Societies Annual General Meeting

16th March 2022, 5pm

Minutes

Chair: Ru Wallace, Vice President Community

Clerk: Jenny Thomson

1. **Welcome**

CM1 asks if it is fair that all societies get one vote when some societies are so much larger than others. RW says he does believe it is fair so that we do not disadvantage smaller societies, but if this is something people wish to change for future elections, he is happy to discuss at a later date.

1. **Alumni Fund**

Elaine Keil (EK), in addition to the information noted on the slides, notes that the Alumni Fund is designed to benefit groups, rather than individuals. Case studies of previously successful applications can be found on their website.

EK provides top tips for applications:

* Ensure you read the guidance thoroughly and ensure your project is eligible.
* Treat it as a formal application, such as ensuring you use full sentences and avoid using jargon or other sector-specific language. Informal applications are not looked on favourably by the board. Getting someone (a friend, family member, anyone) who is unconnected to/not involved in the application to read over it for you.
* Show your budget and include other sources of funding that you have or are attempting to receive, such as external sponsorships.
* Your application is about telling the story of your project as well as the practicalities so be passionate and ambitious in your application.

EK notes she is happy to hear from any societies who have any questions or concerns.

1. **Socs exec candidates**
2. **STAR Awards**

Nominations are now closed. The event will take place on the 25th of May

1. **Charity Month- Winners!**

Note that the societies exec felt it would be unfair to award more than one category to a single society, so one society may have raised the most but if they also won in another category, most money raised went to the next highest.

1. **Active & Engaged**
2. **Finances**

RW notes that the socs exec is roughly on track with the budget, although we are running a little low in cash, it is still on track thanks to the hard work of the socs exec.

CM2 asks when does a society’s Active & Engaged status get updated on the website. JT replies that she does it regularly, usually aiming to update it once every week, if possible, but no set times.

CM3 raises the issue that the budget pages from previous years are missing from the website. RW responds that this will be looked into as soon as possible and provides assurances that it is likely a website error, or mistake, and nothing dodgy. Benn Rapson (BR), Strath Union President, responds If people are looking for the Unions Annual Accounts, the governance page is being updated at the moment but in the meantime you can find the full up to date finances on Companies House: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC568857/filing-history>

To clarify though: Annual Accounts are not the current annual budget, they're what has been spent against projections. This year’s budget is yet to be developed (awaiting funding confirmation from the University).

CM1 asks why the arts and culture fund is not on the graphs, and whether that means that funding is no longer available. RW responds that arts and culture is still available and if anyone would like the information on this, they can get in-touch, they are just not on these particular graphs.

1. **Fundraising for your society**

RW explains socs exec is having to watch the budget right now, so societies (as always) should consider other funding as grant requests will not always be fully granted, if at all. RW stresses the vast opportunities for funding available for societies, including those on the slide and others (specifically Welcome Grants and AGM grants).

1. **Soc AGMs, handover, re-affiliations**

RW stresses the importance of a good handover: tell the new committee everything, including how you deal with issues, how you run events, etc. so that they can run the society well.

1. **Vote for socs exec; Ask Societies Exec**
2. **AOCB**

Membership Proposal

*The membership proposal, as discussed in the Societies GM 2 and 3, was brought up by multiple committee members through the meeting, RW asked them to save the discussion for AOCB.*

CM4 firstly asks why minutes for these meetings (Socs GMs) are not available, and why a specific timeslot for this proposal was not allocated in the AGM, as was expected by many societies, for what is a serious issue with serious potential consequences. CM4 raises multiple issues including that the updated proposal has not been made available, so issues such as non-Strathclyde members being unable to attend overnight trips are unresolved, and the topic cannot be properly discussed if the full proposal is not available; Societies are major stakeholders and should be given better opportunity to give their views and it is wrong that there has been no focus groups or any other consultation other than a survey last semester and discussion at GMs. RW responds that there are minutes taken at these meetings and they will be made available. RW notes that the proposal is out in full, just not on the page referenced by CM4 and that societies who raised concerns about the proposal were invited to have meetings with him but only Pole Fitness did so.

CM5 states that a petition objecting to this policy had 199 signatures and it feels as though societies are still not being listened to. RW responds that the petition was never submitted to himself nor the societies team, but that petition was also on a previous version of the proposal that was then discussed at the previous GM.

RW asks what the actual objections society committees have are now.

CM6 stated their impression with RW’s email was that he only wanted to talk to them before the GM, which was very short notice, therefore after discussing it at the GM, they were expecting to get an update from you which we could then discuss further. RW notes there may have been miscommunication, as he had expected societies to reply, but he acknowledges he should have followed-up again after the GM, although it was incredibly busy with the Union elections taking place.

CM7 says that they never saw the email from RW but would be happy to speak to him on behalf of SURGE. CM7 continues the point from CM5 about the petition and clarifies that the petition was never sent to RW or the socs team as they originally thought the policy was going to be immediately implemented, when, in fact, it was only being discussed at that time. CM7 says that their remaining concerns are around who can be part of the society, and whether some people will just be banned due to this new policy. RW responds that anyone could be signed in as a guest if they are not a student or otherwise a member of the union under the proposed new membership categories, as has always been the case generally with the Union. CM7 says that there must have been a misunderstanding because as long as guests can be signed in, their concerns are resolved.

BR steps in to clarify some points for the societies. Firstly, he notes that he, personally, was not happy with the original proposals and there were significant issues around the constitutional set-up for memberships. BR continues that the only people who will not be able to access the union (including societies) are persons with absolutely no connections to the union: so long as someone knows a student and said student signs them in, they are welcome in the union.

CM6 clarifies whether this is about society memberships or entry to the union. BR responds that they are the same thing: to join a society event a person should be a member or be signed in, so that they are brought under our code of conduct and other policies.

CM5 asks for an update on the concerns raised at GM 3 about international students. BR confirms these have been resolved.

CM8 asks whether, within a society, it is possible to have levels of members to reduce impacts of students bulk joining lots of societies during Freshers then never participating any further. RW confirms this is possible and they should speak to the societies staff team about this. CM8 further asks if societies are allowed to be exclusive. RW responds no, this is not allowed, all societies must be inclusive to all students.

CM9 asks if issues brought up previously regarding alumni members of other universities have been resolved. RW states that, as mentioned previously, they can be signed-in as guests. CM9 questions whether this is fair if the person has put a lot of effort into the society and did not have such societies at their university. RW confirms, emphasising that Strath Union is primarily for Strathclyde students.

CM9 then picks up the point raised by CM4 about minutes. JT responds that there are minutes, the first two were done by Jodie Waite, who has since moved jobs, and she had not uploaded them before leaving. JT apologies and confirms that she will sort this out as soon as she can.

CM10 clarifies that once this has passed in student parliament, it will be done with. CM10 adds that it does appear that there has been significant miscommunication on the issue. RW agrees and notes, that after student parliament, it goes to the board of trustees. CM10 then asks whether the safeguarding measures previously mentioned are still part of the proposal if people can just be signed in anyway. RW confirms and emphasises the safeguarding measures relevance for overnight trips in particular. BR also clarifies that the proposals going to student parliament are only the changes to the membership structures, and that the rules around safeguarding are actually separate and are an issue more for staff than parliament. BR acknowledges that this may have been miscommunicated previously.

CM4 asks why the disclosure checks on non-students are being implemented and asks whether this is placing a paywall onto engagement. BR responds that, firstly to be clear it is the less expensive basic disclosure checks, rather than full PVG checks, which are potentially being implemented and, again this is being looked at by staff who know all about safeguarding. Secondly, BR notes that a paywall is not preferred, it is only to ensure we can hold people to account for behaviour, and that options of subsiding costs are being considered, plus disclosure checks last for a year, potentially covering multiple trips.

CM11 asks about emails for finances where issues arise as communication as been poor. CM1 asks about the recent issues with payments on the website. RW notes that all operational issues should be directed to the societies team, but the payments issue on the website is being resolved, if it hasn’t been already and was due to the Government changes on security for card payments policy.

CM6 raises suggestions for Freshers fair next year: they suggest that the societies which will be present on each day of the fair should be better advertised. RW agrees, and notes that hopefully this year- due to COVID restrictions being lifted and the TL building being fully open- there should be more opportunities for all societies to have stalls throughout the fair and freshers week generally.

CM13 asks if it is known when event number restrictions will be dropped given the removal of COVID restrictions in Scotland. BR replies that it is likely to be very soon, based on guidance provided by the Scottish Government, but this is still to be confirmed by the University.

CM12 asks if the meeting about security that was mentioned at the last GM is still happening. RW says yes, and notes that he hopes it will be very soon and apologises for the delay, but things have been busy with elections.

CM11 asks why so much of the office space on level 1 is unused and notes that staff are difficult to get in-contact with. BR responds that student exec are actually up on level 8, which students are welcome to come up to visit should they want to speak to them. Additionally, BR notes the office arrangements are being actively reviewed for next year. CM11 responds to clarify that he meant paid, non-elected, staff like finance staff. BR notes that finance staff are also on level 8, but the societies support team are on level 1 in the glass offices. CM11 notes that the offices on level 1 are regularly empty. RW responds that many staff are off at the moment due to various personal reasons, so we are somewhat short on staff, but staff (like JT) are still around to help, even if not visible in the offices, especially as many staff are still on a rota to work from home some days so that the whole team is not out with COVID. RW notes that he can, like other student exec members run drop-ins for societies. CM5 asks that, rather than drop-ins, can visits to societies by exec start again, as used to happen before the pandemic. RW says he started his role during the pandemic so this is something he has not been able to do yet, but would love to do this, and he will look at starting this again.

**BR notes that this is RW’s last GM/AGM after two years of being Vice President Community and thanks him for his amazing work.**

Meeting closes: 6.45pm