

## **Accountability Complaint Report**

### **29 August 2018**

#### **1. Summary**

A Union member wrote to the 2017-18 YUSU President on 13 June 2018 proposing a motion of no confidence in the Policy Coordinator.

This matter was considered in line with the relevant bye-laws with the 2017-18 Officer Team concluding that: a) the complaint was valid; b) proceeding with a motion of no confidence would not be in the best interests of students, student volunteers or the Union; c) further discussion with the Policy Coordinator should be undertaken in an effort to address the conflict of interest underpinning the proposed motion of no confidence and resolve the situation.

This matter was not resolved by the end of term and the subsequent departure of the 2017-18 Officer team.

Following discussion with the 2018-19 President and Officer team the Policy Co-ordinator has announced their decision to step down as Managing Director of York Vision. The 2018-19 Officer team is of the opinion that this action will resolve the accountability complaint.

This summary report sets out:

- The procedure under which this matter has been considered.
- The concluding statement of the 2018-19 Sabbatical Team (29/8/18).
- The Policy Coordinator's statement (20/8/18).
- The motion of no confidence request.

#### **2. Overview**

The grounds of the complaint stemmed from the fact that the role of Policy Coordinator is being held by a member simultaneously in post as *York Vision* Managing Director, as stated by the complainant: *"I believe that it is inappropriate that a role so vital to fair and transparent union democracy is held by someone with a vested interest in the campus media"*.

The complaint sets out:

- Following election to the role of Policy Coordinator the Policy Coordinator sought co-option as Editor in Chief of *York Vision*. When the meeting expressed that this may cause a conflict of interests, he instead sought co-option to the role of Managing Director.
- A week later at the *Vision* AGM the Policy Coordinator sought and was successful in election to the role of MD. In response to a question about conflict of interest with the Policy Coordinator role, the Policy Coordinator said the role would not cause any such conflict.
- The Policy Coordinator has subsequently attended Media Committee in the capacity of *Vision* MD.

The complainant has proposed a motion of no confidence on the basis that these actions break bye-laws relating to the role of Policy Coordinator and the PRG.

Bye-law 4 s6 states “No member of Officer Group or of a committee of a Consultative Group (as outlined in Bye-law 9 [CREATING POLICY]) may serve on Policy & Review Group.”

### **3. Procedure**

The complaint was submitted to the President in line with bye-law 11 [Accountability] which sets out the procedure under which relevant officers (or Union groups) should consider and handle accountability matters.

It was considered in reference to bye-law 4 [Policy and Review Group], which sets out the duties, composition, reporting requirements and accountability provision in relation to Union accountability.

### **4. 2018-19 Officer Team – Concluding Statement (29/8/18)**

As a Full-Time Officer Team, we very much welcome the Policy Coordinator’s decision to step down from their position as *York Vision* Managing Director (MD).

Having received confirmation that they will leave their role as MD after *York Vision’s* by-elections in the first few weeks of next term, we are of the opinion that the conflict of interest will be resolved from that date forward.

We recognise that over the course of the Investigation, the Policy Coordinator has raised areas of disagreement in regards to the validity of the complaint brought against them under the Union’s accountability procedures. We are confident however that the outcome of the process is in the best interests of our student members and of all the involved parties.

Over the upcoming year, we are excited to work closely with students and the Policy Coordinator to consider how all members of our Union can contribute and shape decision making. We share with the Policy Coordinator a strong willingness to move forward together, and all are keen to get started on making the Policy Process a system which works for all students.

### **5. Statement from the Policy Coordinator (20/8/18)**

After much deliberation, I have decided to step down as Managing Director (MD) of *York Vision*.

The primary reason I stood for the position was to ensure that *Vision* had the necessary support and signatories to continue as a media group in the aftermath of targeted resignations by the previous society leadership aimed at destroying the paper.

Since then, *Vision* has rebounded and installed a new editorial team. In the knowledge that there are others willing and able to take up the mantle of MD, and for the sake of easing tensions related to my YUSU role, I believe the most beneficial option for all parties is for me to step back from *Vision*.

For the sake of clarity, it’s worth noting that I stand by the multiple comments I’ve made regarding the factual inaccuracy of the complaint lodged against me. This was made by an individual with a personal grudge due to their involvement in the efforts to sabotage *Vision*, and a history of spurious accusations and disreputable behaviour which has previously led to multiple investigations into their conduct.

I’ve previously highlighted the numerous issues with the complaint itself and the way in which the initial investigation was handled, including manners relating to clear conflicts of

interest by investigating parties and a lack of impartiality. I won't rehash them here as the point is largely moot with my upcoming resignation, but these are clear areas to be improved upon in any future investigations into alleged misconduct.

I will be leaving my role as MD at Vision's by-elections in the first few weeks of next term. I'd encourage anyone with an interest in journalism (or just what's going on around campus) to head along and stand for positions; strong student media full of passionate people is incredibly important for holding the University and YUSU to account.

As Policy Coordinator, I'm glad we've managed to find a resolution to this issue. I'm looking forward to working with the new sabbatical team on the bylaw redrafting, as well as improving the structure of the policy process to ensure that it's fit for purpose and open and accessible to all students.

As a final note, we'll be recruiting for the new Policy Review Group early next term. More information will be advertised closer to the time, but I'd definitely encourage you to apply if you're interested in improving the Union.

## 6. Letter to the YUSU president (received 13 June 2018) requesting a Motion of No Confidence

The Union President  
University of York Students Union  
The Student Centre  
University of York  
York  
YO10 5DD

Dear Alex,

I write to you as an ordinary member of the University of York Students' Union in accordance with by-law 11 to the Union's constitution.

Under ss.22-25 of that by-law, I wish to propose a motion of no confidence in the role of Policy Coordinator. Under the by-law, such a motion should be submitted to the policy coordinator - however I hope you understand why I am asking for yourself and the Executive Committee (or failing this, the Board at large) to consider this request, rather than the Policy & Review Group.

The grounds of my complaint are as follows:

Following his election to the role of Policy Coordinator, Josh Mackenzie sought co-option as the Editor in Chief of York Vision, a Student Media Group. When the meeting expressed that this may cause an issue of conflict between different interests, he instead sought co-option to the role of Managing Director.

One week later, at the York Vision AGM, he sought and was successful in being elected to the role of Managing Director. A member of the society, and previous Editor in Chief, expressed concern that the role may hold conflict with his role of Policy Coordinator. He said that the role would not cause any such conflict.

After the AGM had completed, I asked Josh if he intended to attend YUSU Media Committee as Managing Director, which I had previously done in the role. I was told he did. I understand he has since attended Media Committee.

*I believe that these actions break the by-laws relating to the role of policy coordinator and the policy and review group. This by-law (4) states s.6 "no member of Officer Group or of a committee of a Consultative Group (as outlined in By-law CREATING POLICY]) may serve on Policy & Review Group". The referenced by-law has not been updated since the creation of media committee, but would clearly include it (it includes societies committee, to which media committee is a direct comparison).*

*I also believe that it is inappropriate that a role so vital to fair and transparent union democracy is held by someone with a vested interest in the campus media - although not provided for in the by-laws or constitution, I think this is a clear conflict of interest.*

Best wishes,