

King's College Student Union and King's College Graduate Society

Joint Open Meeting, 7 February 2010

Meeting opened at 19:14

Announcements: None

Apologies: Andrew Lynch

President statements

Jess: Important issue – college cutting down number of reps able to sit and vote on council. Terrible idea. Really important for students to be involved in decision making. Hard when we only have one person representing each body. Having meeting to come up with proposal fairly quickly before proposal is voted into action.

Council/Gov Body Reps

Francesco: Question is that college Gov Body has decided to reshuffle how council is organised for the next few years. Reduced number of people who sit on council. Not proportional – reduced junior members much more. From 17 in total to 12 in total. 4 students to 2 students. Our representation is going to be halved. We tried to draft a motion that'd be passed jointly. Both KCSU and KCGS note – decision made. Two presidents invited to *attend* council but only to speak not vote. Student representation important part of King's. Severely and unjustly reducing student involvement. Resolution to make fellows aware of students' emphatic rejection. Everyone to talk to supervisors and Doses. Make fellows know when you talk to them that you don't think this is a good idea. Suggestion that you give us a motion to change this. 3 student voting members, one grad, one undergrad, someone elected by both. Weighted system in favour of undergrads

Aris: First point – 3 voting members + 2 presidents.

Francesco: Sorry – Option 1: 3 voting members + 2 non-voting presidents. Might be a suitable but difficult compromise. Option 2: Fourth student, joint union council rep. Accountable to both execs. Sit in council as ex-officio observer. Option 3: Fourth student = KCSU/KCGS president depending on which is the undergrad. Ex-officio = Entitled to be there, right to speak but not to vote.

Discussion:

Jacob: I should point out that we have a joint statement – we have to mobilise as individual students.

Lotte: Part of the motion is that part of the resolution is to make the college fellows aware. Talking to fellows closest to them. Option of having a meeting with fellowship and students together. Trying to push the fellows in our direction.

Juan: I've spoken to fellows – theme of their response = Council has a very messy structure. Increasing the efficiency. Bullshit – having their agenda pushed easier. They will say “in any case, KC already special. We will always be in the minority. Why does it make a difference?” it does make a difference – in order for us to change opinion of council is by convincing some fellows that we're right. By reducing representation makes things harder – have to convince *more* fellows that we're right. Be ready to give a rebuttal to bullshit.

Munro: Would it be possible to create a central document/piece of information?

Shayan: Has anyone any objections/comments on motion proposed?

Chad: Resolves b)(i) says that the third will be chosen by weighted voting.

Francesco: Idea is that it would be proportionate to student numbers. Make it so that grads and undergrads have the same voice.

Achim Edelmann: Idea is that grads all voting together has the same power as all undergrads voting together.

Chad: Would third seat be open to nomination by all?

[Yes]

Chad: Are we meant to be deciding between the options?

Francesco: Yes.

Lotte: We need to go to the next congregation and, as four representatives, have a united voice. So it's important that we decide on one of these three options. It's crucial that we make a decision.

Anna Richardson: When we take this to next Gov Body, we'll have 5/10 minutes to talk. Won't go down well if we have lots of options.

Liz Rush: Believes b) – do we know what their reasons are for cutting us disproportionately? Do they think our contributions are unhelpful or that they slow the process down?

Aris: No clear justification for disproportionate reduction. Idea is that because of the new stance that every council member should be a trustee – Voting members elected through separate process would be college trustees.

Francesco: Our presidents won't be trustees, but our council reps will be. Independence from specific mandate. Separating those with clear political mandate (bursar, senior tutor, presidents) from those elected and independent.

Liz: So the two presidents would articulate interests of two student bodies.

Dechen Rochard: Fellows saying number of fellows would be reduced. Fellows already reduced.

Francesco: 4 to 2 still disproportionate

Jacob: Although it shouldn't frame this debate too much, I'll make point that charities law doesn't say that presidents ex-officio cannot vote. Chigbo sits on Uni council, has a vote. Does anyone have any problem with notes. believes. resolves a)?

Shayan: All in favour of voting in parts? [majority].

KCSU/KCGS Notes:

Objections?

Liz Rush: This would mean an additional commitment in terms of time of two presidents. Not something they took on board. Any objections from presidents?

Tindall: Noting as being acceptable, or as an unacceptable burden on presidents.

Anna: I was consulted on this – I said this wasn't a burden.

Luke: General comments – first of all, somebody said senior members will use argument that you'll always be in the minority. This isn't something we should accept in the first place. Point of democracy = 1 person 1 vote. If there's a hell of a lot of undergrads, why should they have decision making power? In terms of vote weighting – Are we convinced that weighting votes is actually a good thing? It makes the graduates as individuals have more power than undergraduates. This = Fundamentally unfair. We should be fighting for keeping us on it rather than going down. We should be moving towards a situation where we have more and more representation on this board. Worst-case that we should accept disproportionate reduction, but we should fight for more representation.

Tindall: Can we try and keep to the agenda?

Lotte: Answering both Luke's points – first of all, I agree it would make them individually more powerful. Grads here over the summer. Huge impact on who is on council during year. I fully agree we should theoretically be campaigning for votes on college council, and we have quite strongly at the last annual congregation. Seeing that the fellowship is quite antagonistic towards that motion. We have to go for the realistic option and campaign for what we can actually achieve.

Aris: To add something, in that sense we have to decide between option 1 and other two options.

Munro: Lotte made a good point. Divisive issue about how you create any voting system. I agree with Luke that you have one man one vote. Surely one person can represent both groups.

Shayan: Vote on Notes – [all in favour]

KCSU/KCGS Believes: Comments?

Luke: I'm not sure b should be in there, Suggests acceptance in status quo. Delete b.

Matt Merrick: We have to be realistic. They don't have to give us anything.

Luke: I'd like to propose removing b as a friendly amendment.

Alexa Zeitz: Contentious point is that the current composition isn't satisfactory to some. Is there a way to show that we believe some presence, as much as possible, has been constructive. We do believe in the constructive decision process.

Tindall: Propose - Student involvement in college has been a constructive opportunity for the college?

Lotte: Constructive to have a minimum of 4.

Francesco: Take away current composition.

Shayan: Right, friendly amendment gone through.

Francesco: "Student involvement in college council has been a constructive feature of college decision making &c"

Shayan: All in favour? [majority, 1 abstention]

Resolves:

Jacob: Can I suggest that we need to discuss b) in its entirety rather than first voting on 1 and then on 2.

Francesco: So we discuss everything?

Munro: Can we vote on a) first?

Tindall: Something needs to be said about a)? Munro brought up idea that we have a central document. Mandate someone to create such a document.

Shayan: Fact that we passed that as feasible part of motion.

Juan: I've written a friendly amendment on what Munro suggested.

Francesco: Shouldn't we decide first of all whether we're going for most radical position?

Aris: This [waves agenda] in itself is a document that should be used for that purpose. Once we vote, that'll make this document something to present.

Juan: Propose: add to a "To help members of both unions to do this by producing a letter or guidelines that provides advice on this"

Munro: Who to mandate?

Lotte: We agree to volunteer.

Shayan: All in favour of passing Part a [all in favour]

Francesco: Are we voting b (1) separately from b) (2)?

Jess: I have a question – wondering why we can't demand 4 representatives. What're we afraid of? Why do they have to either give us less or nothing?

Francesco: The way I see it, we've already had that battle and lost it. We've campaigned to keep 4 members. Despite everything, all 4 of us speaking and making arguments, *no* fellows voted in favour. The only one fellow who spoke in our favour proposed a compromise similar to what we're talking about now. A question of practical political reality. We do feel that 4 is fairer in total.

Jess: We hadn't informed the student body broadly enough. If we were to go and speak to fellows, would've been helpful to do that before last battle.

Francesco: Joint motion strongly opposed it, still went ahead.

Aris: Basically, what we have now is about three more months before this comes to a second vote before gov body in June. I agree with Jess. We did put a motion forward in last governing body. What is happening right now is really important and hadn't happened before. What we tried to convey was that generally students aren't happy with such a change. Now we can make a much more organised effort to actively communicate this. If we see that this is not working we can consider other options?

Jacob: Can I propose that we have two campaigning tactics. It'd seem ridiculous to me for lots of us to go and make political arguments based on proportionate reduction. Say we really value rep in the abstract. We can decide in two or three months through a process of working out reaction if we're going to propose this compromise. I think it'd be ridiculous to argue with these fellows on their own terms. If we're going to argue, persuade them that we need as much representation as possible. In the here and now, push for four.

Joseph Quayson: Is it not possible to meet with fellows and find out *why* they're not supporting us?

Francesco: I'll try and summarise reasons. Essentially, the number of fellows in council has been reduced over last 5 years considerably, while student representation wasn't being reduced. Progressive increase in student representation. If we're arguing for proportionality, standing on completely different intellectual ground.

Juan: It's important for us to bear in mind that if we do lose these positions, unlikely that we'll get them back. Is it going to increase or decrease our chances?

Shayan: I suggest that we amend a) to say "And attempt to maintain number of reps" however, on b) "Should this not be successful, to do as follows".

Tindall: Danger of making this too long. We need to make a summarised version.,

Francesco: Against this – it's very weak. "I want you to give me £100, but if you don't agree, I'll take £80".

Jacob: I don't think fighting for something more in our interest harms a fight for something else. Noone can prescribe to a specific student how to talk to fellow. Fellows understanding how we feel is the most important thing. I don't understand how they'd be less likely to accept that.

Munro: Firstly, you should keep such amendments to b. Idea to have student forum a good one. Thing about saying we should go for four people should be in b. Further amendment sensible. I came to this thinking a compromise is what we should fight for. Jacob's persuaded me it's best to go for gold. We say we want 4, we look like we're compromising if we go for 3.

Bryony: I agree with Jacob, but for me the point's important, if we pass the motion saying "This is what we're fighting for, but this is our backup." May back down to backup.

Lotte: don't think it's that unrealistic that we can persuade fellowship to get three. From speaking to provost, he mentioned it as an option but was unclear on how this person could be decided on. If we suggest how to choose third person. I think it makes a difference we have in a/b/c. a = option of having 5 people on council. Might be 3 votes + 2 non-votes. Conceivable to say 3 votes better than 2 votes.

Tindall: We might find that fellows, after talking to us, feel that it'd be right to take our side. We can decide based on fellowship.

Luke: Bear in mind context – Recession. Voices floating around the university about possible cuts. This is a very serious issue. Very long-term. Now isn't the time to be fighting defensive struggle. A few months down the line, might have to be fighting defensive. Fight on the offensive to put us in better position. Put ourselves in better situation to resist possible cutbacks.

Shayan: I see this a cut down into three sections. Vote to get four voting members and set aside rest of motion. Another option – vote for three members, whether we've got two more.

Aris: Fighting for four voting members, we don't account for two presidents. Two amendments: Two presidents are invited. Do we accept that presidents be among those four? This raises question of whether we challenge fellowship that elected reps should not have voting right.

Lotte: I think one really crucial thing, as Anna said, in the next Gov Body, we're going to have ten minutes max. We need to know what we're going for. Don't want to undermine our whole argument about council.

Shayan: My understanding is that incorporation of presidents into council is a condition of reducing voting members.

Francesco: Most radical possible idea would be to campaign for 4 AND presidents – This would be suicidal.

Liz Rush: Two voices that do not commit to impartiality..? We might have three votes but two voices extra.

Shayan: Vote on this idea of having four voting members plus two presidents.

Mike: Begin by voting on number of voting members. First – 4: additional vote. 3: More likely to get additional non-voting members. Suicidal to go for four.

Luke: Can I suggest an indicative vote on whether we should vote for 4 + votes?

Aris: Fellows think we need presidents on council.

Shayan: All those in favour of pushing four voting members and two voting members. [majority against]

All those in favour of pushing for four voting members raise hand: 12

In favour of three voting members: 19 for, 6 absentions.

[Result, pushing for three voting members]

Jacob: Split up what we're campaigning on. Pushing for four doesn't preclude pushing for three.

Juan: We have to understand that we'll always be in minority. Freedom of having people to lobby, not to outvote.

Francesco: Nothing prevents you from going to friendly fellow and saying it's much better to leave everything as it was. Free to be as radical as you want.

Dechen: I had difficulty. We've tried really hard. There's a flexibility here about idea o three.

Francesco: I want to clarify that we haven't decided the way of voting.

Chad: We shouldn't resolve to go to four.

Francesco: Motion will include 3, not 4.

Chad: Clearly there's a general consensus that we want as much as we can get, but that we can't possibly get it. "There will be at least three"

Tindall: People probably voted 3 thinking 4 unrealistic. This ticks the boxes.

Shayan: All in favour of amending this to "there will be **at least** three, one of which ". [majority]

Francesco: I can't draft a motion that there will be at least 3.

Jess: We can fix grammar by saying "one of which" not "the third".

Weighted Voting:

Tindall: Accountability. System where KCSU/KCGS has more representative vote. Holding account for actions difficult.

Munro: As I said before I don't see the need for weighted voting? Direct democracy, accountable to *both* unions. Very few areas where grads/undergrads have had major differences.

Dechen: Always been weighted one grad-one undergrad. Any suggestion from the grads could be completely ignored. Makes sense to be weighted. Every other representation has always been weighted.

Shayan: Political debate. Representatives directly answering.

Lotte: In the constitution it will say they're voted as integrative individual. It matters who the individual. Weighted voting allows for possibility of not *always* being undergrad.

Shayan: Person who is elected isn't elected as voice, but as an individual. Weighted voting = means to make it more fair.

Luke: Regardless of what it says in constitution or whatever. Principle that we elect representatives to deliver views we elect them on the basis of. Shouldn't stop us holding them to account if we want to. Therefore I think weighted voting is an important issue. I agree that there is normally one undergrad/one grad. That's strange in principle. Seems to imply grads/undergrads on different sides. It certainly doesn't happen in King's. We're on the **same side**. We want best accurate representation.

Liz: I agree, someone raised point that undergrads absent. Perhaps some system wherein more undergraduates, third an undergraduate. Designate someone in the summer.

Lotte: That won't work re: swearing into council. They won't accept two different people in same term.

Liz: So we'll lose people in summer period. Beneficial for *you* to have us there to take the vote in the summer time.

Shayan: Instead of talking about weighted voting.. If we weren't to have it, what would be the alternatives?

Jacob: If we didn't have that, vote by entire population.. There is one issue that might complicate things more. When would this vote take place? Would it take place when KCSU reps are voted on before Christmas?

Munro: Grads around over summer. Grads could use that as campaigning point – I'm likely to vote for grad on those grounds.

Francesco: It is very hard to try an argue that one vote shouldn't equal one head. Historical reason for current system of having two unions. In the past there *have* been problems. We can't guarantee that things will be wonderful forever. May be situations where conflicts will arise. That said, important to keep principle that we have equal representation in terms of communities. In the past when there was one union, it was automatically only undergrads.

Juan: Brief aside on summer issue – Are you allowed to vote by proxy?

Francesco: In the summer it was just me and Aris.

Luke: I live here over the summer – not true to divide it up in terms of living here over the summer. We have no guaranteed representation of women, black students etc. Dividing people up based on what identity they fall into, etc, why are grads special compared to black people?

Jacob: I propose 1 minutes guillotine?

Liz Rush: Accommodation issue is extremely important. One area of potential conflict. Some of our accommodation lost this year.

Aris: Reason we formulated motion in this way, we thought that depending on result of this, we'd address this imbalance by deciding whether fourth person would be kcsu/kcgs president.

Francesco: burning point is one phrase. While we're separate unions, we're separate communities.

Shayan: Vote: All those in favour of keeping weighted voting in the motion – For: 26, Against: 4, Abstentions: 5.

Francesco: Option a – two presidents attend with right to vote. b – two – Fourth person appointed by exec committees. Accountable and a member of both committees. New position incorporated into both unions, Joint Union Council Rep, Right to speak not to vote. Third option – Fourth person shall be the KCGS/KCSU president.

Juan: Option a clearly the best, encourages presidents to work together. Position of somebody ex-officio with non-voting rights, different form ex-officio with voting rights. Problem with b, is it SU or GS.

Munro: I agree with Juan, a is the best. Idea of having weighted system.. C undoes that.

Tindall: A is the clearest, easier to convey in meeting.

Lotte: That will provide that there'll be 5 people. Tactical decision to go to 4 much more likely to pass.

Shayan: All in favour of approving option a – 27 b – 0 c- 3 abstentions – 1.

Francesco: Strategy?

Juan: Option a mandates us as execs to meet to decide how best to present advice. I suggest we continue collaboration.

Jacob: I agree, but disagree with top-down model it proposes. Emphasis that this is people *at this meeting*. Generalised by everybody. Create a list for this? Once fellows met, needs to go into database. Methodical. I don't want us to just leave this down to going off to chat to people. Make working group of people in order to write things to help people. I also think that if the secretaries are on it, make sure we know everybody who was at meeting.

Juan: I don't see a reason t make separate working party. I suggest joint email list. If you don't care about issue, don't reply.

Tindall: Lots of people not on the execs want to be involved as well, writing letters, meeting with supervisors and DOSes. Should be coordinated.

Bryony: It'd be better to have a special working group than just the two execs. What form would the mailing list take?

Jacob: Undecided, just thought of it. Should be opt-in so as not to spam uninterested people.

Mike: Perhaps we should make a list of interested people now, send out a general e-mail and generate a list from responses.

Lotte: It's not going to work, people are too involved their own small groups and issues. We need to make this broad.

Munro: A special joint list would be helpful now and in the future, especially a well-moderated one.

Tindall: Keep it moderated well and used only for special issues, want to avoid misuse of mailing lists, no spam about lost phones, for example.

Shayan: Shall we vote on this?

Lotte: Make it a weekly meeting in lieu of a list?

Floor: List is easier

Jacob: Let's vote.

Tindall: What are we voting on?

Juan: A new list between KCGS and KCSU to coordinate efforts.

Juan: Don't we already have students@kings.cam.ac.uk?

Munro: It's college moderated.

Jacob: Why is announces just for KCSU?

Juan: Grads are on a different system and listed differently in the Hermes lookup.

Francesco: Can you add grads?

Juan: Manually.

Shayan: What are we voting on? [Straw poll in favor of combined list – passed.]

Francesco: So what's the strategy? How are we going about this?

Tindall: Can we have a five minute guillotine on discussion?

Floor: A model letter is a good idea, as is a working group – not everyone interested is on the execs – especially if we keep its remit small.

Jacob: We've agreed to lobby supervisors and fellows. Shall we pick a specific day to coordinate our efforts?

Shayan: Shall we mandate a group to generate a letter?

Aris: Our strategy is bigger than this. Which fellows are we lobbying? Who will be more influential? Perhaps some should be approached by mixed groups, perhaps some by smaller groups, some fellows have interests that make them more likely allies

Bryony: Where will this be decided by College? Where to direct our efforts?

Francesco: We can go to Governing Body directly, but better to approach Council first, and soon

Luke: Let's discuss this over an e-mail group.

Mike: Who will make the list?

Josh: I will.

Meeting closed at 20:43