

Student Parliament 1
17/10/2023
Offline/Online meeting

Officers in attendance:

Offline:

Praise Opeyemi Ojumu (Democracy Convenor), Eva Curran (President), Charlie Wilson (VP Education), Molly McHugh (VP Sport), Rachael Okoh (VP Welfare), Pradeep Poduru (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Rep), Jo Fitzpatrick (Disabled Students' Rep), Muhammad Qaedi Bin Nasir (Faculty Rep Business Undergraduate) Shayesteh Moghadas (Faculty Rep Business Postgraduate), Wasiu Emmanuel Ogunkoya (Faculty Rep Engineering Postgraduate Research), Molly Biggar (Faculty Rep Humanities and Social Sciences Undergraduate), Johnnie Anderson (Faculty Rep Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Research), Ishan Babel (International Students' Rep), Maia Peat (LGBT+ Rep), Annie Rose Devereux (Women's Rep)

Online:

Vaisakh Constantine Francis (Halls Rep), Salma Ghazal (Part Time Students' Rep)

Apologies from:

Justyna Kardasz (Vice President Community), Yu-Chu (Kathy) Doong (Vice President Inclusion), Kate McMahon (Faculty Rep Engineering Undergraduate)

Staff in attendance:

Leo Howes (Head of Membership), Pat Joyce (Representation Coordinator)

Students in attendance: (incomplete list)

Kat Chan, Zoe MacPherson

1. Welcome and Parliamentary Procedure

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all attendees to introduce themselves. The Chair invited the Representation Coordinator to provide a summary of Parliamentary procedure including Robert's Rules which will be used during Student Parliament.

2. Agenda

The Chair asked for the agenda to be approved. Proposed by VP Education (VPE) and seconded VP Sport (VPS).

The Representation Coordinator (RC) noted item 6b - mandatory deadlines for opening all MyPlace pages, which was added after the agenda was originally published.

The agenda was approved.

3. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 27th February 2023 were approved.

Minutes of the meeting on 23rd March 2023 were approved.

4. Date and Time of Future Student Parliament Meetings

The RC summarised the dates of future Student Parliament meeting. 5pm was agreed by the majority to be the regular meeting start time.

5. Reports

a. President

The President gave their update – welcomed all and invited parliament to read the minutes of the executive team meeting for a more in-depth insight into the work they are doing on a weekly basis. Strategic framework setting out Uni and Union joint objectives was signed off today. Will share updates at Parliament.

Shared the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment policy summarising where the Union stands on supporting Palestine. Understand that Uni have reached out to all students with a recorded connection to the region and stated the importance of the Union also putting out a statement. Brought this to Parliament to gather insight from our representation. It has been suggested to take a fundraising and humanitarian approach for everyone affected. Opened the floor for input.

A discussion took place regarding this with points including:

- Focus on humanitarian approach
- Support for both the Palestinian and Jewish communities and students
- Suggestion of lobbying the Uni to cut any ties with weapons companies – suggested boycott of BAE Systems
- The Union doesn't support any Israeli companies
- The Union has a role to share facts and signpost students to available support
- Sharing of personal experiences
- the Union should be neutral and support all students, specifically with emotional and mental health – potential for priority access to services
- the Union should not take a neutral stance as this is considered to side with the oppressor
- Taking a neutral position would require the previous policy to be amended
- No tolerance towards anti-semitism
- Opinion that Western media is spreading biased misinformation causing stress to Palestinian students. Avoid taking actions on misinformation and protect Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim communities at the University
- Condemning the actions of the Israeli Government and Hamas.

The outcome of the discussion was that the President would draft a motion setting out the Union's political position and this would be considered later in the meeting.

b. Vice-President Community

The officer has submitted their apologies.

c. Vice-President Education

Report provided for info and invited feedback via email. Working to update Rep policy and StrathReps system. Planned data collection for students accessing support services for the first time. Review Union and MyPlace pages for StrathReps and training. Also engaging with PGR students about connecting with Union activities e.g. PGCert. Looking into AI and impact on assessment. Engaging with other unions for good practice examples of student representation.

d. Vice-President Inclusion

The officer has submitted their apologies.

e. Vice-President Sport

Club sport scoring system, reaching out to societies to share best practice. Exploring a Women in Sport Day alongside the President and Women's Rep. Successful start to the year, similar numbers to last year and aiming to break record numbers.

f. Vice-President Welfare

Working on a Creative Hub bringing together creative students. Updating student mental health agreement. Aiming to update Wednesday afternoon policy to include PG students. VPW has been elected Secretary of Glasgow Student Forum with the President elected as Chair. This group is working together on a campaign to target Council Taxes. Working on a housing campaign – webpage to gather input from students. Aiming to create a University Guarantor Scheme. Invited stories of student housing issues from the members.

- Experiences were shared including a member having to move far from the campus after a landlord found out he is a student. Lecturer had to step in as guarantor.
- Example of student housing commune at Edinburgh University which houses up to 200 students through shared ownership of a block of flats.
- Question of how a guarantor scheme can benefit recent graduates who also require housing
- Suggestion that this issue affects international students more as soon as they arrive in Glasgow. If Uni is reluctant to agree to scheme, push as a minimum for the Uni to provide a letter that the student has paid fees.
- Priority campaign of GSF is council tax including grace period for students until/after graduation.
- Finding a flat is time consuming. Uni should take this into account as students can't choose when a flat viewing takes place.
- The scheme should be available to all students. Lots of local students also impacted including commuter students not eligible to move into halls. Uni gaslights students by block booking halls then telling students they are.
- Shouldn't be a privilege, should be a right. Blame the landlords who raise the prices ostentatiously and overcharge for properties. Go after the landlords instead of blaming students.

VPW highlighted that the Union has services to support students including the Advice Hub. Will take forward this work with the University including the inclusion of housing issues in personal circumstances.

g. Non-Executive Officers

LGBT+ Rep – recently asked about nomination to Herald Diversity Awards. Initially said yes but then found out about BAE Systems sponsorship and nominated in same category as UCI Cycling which

recently banned trans women competing in women's categories so asked to withdraw. University said it was too late to do so. Outcome that we won the award jointly with UCI and now holding a meeting with the people involved in the session.

Women's Rep – Helping to organise the Fight for the Night March on 29th November and 16 Days of Activism between 25th November and 10th December. Engaging with external organisations. Speaking to Strathclyde Sport about windows to ensure students feel they can exercise safely. and meeting with other reps – part-time students' rep about support for part-time women students including PGRs.

International Students' Rep – have raised issue of international student graduations taking place after student visas expire – proposal for introduction of new March graduations. Paper about this has been passed at Student Experience Committee and the International Students' Rep and the President are taking this forward with the intention of bringing it to the next meeting of Senate.

6. Policy Proposals

a. Transition campus catering to 100% plant-based

Moved by Faculty Rep HaSS PGR and seconded by LGBT+ Rep.

An extensive discussion took place regarding this policy with points including:

- Concerns about price discrepancies between outlets and that there are cheaper places than the Union. Diverging the Union's offering would increase this potential for price discrepancy.
- Considerations about dietary requirements and challenges for some people to move to fully vegan offering.
- In recognition of the climate emergency, make more use of locally sourced foods. Lots of students with dietary requirements would be negatively impacted with choices reduced. Could work with campus catering to look at options.
- Students could save money on plant based options including main staples and use more of these in the catering system.
- The policy states 100% vegan to reflect the urgency of the climate emergency. The policy reflects the situation we're in, take action on research coming out from Universities. Transport makes up 6-8% of carbon footprint of food. Myth that eating local food will have impact.
- The motion authors would work carefully with the catering system to implement the menu.
- This policy has been proposed before.
- All vegan food is Halal and Kosher. Outlining for system change at the Union and University to act on research coming out of places like Oxford. Every student has right to bring own packed lunch.

The Representation Coordinator suggested that the members consider the principle of the policy and the other parts of the motion independently.

Discussion on the principle of the policy:

- Stirling Uni passed a similar policy and their catering provision has suffered and is at risk of this not continuing. Catering at Strath Union is self-funding and not for profit.
- Lack of market research on how Strathclyde students feel about this policy

- Benchmark how we measure impact in relation to the climate emergency. Union already aims to provide sustainably sourced food in the outlets.
- Stirling, Birmingham and Edinburgh have passed this motion. Strathclyde could be another flagship.
- The policy is not inclusive as it asks students to leave campus to find food which fits their diet.
- Parliament should consider how feasible it is for the Union to go 100% plant based. The Union is tied into NUS buying consortium and specific agreements.
- Student feedback would be useful
- Lots of PhD students are researching impacts of plant-based foods. If we want research, why not use their data and knowledge.

The VPE moved to refer the question to an ad hoc committee of no more than ten members including one member of Strath Union's catering staff, the VP Community, and students at large representing a cross-section of faculties and demographics.

Be it resolved that this committee be tasked with studying the referred policy, its ecological and economic implications, and student views and bring recommendations to Parliament.

The executive committee is to appoint the membership of the committee and report back to Parliament at its next session.

Moved - VPE and seconded – Faculty Rep Hass UG

Motion passed.

The Chair proposed a friendly amendment to the agenda to return to the earlier discussion on Palestine.

The President read out the draft position statement “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. Be it resolved that Strath Union reaffirms its support of the Palestinian state, condemning the attacks of the Israeli government on the people of Gaza and Palestine. Be it further resolved that Strath Union condemns the government, not the people. Anti-semitic, islamophobic and racist behaviour are not welcome in our society or campus. Strath Union supports the Jewish community at Strathclyde University.”

Moved by the President and seconded by FR HaSS UG.

Motion passed by majority.

7. Adjournment

Moved by VPE and seconded by Faculty Rep Business Undergraduate.

The motion was approved by majority and the meeting was adjourned by the Chair.