

General Meeting

14th March
5:15-7pm

C.LTA4 / MS TEAMS

Annual General Meeting Minutes

- **Welcome**
- **In Attendance**
 - Members Present
 - Union President, Leen Ali (LA)
 - Sports Union President, Murray Bushell (MB)
 - Vice President Education, Katie Gethings (KG)
 - Student Union Representative Trustee, Tom McLaughlin (TM)
 - In Attendance
 - Faculty Officers: 14
 - Ordinary Members: 27
 - Staff Support: 6
 - Apologies
 - Vice President Communities, Zoe Crosher (ZC)
 - Absent without apologies
 - N/A
- **Sabbatical Reports**
 - LA presents report ([see Paper A](#))
 - LA presents report in place of ZC ([see Paper A](#))
 - MB presents report ([see Paper A](#))
 - KG presents report ([see Paper A](#))
- **Annual Report provided by LA ([see AGM Presentation](#))**
 - RAAC was found in the Students' Union building, which as a result has impacted the Union's activities this academic year and development is still on going.
 - Over 2,330 students attended Welcome Week events.
 - A new website was launched for the Union this year as well as a new Events platform (Native).
 - Increase in social media engagement, with Union posts having a reach of 13.2k.
 - Supported LGBTQ+ History month, Islamophobia Awareness Month Pop-up Exhibition and Workshop, and had a display as part of Holocaust Memorial Day.
 - Hosted 12 Sustainability Themed workshops, and 14 Weekly Community Gardening Sessions.
 - Developed an information leaflet to educate students on Harm Protection and signpost them to the appropriate resources.
 - Trained 16 students in Scotland's Mental Health First Aid. There is funding available for an additional 16 students to receive this training next academic year.

- Rebranded STEER programme to Steer Peer Mentoring with a new logo and academic focus.
- Implementing a volunteering module to support our thousands of student volunteers (sports clubs and society committees, peer mentors, zone executives, academic reps, etc) in logging their hours and experiences and downloading achievement records to show future employers.
- Introduced the Volunteer Agreement and process to better record Union volunteer achievements.
- In the Union elections, 11 out of 18 positions were filled. There were 2,388 individual voters (17% voter turnout and 60% increase 22/23) with 19,494 votes cast. Open positions will be elected in the autumn elections in October.
- **Financial Report provided by TM**
 - An additional £36k was required from the University to finish 22/23 with a small surplus of £1,106 in addition to the £557,051 Annual block grant.
 - Along with the above, a letter of comfort from the University was required to allow the accounts to be signed off which commits them to supporting the charity financially and otherwise for FY 2024/25
 - A letter of comfort from the University has been required 3 of the last 5 years to allow the accounts to be signed off.
 - Robbins deficit for 2022/23 was £78,829.
 - In previous years to allow the organisation to have a reduced organisational deficit – all budget of other areas within the Students Union were pulled back at the end of March (meaning they were unable to spend anything that had not been previously approved) to help fund Robbins deficit and reduce the organisational end of year deficit.
 - In 2023/24 The University has funded £110k of Robbins deficit in advance, with a projection as of January 2024 of a deficit of £153,523, this is a shortfall £43,523 which the University have agreed to cover in their letter of comfort.
 - Under the new agreement, there will be a new Robbins Partnership Forum created with the University which will see Students' Union representation positioned to shape and influence the service. The Students' Union will continue to shape and guide the service.
 - The Robbins will be maintained as a space that students, societies and the Union can book to run events.
 - Welcome Week events are planned to go ahead as has been done previously.
- **Clarifying Questions**
 - OM: What consultation was made with the members (students) and when will we see the full details of the settlement reached between the Union and the University?
 - TM: The trustee board makes the decisions for the charity and how the Union operates so from governance perspective decisions were taken are an appropriate level. I will come back to you about the transparency of the documentation.
 - OM: Has the Union given over its lease or is the University only taking over the catering in the bar?
 - TM: The catering services and lease will be taken over by the University and the staff will be University employees.

- OM: What does this mean through licensing terms? Does this mean the Union's status of being a private members club ends and, for example, under 18s are allowed at fresher's events after 9:30pm?
- TM: There are still details to work out as the University commits to maintaining access to the facilities on the same basis they are now.
- OM: Are there any protections beyond standard DUP terms that have been put in to protect the rights of workers currently there?
- TM: The staff will be transferring under current terms and conditions. Once those staff members become employees of the university, then they will be subject to new management regimes, but their terms and conditions are protected.
- OM: Asked for clarification on why Trustees were responsible for making this decision and not the membership.
- TM: That was the legal route.
- OM: Asked if any of the motions that are mandated by the membership such as the plant-based motion will be enforced in space.
- TM: The Union lacks the ability to mandate and enforce so it is up to the university to comply. However, the reason for the long negotiations was that the students' voices remain strong.
- OM: What ability does this students' forum have to enact change?
- TM: We have no ability to enforce but the main thing to take away from this is that if we did not do this the charity would be bust in a few months. The reason this forum is in place is ultimately we are the university's customers so if the university chooses not to comply then it will be expressed through customer retention.
- OM: Did you fight for the ability for us to be enforcers or did you give up?
- TM: We arrived at a place where I don't believe the University is comfortable in terms of the opportunity, we must guide the future of the spaces and the fact they are obliged to keep these spaces open for the use of students and societies. If we were to attempt to put a mandate in place it is likely the University would have walked away from the negotiations.
- OM: Will the surface income from the space be reinvested into the Union?
- TM: The University is taking a large risk taking on this liability so if they can make money from it, they will choose how it delivers its profits, but the University will continue to fund the Union through the Block grant.
- OM: Asked for the section to be closed.
- TM: Denies this request and asks if there's any further questions.
- OM: Will the venue be available at no cost to the societies, or will it now be charged?
- TM: I will come back to that as I do not know the basis of the access mechanism, but access has been guaranteed. I agree that if it's far too expensive then it is not accessible.
- LA: Societies are currently charged to cover staff costs. It is one of the reasons it was losing money as we could only afford to pay living wage because the University gave us extra money to pay for it.
- OM: Have the Union undertaken any attempts to try and improve the situation instead of handing over ownership? If so, what has been implemented?
- TM: Yes, they have. They have tried reducing costs but operating with the scope of the services we deliver. Some improvement was made as the result of direct inventions, but it was not enough.

- OM: You said in 5 years' time there is the opportunity for the services to transfer back to the Union. How could we be in a better position to do this?
- TM: In five years', time we do not need to buy the services back, we just need to prove that we are in a financial position that taking the service back would not put the charity at risk.
- OM: In five years will the Union have full say over the retaking of it?
- TM: It would require negotiations with the University.
- **Next AGM: End of Semester 2 2024/25 year.**
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 - Absent without apologies
 - NA
- **Minutes Ratification**
 - Minutes objected
 - Amendment passed with 58.6% in favour.
 - Minutes ratified by LA. No objections.
- **Challenges to Order Paper**
 - Challenge to order.
 - OM: In consideration of how long we have already been here, I beg to move change to order paper so far as motion number one be the boycott motion (Paper D) put forward by Joe Roach and Luna Larkin and motion number two be the sustainability policy (Paper B) put forward by the executive.
 - No speeches made against
 - LA observing Ramadan so takes 5-minute break as vote takes place.
 - Order paper changed. Motion passed with 68.6% in favour.
- **Dates to Note**
 - Women's History Month - March
 - Ramadan – 11th March – 8th/9th April 2024
 - Eid Al-Fitr – 9th/10th April 2024
 - Inspirational Women Awards – nominations closes 15th March 2024
 - RATE – nominations closes 15th March 2024
 - Academic Rep Symposium – 20th March 2024

- Sports Union Varsity – 27th March 2024
- Societies Awards Ball – 28th March 2024
- Sports Union Awards Ball – 5th April 2024
- **Elections & Resignations**
 - Elections
 - Spring elections: there was a 60% increase in voter from previous year, 11/18 positions were filled.
 - Resignations
 - None.
- **Reports (the Sabbatical Officer reports can be reviewed in [Paper A of the agenda](#))**
 - Sports Union President
 - Report provided in the Annual General Meeting immediately prior to the General Meeting.
 - Vice President Education
 - Report provided in the Annual General Meeting immediately prior to the General Meeting.
 - Vice President Communities
 - Report provided in the Annual General Meeting immediately prior to the General Meeting.
 - Union President
 - Report provided in the Annual General Meeting immediately prior to the General Meeting.
- **Motions**
 - Student Union Declares a Boycott of University Commercial Services ([PAPER D](#))
 - Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: Since the protest against the rent increase and the subsequent finalisation of an 8% increase, it has been made very clear to us that the University of Stirling and its faculty, or rather its senior management, does not care for the protestations of its students. And that they will not listen to negotiations. We are using this general meeting to call upon the Student Union to lead a boycott against all University commercial services to ensure and to demonstrate that we will not sit by as a rent increase is pushed through and the cost-of-living crisis on students is made worse and worse. The time or negotiations is over, now is the time for action and it cannot be done merely by extraneous bodies but must be done by the representatives of the students themselves.
 - Clarifying Questions
 - OM: **Unheard on the recording**
 - OM: Given that the transfer of ownership and management does not occur until June 1st, unless this boycott continues and as stated in the motion itself, the boycott is to cease when the demand for the reverse of the rent increase is met. So, if that continues forward, then yes, at that point we will likely have to boycott the Venue as it would be a University commercial service.

- MB asks why the Union has to be included in the boycott services, but other places such as Nourish aren't included.
- OM answers would like to state the fact that there is a specific list of the different things that are included in this motion. It would not be in our remit to demand students boycott the gym or places within the gym because we have not got any sort of mandate from those students. And I think it'll be frankly wrong for us to encourage people to boycott what is a facility for well-being in health. I think it would be quite irresponsible of us to do that, and in line with that I was not going to try and specify different eateries within that facility because they're all part of the gym. Specifically with the Union that would have to be an amendment proposed at the next UGM But would not be automatically included as per the language of the motion as it is very specific in the different commercial services that are actually boycotted. The main reason would be to prove a point to the university that this deal and the way they've going about negotiating with the student union is wrong and they shouldn't deserve a voice when it comes to our Union Bar.
- **Speeches For and Against the Motion**
 - OM speaks in favour: I would just like to restate the points that have been made. The University only speaks the language of money. They do not care about the well-being of students over their profits, and a boycott is the only way that we can successfully make the point to them that we will not stand for a rent increase. It would make students homeless; it will make students struggle to eat and it will make students cold in their own homes. This rent increase will have a knock-on effect. And if the University thinks that they can get away with it, then we need to have an answer. And this motion is that answer.
 - MB speaks against: The rent increase is outrageous. It's happened both years of my time here. But the motion won't necessarily have the impact you want it to have. The boycott starts at the end of March. Students are going to start to leave at the end of March, this semester is over. The effect will come from students not being on campus.
- **Presented is a challenge of the chair**
 - OM: We once again find ourselves in a situation where the Union is restricting who can speak at a general meeting. It is completely proper for the chair to restrict this in some way however, this is more than one general meeting in a row where you have denied the ability for people to respond to speeches made against motions. Therefore, I put it in the interest of democracy that the floor reverses the ruling of the chair and sustains my point.

- OM asks question about what the rules are for asking questions during the speeches made in favour and against section of the motion.
 - LA: We have space to speak in favour of motions and you cannot ask questions to the person speaking in favour of the motion. It is the same with speeches against.
 - Chair position passed to KG.
 - KG asks for the OM to repeat the ruling for those online and what favourable alternative ruling is. (See above)
 - KG states LA has the opportunity to reply.
 - LA: I stated at the beginning of this meeting that we have a certain amount of time to run this meeting. I believe that having a structure to the meeting is crucial and I am not denying people the opportunity to ask questions. I said that you could walk up to Murry and ask questions, but I cannot take your questions publicly. There is space for clarifying questions after the motion proposer, but I cannot take it at this point.
 - KG casts vote
 - Vote falls with 64.6% accepting the Chair's Decision
 - Chair is retaken by LA
 - Speeches for and against Motion continued
 - OM speaks in favour: I just want to clarify something that Murray asked before the interim break. In terms of the actual language of the motion because it does not have a set deadline, there's no time in which the boycott will end. It is specified that the boycott only ends once the university meets its demands, so therefore there will be renewed calls for the boycott throughout next semester.
 - OM speaks in favour: As housing officer, and I sat in quite a lot of meetings with management in which VP of Communities and I have continuously stated that students cannot afford the current rents and they cannot afford to pay for bed sheets and they can't afford to eat. Despite all of this, they decided to increase rent anyway. So I'm in favour of this motion because at some point as a student body, we have to stand up for ourselves and say we won't accept it regardless of what the outcome is.
 - KG speaks: I'm not necessarily speaking against, I'm just going to add a clarifying point, if this motion passes, it will not come immediately into place. It will have to go to the trustee board, which will be in May.
 - Motion summation
 - N/A
- MOTION FAILED (38.3%)**
- Sustainability Policy Updates ([PAPER B](#) and [Appendix 1](#))
 - Motion Proposer Introduction

- KG (on behalf of ZC): Last academic year, the Union Sustainability Steering Group decided to move forward with the Union no longer purchasing carbon credits or identifying as carbon neutral. But instead to increase the emphasis on bringing down emissions in total. This is primarily due to an increased dependence on carbon credits and associated greenwashing from numerous other organisation. We've decided that this sort of behaviour isn't acceptable and is detrimental to the overall aim of reducing carbon emissions as an alternative to offsetting. We'll be focusing more on carbon in settings. Carbon insets are carbon and GHG management and reduction activities within the organisations operational boundaries on their own land holdings. So while a range of inseting activities already exist, this guidance focuses on nature based inseting processes. And we're just updating the staff titles and putting this in writing and updating the staff title to be Environmental Development Coordinator to Sustainability Development Coordinator.
- Clarifying Questions
 - N/A
- Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - MB speaks in favour: As Katie said this is really just refreshing a 2019 policy. It is just going to update job titles and bed policy and switch the focus from carbon offset into carbon inseting. So I'll fully back this motion. It's just a refresher.
 - No speeches against.
- Motion summation
 - KG: This is just an update to the policy, to align with what we're currently doing and the current job title.

MOTION PASSED (95.5%)

- Hedgehogs over Squirrels Referendum ([PAPER C](#))
 - Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: Hedgehogs are beautiful animals and squirrels are a menace to Stirling campus. Why are we promoting such an animal for this University's mascot? Why do we not have the resilient and strong hedgehog that can stand up to anything just like our student's movement seeks to stand up for our university?
 - Clarifying Questions
 - OM: What inspired you to make this motion?
 - OM: I am inspired by our new sabbatical officer Justine and how she fights for our rent rates that we should have mascot that reflects just how hard our union is.
 - OM: What is the point in this motion? This feels like a waste of time in my opinion.
 - OM: I am not going to dignify that with an actual response. My statement is that any member of this Union to bring

forward any motion that they please. Please recognise that this motion is just a joke.

- OM: What are the financial implications?
- OM: I have already answered this question. I yield my time.
- OM: Why a hedgehog? The wolf is a large symbol within Stirling and if you are wanting a strong protection figure then surely that would be a better mascot?
- OM: I yield my time.
- Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - OM speaks in favour: It is a well-known fact that our university is a Hedgehog friendly campus so I think we should continue to fight for our furry friends. Any Union that seeks to represent biodiversity should not be showing this through a grey squirrel mascot.
 - OM speaks against: I would like to point out that squirrels and hedgehogs are not Kosher or Jewish friendly. I support the idea for a citizen's assembly where there should be an option for the Noble Capybara.
 - OM speaks against: I think this is a waste of all our time and this should never have been a motion.
- Motion summation
 - OM: It is a tradition of the Stirling Students Union that we have motions in the last meeting of the year which are not serious. I do apologise that in this case of the order paper that it happened to come before all the other motions which is why I continue to yield my time.

MOTION FAILED (42.5%)

- Alteration to Election and Referendum Regulations ([PAPER E](#))
 - Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: I move to reintroduce nominations to the Union general election. Last year Jess, the previous VP Communities, did the correct thing to remove nominations as we struggled to fill many of the roles. However, we have seen this last year a higher turnout in elections due to hard work of the Union permanent staff. Our motion states that if you can secure the number of votes to be elected to the position there is no struggle to gain a nomination.
 - Clarifying Questions
 - N/A
 - **LA reminds everyone in the online chat of the safe space policy.**
 - Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - KG speaks against the motion: This is only a recent change to the regulations, so I see no reason to keep an outdated and gate keeping approach. The more candidates we have the more voters the union gets which makes the union stronger. I will be unable to vote for anything that weakens positions that the officers

have. So, I encourage people to vote against this motion and to support the rights of all the students to stand for elections and oppose gatekeeping

- Motion summation
 - OM: I understand the point Katie has made and I acknowledge that is it a short time period but for what I understood this was a temporary move. I will give into the will and yield my time.

MOTION FAILED (27.4%)

○ No More Drug Disciplinarys ([PAPER F](#))

- Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: A few years ago, a similar motion was passed, and I don't believe that this goes far enough. We should help and not harm students. Instead of giving them over to their disciplinary committees, we should ensure that they go along with our advocacy and all our other counselling services, but we should not have the ability to punish them. This is, after all, a public health issue.
- Clarifying Questions
 - OM: Does this motion not increase legal liability and excessively burden the student union with legal fees?
 - OM: I am a students of Scots law and we are a union, not a court. We do not have any obligation to enforce the drug act of 1971. There is no legal liability that we are imposing, we are giving away a right to punish our members. This is a decision that this Union made when it incorporated and put its schedules together, and we can give it up as much as we took the power.
 - OM: For clarification, is the proposer's view that no union staff will face any legal consequences?
 - OM: I unequivocally and I will put my neck out for this, absolutely state that yes, no legal liability, criminal or civil, will come from this motion.
- Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - OM in favour: We need to switch to an attitude towards drugs that is based on the fact that it is a health issue. As Aaron mention, students should not be penalised for something which should be treated as a health issue as our Help not Harm policy of the Union. This motion will help clarify an further enhance this campaign to transfer drugs being treated as a health issue, not a criminal case.
 - MB speaks against: From a sporting perspective, British University and College Sport (BUSC) have their own set of rules regarding drugs and this is a contradiction of this motion. The practicalities of this motion may cause issues for the sports union as a whole and all sports clubs.

- Clarification was asked what the rules are for BUCS and MB responded saying they would discuss that privately to save time.
- Motion summation
 - OM: I'm sure BUCS is willing to accept that it is currently a non-functional disciplinary schedule. I don't see the great difference in them having one that reflects practise. BUCS has their own rules regarding illegal drug use and doping and they have the civil ability to use their powers as they have over their membership to punish them. This is, in essence, already a policy of this union and if that goes against BUCS then that should have been worked out at least two sabbatical officers ago because Help not Harm had already passed. It is not for me to accept the failure of past executive to make a motion. We should make an absolute statement that this must happen.

MOTION FAILED (37.5)

- Save our NUS Delegation (PAPER G)
 - Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: This is a symbolic motion. The leadership of the stumbling student's union NUS delegation is symbolic possession. However, I feel that is completely undemocratic that we use our constitution to appoint our delegate leader rather than electing them amongst themselves. I understand that the delegates leader has no real power however, I believe that this person should have the confidence of the entire delegation.
 - Clarifying Questions
 - N/A
 - Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - KG: This is purely procedural as the role affects such a small amount of people it is just so the NUS can send the information to one person instead of everyone.
 - Motion summation
 - N/A

MOTION PASSED (65.2%)

- Students' Union Starbucks Affiliation (PAPER H)
 - Motion Proposer Introduction
 - OM: It is largely known amongst most people how terrible Starbucks coffee is. It was also brought up in this meeting how tight the purse strings of the Union are. We have also just found out that the effects of this motion are only in effect for a few months, but I still feel like it is important that we at least act out against the notion of rubbish coffee. Aside from any political concern you may have about Starbucks, I think we can all agree that we deserve better coffee.
 - Clarifying Questions

- N/A
- Speeches For and Against the Motion
 - OM speaking in favour: Starbucks is a Union busting workplace. They have acted against their workers forming a trade union, so I believe it is perfectly reprehensible to have that facility on campus, especially like the students supporting the UCU. Starbuck have also been supplying Israeli soldiers with coffee which shows them supporting an apartheid regime.
 - No speeches against
- Motion summation
 - This motion was purely based off the fact that Starbucks coffee tastes horrible and is too expensive.

MOTION PASSED (73.3%)

- **Any Other Business**
 - OM: I would like the minutes to note that the housing committee was dissolved at the communities' zone on Tuesday without a vote. So, I would like to note for the next general meeting for the executive team coming in that the motion, Housing Emergency Committee motion must now be repealed.
 - OM: The chat does not seem very nice so next year could we have a form that can be filled out instead of people online being allowed to chat while we are not. I would also like to say that I believe that it is right for people to question the for and against speeches. If someone has either said something wrong or just wants more information on it, it seems relevant to everybody to understand why they are for/against.
 - KG: Because these people are not the people who had the conception of the idea so there isn't a situation for them to be able to have their clarifying questions because they were not the motion proposers.
- **Date of Next Meeting: Academic Year 2024/25**