

INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

There have been concerns expressed about 11-12 Trumpington Street's condition, and the lack of a centrally-located, accessible student facility in Cambridge for some time now. The past two presidents of CUSU and the incumbent, have all made manifesto pledges to find CUSU a permanent, purpose built home, and all three have been involved in negotiations with various senior Officials in the Old Schools over this issue. However, we appreciate that finding CUSU a suitable home in the centre of Cambridge is a very hard task.

CUSU has recently done a lot of work researching what students and student organisations and college unions want the future to be for their Union. As we will show during this report, students are in favour of their Union being similar to other University Student Unions – by having a recognisable 'union' where to seek support, services and representation. In its current state, 11-12 Trumpington Street is being outgrown by CUSU's increasing size and facilities. Ed Shattock, CUSU Services Officer 2004-2005, has compiled an inventory of 11-12 Trumpington Street, and this is included in the report, detailing the size, contents and function of each of the rooms in the building.

We would go as far to say that the current premises limit CUSU from offering the best service to its members. One major obstacle to continuing to reside in 11-12 Trumpington Street is that the building does not comply with Disability Discrimination Act, and is therefore illegal. There is also limited scope for 'reasonable adjustments', as the building's structure would not allow, for example, the installation of lifts.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has helped with the compilation of this report, particularly the Staff and Officers of CUSU.

If there are any questions regarding this report please contact Ed Shattock or Ben Wheeler

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WHERE WE STAND CURRENTLY – AN OVERVIEW

Cambridge University Students Union is currently housed in 11-12 Trumpington Street, on a row of Regency style terraced housing originally built in x. CUSU moved to these premises in 1990. Since then, the range of services and provisions CUSU offers has increased drastically and consequently, so has the staffing levels. Not only is 11-12 Trumpington Street home to 11 full-time members of staff and the CUSU Executive numbering some 22 elected part-time student officers, it houses The Cambridge Student (TCS) Newspaper, Varsity Newspaper, the Cambridge Students RAG Appeal, Cambridge Contact (student charity) and the CUSU Mail-Service. This means at any one time there can be around 20-30 people using the building and its facilities.

As the range of services and support CUSU offers has grown, so the building has struggled to keep up with the pace. Included in this report are photographs taken of the poor and frankly dangerous condition of the building. Apart from its inadequate size for one of the UK's most active and well-respected student unions, the building is totally inaccessible to wheelchair users. Small corridors and tight stairwells prevent CUSU from providing the best services it can to students with disabilities or those with mobility problems, and the building's condition is surely a discouragement to students with disabilities wanting to take part in the workings of their union, let alone seek advice or services. Due to its layout, 11-12 Trumpington Street doesn't comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2001. It is also debatable whether, given its current condition, the premises meets Fire Safety Regulations, as emergency exits are only located to the front of the building.

This cuts off CUSU Officers and the various other student organisations from students, and compared to other Student Union Facilities of CUSU's standing and size, CUSU lags far behind. The Oxford University Students' Union (OUSU) is located in a modern, purpose built facility close to the city centre and the colleges. As well as structural and layout problems, CUSU also suffers from problems which plague older buildings; damp permeates a number of rooms in the building.

Back in 2003-2004, CUSU conducted a postcard campaign of the entire student population entitled 'Tell Us What You Want from Your Union'. The majority of suggestions of what CUSU members wanted from their Union were overwhelming in support of a Central Union Building. Subsequently, an Open Meeting was held at Kings College on this subject, where the attendance was the highest on record in recent years. As a result of these, Ben Brinded, CUSU President 2003-2004, secured undergraduates trial membership of the University Centre, which is due for review December 2004. Undergraduates can currently take advantage of the University Centre's facilities including a university-subsidised bar, catering and cafe facilities. We have contacted the University Centre Manager, with the University Centre Management Team, with a view to extending the trial membership of the University Centre. Last time we met, feedback from staff at the University Centre was extremely positive.

Although the university centre is a useful facility for students and Student Officers (Sabbaticals' often hold meetings with JCR Officers in this building), it is only a temporary solution to a problem which has been debated between CUSU and the University for over 5 years. There is no visible office space in the University Centre, and facilities are currently shared between University and College Staff, graduates and undergraduates within the University. CUSU need a centrally-located, permanent home in order to continue to provide the range of services, support and representation they currently offer.

The CUSU is now at the stage in its development where it needs bigger, more purpose built and accessible facilities. The general student body as a whole need and deserve a centrally located student facility where students can access their union officers, and CUSU's three pronged provision - Services, Support and Representation. We believe that having a centrally located union building would benefit not only the current occupants of 11-12 Trumpington Street but reconnect CUSU members with their Union, by having a recognisable "Union" where to seek services, welfare support and the like. Ed Shattock and Ben Wheeler (CUSU Services Officer and Communications and Union Building Officer) have surveyed the college student unions, as well as various other interest and user groups. The response has been nearly unanimous. They want a centrally-located Union Building, a facility where can seek advice and representation, a venue where societies can hold meetings, or perhaps a place to have a coffee and chat with friends from other colleges. The comments and results from the questionnaires are included in this report. Of those surveyed, nearly 40% of all colleges applied.

In this report we will offer two different scenarios of what we would like from a Union Building. Firstly, we offer suggestion on what CUSU minimally needs. Secondly, we offer what CUSU would like in the best place scenario. There are general stipulations about the building for the University that CUSU members have told us they want is:

- Central location
- Accessible to all
- Recognisable facility to access CUSU Officers and other Union functions
- Student Leisure Facility (bar, common room etc)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHAT CUSU MINIMALLY NEEDS:

- A centrally located union building where CUSU can offer its members services and representation at the very best level, a student services point where undergraduate members of the university can have a student union facility to be justifiably proud of.

- Disabled access to all floors: To provide an equal footing for all of CUSU's members to get involved with the workings of their union, be it writing for TCS or Varsity, or attending meetings with CUSU Staff and student officers. CUSU currently has a students' with disabilities officer on its Exec, currently she cannot attend meetings or training in the CUSU Offices.

- Open and welcoming reception area: CUSU is currently very daunting to walk into, and feels very claustrophobic. An open and welcoming reception area would encourage more students to seek advice and get involved with their union. Also, the services CUSU offers cannot be fully participated in at the moment due to space pressures in 11-12 Trumpington Street. Once you get more than 3 people in reception it is crowded.

- Casework Rooms: Students visit the CUSU Offices in and out of term, offering support and advice, on a range of issues ranging from academic concerns to health concerns. Dedicated Casework rooms would help the CUSU Caseworkers be more accessible to students, by having a place where they can drop in for advice. The phonelines CUSU currently offers are EDS (Eating Disorder Support) helpline, Beeline, and LGBT (lesbigaytrans) advice and support line. Currently, the casework/ phonenumber room is dark and used for additional storage, due to the lack of space elsewhere.

- Adequate storage facilities: Currently, storage in the CUSU Offices is very difficult, with an inadequate archives room, meaning deliveries are piled in offices and worse still, the corridor due to the sheer lack of space. A new building would have to recognise that CUSU needs a very large storage area. In the current situation, it is very hard to keep areas in line with health and safety practices due to the lack of suitable and dedicated storage.

- Offices for the part-time exec: The CUSU Executive consists of 22 members and there is only one PC in the whole of 11-12 Trumpington Street dedicated for p/t Exec usage. Although 3 machines in the TCS Room can be used, these are often busy. Part-time officers also have no desk or storage space, making their job alot harder than necessary.

-Better facilities for TCS and Varsity: TCS and Varsity are cramped in two very small offices, totally unsuitable for Student Newspapers with a combined circulation of 20,000 copies a week during term time. In the period before going to print, there can be up to 10 people at a time working in these offices. Varsity employs a full-time business manager, who works in the Varsity Office.

- Meeting/ conference room: Currently, if the CUSU Executive wants to meet they have to beg, borrow and steal rooms from Colleges via Senior Tutors, or hold meetings in the University Centre. Sometimes this is very haphazard and can mean venues being changed at the last minute. The Services Officer, Entertainment Manager and Business Manager also hold important meetings with clients and other Student Unions. Currently, there is no suitable venue in which to have these meetings.

- Student common room: Students would ideally like a central bar/ cafe, similar to those which are in other unions across the country. If this is not possible, a student common room where people can meet and have a chat is a must in a new union building. This would help reconnect CUSU with its members. It would also give students a better value alternative outside of their college and expensive town entertainment venues.

- Enough offices for Sabbs, RAG and full-time staffers: Each sabbatical has an office, but facilities for student societies, the Executives of Cambridge Students RAG Appeal and CUSU are totally unacceptable. Offices are unequipped for the demands facing a modern student union.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT THE CUSU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN A CENTRAL UNION BUILDING

- Venue for Council: CUSU Council, which makes up JCR Presidents, External Officers and MCR Presidents, is the sovereign decision making body of the CUSU. Its membership stands at well around the 100 mark. At present, Council is rotated around colleges with suitable facilities. A central venue for council would mean problems with disabled access and the transportation of documents to venues would be erased. It may even encourage CUSU members to come to Council. Such a room could also be used for Society AGMs and related events.

- Bar/ cafe/ entertainment venue: CUSUEnts, the entertainments arm of the Student Union, are in the majority of cases the most contact the typical Cambridge Student has with their union. Nights such as 'Top Banana' at Ballare and 'Urbanite' at COCO have in recent years gone from strength to strength. A central venue for a university-wide entertainments programme would make CUSU are more commercial organisation, allowing it to make profit on its services. Such a result may lead to CUSU reducing college affiliation fees. A central bar or cafe, whilst not in competition to college butteries and bars would mean students could benefit from a central venue, similar to the Grad Cafe in the University Centre to meet friends for a coffee, beer etc.

-Student Advice Centre: An area where CUSU members could drop in for advice would greatly enhance our welfare provision, by inviting representatives of the University Counselling Service, Disability Resources Centre and local MPs and the like to chat to our members about issues affecting them in a neutral environment.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO 11-12 TRUMPINGTON STREET

In the short term, (i.e. a matter of months) the users of 11-12 Trumpington Street are most concerned by the untidy and dangerous state of the building, with the dangerous stair covering, rising damp and the noise and heat loss due to the lack of double glazing. CUSU would like the University Estate Management and Building Service to come and relay carpet and linoleum and to sort out the rising damp that permeates the building. Double glazing and a few structural adjustments also need to be done to the Students Union. CUSU would like to see the trial membership of the University Centre extended.

AUTHORS COMMENTS

In the medium term, CUSU would like to see the University give a guarantee to move the Students' Union Offices to a central location, with access for disabled students and anticipating the growth of the Union, within the next 5 years, ideally the Union would look to move from 11-12 Trumpington Street within 2-3 years. It is almost inevitable that the University would have to finance such a project as CUSU, as a charity has neither the capital or the resources to gain such capital.

CONTACT VC - meeting at CUSU

CONTACT CUSU Exec

Phone Fire Brigade -doesn't comply with Fire Regs.

Results

Recommendations - s/m/l term

Photographs

CIRCULATION LIST

Vice Chancellor -1

Pro VCs - 4

Head of Estate Management and Buildings Services

General Manager, University Centre

Registrary

Head of Health & Safety

All members of the University Council for information

TCS

Varsity

Cambridge Evening News

National Union Students' (NUS)

College Masters

College Senior Tutors

CUSU Executive

JCR Presidents

MCR Presidents

Ruth Keeling, President of the GU.

Alex Broadbent, GU VP

ACT ON INFO AND ARRANGE MEETING WITH VC, PRO-VC for Planning and Resources, HEAD OF EMBS, REGISTRARY