

OPEN UNIVERSITY  
LAW SOCIETY



**OPEN UNIVERSITY LAW SOCIETY**

**Society Committee**

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the 5th meeting of the 2024/25 Society Committee held online on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

**Present:**

Patricia Thomson

Chair

Mark Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle

Treasurer

William Brazier

Secretary/ Acting Vice-chair

**Agenda:**

To discuss the publication of the minutes to our members and document a timeline of events.

**Welcome:**

Patricia Thomson, Committee Chair, welcomed everyone to the 2024/25 Society Committee's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Housekeeping:**

N/A.

**Absent:**

N/A.

**Minutes of the last meeting:**

N/A.

**Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda:**

Ms Thomson

Ms Thomson [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

It was unanimously agreed by the Committee that these minutes should be removed pending advice from the OU Student Society Associations. The minutes were subsequently removed at 1604.

During the period following the removal of the minutes, the OULS received numerous requests, in fact, upwards of ten, from members for a copy of the minutes. The society unanimously agreed to refrain from any further comment until such time as advice sought.

Ms Thomson opened a conversation with Mr X from the OU Student Society Association on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October.

Later on, this same date, a Facebook post circulated in which the content of the OULS Communication sent on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October regarding the removal of the former Vice-chair was circulated. In the comment section of said post, members expressed confusion as to the absence of the minutes.

It was, for a second time, unanimously agreed by the Committee to refrain from comment until advice was sought.

Mr X of the Student Society Associations contacted Ms Thomson. Mr X affirmed that sharing the minutes in which the reasons for the former Vice-chair's removal were discussed is in no way a breach of data protection. Ms Thomson, in her opening to Mr X, explained the process the Committee followed to remove the former Vice-chair from office, a process of which was confirmed as correct. Furthermore, Mr X

explained that it was a matter of discretion (due to the absence of guidelines contained within the constitution) whether these minutes are published.

It was felt by the Committee that these minutes, and too any future minutes, should be published as they allow for transparency and accountability.

Mr X agreed with the initial decision for members should be made aware for the reason why the former Vice-chair was removed from office.

Ms Thomson's view on the matter was that the minutes should be published. These reasons are twofold and can be summarised as: The committee's main purpose is to ensure the continuity of the OULS, our duty is to our members, and they have the right to know. The members had low confidence in the society due to its dormancy and we should not provide any reason for them to experience this again, as it could jeopardise both the committee and the society as a whole. The members are the most important aspect of the OULS, we are appointed by them therefore transparency is key. Secondly, speculation will occur which could lead to incorrect beliefs about the removal of the vice-chair which could be significantly inaccurate.

Ms Thomson additionally sought advice from an alumnus of the OULS, who had previously held a position on previous Committees. For clarity, Ms Thomson confirmed that anybody could seek advice from external persons/ professionals regarding the OULS as set out under section 13. This alumnus stated that the OULS should publish these minutes.

#### Mr Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle

It was felt as though the terms binding on candidates for election to the Committee - In presenting themselves for election candidates agree to read and adhere to the system of administration laid out in the OULS Charter, such as, the Committee meetings being recorded in the minutes.

Mr Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle felt as though the Committee meetings provided a balanced view and was of the view that they should be published.

Additionally, the concern raised by Mr Brazier regarding the comment in the minutes mentioning the referral to the ACO of the matter. However, it was felt as though the

former Vice-chair would become aware of the referral in a matter of time, and it was important for the members to be aware of this process.

Mr Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle was of the opinion that the minutes should be rereleased without advertisement via an OULS communication.

Mr Brazier

Raised a concern regarding the mention of the referral to the ACO of the former Vice-chairs comment, however concurred with Mr Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle that it was important for the members to be aware of this process.

Mr Brazier confirmed that the minutes should be published to the members, as the OULS is a student society, and ultimately the Committee is accountable to the membership.

**Report:**

N/A.

**Actions:**

**Finance:**

N/A.

**Proposed changes to the society byelaws and society guidelines**

N/A.

**Any other business**

N/A.

**Date of next meeting**

N/A.

**Signed:**

William Brazier, Secretary.