# **Minutes** **Communities Zone** **30th January 2024**

Minutes for the **Students’ Union Communities Zone** meeting that was held on the **30th of January 2024** from 5pm in room **C.LTA3** and via **Microsoft Teams**.

To ensure the meeting is kept to time please ensure all attached papers are read in advance.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

1.1 Members Present

Zoë Crosher ZC Vice President Communities

Anne Marie Hamfeldt AMH Sustainability Officer

Justine Pedussel JP Housing Officer

1.2 In Attendance

1.3 Observers

Jordyn Austin JA Activities & Volunteer Coordinator

1.4 Apologies

1.5 Absent without Apologies

Khaliun Batbayar KB International Officer

Rebbecca Cameron Park RCP Co-Curricular Officer

Shani Doudet SD Arts Officer

Arya Hasan AH Media Officer

**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Minutes ratified by ZC.

**CHALLENGES TO ORDER PAPER**

None.

**DATES TO NOTE**

4.1 LGBTQ+ History Month - February

4.2 Community Garden – every Wednesday, 2-4pm

4.3 [General Meeting](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/your-voice/make-a-change/general-meetings/) – 1 February

4.4 Communities Zone Deadline – 4 February

4.5 Societies Awards Ball, tickets on sale and nominations open – 5 February

4.6 Lunar New Year – 9 February

4.7 [Elections](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/your-voice/elections/) nominations close – 12 February

4.8 International Festival of Culture – 12 & 13 February

4.9 GBV & SV First Responder Training – 15 February

4.10 StirPride – 19-23 February

4.11 Wellbeing Week – 26 February – 1 March

4.12 [Volunteering Fayre](https://stirling.native.fm/event/volunteering-fayre/217889) – 26 February

4.13 [Elections](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/your-voice/elections/) voting period – 27-29 February

**Elections & Resignations**

None.

**REPORTS**

6.1 Vice President Communities

Plans for the societies ball have been finalised. Spring semester events are all planned out, including more attacking student’s loneliness workshops. International festival of culture, LGBT history month and a lot more. We saw students attend the Scottish Mental Health first aid training, thanks to the Stirling Fund. Which has officially completed one of my main manifesto points. Attended the Student Experience Committee and presented Student Parents Survey report which I have been working on since October, had a great response to it. Very excited to see some changes come from that. Enjoyed successful January welcome week societies faire, over 60 societies attending and a lot of students coming along despite the awful weather. If you have any feedback about that then email me and we can talk about it. Launched the SV and GBV Awareness Award on the SU website, so if you’ve ever heard about it and want to know more about it you can now find it under the societies section. We also have a transport guide that I’m working on which is going to be promoted to sort of new students to hopefully make transport and getting to and from the university a bit more accessible. And if you keep an eye on my social media, I am asking for a lot of student’s opinions there, including opinions on buses.

6.2 Arts Officer- [SD was absent and did not provide a written report.]

6.3 Co-Curricular Officer- [RCP was absent and did not provide a written report.]

6.4 Housing Officer

Last communities meeting I think I mentioned that we were in the process of conducting a survey for all students, based on whether you are in private housing or student housing. The survey is closed, and we had over 300 responses, though may be over 400 but I’m not entirely sure. I’ve got the results so though I would give a quick rundown of what the results are and if you have any questions, I can give more details and stuff. Basic results for private rentals are about 47.8% said that their housing was not affordable. 18.1% said that maybe it was affordable, but they weren’t really sure. So about 32% said that it was affordable, which is kind of a shocking amount. 15% said that they can only work 20 hours but because they’re on visas they can’t work more than that but they would like to, so they can’t afford the place that they live in right now. 15.5% said that they do work more than 20 hours. Over 50% said that they have struggled to pay rent and over 50% said that they have struggled to eat. That includes people who have skipped meals regularly, people who have skipped meals occasionally and people who don’t skip meals but are constantly struggling in order to find something to eat. People living in student housing over 50% said that it was not affordable. 10% said that they would work more than 20 hours, but because they’re an international student here on visas, they can’t. 11.1% said that they do work more than 20 hours and about 40% said that they have struggled to pay rent and around 60% said that they have struggled to eat. That includes people who don’t skip meals but struggle to find food.

Student asked given the reports that were just given, what’s the ongoing pressure that we’re going to be giving Stirling Council or the university from now onwards?

We are continuously having meetings. I’m currently in the process of trying to reinsert myself into these meetings, I’ve been excluded by a lot of them by the university. In terms of what we can do for Stirling council, the problem isn’t entirely them. The way that we can solve quite a lot of these issues is by reducing rents on our side because Stirling University is the biggest landlord in Stirling. Because of this they control the housing market, so if they reduce rent or they up rents then the rest of Stirling is going to follow. Same thing is if they keep increasing the number of students at Stirling, then there’s a lot of pressure on the housing market and then that’s where we also see a lot of increases, people who are homeless and so on. And so the pressure will continue on Stirling University for that and getting them to reduce the rents, give better housing and ideally find a quota of the amount of student intake per year so that it is proportionate to the amount of housing that is available that the university can provide so that there isn’t that pressure anymore.

6.5 International Officer- [KB was absent and did not provide a written report.]

6.6 Media Officer- [AH was absent and did not provide a written report.]

6.7 Sustainability Officer

I work to make the university a bit more sustainable in the union. So, things like gardening sessions I work with Gabbi who the Sustainable Development Coordinator is who help run those and a few other people who have taken up lead roles in those gardening sessions. We have been using the Green and Blue Space as a community hub, last December we had a Christmas party which was really nice. I’ve also been working with Justine to get volunteer officers a discount at the Union and all Union staff to be able to have discount. This is an incentive to have people to go and vote in the Union and be a Union representative. Also as kind of a partial compensation for the amount of hours we put in as work. I’m meeting with Gabbi tomorrow to discuss future semester plans. Green Action Week is coming up, potential bioblitz being offered but we have to figure that out tomorrow. Not much news over the Christmas break.

**UPDATES, DISCUSSION AND DECISION TOPICS**

7.1 Societies Awards Ball: theme, venue, & date announcement

Theme is the Oscars. Tickets go on sale on Thursday the 8th of February at 10am, nominations for awards also go out on this date. You can nominate your society and nominate an individual. There is around 10 different awards you can nominate yourselves for. A fun night that is made fun by the awards and seeing people celebrate their achievements. Must have a society membership in order to purchase a ticket. Venue is the Golden Lion. Date is the 28th of March 2024. Dress code will be formal black tie, if you were going to the Oscars, what would you wear?

7.2 [VC Fund](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/sports-and-societies/societies/society-resources/society-funding/)

If you as a society have any kind of big events or something that you want to plan that doesn’t fall within the communities' zone grant budget, then you can apply to that. Opens on the 26th of February and closes on the 25th of March. All information on that can be found on the website.

7.3 International Festival of Culture, Women’s History Month, Ramadan, Green Week, etc.

12th and 13th of February is the International Festival of Culture – the 12th is sort of a societies date. Even if it’s not a society and you just want to share your culture then speak to Vice President Communities.

7.4 Elections

Elections are open until the 12th of February. You can run for almost any roles, including community zones volunteer officers and also sabbatical officers. You can recommend a friend if you think you have someone who you think may be interested. You can also schedule a drop in with VPC, Jordan or Natalie if you’re interested in communities zone role. Can give advice on writing manifesto or what goals for the year would be.

7.5 Holyrood Rally

Will take place on February 21st. This is a protest because the Scottish Government are cutting the budget for higher and further education by over £100 million. Will have detrimental effect on the university and us and our experience of university. Vice President Communities will hopefully be hosting a placard making session a few days before it. Email with link to sign up will be sent out.

7.6 Log your [volunteering hours](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/opportunities/volunteering/) – being on a committee counts!

Volunteering section of the Students Union website. Able to track experiences here by downloading activity tracker. Track your hours on it and at the end of the semester/academic year you can log your hours by submitting the activity tracker. Being in a society committee does count as volunteering

. At the end of the semester, you get a certificate of how many hours have been completed. This looks great on CVs and can be used for the Stirling Award. Any questions about this then you can email Jordan.

7.7 New process for [submitting to the CZEC](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/sports-and-societies/societies/society-resources/czecsubmissions/)

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

8.1 Questions?

8.1.1 Q: Will there be any more mental health first aid training?

JA: There will be, we are organising something for next semester. Unfortunately, not this semester, it will be semester one of the 24/25 academic year and will still just be open to 2nd and 3rd year students just to make sure we’re having the benefit of keeping you guys around on campus for a while. We could potentially open it up to PHD students, we will look into that.

8.1.2 Q: Psychology students would really benefit from participating in the training and if we can potentially open up Scotland Mental Health First Aid Training to 4th year students?

JA: Right now there’s not scope to open it up to 4th year students because we only have 16 more spaces available because we had 16 this past round and then we have 16 next semester. It’s just a matter of money, if we can get the funding to offer it to anyone who wants to participate absolutely. But right now it is only open to 1st, 2nd and 3rd years. It’s really good to hear that you’re interested in it and we will try to get that. I might be training to become a mental health first aid course trainer, and if that happens, then I am at the disposal of the Union, and it won’t be super expensive. And then I would be happy to have you on the course.

8.1.3 Q: Will the housing survey statistics be published anywhere?

JP: Yes. I need to make it more presentable and to potentially writer a proper report and then yes the plan is to have it published in the Brig if they’re okay with that. Otherwise it will be published on my own social media and I think ZC will be happy to publish it on the union website and the such. Can look into publishing it on the bulletin board.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 12th March 2024

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

N/A