

## Student Parliament 5 Minutes

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – 17:00 – 19:00

*Chair: Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor)*

*Officers In Attendance: Anna McKinley (International 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), Ru Wallace (VP Community), Dorothea Hinrichs (Postgraduate Students' Rep), Chelbi Hillan (VP Education)*

*Apologies:*

*Absent: Saul Porter (Halls Rep), Marc Schachtsiek (Faculty Rep Engineering), Kayla-Megan Burns (President)*

*Ailidh Hamilton, Sean Clarke, Jessica Lell, Kat Chan, Richard Aguiar in attendance.*

*Staff support: Adam Crawley (Policy & Campaigns Co-ordinator), Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement)*

### **1. Welcome and approval of previous minutes**

#### **a. 26<sup>th</sup> January**

Democracy Convenor (DC) welcomes all reps to the meeting and explains procedure for how to get vote and get involved in the discussion. DC summarises the code of conduct with a copy displayed to attendees.

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

#### **b. Exec Committee Minutes Consolidated – January to February**

DC explains that Exec Minutes are for information.

### **2. Executive Updates & Questions**

**Rachel (VP Inclusion):** new parking spaces on campus. Working towards one consolidated map for campus. RADAR keys have all been removed. Emailing Humza Yousaf and will keep Reps updated. In touch with NUS about NDA policy. This is going to NUS Scotland Conference as is and combined with other policies for NUS UK Conference. Have fed back to NUS UK that this isn't ideal. Looking at creating an accountability action tracker for the Union website. Attending Conference tomorrow

Participating in user testing for Report and Support's new system. Excited to see this continuous development. Continuing to feed into outcomes following the O'Gorman report.

**Ru Wallace (VP Community):** aiming to obtain Strath.ac.uk email addresses for clubs and socs via IT services. Working with societies regarding needs within the new building including media societies. Looking at link with Social Good Connect to help staff and students find volunteering opportunities. Charity Week ongoing and Star Award nominations close in 10 days.

**Eilidh Sneddon (VP Sport):** Facilitated Stonewall inclusion training for sports (around 46 attendees). Working with concuss-ed on how to recognise signs of concussion. Working on

virtual Sports Ball plans and Virtual Glasgow Taxis Cup. Second draft of the Student Mental Health Agreement.

Chelbi has submitted an update via video which will be sent out after the meeting.

**Liam:** Is there any update on the No Detriment Policy?

**Chelbi:** Attended a meeting with the University along with Kayla. Draft provided shortly before the meeting and is focussed on utilising Personal Circumstances and an evidence based approach. Continuing to communicate with the University on this and they are also in contact with Universities UK. Last year's policy was based on the first two thirds of the year which were unaffected by Covid. Waiting for a further update on the policy.

**Liam:** What can Reps and students do to put pressure on the University regarding this?

**Chelbi:** Conscious of how stretched staff are at the moment. Recommend utilising existing feedback channels to keep this on the agenda.

**Chelbi (VP Education update):** lobbying the University to increase the capacity of the library, particularly for student groups such as PGRs with significant need for this. Hoping for weekend opening. Continuing to make the case for recording lectures. Investigating the staff and equipment resource required, including funding, for standardising lecture capture. Happy to take on accessibility work with a focus on this in the remainder of term in office. Academic Rep Conference went really well and provided feedback to take to the University. Utilising feedback to focus on what we have learned through the pandemic. Working with QAA on building resilient learning communities and aiming to celebrate all of the good things which have happened. Excited to introduce new Faculty Rep roles and will continue to develop postgraduate representation.

### **3. Ratification Vote on Removal of Saul Porter**

DC explained that Saul Porter didn't attend two Student Parliament meetings without providing apologies leading to removal as detailed in Strath Union Schedules. DC moves to a private vote and invites any comments from Parliament

**Liam:** has Saul left the University?

**DC:** unconfirmed but think it's best to go ahead with the vote from a process perspective

**Vinny:** saw his use of inappropriate language on social media

DC moves to vote:

**16 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions. Removal of Saul Porter as Halls Rep has been ratified.**

### **4. Policy Proposals**

#### **a. Increasing Vegan Awareness**

DC confirms that Reps have received information regarding the policies and invites Kat Chan to present the proposal.

**Kat Chan:** Presented on the policy. Summary of raising vegan awareness policy. Explained Impact of animal agriculture including zoonotic diseases, environment (biggest way to reduce impact on the Earth), pollution, slaughterhouse working conditions, animal cruelty. Recommend Dominion and Earthlings as documentaries to watch. Aiming for people to change behaviours around diet to make a big impact.

**Anna:** Not in purview of Parliament to pass a policy like this. Feel it would be better to be asked at a referendum. Don't feel it's in the international rep role to vote on a policy like this. Grew up in rural America with personal background in farming. Feel that lots of information in the public domain is misleading. One of the groups included in the policy materials has lost charity status and feel this was inappropriate. Personally passionate about farming and animal care and have experience of high standards of practices. Many livestock farms also produce grain. Animal farmland is often unsuitable for grain farming. Feel this policy is misleading and some of the content is insensitive.

**Liam:** Point 2 in notes - recurring phrase (animal agriculture as opposed to factory farming) differs from the basis of this policy. Instructs 5 – find it difficult to believe that Student Parliament should try to restrict food sources to those most in need. Referring to reduction of meat based food on campus – demand is set by students and it's not up to the Union to control this. Feel that this policy is not within the merit of Student Parliament. A student society has stated this would have significant negative impact on their ability to recognise religious events.

**Ru:** also grew up in agricultural community although wasn't directly involved in this. Clearly issues worldwide with animal welfare. Meat reduction has been proven as a means of reducing carbon footprint. Main focus of the Bill is on education and not restriction of students' choice. Regarding foodbanks, the policy doesn't say anything about rejecting meat products. Feel like overall, this Bill would benefit environmental impact of the Union and doesn't restrict students or societies.

**Kat:** All animals are sent to slaughterhouse so contest that this is humane. The societies and organisations listed in the policy are reputable and many are linked to Universities including Oxford and Harvard. Potential benefits of animal land use, however, these are outweighed by the positive impact of vegan agriculture. The policy is about raising awareness and educating, not about controlling people.

**Vinny:** Challenging relationship with veganism. Believe in animal consent, however, personally suffer from severe allergies from many non-meat products (nuts, legumes etc). Many meat substitute products utilise these ingredients which would have significant personal impact. In worst case scenario this might result in anaphylactic shock, hospitalisation and possible death. Don't think we should restrict the food available to students.

**Aspen:** like the Bill but would favour removal of point 6 limiting the food available to students as likewise require a restricted diet. Believe that restricting students would lead to lower compliance but making more vegan products available would be positive.

**Anna:** Acknowledge the points made but find the Bill still carries malice and is not inclusive. Don't understand why the website would be used to promote this – refer to the trigger warning required for the presentation. Believe this space would be best used to focus on other student campaigns. Find some of the language and points included in the policy inflammatory. Feel the policy could be enhanced with work such as sourcing animal based food products from local and ethical providers.

**Liam:** Concerns with the interpretation of the policy. We shouldn't be restricting students or forcing their choices. Live in a country where eating whatever you want, if it's not against the law, is your own prerogative. Not for the Union to dictate the removal of the sale of animal based food products. Not a farming expert, however, acknowledge there are issues with farming globally. Should focus on better sources than industrial farming. Would favour a revised version of this Bill addressing the key concerns raised.

**Benn:** Thanks to Kat for bringing this. Feel there are some skewed points included within the Bill. No issues with greater promotion of Veganuary and other events of this nature. However, feel ensuring a broad range of food sources available to students is important. Aware that the University doesn't use the highest quality of animal products in catering. Unsure on this Bill but feel directing it to a referendum might be appropriate. Would favour a scaled back version of this Bill. Have enjoyed the debate on this.

**Rachel:** applaud the discussion and how this has been conducted. Believe that this should avoid debate on the ethics of farming but instead focus on sustainability which has long been priority for the Union. Believe we should review the process of amendments but not necessarily shy away from strong language as this has often been used in previous Union policy. Favour greater availability of options for students to choose from and make veganism easier to adopt.

**Kat:** Campus has lots of other food shops and outlets nearby providing meat-based food products so don't believe it's restricting student choices to not have meat on campus. Lots of terrible food farming processes are used and we should focus on sustainability and ethics of the issue. Impact to the environment is significant and what right do students have to support animals being treated worse than criminals. Standard farming practices are exploiting animals. Veganism would help save animal lives and is the best thing to do for health.

**Liam:** Room for more open discussion but this can't take place if passed in its current form. The policy suggests taking the moral high ground but don't agree with this. Some students have dietary requirements and a policy like this restricts them and makes the Union a less inclusive place. Not against the advancement of Veganuary and campaigning, however, not in favour of this policy in its current form. Passing it now could lead to this being interpreted differently in the future.

DC moves to vote on this policy.

**9 votes in favour, 7 vote against, 0 abstentions. This policy passes.**

#### **b) Increasing Library Access for Students with young children**

**Sean:** Strathclyde is currently one of the Universities which doesn't support students to bring children to the library or study areas. Union committed to supporting equal opportunities for all. Set up an area for student parents to study in private. Studies show that providing students with children with this support results in better outcomes for these students. Lobby the University for an area within the library.

**Rachel:** This has been put on pause due to the pandemic but the University is planning to create a crèche within the library. Favour introducing this policy in case anything changes and to inform future student reps.

**Benn:** great to see this policy and well done.

**Chelbi:** This is within the plans for the extension of the library. The pandemic has shown the disproportionate impact on these students and we should look at how to support student parents across the campus, particularly with the costs and obstacles that these learners face. Keen to take forward this and other relevant issues with the University.

**Sean:** thanks everyone for comments and wasn't aware this was within current plans. We should aim to make University more inclusive and continue to break down barriers to learning.

DC moves to vote on this policy.

**16 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions. This policy passes.**

### **5. Any Other Competent Business**

**Liam:** request info on how best to amend standing policy

**Aspen:** think we need an improved voting system

**DC:** We are somewhat limited by the points in the Schedules. Reactions within Zoom did work but the time limits have subsequently been reduced making these difficult to count.

**Benn:** Suggest amending this within the Schedules if anyone wants to do this. Could do voting by asking everyone to turn camera on to provide their vote. Also suggest adding an explainer to the agenda for each section in case students aren't aware of what happens in each section such as AOCB. This would make the agenda more accessible.

**Anna:** Want to start a conversation about updating the code of conduct. The presentation and recommended documentary included trigger warnings for difficult or disturbing content and have concerns if this is likely to become a regular occurrence at Student Parliament.

**Benn:** suggest taking this up with Rachel who wrote the original code of conduct.

**Kat:** If viewing documentary evidence makes you uncomfortable how do you justify supporting these practices and why is it ok?

**Rachel:** Upsetting to hear about animal abuse and although favour moving towards veganism, we should carefully consider people's triggers and be courteous in relation to these.

DC thanks everybody for attending and closes the meeting.