

Student Parliament 1
27/09/2022
Offline/Online meeting

Officers in attendance:

Offline:

Arran Lamont (VP Education), Lewis McDermott (VP Welfare), Ronan Welch (VP Sport), Adam Morrow (President), Yu-Chu (Kathy) Doong (VP Inclusion), Justyna Kardasz (VP Community), Vivek Malik (Mature Students' Rep) Molly Biggar (Faculty Rep HaSS UG), Eva Curran (Women's Rep), Musa Bello (BAME Students' Rep), Alistair Cooper (Faculty Rep Engineering UG), Hemanth Dhulipalla (Faculty Rep Engineering PGT), Muhammad Qaedi Bin Nasir (Faculty Rep Business UG), Mohammed Gusbi (Faculty Rep Science PGR), Muntana Naseer (Faculty Rep Science UG), Maia Peat (LGBT+ Rep), Stutee Karulkar (Faculty Rep Science PGT)

Online:

Diksha Shandilya (Interfaith Rep), Swati Choudhary (International Students' Rep), Grace Alom. (Part-time Students' Rep), Abdul Eneser (Halls Rep), Ziqing Yin, Shafa Ayaz,

Absence:

Atif Sattar (Faculty Rep Business PGT), Rebekah Chatellier (Faculty Rep HaSS PGR)

Staff in attendance:

Adam Crawley (Policy & Campaigns Coordinator), Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement), Amy Baddeley (Representation Coordinator), Natalie Bello (Student Engagement Support Staff), Maisie Keogh (Student Engagement Support Staff), Ashanti Magoma (Student Engagement Support Staff)

Students in attendance:

Matilda, Liam, Lottie, Murie, Jade

Apologies:

Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor)

1. Welcome and Code of Conduct

Everyone is welcomed by Adam Morrow who was acting as Chair for today's meeting, and he reminded Student Parliament of what would be discussed.

2. Approval and note of previous minutes

Approval of previous minutes are passed from the previous meeting at Student Parliament.

a. Student Parliament Minutes – 23rd March 2022

No comments or queries were raised about the last minutes. These were passed.

b. Exec Committee Minutes – March to September

No comments or queries were raised about the last minutes. These were noted.

3. The Student Exec Update

Arran mentioned what the priority projects were for the newly elected officers. A major area of focus was the cost-of-living campaign. The union and officers are dedicated to helping students through this crisis. Arran stated that they will be bringing more up-to-date information on this issue as soon as possible. Secondly, Arran mentioned the sexual health campaign and passed this topic to Lewis to discuss further.

Lewis noted that the sexual health campaign would be a priority this year with students returning back to campus for the first time in up to three years. Ronan provided sexual health statistics as follows: out of all the universities within the UK, the University of Strathclyde is top five highest risk for STIs. Lewis said they have started a sexual health working group that will meet with key partners at the university. They will be doing a lot of campaigning and working with organisations like Terrence Higgins Trust to do more drop-in sexual health testing on campus. One of the long-term goals would be exploring if a sexual health clinic could be on campus or near campus for the use of Strathclyde students. Ronan added that Strathclyde Sport have already organised a sexual health drop-in clinic for first and second semester.

Arran said the final priority project for this year was about accessible learning. The officers recognise that students have many responsibilities in their lives other than attending university, whether it is students with disabilities or care responsibilities. The officers want to make sure the right provisions are in place. For example, the return to campus 5 days a week, 9 to 5 might not work for everyone. Arran noted that they took a paper to the Student Experience committee last week. They are looking to set up a working group on that topic in the coming weeks to explore the issues further.

a. Individual Officer Updates

Arran is looking to further support Strath Reps which is the new online platform the union is using to elect reps. Elections for class reps are open as of noon on September 27th. Please encourage students to run in these elections. Another individual priority is the higher education attainment record. Lastly, Arran also mentioned the student partnership agreement, but will be bringing more information to Student Parliament when it is ready.

Justyna noted one of the larger projects she is working on this year is the sustainability hub. It is a joint venture between the union and the university. This could be a space for the Climate Action Group. Justyna is also working on a project which is looking to get societies to take on an extra role to help students plan events. Lastly, Justyna and Kathy are working on a sensory room which will likely be located on the second floor. This project is in the early stages of planning.

Kathy mentioned that October is Black History Month. She will have two speakers and has also secured a week of workshop space to create art to celebrate black culture and talent. Secondly, she wants to create more relatable events for the LGBT+ society and make events more accessible. Lastly, she is looking to support election for the Disabled Student Rep because that position is still vacant. Kathy would like to work closely with the person elected to that position.

The main priorities for Lewis are sexual health, mental health, and the housing crisis. They have started working on sexual health goals as noted earlier. Lewis has been working heavily on the housing issues and has no news yet to share with parliament. However, it was noted that there were conversations happening behind the scenes that could not be shared at this moment. For mental health, Lewis is drafting and finalising a new student mental health agreement for 2023-2025. They have also started that drafting process and forming a partnership with the Disability and Wellbeing Service and a subsection of the NUS. Lewis wants to make sure a draft of the agreement works well

for Strathclyde students. Lewis is working closely with key partners at the university to address the cost-of-living crisis. Please get in contact with Lewis if you would like any further detail.

Ronan said the Strath Sport Union numbers are doing better than ever with membership increasing by 500 since last year. He also noted that 50 people attended volunteer training which was important because it adds value to the volunteer experience. Ronan has finished the early planning stages of the online courses to ensure each volunteer is putting in time into Strath Sports. Ronan wanted to achieve an initiative for all new Strathclyde Sport members to get five pounds back. He aimed to retain that discount, but that is not going to be possible. Ronan is going to make a big push for the Wednesday afternoon initiative which is to have no lectures booked for Wednesday afternoon so this can be a time for health and wellbeing. Ronan would like to have Wednesday afternoon's rebranded as sport and wellbeing time. He is also working on the sexual health initiative with STI testing drop-ins held by Strath Sport during both semesters. Ronan is looking to continue holding events like Sports Ball, Captions Dinner, and Ceilidhs. Finally, he is working on inclusion in sport within the university.

Adam is working with key partners in the university on the cost-of-living crisis and making life financially easier for students in the union. In terms of housing, as Lewis mentioned, conversations are happening in the background and hopefully there will be more information to share soon. Adam is also working with the Disability and Wellbeing service, particularly on reinvigorating the counselling service.

3. Action Groups Update

Adam introduced the climate action group – Jade talks about how there is not much of a current update, but they had a fresher's event that attracted new members. They have been submitting ideas for the sustainability hub. They are also focusing on the diverse campaign with People and Planets. Jade noted that they were thinking of having a workshop to educate people on the campaign and People and Planets. A second member of the Climate Action group noted that sustainability is fundamentally about meeting the needs of the present. They will be submitting a manifesto for a democratic assembly to discuss environmental issues that concern students and staff. They will get the individuals to sign this document by Google form. They hope to hold the next assembly in October. Liam stated that they held their first meeting last week in which they discussed issues mainly pertaining to university pensions which are invested in fossil fuel companies.

Mental Health and Cost-of-Living action groups have not meet.

4. Policy Proposal

- **HEAR We Go**

Arran talked about how the higher education record is the standard document for what extracurricular activities a student is involved in. Therefore, any additional activities a student does during their time at Strathclyde would be documented on your transcript. This action provides proof of what the student has done which can be professionally beneficial. Strath Union has been pushing for this for a long time and it is a lapsed policy. Arran took a paper to Student Experience that passed and there is the intention to set up a working group to explore this topic further. Arran wanted to get the thoughts and support of Student Parliament before taking it any further.

No one offered any comments or opposed. It was put to a vote and was approved unanimously.

5. Lapsing Policy - Proposal

A sizeable number of policies are due to lapse. Adam asked for individuals to volunteer, meet, and discuss those policies. Adam is going to be involved in this and Lewis, Arran, and Justyna also volunteered. Anyone else interested in volunteering can send an email.

Change-it Schedules - Ratification:

This policy was passed last year but the board of trustees passed with amendments. Adam asked parliament to ratify the changes made.

No objections were made and the changes are ratified.

6. Housing and Cost-of-Living Crisis

Molly: She said that HaSS department was telling students to defer for a semester or a year as a solution for the housing crisis or for students that have to travel far to Strathclyde. Molly does not believe it is fair because students are missing out on their education and university experience.

Lewis responds: Lewis said departments should not be telling students to drop out as the first point of action. That is not the conversations Lewis and Adam are having with the university or the advice students would get from the advice hub. It is not something they are suggesting to the student body. There are plans to help students with the cost-of-living, especially those living further away from the university. Students living in Glasgow now have the first 60 minutes free on Next Bike.

Student: The student noted an article about University of Glasgow, who are doing the same thing for their students was published.

Liam: Liam asked a question about what the Strath Union is going to do about the housing crisis since this is happening across the UK.

Student: The student added onto Liam's question stating the housing crisis is an urgent matter because international students are traveling from abroad and their visa expires in a certain span of time. The student noted that departments should not be telling people to defer. How quickly is the union and the university going to address this issue?

Lewis responds: Lewis noted how they were unable to share the conversations happening behind the scenes. Neither Adam nor Lewis were allowed to mention any resolutions until they were 100% sure they will happen. However, even the solutions proposed will not be enough. Lewis offered for anyone wanted to brainstorm more ideas to get involved.

Adam responds: One of the tasks they are working on is ways to prevent this housing crisis from happening again. This is the second year running where the university has been faced with students being homeless.

Liam: Liam asked if financial compensation will be available for students that are asked to defer.

Adam responds: Regardless of the cost-of-living crisis, the university should be doing more to support students. They are pushing for financial help and Lewis noted there is a housing support fund. However, that fund does not help students if there aren't any homes. Lewis also noted that in

terms of financial initiatives for students asked to defer, the university does not want to be asking students to defer. The conversations they are having is about how we can help students. However, if the conversations change to deferment they would be pushing for financial initiative.

Abdul: Abdul comments that the bike initiative is great but excludes minority student that may be visually impaired or individuals who can't ride a bike. Abdul suggested since students are having to live further away if shuttle buses would be an option to help students.

Lewis responds: Lewis felt this was a great suggestion and would be happy to pass on the idea. Lewis felt it would be beneficial to figure out an area where students living further away are staying. Lewis also mentioned that the sign-up process for the free bus pass is difficult and not all students can access it due to age. There have been discussions about the university helping with that process. They would ensure this process was replicated for additional students looking to get travel compensation due to disabilities.

Abdul: Abdul asked a second follow-up question on guarantees that this housing crisis does not happen again. Would you suggest to the university to have a cap on offers for the next year?

Lewis responds: Lewis said the standing policy on housing is for the university to submit a housing impact assessment alongside their recruitment targets. It is not asking the university to cap recruitments, but it is asking the university to think if they are recruiting a certain number of students how it will affect the local housing market.

Abdul: Abdul asked a final question on the cost-of-living crisis. Abdul mentioned that last year a rent cap was put on student accommodation at Strathclyde. Would you work with NUS this year to ensure a cap on the amount students are being charged rent?

Lewis responds: Lewis would be happy to do that and noted that a rent freeze was again put in place for Strathclyde accommodations.

Student: The student asked why are there not steps to put courses online as a temporary solution to the housing crisis?

Arran responds: Arran agreed with this question and felt the university should be doing more in terms of offering alternatives. Arran felt that this could be extended to accessible learning. However, it is not something the university is considering due to certain courses that must meet professional standards. The university was given special permission to put courses online during Covid-19.

Lewis responds: Lewis suggest letting your faculty or course coordinator know if you are struggling. Log this information on your personal circumstances so this will not affect you during examination time.

Arran responds: Arran added that faculties often consider students on a case-by-case basis for provisions.

Student: A student commented on how international students are struggling for accommodation and asked how they can push their faculty to go online?

Adam responds: Adam noted that it is easier for some faculties to go online verse other faculties due to the accreditations from external bodies and standardisation across departments.

Arran: Arran added that a working group has been started on this topic. Faculty reps can ask questions and keep piling on the pressure.

Maia: Maia asked if the second TIC building would be better suited as accommodation for students.

Adam responds: Adam said this would be unlikely due to the donation that was given for that building. The university would find it hard to reallocate that donation.

Lewis responds: Lewis added that the new halls are being built. However, the building has been pushed back because not enough rooms were going to be built to meet demands. This project will not be finished until 2030.

Liam: Liam stated that the university has recruited more international students and needs to shoulder the crisis they are causing to housing. More people coming from further away and for shorter periods (like exchange students) are struggling to find accommodation, so is it being considered on ways to help them?

Lewis responds: Again, noted we are early in conversations about housing. The bare minimum would be that there is enough housing for everyone which includes international students. Lewis suggested Liam talk more with them about his ideas.

Student: A student asked how students could get more involved in the housing crisis.

Lewis responds: Lewis suggested getting involved in the housing action groups and travel related societies. We will be supporting any students and campaigning on this topic.

7. Any other business

There was no other business. The Chair thanks attendees for coming and ends the meeting.