

General Manager's Report A Note by Peter Haldane

Financial Reporting.

It has been pointed out to the College Finance Division that the Union's obligations to report financial results for 2008-09 under the new Charities Act will impose the requirement to frame our accounts in accordance with the current Charities SORP. This conflicts with the requirement from College to report in a way that can be consolidated into College accounts¹. This remains to be resolved.

Trading

Business in all trading areas remains firm. Management Accounts as at 31st March 2008 indicate that the Union continues overall in a healthy financial position. The current surplus is 52% above this time last year, largely because expected major expenditure for Phase 2 of the Building Project is not now going to take place until September 2008. Generally income has increased year on year by 17% (trading 13%); cost of sales by 16% and this has reduced the GP margin by 9% to 37%. This is being investigated with a view to reduction as far as possible. Bars maintain the improvement in turnover on last year, income up 17%, and are taking advantage of our ability to serve alcohol to the public through the mechanism of the Refectory Club, particularly in the summer and based on the Proms trade at the Albert Hall, making use of our USPs, the Quad area and the Union Bar. Catering remains in support of bars and subsidised by the bar trade. However, a new offer of an evening plated meal from a specific evening menu started on 6th May. Initial indications are that it has been well received and catering takings have responded by doubling those of last year, day on day. The breakfast offer, started in October 2007, has also been re-launched to determine if there is increased demand from students in the summer term and to take advantage of the demand from the public in the area. College will be using the ground floor of the Union in the summer vacation for breakfast preparation in support of the Beit Hall residential programme. In return, they have provided the Union with some new catering equipment and furniture. Retail (Shop and newsagent) maintains its improvement on last year; sales being up by 14%. The aim is to see if making use of a full time retail manager can return the shops to the level of profitability enjoyed before the lower level of profitability experienced in 2005-06. College are again showing interest in our performance.

Master Plan Building Project

Phase 2 of the Master Plan building project proceeds to cost and time plan. College have appointed an external project manager, Mr Alan Isaacs of Mortimer Isaacs. The architects have requested a 2 week delay in the programme in order to make a proposal for an improved solution to the new mezzanine floor arrangement; this was granted. Construction is now expected to start in September and last for 8 months.

Key Union Systems

The approach to be taken over the accounting system SAP is to upgrade to the latest version rather than attempt a patch upgrade of the current version. Evidence produced by the Union to the College ICT division about system performance has prompted a memory reconfiguration by College and this appears to have improved performance to an acceptable level. However, it remains the objective to establish a new Chart of Accounts for the system for FY 2008-09 in order to support further performance improvements.

¹ Imperial College Union are one of the few (if indeed the only) student Union that has its accounts consolidated into the accounts of its parent institution.