**Societies General Meeting 2 – 20/11/2023**

**Justyna Kardasz (VP Community) – Chair**

**Erin Ross (Activities Coordinator) – Clerk**

**Start of meeting**

Justyna asks everyone to sign in and goes through meeting agenda

**1. Information**

1. Budget update – 23% of the General Pot and 54% of the Arts and Culture pot for the year has been spent at time of meeting. The General Pot started at £40k and Arts and Culture at £15k
2. Creative Hub – VP Welfare Rachael Okoh is working on a platform for student creativity. Contact her to learn more
3. Disability History Month – Societies Exec member Jo Fitzpatrick speaks to the events coming up. VP Inclusion Yu-Chu Doong has put together an amazing programme including a hard of hearing and deaf awareness session and BSL workshop
4. Spring election – VPs Community and Inclusion are hosting an Intro to Student Elections and Manifesto workshop for anyone thinking of running
5. Staff – VP Community welcomes new socs team member Natalie and reminds socs of staff structure. Erin and Natalie are the two full-time Activities Coordinators, supported by part-time student staff, managed by the Student Opportunities Manager Alison. The Activities Team works alongside the VP Community
6. Socs Exec – VP Community introduces the Socs Exec and the society category they are assigned to look after:
	* Jo Fitzpatrick (they/them) – Community
	* Cameron Pattinson (he/him) – Hobbies & Interests
	* Jamie Campbell (they/them) – Political & Activism
	* Karen Low (she/her) – Media, Arts & Music
	* Olivia Page (she/her) – Faith & Culture
	* 6th member to be elected in this meeting – Course-Based

Reminder that you can check and reach out to the Socs Exec point of contact for your society here: <https://www.strathunion.com/groups/societies-exec/>, on the Societies Discord or through strathunion.societies@strath.ac.uk.

1. **You said, we did** – VPCommunity gives update on how socs team are progressing urgent society issues raised at last GM and earlier**:**

**Training**

* Socs team have reviewed and improved committee training
* Finance training is now being reviewed
* Staff and Socs Exec are working on guidance/resources to help with grant applications
* Union staff now able to deliver safeguarding training and consent training for societies
* Offering antiracism workshops delivered by Show Racism the Red Card next semester
* VP Community is working on an online comms/marketing training for societies

**Room booking**

* Staff are working with university room bookings to improve the process of liaising with them
* Streamlining how bookings are confirmed – to reduce steps and waiting time on all sides
* Gaining more access to uni space information and systems so we can advise you better on room types and hopefully book you into rooms ad-hoc throughout the semester
* L&T building in particular – last year we secured free bookings for societies 8am-10pm 7 days a week, but we are working to secure a shorter notice period and reduce security steps so it is actually easier for you to book these spaces
* Also exploring less constrained free access to other space the union uses on campus
* Improving the room booking form to make it easier for you to provide the info we need
* Societies can improve the system too, by actually using the form we provide and filling out the information fully. Often it’s the back-and-forth between three parties looking for key information that leads to delays and confusion
* Societies can also help by respecting the deadline we currently have to work with i.e. 2 weeks for uni rooms. If it’s less in advance than this, please don’t ask us for a uni space as this is not up to us
1. **Active & Engaged** – VP Community explains how it works – societies submit evidence that they have completed each mini-badge. When you get them all, you achieve a tier – bronze, silver or gold. Tip for societies – attach a summary document explaining the evidence you have included

Congratulations to our first societies to achieve bronze!

Question about when socs are awarded their badges – as they apply or at the end of the year. Activities Coordinator confirms this has changed and badges are awarded as societies apply for them. Badges will be reset to 0 in September as with all societies operations

1. Strath Active – free social sport and active health programme
2. Alumni Fund – only one cycle this year in spring
3. Sustainability – Intro to Sustainable Development course on MyPlace
4. Charity Month – Socs Exec introduce Charity Month which will run over February 2024. There are 3 categories – Most Funds Raised, Best Collaboration and Best Charity Engagement. They encourage societies to go beyond funds raised – we want to see how you are raising awareness and/or working with your charity partner(s). Prizes are monetary – more info soon, keep an eye on emails and Discord

**2. Tips**

1. **Dates to get involved in**
* 16 Days of Action against GBV, especially Fight for the Night march on 29th November
* Christmas Market – Christmas gifts from small businesses and local makers
* Refreshers – 1500 new postgraduate students on campus. There will be a welcome fair on 16th January, but there won’t be a space for all societies. We’re bringing back the International Food Fair on 18th January – societies will be reimbursed up to £80.

Contact strathunion.societies@strath.ac.uk about any of the above

1. **Good grant request examples –** Socs Exec highlight two grant requests that were done well and why
* Abercrombie & Stitch made an application for core equipment they will use throughout the year. Information is broken down into itemized spending. They include reasoning for why they chose certain products over others e.g. beginner-level materials were chosen to include everyone in the society.
* Concert Band made an application for one larger amount for a specific piece of core equipment needing replaced. They explain exactly why the product is needed, break down costing options and give a justification for the more expensive option
* Question about whether there’s a funding limit for a Socs Exec application. Socs Exec respond not as such but we look at lots of factors including impact and longevity. Karen Low adds that we look favourably at part-funding. Ollie Page adds if you have a lot of funds in your Savings but are using this for something else, say that in your application. VP Community surmises we need to see the overall picture – if in doubt, put it in! Give us information
1. Other funding opportunities– VP Community highlights further sources of funding for individual students and potentially society activity, which can be found at <https://www.strathunion.com/support/money/financialsupport/>
2. **Electing committee members –** Socs Exec and staff are concerned that process is not being followed when it comes to electing society committees. You need to democratically elect committees from your members, not decide among committee or ‘appoint’ new positions.

This is about ensuring the opportunity for all to vote and run as standard –you can elect committee outside of your AGM, but you must hold an EGM (Emergency/Extraordinary)

Karen clarifies that this does not always need to be a full physical election – it’s about putting the opportunity out there for people to go for and could be conducted on whatever platforms you use

If you have not properly elected your committee, put it to your members to vote on now. If members say they aren’t happy with this committee, hold another vote

1. **Other tips –** when contacting the staff team, please read the automatic reply which contains useful information. If you would like to speak about an issue in person, please email first as drop-ins aren’t feasible at the moment
2. **What to contact Socs Exec about:**
* Support writing grant applications
* Incentives and development opportunities for your society
* How to plan an event
* How to collaborate with different student and external groups
* Non-emergency wellbeing issues – VP Community adds that for emergencies, university security can be contacted to reach the university’s crisis response team. There is also the Report and Support tool and the union’s Advice Hub

**3. Collecting feedback via Menti**

Summary of discussion points and questions from attendees:

* Does Socs Exec reject grant applications? Answer – yes, frequently. One society feels their rejections have come from technicalities that are more to do with finance knowledge. Exec clarifies that they would usually reject such an application with feedback and allow the society to resubmit
* Point made that offering a follow-up chat after a rejection would be good – Exec confirms this is something they often do and can be added to feedback as standard
* Point made that support in advance would be more useful – Exec confirms this is something they are available for and societies may approach their point of contact for help with grants
* Question about Socs Exec voting – this is a majority vote system
* Question about Socs Exec funds – is Socs Exec fund separate to Arts and Culture? They are kept separate but both are administered by Socs Exec. Arts and Culture is £15k on top of the general £40k, so there is £55k available over the year in total
* Question from Socs Exec – would you come to grant-writing sessions if we put them on? Discussion that it’s hard to do one-size-fits-all; could be useful to create resources by type of application e.g. grants for events, competitions, trips. There isn’t a need for an in-person session unless this were more of a ‘surgery’ where socs can get practical help with their applications – there is a need for resources which could sit online

**4. Electing new socs exec member**

Ammar Ameer – involved in a number of societies including Rubik’s Cube. No speech

Sam Marshallsay – expresses support for Ammar, withdraws

Shania Maritz – founded and runs Harry Styles society. Union volunteer – Welcome Team leader and Hear to Listen. Wants to support people to find the society for them. Has pet monkey

Attendees vote – Shania is elected

**5. Talk to your Intersoc Rep time** – not minuted. Attendees are offered a chance to chat with their relevant Soc Exec member and concerns may be passed to socs staff if needed