

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON STUDENTS' UNION
STUDENT COUNCIL

Thursday 23rd April 2020

18:00 Virtual Council

PRESENT: Gemma Lovegrove (President); Katy Baker (VP Welfare); Ryan Bradshaw (VP Union Development); Tre Ventour (VP BME); Anthony Stepniak (PGR Officer); Tamara Holt (Societies Officer); Hugo (European Officer); Hollie (LGBT Officer); Erin Laste (Women's Officer); Nathan (Societies Chair); Alex (Societies Deputy Chair); Stefan (Societies Councillor); Travis (Societies Councillor); Claudia (Societies Councillor); Misra (Societies Councillor); Chloe (AU Deputy Chair); Ratri (AU Councillor); Lynsay (AU Councillor); Izzy (AU Councillor); Jack (AU Councillor); Genine (Education Committee); Lillian (Education Committee), Louise Dowson (Chair).

APOLOGIES: Kirstie Pope (Disabled Students' Officer)

ABSENT: Ektaa (Education Committee)

MINUTES: Beth Garrett (Deputy Chair)

1. Apologies: Sent from KP, under mitigating circumstances.
15 accepted, 3 rejected (some councillors not present at this moment).
2. Declarations of interest: none.
3. Minutes: minutes unavailable on the website so unable to approve.
4. Issues from minutes not elsewhere on the agenda: none.
5. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair.
LD put herself forward to continue as Chair as she is running in by-elections. This has been discussed with RW and LM.
22 accepted (unanimous).
Deputy chair vote postponed until next council due to no-one stepping forward.
6. Motions
 - Officer Role Descriptions Discussion Point – This was carried over from the last council due to it not being quorate; a working group has now been created, featuring:
AS (PGR PTO), RB (VP UD), TH (Societies PTO), N (Societies Chair)
 - Faculty Forums and Faculty Advocates Discussion Point – Paper about Faculty Forums and how they should be embedded into the Faculty Advocate role. Point was made about what happens if there are not advocates in role for a Faculty – in which case, Education Committee elect a Course Advocate to go in their place. This will be written into the democratic process. No questions asked.
 - Student Group Ratification Discussion Point – When groups are put forwards to be ratified at Societies Committee and AU, it can be unfair if these meetings are consistently not quorate, meaning the ratification process for clubs can be delayed indefinitely. Proposal is to give executive committee the power to ratify clubs in the absence of a quorate committee. No questions asked. It was decided to create a working group to embed this into the by-laws, featuring:
TH (Societies Officer), N (Societies Chair), RB (VP UD), LK (Education Committee), AT (Societies Deputy Chair).
 - Governance Review Discussion Point – The governance review needs to be done over the summer, which involves reviewing governing documents such as by-laws and policies. The

discussion point was presented in case of any objections to the review going ahead. No objections.

- Liberation Forums Discussion Point – Representatives are required to attend NUS conference in May on the behalf of liberation groups. GL outlined details on who needs to attend.
- Apology By-law Amendment– A working group was created to amend the Student Council By-law and make it more specific, to define apologies into different categories. This was done as a result of a number of inadequate absences during the last year. No questions asked.
22 accepted (unanimous).

7. Reports

- Trustees report: GL informs there has not been a Trustees meeting since the last Council.
- Finance report: Lack of Finance report; RB provided a brief, verbal account assuring everything is in order. BG questioned lack of report for another Council – this had been the same in the previous Council and AGM. GL informed it was largely due to a lack of Finance Manager which has resulted in delays. BG suggested this should be communicated to Council so that councillors understand the situation.
- President (GL): A lot of attention has gone into representing students during the COVID-19 pandemic, working alongside the University management team to ensure students have the best outcomes during this situation and disruption to learning is minimised. GL has supported a lot of international students, particularly in light of the situation. No questions asked.
22 accepted (unanimous).
- Vice President Union Development (RB): The intention for this period was to plan a 'Re-freshers' event which would have taken place after Easter however this was cancelled due to COVID-19. RB had been working with KB to organise more mental health first aid training for clubs. Due to COVID-19, a lot of work has surrounded supporting students with issues such as accommodations, and this has been done across the Sabbatical team. RB has continued to attend weekly team meetings. RB has also be working on budgets for next year and ensuring sports and societies have sufficient funds. He is looking into organising an event, particularly for third year students, who have missed out on typical end-of-year events due to the global situation. No questions asked.
22 accepted (unanimous).
- Vice President Welfare (KB): A lot of time has been taken up working with landlords and letting agents to represent students during the COVID-19 situation, as a number of students have moved out of accommodation due to these extenuating circumstances and cannot necessarily work to cover costs of unoccupied accommodation. KB has written an open letter to landlords and NUS regarding this. KB has also worked closely with HM on developing the advice service and looking at ways to promote the service. KB has done welfare training with CS so that he can advise next years' advocates on welfare issues. KB has also been very active on social media with welfare and isolation-related posts, which was commended by a number of Councillors. No questions.
22 accepted (unanimous).
- Vice President BME (TV): Had organised events on how to decolonise the curriculum. Investigated how BME people are being affected by COVID-19. Has been doing reading around COVID-19 and will be creating a reading list relevant to BME and COVID-19. Has supported disciplinaries.
- Question asked about the format of the report which failed to use the template provided. BG pointed out that this is at least the second Council since the templates have been introduced – the report does not use the old template either. BG questioned

- what TV has done to represent students during the last month as a lot of the report discusses research and writing, rather than immediate communication with students. TV assures he has been doing so on an individual basis, supporting students singularly rather than as a whole.
- 19 accepted, 3 abstained.
- NUS Conference Report – GL attended the NUS Conference, which was supposed to be held in Liverpool but was held online. The conference is where the National Union officers were elected, and attendees voted on NUS policies. The conference is very important for shaping the direction of NUS; campaigns discussed included one for a better education and one linked to the climate emergency. There was also discussion about how to increase international student support. No questions.

8. Committee meetings

- Societies Committee: Approved minutes from last meeting, elected Chair and Deputy elected. All councillors elected. Art Society discussed issues with booking the Engine Shed and the costing of this. Pole Fitness expressed that they had felt let down by the Union, particularly at the beginning of the year. No questions.
22 accepted (unanimous).
- Athletics Union: RB informed AU of situation regarding refunds for Varsity and Sports Awards. AU members shared concerns about the Union website currently and how has caused difficulties for certain things, such as committee elections. Welcomed new committee members, elected new Chair and Deputy Chair as well as new councillors. No questions asked.
22 accepted (unanimous).
- Education Committee: First Education Committee with new Advocates in position. Discussed the Faculty Forum Discussion Point. AS gave a PGR update and informed Committee that his PGR drop-ins had been well attended, which was good to see. BG held a discussion about what advocates would like to achieve during the next year and gave some advice on how to do so effectively. Update was given on STaR Awards which are due to be announced at the beginning of next month. No questions.
22 accepted (unanimous).

9. Issues arising from committee minutes

- None

10. Any other business

- GL – Audited accounts need to be approved by calling a council. In order to do this, a petition is required. GL asked councillors to share this so the accounts can be approved.
- BG highlighted that there has been a Trustees meeting since the last Council and asked for a Trustee to provide a verbal report. RB informed Council that the meeting mainly consisted of conversation around the appointment of a new CEO. The meeting also involved discussion of COVID-19 and the actions put into place to support staff during this time. No questions asked.

11. Date of next meeting: Thursday, October 15th 2020.

Meeting adjourned 7:27pm.