

Student Parliament 3 Minutes

Thursday 26th November 2020 – 17:00 – 19:00

Chair: Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor)

Officers In Attendance: Anna McKinley (International Students Rep), Dorothea Hinrichs (Postgraduate Students' Rep), Adanna Onu (BAME Rep), Andrew Merchant (Faculty Rep Science), Benn Rapson (VP Welfare), Eilidh Sneddon (VP Sport), Emily McIlhatton (Faculty Rep HaSS), Jenna Gilmartin (Mature Students Rep), Liam Mosson (Interfaith Rep), Rachel Cairns (VP Inclusion), Vinny Williamson (LGBT+ Rep), Zoe MacPherson (Women's Rep), Aspen Lynch (Disabled Students' Rep), Victoria Welsh (Faculty Rep Business), Sean Jamieson (Part-Time Students Rep), Kayla-Megan Burns (President), Chelbi Hillan (VP Education)

Apologies: Ru Wallace (VP Community), Marc Schachtsiek (Faculty Rep Engineering)

Absent: Saul Porter (Halls Rep)

Sophie Gwynne in attendance.

1. Welcome and approval of previous minutes

a. 17th September

Democracy Convenor (DC) welcomes all reps to the meeting and explains procedure for how to get vote and get involved in the discussion.

DC welcomes comments on Student Parliament minutes. These Minutes are approved

b. Exec Committee Minutes Consolidated – October to November

Minutes are noted by Parliament.

2. Executive Updates & Questions

Kayla: Working on Covid, looking at support for students, to ensure that students aren't facing insecurity next semester, as the plans are currently similar to this similar. Looking to have a message out within the next week or so. Working on Anti-Hate – pulled together surveys. Sent round the liberation committee for feedback, meeting Action on Prejudice and Action on Sectarianism to make sure the data is constructive. Sustainability planning – looking to do a holistic sustainability plan, linking to the new building, reaching out to other organisations. We have a sustainability forum tomorrow. Looking at tackling the culture at Strathclyde, considering that I'm the first female president in a while. These discussions have been constructive so far – looking to start tackling cultural issues and tackling large changes.

Looking at EU Student fees and support – already started looking into EU and international student fees and support for these students. Supporting graduates about how to access their parchments. New survey platform launched on union website, so that we can help students who need to share surveys. Hoping to get some traction on this and to get some more feedback on this.

Rachel: 16 Days of Action have started. Doing Fight for the Night from home – my favourite time of the year. This year's events are inspired by other kinds of online activism. Like idea of sharing signs in public and reach people we haven't done so before. This year's focus is on disclosure – ensuring there's safe spaces to disclose and ensuring NDAs aren't weaponised. Working with the University, Director of Student Experience, getting the Equally



Safe in Higher Education committee back and running to make sure we make up lost time – Strathclyde are keen to contact gender based violence.

Congratulations to all of the newly elected officers. Starting new project in the new year on gender based violence to try to bring current work. First liberation committee this week – identified a few key themes and keen to move forward with work. Also working with Anna from Strathclyde's Disability & Wellbeing Service to get a working group about accessibility on campus. The team has read the Kevin O'Gorman QC Report and we've informed the university of our thoughts – we have issues with the report and we're keen to take these issues forward. Brought a paper on demographic specific counselling – myself and Benn are working on that. The exec team had a teambuilding day and want to work on some campaigns moving forward and keen to work with new reps on these topics.

Eilidh: First day of rainbow laces campaign – secured funding for 50 students to get training on LGBT training and making sports teams inclusive. Met up with 45 club captains and trying to come up with new ideas to make the best of the situation. Doing a lot of finance this year. Completed two of our awards meetings – good to recognise success of clubs even though some of last season was cancelled. Good to see how sports have supported each other and members – including offering safe spaces after training session. Speaking on Ru's behalf – Movember has been massive and we've raised over 6500 at the moment, plus other fundraising from clubs. Looking to get more liberation-based data – to see where we can do better. Working on social media strategy which is going well, including Christmas things. Been composing thoughts on QC report.

Chelbi: Online learning survey, 1200 responses and everyone is missing community engagement. People have valued replaying lectures and keen to keep. Doing 16 days of action things and putting together a sexual assault and harassment survey to go round the sector. Ran session for primary teachers about decolonising the curriculum. And doing carbon literacy training for reps. Doing work for care-experienced and estranged students and their experiences of domestic abuse.

Benn: Looking at private housing providers to ensure students are being treated fairly, including charging exit fees. Do a lot of housing work – set up the Greater Glasgow Students Tenants' Union, on Facebook and doing a launch meeting in December. Been working with other Union officers to promote the meeting. 407 responses on sexual health survey – really valuable data, looks like some students aren't looking after their sexual health due to lack of access to services. Working with Eilidh to do a mental health survey linking to the sexual health survey to inform Student Mental Health Agreement.

Working with University about the PG student discounts and care experienced students' scholarships. Transcript fees are now online so there's no fees. Every meeting I'm in, I raise the issue for student jobs. Started to pick up the circuit laundry campaign Matt was working on last year – let's get it sorted.

DC welcomes questions. None are received so moves onto the Policy Proposals

3. Policy Proposals

a. Fair Tuition Act 2020

Anna: Thanks to Liam for collaborating with me on this motion, particularly around the understanding of the law. Recently announced that universities will be able to set fees for EU students, though this wasn't the original intention. International students add a lot of value to the University. Though the University will probably try to find the way to make the most money of off students – if we could lower fees for everybody, that should be best. This policy

states that EU Students should pay the same as international students, but their fees should be cut drastically. Also touches on the fact that EU students already here should not face any economic issues that they were not advertised. Feel like this is a step in the right direction.

Kayla: Here with the spirit of this motion, and I think fees are incredibly important. Just a few things to highlight – after Brexit, the university cannot discriminate between EU and international students, so fees will have to be the same anyway. How they do that is the important bit though, as there have been a lot of institutions that are saying that new EU students will be paying the same rates as international students – this is an extreme hike, from free to 20K. Currently, the university is getting funding from SFC for EU students – if they go with the current format, they will make a lot more money. There should be an ability for students to pay less.

On point c of the policy, Strathclyde have confirmed that students will not see a change in their fees. Still a lot of grey areas, including Irish students with dual nationality, so are a few points. Just thought I should highlight – apologise for not submitting amendments in advance.

Liam: Glad to Kayla is involved, and since writing it there has been changes to the university policy. Agree with point about students having more funding. Done some very quick maths about this, but looking at a rough estimate of £2500 pounds for students. Worth mentioning that the University's budget will be increased, that it would be worthwhile that the Union will be campaigning on them. On points of law, just showing that this is in agreement and affirming that we are in the same position or encourage the same position.

Benn: Really good motion – agree with points about fees. Personally think that the two points about the law are fine as they are in line with the law. Don't see the need to amend the policy as this is our political position. Would love to see more of this well written policy, well done.

Anna: Apologise for not hitting on this in the overview, but Benn said what I wanted. A lot of this is political beliefs. Thanks for bringing up that a lot of this is law, but I think this should still be the stance of the Union, and just show that that was what the Union will campaign on. Hope that settles what Doro says. I don't think that we have to state that we explicitly agree with the law as and when we need to.

Chelbi: I think this is really relevant and having this stance with the University would be helpful. We are looking for a fee reduction and now we contextualise it, this would be a useful motion. I know international fees are incredibly high. Good work.

Liam: Really glad to hear that everyone has spoke is positive responses to this bill. The point is to state the position of the parliament and Union.

Anna: Brexit sucks and it's a reality we're living with and I hope this is a step in the right direction.

Dorothea: Some issues about the phrasing, around international students paying the same as eu students. Though don't think that this is necessarily an urgent issue.

DC explains that amendments can't be submitted once the Parliament meeting has begun.

Kayla: Very behind the concept of this policy but concerned about some of the wording. Keen on passing in principle but could be stronger. I'm a little conflicted about whether to vote in favour or not.

Rachel: Could pass as read and work with Anna to amend and then approve next Parliament.

Anna: If we pass it as is, and we should have some urgency on this. Could pass amendments to standing policy – would be a shame to see the policy lapse.

DC moves to vote on this policy, with a note that if this policy is passed, then the proposers will work with the Executive committee to strengthen the wording.

14 votes in favour, 1 vote against, 1 abstention. This policy passes.

b. Headspace for Students

Sophie: Discussed at Mental Health Action Group, can get student subscription but would be good to get the university to offer subscriptions to students. This isn't taking away anything that is currently provided.

Benn: Thanks for bringing along, if this passes I will raise immediately and get on it. Will see this as a Christmas gift from the University. Always good to see non-reps bring along policy proposals as well.

Eilidh: Class motion, good job.

Vinny: More mental health support for students would be a great thing.

15 votes in favour. This policy passes.

Refunds for students in University Accommodation

DC notes proposer isn't here so waives to floor.

Dorothea: halls rep mentioned that it's about giving money back to students as other unis have done.

Benn: Wanted to collaborate with Saul about this and ask questions and Saul will be sitting on welfare committee. My gut reaction would be that we should defer the policy to the next parliament, as I can then discuss it with Saul. Have been looking at this already and wanting to reduce fees. The concern is about moving between halls, so would have clarified here but would like to defer. What we could do is get in touch with Saul and then it could go to Exec to be passed in the interim, and then bring it back in January.

Kayla: Agree with the principle, but see issues so would be happy to move to the next policy.

Dorothea: I wasn't previously aware about the part about moving round, I agree that that's an issue. I think we would probably need two different policies on this. I would not necessarily vote for this bill because of that. Have issue with it being passed and then amending it. Also didn't know that you can pass amendments in the meeting – there shows that there is an issue with how parliament works.

Benn: I think we should defer it as Saul isn't here, and it's his motion, as I can't air concerns to the proposer. I think that if we just defer, I will get in touch with Saul and bring it to exec meeting and we can approve in interim until next parliament. Nothing stopping me and Saul to lobby for rent rebates anyway, as we're both elected reps.

Liam: In agreement with what everyone has said – I think point 2 to student parliament believes is a concern. I think deferring until Saul is here would be best. If it went to a vote it would be a no-vote.

DC moves to a vote to defer the policy to the next Student Parliament, noting that the Exec will get in touch with the proposer of the motion.

15 votes in favour. This policy is deferred to the next Parliament

4. Student Parliament Code of Conduct

Rachel: Put together last year with Kayla, Benn, Vinny and myself. Brought along as information as it was looking for consensus on it. It's adapted from the code of conduct that the Union has and tweaked for Parliament. I think it's needed – I would like it if it's a standing item at the start of each parliament meeting. Nothing too much, just about not treating others badly. Keen for thoughts and a consensus.

Vinny: Want to point out that I helped write it and I'm glad this is finally getting put to Parliament. This came about after I experienced transphobic actions at my first parliament meeting as a rep. I'm glad people think that this is something that needs to exist.

Andrew: About respecting privacy – the current voting system we have isn't currently about privacy. We could have another look at how to cast votes in Parliament.

Rachel: I think that privacy in voting is important and I think that it's encompassed with this. Something we've done in the past, is that we've had a private vote as opposed to a public vote. Should only have public votes whenever we all agree to it.

Aspen: Was there any specific reason why we changed voting.

DC: There's two reasons why we vote the way we do. Firstly it's a lot quicker than the other way and people have had difficulty to vote. We do have ability to bring votes back during contentious issues. Also, it's the best use of transparency, having votes public is useful for reps. No one has brought up issues, but if people want it to go to a private vote, we can go to a private ballot if necessary.

Benn: I understand, but I personally take the opposite view that votes should be open and accessible but if it is contentious, then it can go to a private ballot. 9/10 we're going to have nice motions that aren't controversial and it's good to have so people can hold reps to account. For example, we've done it for things like politically contentious issues. As reps, I think it's important that students know how we're voting generally.

Kayla: Wanted to clarify that although people haven't this raised issue before, this shows that this is an issue. I do think there's an accountability thing in how we vote, students need to know how we vote, but I think that there's a difference between voting in front of each other and voting in public. When we vote in front of each other we can influence each others decisions.

Rachel: Just to clarify, in principle I agree with a public vote but I am also aware of anxiety at student parliament. I've said that I've been anxious at these meetings – I think closed ballot is a standard and then it should be open in contentious issues. I'm not 100% sure – I think this is another discussion, and it doesn't need to be formal. Though it looks like we're in consensus.

DC: For clarity, under the schedules, voting is to be done by a show of hands unless specifically otherwise. If they want to change it, it would be a schedule change or brought up each vote. For example, every vote would have to be done in consensus.

Benn: Agree with what Kayla says, so students can see how we're voting but after the fact. But also completely take on board that it can be influenced. It can be intimidating being the

odd one out. If it's something that people want to amend to the schedules, they can do so. If people do feel strongly about this, then they can do.

Liam: Consensus is that a vast majority of us can get behind the code of conduct. If it was to be voted, then I think that I would vote yes. I think the voting points are valid, no one should feel uncomfortable but students should see how their representatives have voted. We could look into it further. Personally, that if it is private, then private during the session and then public afterwards. Good work on the code of conduct.

DC: if people have objections, they can contact. This will just pass, and we'll move to other business.

5. Any Other Competent Business

DC: Since we've had two pieces of legislation that have to be brought up at the next meeting which are to be deferred or have further actions taken, do you think we should call another parliament?

Liam: if it's time sensitive I think we should be meeting more regularly. For example, the EU policy changed in the time from submitting it to discussing it.

Chelbi: I agree – I think this year has been really hard to engage everyone online and I would love to work with the officers more. Perhaps do a parliament and a collaborative session, and have a bit of fun as well.

Kayla: I think it would be lovely to have some more information time together. Perhaps suggesting a little Christmas day if people are interested? But about extraordinary Parliament – could we do the amendments and circulate via email as a more efficient way?

Vinny: Feel that parliament isn't fun, and they are anxious about meetings and that it's detrimental to my mental health.

Kayla: Sorry that Vinny feels this way and bringing back some fun might help. Would love to support anyone that feels like that. No-one should be dreading Parliament.

Vinny: Maybe just because it's online, it's very overwhelming, I come out of the sessions drained. After the last parliament I was very shaky, luckily I had support, I think it can feel a bit intimidating. I hope the code of conduct helps but it can be a bit shaky.

Benn: I'd agree that Parliament's vibes are not great. Now that it's a representative council, it should be a bit more laidback and fun like the Exec meeting. As long as parliament is a policy chamber, there will always be an argumentative edge. I think tempering the arguments are the important things, making sure it isn't personal. It's a conscious motion of improvement. Around an extraordinary parliament, I don't feel that one is needed in December, as we're all burnt out. Though not opposed to more frequent parliament – I'm conscious that I'm paid to be here but part time reps all have exams. There's a difference between the eu motion and the halls motion – I will just work with saul to then approve the parliament through exec.

DC: seems that there isn't a will to change it.

Liam: Really sorry that people don't feel comfortable in Parliament. I think that Code of Conduct should try to tackle. Around having more parliaments, I would be more than happy to have more discussions. I think that maybe we should have a more informational session to discuss.



Chelbi: Maybe we need food supplies for reps.

Kayla: Wanted to propose that perhaps we introduce informal pleasantries, abolish informal language – I think that it's important we fix the culture as no rep should feel uncomfortable. Kayla, I would like to work with Kyle to come up with some information suggestions for the next few parliament to make it more constructive.

DC: Happy to do that.

Doro: Would like to thank Vinny for coming forward – it feels like there's a lot of confrontation sometimes instead of working together in a collaborative way. I found it a little difficult, in this and the working group. I say things because I feel like I have to but sometimes I don't feel comfortable doing that, and sometimes I feel like I need to leave. Shared link about white supremacy culture – looking at confrontation.

DC thanks everybody for attending and closes the meeting.