

# Motion that the membership believes the renaming of the Sugarhouse to be a contentious issue.

## Motion for Approval

### Name:

Josh Wardrop

[j.wardrop@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:j.wardrop@lancaster.ac.uk)

### This Union Notes:

- On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to rename the Sugarhouse. A press release to members was issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> March (via Facebook and the Student union Website).

### Background on the 2016 Articles of Association

- The powers of the Executive Committee are very clearly described within the Articles of Association (the legal basis of the Union's Governance),
- Under The Articles of Association, 3.2.3.7 Section a:

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*"Executive Committee has the power to pass a policy idea only where it is reasonable to be deemed as not contentious by the wider membership"*

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- Within the Article of Association 3.2.3.7 Section b:

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*"Executive committee must refer any policy idea, which it would be reasonable to deem as contentious by the wider membership to either a Student Jury or a referendum"*

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- When the articles were adopted in 2016 the Union President Will Hedley assured both the Union Council & the Trustee Board that the changes would democratise the union and prevent any contentious policies being implemented without democratic approval. His aim was to use prereferendums regularly to keep the membership invested in the decision-making process of the union. Much of the contemporary reporting is no longer available however notably this change was controversial at the time with SUBTEXT (Issue 146, 28 April 2016) reporting:

“All of this will apparently place more power in students' hands. LUSU Executive Committee is not an open meeting that any student can attend and speak at – LUSU Council is. If 'unanimity' can't be reached by the Executive Committee because a policy is 'controversial' (there is no definition of what constitutes 'controversial'), it will then go to a randomly selected 'student jury' who will attempt to reach unanimity. If the 'student jury' cannot reach unanimity, then the idea is put to a referendum – sorry – 'preferendum'. Juries are indeed democratic (the oldest form of democracy, in fact) but subtext hopes the student jury will be given the same support and unbiased information as a 'real life' one. However, that the Executive would be more or less prohibited from enacting any kind of policy without consulting the jury is a far more complex and overlong way of simply having students lobby their officers to do things.”

### The motion to rename Sugarhouse

- The motion in question on the renaming of the Sugarhouse passed by the Executive Committee was due to a Student Petition (with 229 Votes, approx. 1.4% of the membership).
- Within the petition itself it is noted that when the issue was raised with the Executive Committee previously there was a desire to “ensure that students were consulted before any name change or rebranding occurred.”.
- The renaming of the Sugarhouse was mentioned within the Executive Committee meeting on 11/08/2020. This meeting was published on Facebook on 09/09/2020. A lone comment regarding the “renaming” was made on the Facebook post stating “Renaming the Sugarhouse is completely unnecessary, it does not need to happen, we don’t want it to happen”. At the published meeting (11/08/2020) the Executive Committee clearly wanted the change to happen but were aware of the need to involve students in the process of renaming the Sugarhouse. Students with Disabilities Officer Molly Lawson said “It needs to happen”. VP Union Development Atree Ghosh described the need to go to students “Not to justify changing but to see what the end product in terms of a brand/name is”. BAME Students Officer Max Kafula “If we do get student feedback, I don’t think the executive committee, will have the final say, I think this will have to go to a preferendum as this will have major complications not only for the SU but for literally a whole new brand review” & “this has to be made by the students and not the exec, thank you”. Atree “Wholly agree with having the student opinion, not entirely sure a preferendum at it’s core is the best solution, potentially a polling exercise with people submitting candidate names” and “Have a debate and conversation and take the names to a preferendum”.

- Any consultation with students since the 11/08/2020 has been limited. On the petition there is notably a small but significant body of messages with “No”. The view of the petition is therefore not unanimous within the membership.
- Unsurprisingly, the Executive Committee’s decision has met a mixed response from students, with a lively debate occurring on the Facebook announcement. This could be seen as controversial.
- In 2019 the Union decided to close the Sugarhouse, this was met with a significant backlash from students. The membership is emotionally invested in the venue and it’s future. With this being in living memory of the Union the Executive Committee would be aware of the Membership’s views on the venue.
- When the motion was made public, it prompted debate within the student community.
- “Contentious” is defined (by OED) as “likely to cause an argument; controversial”.
- The purpose of the Executive Committee is to remain objective, and it must adhere to the Articles of Association and relevant Bylaws.

### This Union Believes

1. The Executive Committee was aware that the motion to rename the sugarhouse would be contentious (i.e. likely to cause an argument or controversial) by the wider membership.
2. The Executive Committee therefore did not act in accordance with The Articles of Association, 3.2.3.7 Section a. & b.
3. In accordance to the Articles of Association, 3.2.3.7 Section b. the matter should have been referred to a Student Jury or Referendum.
4. The Executive Committee should be reminded of their responsibilities as detailed within the Articles of Association.
5. The Articles of Association establishes the legal basis of the governance of the Union and the trustee board has overall responsibility for the governance of the Charity as defined in Article 28.2.1. The Trustee Boards’ role is to provide independent oversight of the executive structures of the Charity and to ensure the Charity is run lawfully. It has a duty to investigate independently any failure to comply with the Articles of Association as written.
6. In a healthy debate and collaboration with the membership on this issue and all future matters.

### This Union Resolves to:

1. Engage with all students on the issue.
2. Utilise the established democratic structure of a randomly selected Student Jury to determine a number of potential “candidate” names for the venue.
3. Put those candidate names of the nightclub to a preferendum, with the original name as an option. This will require a resolution from the trustee board under Article 15.5.2
4. Request that the Trusteeboard independently investigate this identified breach of the Articles of Association