

## **Union Review Open Meeting Held at Falmer on Thursday 11 December 2008**

Phil Gilks (PG), President, referred to the one to one survey covering the Democracy theme which had asked

How important is it that UBSU is a democratic organisation?  
60% of respondents agreed that it is

PG then asked those present

Why should we consult students rather than just making the decisions ourselves?  
“Officers are elected to make decisions”

How good is UBSU at electing the best Union officers?  
“There is a lack of awareness/understanding of what is required and therefore it is less likely that achievements be recognised  
Engagement is key; need to see how other unions tackle this (need to identify split campus unions with high levels of engagement)”

How easy is it to vote?  
“It is easier with e-voting but this needs promoting to the wider student community”

PG then referred to the on-line questionnaire and asked those present for their responses

When thinking about how decisions are made on my behalf ...  
“I feel able to lobby the elected student representatives to make sure my voice is heard  
There was low awareness amongst those present prior to the election”

I feel able to attend Students' Union meetings and share my views with others  
“This is an issue of engagement”

I believe that the elected student representatives are sufficiently informed to make the right decisions  
“Do students care?”

I don't believe that the elected student representatives are interested in what affects me  
“Different campuses have different cultures; students may identify with the officers on their campus but not necessarily wider Council  
Students need to identify with a leader (but is this campus based knowledge?)”

I feel aware and informed of the contribution elected student representatives make to University committee decisions  
“Poor awareness, few students could name the elected officers  
Need to make them care  
Need to communicate and engage  
Glamorise the job  
Officers with charisma tend to have the ability to get elected“

If I were to consider standing in the Students' Union elections, my motivation would be. . . . .

To create change and improve the experience for my fellow students locally and nationally

"There is a lower interest in national issues"

To continue my personal development and enhance my CV through training opportunities and responsibilities

"Yes"

I am not interested in standing for election

N/A

I know someone in the role and it appeals to me

"This is likely"

To maintain the student lifestyle which I currently enjoy

"I like being involved and wanted to stay at UoB"

When considering voting in the Students' Union elections, my motivation would be.

. . . . .

PG: Are videos/talking heads a good idea?

"look at government and industry models"

"Encourage officers to make youtube shorts"

When thinking about the nature of student democracy within UBSU, I believe that...

"Poor turnout at the open meeting says a lot"

"Candidate registration can be offputting"

"Noisy campaigning within close proximity of the ballot boxes is intimidating"

"E-voting anaesthetises democratic buy-in"

"No need to lose lobbying and campaigning"

"AGM is for clubs and socs only and is of little interest to ordinary students"

"Change the date; add value to the AGM; maybe a BGM?"

"Announce the elections at an AGM/BGM in March/April?"

PG: How can we better engage with students?

"Have hustings at the AGM?"

"Is the budget necessary at the AGM?"

"Incentives for elected officers – top up fees refund? Free accommodation for halls reps? Tokens for free lunch (Portsmouth)?"

"Send students a 'thank you for voting' message"

"Trusting officers to deliver manifesto pledges"

PG: How transparent is UBSU?

"Mapping the Union"

"We can only use what people contribute"

PG: Focus Groups

“We need a brief with defined demographics and a professional facilitator”

The following were proposed

International students

Part time and placement students

Mature students

Post grad students

The 5 campuses

Partner Colleges

SU officers

SU staff

UoB staff (academic and administrative)

UoB Governors (SMT; BoG; deans; Head of Schools)

10 to 12 in each focus group, students to be paid £20 plus travel costs; staff and governors given lunch