenges, i'll say for everyone and, of course, the SU has not been excluded from this. I remember very clearly, I know, St Patrick's Day last year was my last day in office officially with my team, and after that I go into the new life of working from home.

Just during that period of the first lockdown we saw the departure of our long term CEO Gina Connelly who's been with us and we saw the arrival and departure again of another CEO Sarah Gibson before we had our current interim CEO, Anthony join us in October.

Of course, Antony has given a lot of detailed information on our financial position at the moment, but just to point out, you know, COVID continuously impacts our financial position at the moment and we're not taking it lightheartedly, we're still working constantly to ensure that we are able to function financially on its own side. Like Antony pointed out, one thing that seemed like a challenge to us is the pension deficit, but it's something like he said, the Trustees are continuously working on to improve.

On a positive note, UPSU have adapted quickly to working online now from running our Trustee meetings, Union Council meetings, I'm sure we have some Councillors here in the house.

Union Council meetings, the Advice Centre, they are running online via zoom or on Teams and we have been doing it successfully.

We've also done some interesting online activities like the Q&A session with university with key University senior staff members which was exciting to see. Also, we are already making plans, that once the government ease restrictions, making plans on reopening and what this will be like for the future. And part of what the Board of Trustees are also currently looking into is the recruitment of the new permanent Chief Executive, who should join us by the beginning of the next academic session.

Well so far, this is what this the last 12 months have been about, this is what it has been about for us. It's just a summary of you all, I believe we've seen the bigger report so I'm happy to take questions at this point, if you do have any please. I hope it's Okay, for us to do we have questions, please, if you do have question for me fill them in and I'll be happy to answer, I'm happy to answer questions for you guys to anything in the reports.

I'm happy to hand over back to the Chair to continue but if you do have questions do direct the questions accordingly.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Give it one more minute for the questions.

1:21:57

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Why are we paying NUS Services membership if we disaffiliated from NUS?

Obviously we can bring Antony in as well if you like.

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** yes, my question is, I think that question was there from Antony's Presentation so I am happy for Antony to come in for that question.

**Antony Blackshaw:** Thank you, yes, the question related to the affiliations, that NUS Services membership, which is a very low figure, it enables the students union, despite not being a member of NUS and not paying us affiliation fee, to benefit from the discounted prices that NUS negotiates for their members, it is a tiny amount compared to the discounts, which are which are available and it just provides the commercial team, the opportunity to benefit from those discounted prices. Hope that's okay.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** If there's no questions come in so shall we move on?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Thank you.

1:23:08

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** that's all right.

I am going to have to hand over to my deputy for this bit, I introduce the very lovely Owain.

**Owain Gullam (Deputy Chair):** It is my pleasure to hand directly back because not only is Robert the prestigious Chair of the All Student Meeting tonight, it is he's also got the pleasure of chairing the Union Council of which he's written report, which is the record for the shortest report of anything written for tonight. But, nonetheless, it is very worth listening to him, because all of the policies that you've engaged with your Reps over the past three Union Councils, Robert had the pleasure of overseeing them and will detail a little bit about the work they've been doing now.

**Robert Nutkins:** Yes, Hello I'm also Union Council Chair.

So Union Council is the legislative body of the SU, we make, or rather, the elected officers make policies which are binding for two years and the Sabbatical Officers, then have the duty of enacting them.

This year we have passed six policies now, in my report that says three but as of the meeting last week we passed another three, so we've additionally passed a policy on UPSU communications, on student representation and a training template for the SU for Course Reps and academic representatives, and that's the kind of thing that does really make me proud of this Council as I've detailed my report again.

This Council has really pulled it out when it comes to making positive changes for the students, I know that the policy they've worked on been more detailed and have had a bigger and better defined scope than anything that has gone before.

They, in addition to writing policies, the councillors, they do podcasts, they do forums, they do focus groups, they overview policies for the university, things like the Academic Policy that the Sabbatical Officers had a part in and the Well-being and Studying policy that we had to focus on. They do so much more than just talk to students and then vote on stuff and I think it's important to mark that duty as the Council.

They've also been taking part in the democratic review, which is a annual oversight of the, not oversight, it's the annual overseeing of the mechanisms that enact our democracy, it's things like is Union Council the best, it's how do we represent students best. By that they've given very, very detailed feedback towards that, and they are just, it's all for the students and this Council has really made it clear that they are fighting to make it the Students' Union and as our manager, of the Student Voice Team, Tracy always says, look at where the apostrophe is and that'll tell you whose Union it is, the union of students it's made up of us, even me, as the elected Chair. It is made up of us, and we need to use it to that advantage.

That's it. I'm done.

**Owain Gullam (Deputy Chair):** So with your ramblings.

They're have been no questions, yet which is either a really good thing or a really, really bad one because you put everyone to sleep so we'll give people a minute to ask anything of you. Because you get the best job on the Council, you just get to watch when everyone else does.

**Robert Nutkins:** I do, I did yeah.

**Owain Gullam (Deputy Chair):** So nobody's picking up on you, so far, so you might have gotten away scot free. Oh, never mind, spoke too soon.

Robert, why are you the best chair of all time, thanks Will.

I think the frosted tips and the mullet personally yeah.

**Robert Nutkins:** I mean, what other Chair in the history of this Union Council could pull off frosted tips and a mullet.

**Owain Gullam (Deputy Chair):** don't start that, that would just get us in trouble. That's everything so welcome Rob, you got away scot free, you can transform back into the Annual Student Meeting Chair now and I'm going to disappear.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Bye Owain.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Isn't he great. Alright, so moving on to the report from the Chair of the Accountability Board Alex.

1:29:18

**Alex Jobling:** Thank you Rob.

I was elected September, October, I can't remember, whichever month the elections were in to Chair of the Accountability Board, since then, the Board have endeavoured to fulfil manifestos that they were elected on and to fulfil the role and purpose of the Board itself, which is that of the disciplinary, advisory board for the Union Council.

When I stepped into the role, I found that, as I did when I before I heard about the role, I hadn't heard about the role at all barely about the Union Council, so some of the things we want to do is try and help publicize well, both the Board and Union Council.

So the Accountability Board is there to scrutinise both the elected officers and student led meetings to help ensure they are being as fair and representative as they could possibly be, and the make sure that the elected students that are there, that you have elected are doing the jobs and are being fair to everyone who is there to speak.

So our role as a Board, breaks down into four key areas essentially:

To hold meetings with the Sabbatical Officers and make sure they are doing their jobs right.

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. So that's making recommendations about the most appropriate course of action.

Suggesting as well when the Council is steering off course from their intended discussion point

Assessing policies submitted by students and making sure they are being progressed as well

I, as Chair of the board, have the added responsibility of attending Union Council to monitor the debate, make sure it's fair and unbiased and, like I said before, to make sure it's not going off track and to investigate any allegations of misconduct or unfair bias decision making made by the elected representatives that you, the student body have elected. To closely work with the Union Council Chair, Rob to identify and chase action points arising from the Council.

I think I should point out the Board, it should go without saying, is completely in the democratic principles, the student Union runs on and is beholden to because, I mean democracy. To that extent we have, as well as supporting the Chair of Union Council and its members, we've worked thoroughly to the achievement of our manifesto points which we were elected on.



So this was to ensure the democratic election that takes place, according to the new bylaws that are set out, so this is, because of COVID, we came into the time of having to do the Sabb elections online, and so the Accountability Board was there, we engaged with Student Voice to make sure the rules were fair essentially and to publicize why the Sabbatical Officer roles of Society and Sports VP's merged into VP Activities and to essentially ease student worry at this, because then we had heard about it a lot.

And to publicize both the Board and Council. I think we've done great on the on our manifesto points, we have publicized why the roles of Society and Sports were merged by the Trustee Board and that has, I've been told, Calmed students fears and student worry from the two particular group sports and Societies, as to why that happened.

The Board is essentially the tool for keeping your elected officials in line, I think that as a carrot and stick, we haven't had to use the stick, or hopefully we'll never have to use the stick and we just use a lot of carrot, which essentially praising your elected officials who have been doing a great job. This year I've had the privilege to work alongside some great elected Reps, some of the best that I've seen since I came to university three years ago and I've had, and they are brilliant, they have dedication that goes well and beyond. You know, they were elected in the time of COVID and academic upheaval and considering that they've all done absolutely brilliantly, Thank you.

1:34:24

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Thank you Alex and, yes, it has been a pleasure to work alongside you.

If we now go on. Oh yes, questions to Alex as the Chair of the Accountability Board.

Question in the Q&A function - Are the minutes of Union Council published somewhere?

**Alex Jobling:** They are published and the published somewhere on the student the website I don't know off the top my head sorry, I know Robert was supposed to ask me that question before it read it.

I can Google it and find out for you.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Even if you just Google UPSU Union Council it'll come up. There's a list of all the elected representatives, School Reps, Part-time Officers, Sabbatical Officers the policies we've enacted and there we go Thank you Tracy.

In the chat <https://www.upsu.com/studentvoice/representatives/unioncouncil/>

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** www dot UPSU dot com slash student voice slash representative slash Union Council so all the minutes are there, details of policies we've passed are there as well as the UPSU governing Bye-laws are there on the UPSU website

Any further questions.

**Alex Jobling:** Whilst we are waiting for questions I just wanted to reiterate, your elected officials this year, both Sabbs and Part-time Officers and the School Reps and your Course Reps have done great jobs, I think they've gone above and beyond this year, especially in times of COVID, where it has been a unprecedentedly weird, weird I think that's the right word to use.

No one quite knew what the year was going to be like I think the fact they put themselves forward for the role, let alone, did the role, let alone they've done the role of admirably and great as they have bodes well for the student body and the student union and the future.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** My sentiments exactly.

Given there were no new questions, I am happy to move on to the Sabbatical Officer reports, thank you Alex.

So if I could call upon again KC President of UPSU.

1:37:20

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Yes, yes, happy to be here again I'm just going to go through a few of my points, a few of the things I have been working on so far this year I believe and I hope, most of us have read the full document, full reports that has been shared prior to this and but yeah, like I said just to point out a few.

So with regards to the first one is Post Grad and international students engagements so with regards to that, and like I said it's with regards to Postgrads. Whilst in my first year of my Sabbatical role last year I realized that, you know, postgraduate engagement is something that we've been struggling with as an SU and it's something for myself I have to say, I want to see to increase the engagement with postgrads at the SU.

Last year I tried to organize them postgrads talk sessions again to get more, to get, to find out, to let them know how we can support them more and then find out what they want from us, and we did that last year we got somewhere with it in the sense

that we started some sort of communication with, we established a communication strategy with the Doctoral Board, since they do communicate with PGR students by themselves so they'll let us know when they want to put out communications to them and we give them information and that will be useful to the students but of course, COVID came in the way and disrupted that plan as it was just something that we're starting really but we are starting to revisit it again to continue to try and increase the engagement with regards to postgrads.

Both myself and the VP Education Emi have, we've met with faculty reps in the post Grad school and they've come to us with brilliant ideas it's delighting to see that they themselves, do also want to engage with the SU they also have said that they don't know what the SU could do for them and also have means that they would like to support the SU with as well from their own aspect like helping creating some sort of... putting something in place to support students who would like to translate from say undergrad or master's course to PGR courses so continuing with that currently and will keep you updated with that as I work on that.

The next one was something that I also picked up from my last year being a Sabbatical Officer, which is getting more representation on university committee meetings. These meetings are where decisions are being made for us and from the university aspects with regards to about students generally and I felt it would be more use, whenever we are at these meetings, they tend to do look at just the Sabbs to get to student views but I believe we can have more of our students who are enthusiastic about being involved, so why don't we use the students to get more views on student views generally.

So, at the beginning of my term I had a meeting with Academic Registrar to start with enjoyed the idea and we listed out the list of committee meetings at the university now a share to our Student Voice Manager Tracy who has supported me to appraise which Part- time officer, so which one's best fit for what meetings. So I'm happy that's progressing and I hope it will continue that way.

The third one was the meeting that we had, the Zoom call we had with Luke (Pollard, Plymouth Sutton and Devonport MP) as a result of an email we sent to him, due to, lacking... various challenges the students are facing at that time and we needed some sort of support from the government because we were going after the university for support, but a lot of the things they say to us, they say has come from the government, so we thought it would take upon ourselves to reach out to them. We as a Sabbatical Officer Team reached out, to other MPs and well and Luke responded saying that he's going to he's he was appreciative of that, he's looking to organise a Zoom call for students generally within his constituency which he did.

Students were there and poured out their hearts to him with the challenges that they face, and if you took it up and said he was going to do something about it, I also followed him up with an email, to say, to know how far he has gone with that and he responded to me with his letter that he did send to Gavin Williamson about the issues that students are facing and so, hopefully, we believe that will be progressed, now I'm still going to be chasing him up to know the progression of that.

But this leads me on to my last one here, uniting students in the city and the City Council, this is something that I had in mind, from the beginning of this academic session and it's just I see Plymouth pretty much as a student dominated city. I believe the students should have more involvement with the ongoing needs of the city, and so I had this idea in mind to have sort of like a big town hall group, so we have the city council and the student Council meeting, something called regularly to decide on things, and you know encourage students along with things that are going on, because, like I said it's a student city.

And I know and the bigger picture of this is, I shared this idea with CEO who would give me more even more knowledge on it and look to see that we have other students unions as well, who we work with well in the city being, Marjons student union and PCA so we've involved them in this we're going to have a three way union meeting together, a sabbatical meeting together to continue this plan and approach the council with this.

But so far, these are a few points, I just wanted to point out from my reports, I believe, like I said before, we have all read the report, so please, I'm happy to take questions on anything to do with that, thank you very much.

1:43:17

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** There we go again, any questions for KC?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** I feel like the people in this picture have questions, just because I feel like they are raising their hands at me, anyways.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** here we go.

Having been in the role of President for coming up to 12 months now you've listed student engagement as a win, having less than 30 students in this very meeting, would you still call it a win?

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** First of all I didn't say student engagement was a win, I did say the opposite of that actually with regards to some particular student groups, and never said it was a win.

but you saying that we haven't has a win this year, of course, we I wouldn't say we did not expect this so far, because, like I said students are facing a lot of challenges now, we did not see it fit to put so much pressure, in as much as this is very important for them to be part of, but we did not see if it was too much pressure on them , combining the pressures they have already for them to, do you know, to force them, to sort of force them to say you have to be here in this meeting, with regards to engagement in this meeting, but no I didn't say that student engagement has been a win this year. I said it's something that needs to continually be worked on. I hope I clarified that for whoever asked the question.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Okay well I'm happy to move on. Thank you KC

**Chukwudi Ezenyi:** Thank you very much.

1:46:34

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** So I will now call Emi Dowse Vice President of education.

**Emi Dowse:** Hi Robert, thank you for calling me up.

So I'll start by saying that I've got a lot of updates but I've just narrowed it down to my top four, but when I ran for VP Education, I did it on the belief that for students to succeed within their academic studies, they need to be supported in every walk of their student life, so not just their education, so you'll see that some of my points don't necessarily relate to education, but it will definitely impact their education.

With that being said, one of my manifesto points was about accessibility and it was specifically about having backgrounds, a pale or pastel colour and I've noticed that tonight we don't have that. I did bring it up with the people creating the presentation, but I think there has been an error, so what they've said they're going to send out a coloured version, so if anyone does need that accessible version that will be sent out.

But I'll get on to my first point, and that was about extenuating circumstances, so this, I'm really passionate about and it's about making the extenuating circumstances more accessible about some of the issues that students were facing and I'm really happy to say that I have been really successful in doing this manifesto point. So I've been on a extenuating circumstances policy review board and we've managed to get some issues which might not be affect all students but have a significant effect on some students, to be included.

So these are things like people can submit extenuating circumstances for terror attacks or natural disasters or any extreme form of event in their home country or their hometown so, even if it doesn't happen in Plymouth or doesn't happen to themselves, which I think is really good. Another one is about if a friend or family

member gets into an accident or a serious illness, then they can also submit extenuating circumstances. And these are two big things that came up when I was doing my campaigning last year about students saying that they needed that to be included, so that's great.

My next thing is about the safety net. The safety net, has been probably the biggest topic that I've been working on this year it's been ongoing since November and I've been lobbying the university, on students behalf, to implement a safety net. This has been something that I've really tried to collaborate and make sure I get as many students voices heard as possible, because not every student wants the same thing and it's still ongoing, I would have to say I know that some people are not happy with what's been done so far, and all I would say is it's still ongoing and I will always continue to update people as we go so not just tonight.

My third point is about Clever Student Lets and that's about representing students views on

Clever Student Lets, so over the summer we had a lot of people put forward their concerns about Clever Student Lets about their housing and what I did was, I took this and took it to Clever Student Lets directly, took your concerns and we worked on this, I worked on it with their previous CEO and current CEO to improve things for you students and it ultimately led to us ending our partnership mutually with them, but, that doesn't mean that we won't continue to advocate, on your behalf for any housing company, not just CSL (Clever Student Lets) If students have an issue we will definitely take it up.

This is one of the examples are all saying it's not just education, but it will impact your education. The final one is the buddy scheme, so this is something that I wanted to create because I wasn't able to do my life skill seminars and also because I knew that loneliness would be a big issue this year, so we've created a very simple scheme where students can buddy up, students in first year can buddy up with students in older years, currently it's a very basic scheme because we just wanted to make sure it was sustainable, but I hope to continue on with this next year and to continue growing it and making it more effective.

So, they are my main updates, please do ask me questions, and if you do have any questions after tonight feel free to email me.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Thank you Emi, any questions for Emi?

And of course I'm echoing what she just said, if you have any questions or issues for any of the Sabbatical Officers or elected representatives do feel free to get in touch via university email.

The buddy scheme has cut off in mid November, why?

**Emi Dowse:** Yeah, so that's not 100% true, it was true at the time and the main reason for that it was a very new and we didn't want to take on too many buddies and too many students because we wanted to make sure that those students who did sign up were completely supported, and that means that when we can take on more students, it will be more sustainable, so we don't just burn off straight away.

So it has opened up and closed since, and it will probably continue to for the end of the year, and we hope to make it so it can be continuous throughout the whole year for all students but up until we get it to a point where we can support all students who sign up effectively, we do have to cut it off because we don't want to have some people have half supported, if that makes sense.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** What advice would you give to your successor, about being an effective VP?

**Emi Dowse):** um, I think the best advice I would give is to really listen to what students want. It sometimes may be different to what you think it is, and also that means sometimes going out to them in different ways and making sure that you're not just going to the same people who always ask. But, I would also say just try and work your best not to let the uni put their views on you, but make sure you're sharing the student views, because sometimes it can be quite difficult in that sense.

1:54:45

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** give it a little bit longer and then we'll....okay well I'm happy to move on to Verity Lemm VP for Activities.

**Verity Lemm:** Hi everyone, thank you, Robert.

Hi, I'm actually really pleased to be here tonight and I'm really excited to present some of the work that I've been able to do this year. So what I will say is that with my role, I find myself doing lots of little things, rather than big projects so picking four things for me was actually really tricky, so I would encourage you to go back through my update to read some of the other things I've been doing may be equally as important.

But to start off with funding and facilities, I know this crops up every year in an activities, sports societies Sabbs manifesto, because it is so important to the students, they represent.

Obviously, with the changes of due to COVID, this has been shaped and warped all year. I would say one of the successes that I've achieved from this year was demonstrating the need of our societies to the university, I know the uni are aware of what sports facilities we need, but actually some of our societies do need specialist room and with COVID this became very limited, and it was a massive win when I was

able to present the case, on behalf of societies to the university and they were able to give us some different rooms at different times, which was fantastic and I hope this will carry on when we can restart back up, I'll definitely be checking in with that.

Also I've managed to build a relationship with the Director of Estates this year, I think this is going to be a relationship which will be really good in the future, he wants to know what students want on campus and what we're lacking and my main viewpoint is that all these changes to academic buildings and campus developments there encouraging students to come to campus but we're not looking after our students when they are on campus. So it's just building a relationship with him, so that we can work some things through, some ideas that we've discussed are; more studio spaces for yoga and mindfulness and also some sensory rooms and some quiet rooms.

My second point is mental wellbeing, I know this is so important and crops up in almost everyone's manifesto as well. I've been liaising with the university to continue our Wellbeing Advocate scheme, this is a scheme where students in clubs and societies have access to training, which allows them to signpost and look after their members.

So, this training has been continuing and I'm really pleased to say that I had over 50 Wellbeing Advocates this year in sports and societies and even with everything going on with COVID

I was able to extend the training on offer, I worked with our Advice Center to produce an SU specialized training session on what our Advice Center can offer and how you deal with information and the feedback from that was really valuable and we're also looking, staff from our Student Voice Department are hopefully going to be able to deliver bystander training which I'm really keen to get our clubs and societies involved with.

And also picking up one of the campaigns I ran last year and I've had connections with the Harbour who deal with alcohol and substance misuse and just bringing that training into our clubs and societies, which was planned and but obviously with COVID things got difficult but I'm going to hopefully bring that back in.

So, with the Faculty of Health, I lead the Faculty of Health, I'm the Lead representative here, this means that I work with the School Reps and Course Reps and listen to them and represent their views in meetings where it's not possible for them.

One of the great things that has come out of the work is a policy for webcam usage. With everything going online it's been a really difficult time for students and staff. You know how should we be using Zoom, how should we use teams and in the



Faculty of health, this has been extremely challenging due to professionalism so it's been great to work with the staff and get our School Reps involved in a policy which is going to be underway.

I've also been able to build on the relationship I've had with staff and the Faculty and I've met with staff from courses that have only been running two years, helped them and their Course Reps relay information between one another and just facilitate those conversations which been really positive. And also placements in the Faculty of health issues have been majorly disruptive so it's being there to support those students and Emi, and I have been running some focus groups to really try and pinpoint where the issues are within placements in the Faculty.

My final point, and as part of my role, I put myself forward to be elected as the southwest region representative within BUCS ( British Universities Colleges Sport) which I was delighted to take on, and this has meant that each.. I've had about four or five national meetings where I sit and be the voice for students in the southwest. This has helped me build relationships more than I ever imagined, so not only with staff throughout the southwest but also students from England, Scotland and Wales. We've been able to discuss issues even outside of sport so we've spoken about engaging our students, how can we look after our students, even if our sports clubs want to do zoom sessions, how can we make it actually beneficial and maybe not always to do with sport.

It's also given me a direct route into voicing about money and changes which is really important for our Union, obviously with sustainability moving forward and actually this week I feel it's really relevant to update, I was actually invited to a call for action to sit on a working group for transgender and non binary inclusivity it within campus in general and sport and sporting facilities which I'm really delighted for.

And I think that's it for those points, but like I said, please do have a read of everything else there's so much more that I'd love to talk about that we don't have time for this evening, thank you.

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Any questions for verity.  
We are slightly over running so do get them in quickly.  
Okay, well again I'm having to move on to Fawzy so thank you Verity.

2:02:17

Robert Nutkins (Chair): You are muted Fawzy.

**Fawzy Ahmed:** i'm so sorry.

Hi everyone, thank you Robert and thank you everyone for being here. Any questions, please feel free to send me an email or send me a message, as well as read my full report

So, one of the things I've worked on this year is celebrating diversity, so last year in October and November I led the campaign for Black History Month and Disability History Month, due to restrictions, most of the events were virtual but I collaborated with student groups and we hosted events collaboratively, ranging from open forums to virtual to watch parties.

LGBT+month, Movember, International Women's Day I ran a digital campaign which essentially focused on sharing posts which created awareness of those months. And one of the things I'm most excited about, which I'm currently working on is the hashtag be an ally campaign which is focused on sharing tips and creating awareness of some micro aggressions based on some marginalized groups such as BAME, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, Muslim and women and the main aim of this campaign is to create awareness of some of the prejudice that people and students face in our community and also to create awareness of the Speak Up tool.

The next point is Wellbeing Forum, so this was one of my main manifesto points when I ran last year, and it was to make Wellbeing Forums as regular as sports and society forums. So these forums are actually an open space for students to talk about anything related to Wellbeing and also for the feedback on the support services. I have posted a total of four Wellbeing Forums. Although the engagement isn't as much as I would have wanted it to be, the students that attend have told me that it's quite useful and the feedback they pass on to me I then pass on to the support services.

So the most recent Wellbeing Forum I held was on the 24th of February 2021 and I got in touch with the School Reps in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Business. So the attendance was better than the previous Wellbeing Forum and some of the feedback was on the theme of accessibility of the website, how the support services are advertised as well as the possibility of implementing Wellbeing champions and some students also shared their experiences of using some of the support services which other students found very useful. So before the school year ends I'm looking to host a few more and the university as well are looking to collaborate to host a few more feedback/Wellbeing forums.

My next point is to Access Progress and Participation Plan, so this is one of the projects that university is working towards it's focused on improving the access, progress and participation of underrepresented groups such as; BAME, students with disabilities, mature students as well as students from low income backgrounds. So as part of the Office for Students review, I am the lead nominated representative for the students submission as part of the OfS review which is focused on holding the

university accountable for the promises and activities, they said they were going to do for those underrepresented groups, and in terms of access, participation and progress. So for the submission I'm working closely with the Director of Student Experience in the SU and we are looking to put together a survey, based on the activities that the university have said they have put together for those students, so essentially we will be holding the university accountable for the promises they made.

The last thing I just want to quickly talk about is the rent rebate campaign. So at the beginning of the lockdown this year, many students were unable to access their accommodation as a result of COVID restriction, so I raised this issue in several university meeting, such as a meeting with the Vice Chancellor and at Student Life Committee. As a team we wrote a letter to the Plymouth MP's urging them to lobby university, as well as private landlords to offer some for financial relief during the period of lockdown.

I also put together a private landlord toolkit for students renting from private landlords which contains tips and information on how to rent during this pandemic, it also contained a template letter so that students could write to their MPs and also their private landlords.

So the university made the decision to offer a 50% rebate for the period between eighth of January to eight of March. As a team we do recognize that there are still some students up until this point to have still not been able to access their rooms beyond the end of March and we are still continuing to raise this issue with the university and we've raised it at a meeting with the Vice Chancellor. So as a team will continue to work and I'll continue to provide updates regarding rent. So, thank you that's all for me, I am happy to answer any questions anyone might have.

2:08:15

**Robert Nutkins (Chair):** Give a few more seconds.

Well, again I'm happy to move on, thank you Fawzy.

We didn't have any other business, so we can move on from that. I will call meeting to the close, thank you all for coming, and thank you for your questions, thank you for your engagement and have a good evening.