Student Council Minutes – 24.01.23

1 Welcome and apologies

- Welcome given by Harry Jee.

Apologies:

No apologies were given.

Present:

- Will Brewer (President)
- Harry Jee (Chair)
- Ethan Parmar (Deputy Chair)
- Chih-Hsiang Lo (VP Education)
- Jack Sperry (VP Democracy & Development)
- Anna Taylor (VP Societies)
- Tomi Amole (VP Welfare & Campaigns)
- Emma Birch (VP Sports)
- Hamza Rehman (VP Postgraduate)
- Maisha Hassan (Ethnic Minorities Officer)
- Kieran Barry (Widening Participation Officer)
- Jack Bateman (LGBTQUA+ Officer)
- Enaya Nihal (Women's Officer)
- Ella Osho (Trans Students Officer)
- Saul Harvey (Disabled Students Officer)
- Ella Seear (Chair of Welfare Committee)
- Tom Chaloner (Chair of Education Committee)
- James Hart (Chair of Postgraduate Committee)
- Nathan Stone (Chair of Democracy Committee)
- Tom Garth (Chair of Environment Committee)
- Nathan Cox (Chair of Development Committee)
- Sueda Oktay
  Luke Degun (Chair of Sports Committee)
  Yaz Yeahia
  Keith Roper-Hitches (Part-Time and Mature Students' Officer)

2 Chair and Deputy Chair Introductions

- HJ makes a brief introduction about how council meeting will work, and the changes that will be introduced to make them quicker and smoother.

- HJ establishes that the content of SAV motions will not be discussed but rather will go directly to SAV, people should attend SAV debates if they want their or their committee's views to be heard.

- Student Council – 2020/21
- 11/05/21 – WebEx
- Warwick SU Democracy

- EP makes a brief introduction about himself.

3   Announcements & Co-options

- HJ HJ announces that a lot of motions have been received and therefore will be discussed.

- He goes on to mention that council will discuss the Governance Reform proposals.

4   Minutes from last meeting

- HJ received minutes from last meeting, a comment was made about the misspelling of Jonathan Bateman?. With the edit pending, the minutes were approved and signed off.

5   Governance Regeneration Project (GRP)

- YY gives a brief overview about these proposals and establishes that in the next student council the initial proposals will be presented. He says that the objective of the discussion going ahead will be to answer questions, to help illustrate the proposals better.

- YY says that initial discussions will be carried on regarding the position about the chair and the content of what forums will look like.

- YY mentions the initial questions that could be discussed, if chosen. Questions? YY, mentions that the vote for these will happen next council, and that the questions will be discussed, on this council.

- HJ takes over from YY, and talks about the policy tool kit and policy in categories, explaining that it will try to make it easier for students to submit a policy, which will then divide policies up into specific categories in order to simplify the process.

- NS comments specifying that his committee endorse both the policy tool kit, and the categories, as their main objectives was to make the process more accessible for everyone, and to expand the ability to engage with it, therefore he says that simplifying the process will make it easier to people to engage with it and therefore they are in favour of both of the measures being adopted.

- HJ shows what the policy tool kit is and explains that it will be an easier format than the one currently in place. He then goes on to ask whether there are any objections to the policy in categories, to which no one comments, and so it is assumed that they agree with it.

- YY talks about committee reform, and explains how the postgrad and x committee were merged, and that the welfare committee will be treated as a forum instead, HJ mentions that in some sense it might make sense to merge the postgraduate and the education committee, however, the postgraduate committee deal with non-academic issues too, so he notes that it might be worth to discuss the best way to maintain focus on non-academic issues of postgraduates within the SU democratic structure, if those two committees do merge them into forums.

- JH comments on the fact that people might not understand what the postgraduate committee is, and therefore talks about the dangers of merging the committees saying that they will be nothing in the SU to guarantee that postgraduate voice is heard, so he suggests not to merge the committees at all, as education matters are the minority of the issues that the postgraduate committee deals with, so

merging them will take away most of the issues that they deal with regarding welfare, engagement etc. He then goes on to mention that the priority of the postgraduate committee is to improve postgraduate engagement within the SU, and so what they would be in favour of is a separate forum for postgraduates, to show them that there is a strong voice for them, so that they aren't relegated to being an after-thought.

- HJ mentions that another possible solution might be that in order to merge the committees the welfare issues that the Postgraduate committee deal with could be merged into the welfare forum, with insurance that the forum will deal with the issues with some level of seriousness.

- JH responds to this, establishing that in theory it would be a good idea, but the issue would come as postgraduate engagement might not be reliable, he gives the example of him only having has 8 votes, and that being more than anyone else, and establishes that people might not realise that they can engage with the SU and so the danger would be that very few people would recognise these forums as places where they could turn to if they were having issues, especially with committee elections being towards the end of the year, only postgraduate who are on a multiple year course would be able to be elected. Therefore he says that the postgraduate committee should remain its own entity, however doesn't disregard the proposal of having some chair on the welfare and education committee for the postgraduate students.

- HJ closes the discussion on the postgraduate committee, and opens up the discussion about any other concerns that could be raised, no comments are made and so he moves onto the ideas platform. He gives a brief overview of what this entails, mentioning that the platform is a way for students to contribute to democratic outcomes in the SU, by removing the process of submitting a motion and instead giving them the opportunity to submit an idea to the platform, and then that would then be developed with the person that submitted it by the relevant committee. No comments are made about this proposal.

- HJ goes on to talk about the scrutiny panel, establishing that one of the functions of it will be to hold elected officers to account, which will mean that it will be taken off the student council responsibility. The proposal suggests that 7 randomly selected forum members, one from each forum, would make up the panel, and that there would be a scrutiny panel help termly for each full-time officer. He says that the democracy committee came up with suggestions, including that since there is a variety of commitment and engagement that members want to put into their role, it has been suggested that the forums should each select one member to send to the scrutiny panel each time, so that relevant issues that might want to be raised can be mentioned. Another suggestion made by the committee was that the meeting needs someone to chair it, and so it would be convenient to have the chair of the student council chair it, and that it might be better to have 1 meeting with all the officers, with them either being all there or coming in one-by-one to have the meeting with the panel.

- X comments about the fact that the student council last year was something that was unable to hold officers to account, and sometimes they didn't submit their written reports to work through on the meeting, and so he says that in order to get more accountability this panel needs to be put in place.

- WB comments stating that officers should be kept into account, however something should be kept in place, to understand the lifestyle of the officer, so that they can understand why sometimes officers might be unable to do something, and also he mentions that it shouldn't create unnecessary work for officers, as the scrutiny can inhibit them from doing the work they are being scrutinise from.

- HJ responds saying that the sanctions would still be imposed by the student council rather than the panel, and so when the panel recommend a sanction that is too high, the student council could then review it and change it to something that is reasonable.

- WB mentions that he has experience of scrutiny panels in other unions where they receive an external officer from another union to do the scrutiny, and also states that a union had to remove the panel as it didn't work, so he wants the council to consider whether it is worth creating a panel or whether it might not work for the long-term

- Y talks about the fact that it might end up undermining democratic structures, as if someone dislikes a particular officer, they might request a vote of no confidence, which will carry a lot of weight at council, so the panel might be better for just scrutinise and talk about how officers might be able to be supported, so that they can do the things that they are scrutinised for.

- HJ responds to this suggesting that the scrutiny panel shouldn't recommend specific sanctions but rather express the degree of dissatisfaction so that student council can decide what an effective sanction might be.

- NS believes that a dedicated platform should be created for scrutiny, however the meeting should be all in one go, therefore all 7 officers should be present at the meeting.

- HJ states that the having it all in one meeting will also balance out the time, as certain officers might have less to discuss than others, therefore they won't have to turn up on campus jus for a 10 minute meeting.

- WB comments on the fact that potentially having a HR business partner in the room might help when establishing whether sanctions might need to be given.

- TC comments that there should be a measure of consistency so that there are no different skills in levels of scrutiny so that all members are scrutinised to the same level.

- HJ responds saying that the democracy committee mentioned that, it is a concern, however, within a committee as there will be different skills, being able to choose different members from committees to scrutinise will be more effective, and will also allow more flexibility, however the concerns should be taken into account.

- HJ mentions chair of council, saying that the idea will be to have a directly elected council post which will be non-voting, as someone that is elected by students isn't prone to be more neutral than someone elected by a wide variety of people elected to the student union. He mentions that one issue of electing the chair is that in order to get elected one needs to reach out to a large variety of people across committees, so that means that you need to strike a moderate line in order to get support. If the council wants to maintain a chair who is elected he suggests to have the chair be elected by all members of committees, as it would remove having a named body which only has one person. He also mentions that sometimes it is an issue that the chair is an ineffective facilitator, however he mentions that it wouldn't be different if the person was directly elected. Furthermore, the role of deputy chair can be removed.

- NS responds that democracy committee also proposed that if the position of deputy chair is abolished, the most appropriate person to take over would be the chair of democracy committee due to relevant experience.

- TS mentions that the use of all student votes to resolve split votes is inefficient.

- HJ talks about votes from committees being representative of a broad base.

- TA responds in disagreement with previous arguments against a voting chair. Also talks about the SU being a representative body meaning that a voted in chair would lead to a more representative candidate.

- HJ mentions that the quality of a chair is defined by how they hold a meeting, and a vote with campaigning may lead to less effective chairs being elected in.

- WB responds that the role of a chair in a split vote carries more weight than other votes, which may not be agreeable. Defines a neutral chair as someone who does not take part in discussion, and is not presenting their own views. Acknowledges it is impossible to elect someone without opinions, instead looking at training on neutral discussion may be more appropriate.

- HJ responds that the role of the chair in terms of being neutral vs active may not agree with the nature of the SU, where it is more important to bring people into discussion. Compares the SU model of a chair to the CEO of a company as opposed to a speaker of the house.

- NS comments that it is important that the student council can function in order to maintain representation, and therefore the priority should be on ability to chair.

- AT responds that there is training offered by the SU, even if they are elected. Mentions that the purpose of campaigning is to communicate with student body.

- HJ responds that voters do not get to see the ability of a chair to lead a meeting.

- JB comments that there is a difference between being elected on a manifesto vs a chair campaigning to be a good administrator.

- WB responds that asking a chair to campaign may politicise the role.

- HJ believes that committee members may have different ideas of what chair to vote for compared to the student body.

- NS mentions that there can be a difference between electing a student officer, compared to a chair who impacts those in council meetings rather than policy. Therefore, you cannot ask a chair to campaign in the same sort of way.

- HJ introduces proposals to expand the student council. Proposal A1 looks at slight expansion, A2 looks at significant expansion.

- WB mentions that the election of committee members involves very low voter turnout, although there is greater participation in sport. There is an argument that we are electing for the sake of it. Proposal

to take the presidents from sports societies to form a sports committee, to be a more representative President's forum.

- HJ responds that democracy committee had similar ideas.

- JB voting turnout may show underlying issues with engagement in certain areas.

- EB believes that having 53 sport presidents in one room may not be very effective, as turnout can be inconsistent.

- LD responded that larger clubs may dominate committees.

- AT mentions that societies may not be responsive to extra responsibilities applied to roles. Also, executive committees often change throughout the year so attendance is likely to be inconsistent.

- JH responds that creating committees with only sports and societies members may reduce the demographic of representation, and therefore impact who may be in a strong position to work in the SU.

- NS thinks that there is room for society presidents to work with the SU in an advisory capacity, perhaps on rotation or by invitation.

- CL mentions ideas to create a president of each type of society, in order to reduce the number of people attending meetings.

- LD responds that there is a need for society presidents to get the views from students.

- EB believes that it might be more effective to open this role up to execs not just presidents.

- NS responds that societies committee demands a different set of skills to the role of execs, so it may be better to avoid assuming they will be strong participants in committees.

- HJ comments that each society is likely to have specific interests and problems.

- AT mentions the lack of guarantee that a member of society exec had strong backing.

- HJ introduces talks into the number and size makeup that is wanted in the committee, with democracy committee supporting having 7 members – except in some committees with more specific makeup.

- TC responds that there may be too many people on academic forum for it to be effective.

- WB comments that sport has had a strong model of engagement for years, with the feature of forums to get the voices of sports people. An academic forum may help to create a strong point of contact.

- SO comments that societies could sign up to get involved in societies committee.

- HJ responds that there is potential for regular presence of exec members in a non-voting capacity to advise on specific issues, as discussed by democracy committee. Introduces conclusions on the number of people to sit on committees and student council.

- NS states that democracy committee came to the conclusion that the chair plus one other member should attend the student council. A smaller student council allows for ensured representation and efficiency.

- HJ responds that there is currently 13 faculty members on council.

- WB supports the presence of all 13 of these members, as the SU should focus on education and the attendance of all 13 faculty members sends this message.

- TC agrees with education being the priority. Suggests that having 6/7 faculty members on the council is still more representation than the proposals of a chair plus one.

- WB responds that this leads to the dilemma of which half of faculty members to select, or the adoption of a rotation system which leads to inconsistent council membership. Neither of these options are preferable.

- HJ mentions that it is difficult to cut the number of faculty reps as each one represents a specific area.

- KR comments that it might be of use to explore the models of other SU bodies.

- YY responds that there is already precedent for each of the models being discussed, through previous research.

- JS comments that away days have allowed for successful observations of other unions.

- KR asks if there is a possibility to see the problem, action, solution and success of other university models.

- HJ proposes that an annotated version of the meeting PowerPoint could be sent round.

- YY comments that there is conversation with the NUS into these ideas.

- WB mentions that all the ideas being discussed have come from 2-3 years of research, and we need to be careful not to think that these models could apply to Warwick.

- JH comments that the addition of faculty reps to the council may be complex if they hold other positions that can vote on council.

- YY responds that there will be a move to avoid this being possible and council members only being allowed to hold one role.

- HJ introduces option 2, where all roles attend student council. Comments that democracy committee decided this would not be an effective solution as it becomes too large. Introduces option B, where the student council is abolished and forums act as mini student councils within a particular domain.

Questions over how to resolve split decisions and overlapping issues. Also harder to hold policy makers to account.

- WB comments that the prospect is exciting but there are a lot of problems. On one hand it empowers forums, and allows for impressive/concentrated work. On the other, there are big questions over how to maintain the agility of processes and address motions that cross over multiple forums.

- HJ comments that there may be room for a combination of options A1 and B. With a steering committee having the opportunity to delegate motions.

- WB responds that this is still essentially option A1, as these motions would go to the all student vote. And option A1 also has room for increased empowerment. Comments that the only affect on policy allowed by option B is from societies and sports where bylaws are applicable.

- JH comments that the issue of this option is that it may not recognise the extent to which motions extend, as steering committee may generalise motions.

- TA mentions that this option may disempower officers. As committees are often voted in my few people, there power may override that of officers who have been voted in by thousands and are more representative.

- SH comments that some students are very focused on particular issues, so committees may overlook the impact of decisions on other areas.

- WB comments that there may be room to look at where elements from B can be incorporated into A1, specifically in terms of policy.

- HJ responds that they could develop agendas further.

- NS comments that option B needs development and more information in order to be compared to the other, more comprehensive, proposals.

- HJ summarises that lots of people like elements of option B, but mixed into A1.

6   Actions arising

- YY comments that we will go back and look at the 3 options are how they can be developed. Reminds council that at the next meeting there will be a vote on the 3 options as they are. Also, if anyone is interested in contributing towards a working paper then they should email democracy@warwicksu.com.

7   Motion to Student Council

- HJ comments that the following emergency motions will go straight
  - 7.1.Emergency Motion - Suspension of parking charges for specific groups of students and staff for 12 months
  - 7.2.Emergency Motion – Mitigating the impacts of strike action on students

- o 7.3.Emergency Motion – Updates to Disciplinary Process
- o 7.4.Emergency Motion – Warwick SU to oppose removal of self-certifications
- WB explains that motion 7.3 effects bylaws and is necessary due to the number of changes made in university processes. The university sends cases to the union to take disciplinary action, which needs to be more in line with the university's policy. This motion should improve the bylaws, prior to a major review further in the year.
- HJ moves the council to vote on the motion, which passes. Introduces motion 7.5.UCU Strike motions, and amendments. Asks that if anyone seeks an anonymous council vote, then they should email prior to meeting.
- NS explains that there is a proposed amendment to change the title of 'Warwick SU supports the UCU in their strike action', with the aim of separating the action from the motivations.
- TA responds that all changes previously have come through industrial action, therefore separating the two is not possible as they are intrinsically linked.
- ?? comments that students should know why the union are striking, which is then in the title.
- JS responds that students can look at the motion detail, where motivations are explained.
- NS comments that why they are striking is clear in the motion, and placing them in the title leds debate towards agreement with the motion vs about the strike. It is possible to support the motivations and not the strikes themselves.
- WB comments that it is not clear how many motions are going ahead.
- HJ responds that they motions will be combined into a referendum style vote.
- NS clarifies that 7.5 A 'Warwick SU support UCU in their industrial action for better pay, working conditions and pensions' has been changed to 'Warwick SU supports the UCU in their strike action'
- HJ introduces voting on the amendment, anonymously. After the vote, introduces amendment 7.6.1, Amendment – Support Students Through the Cost of Living Crisis, which was accepted.
- NS introduces proposals to amend a motion to separate out strike action.
- TA responds that there is a need to look at industrial action as a whole, as singling out strike action offers a limited view on current situation.
- JS comments on engagement problem within the SU, and therefore the need for voters to immediately understand what they are voting for in order to encourage engagement.
- TA responds that the idea that students don't understand industrial action is unrealistic.
- JS responds that there are fears that voting for one motion may result in influencing another, so clarity is important.
- JB comments that it is not unrealistic for students to not understand industrial action, as many are not political engaged.
- TA mentions that the vote by the UCU was for industrial action, not strike action, so presenting it as strike may misrepresent the movement.
- NS responds that students are most likely to be affected by strike action, so the vote would be relevant to issues facing students directly.
- Harry says we've eard both sides so its time to move onto voting.
- TA adds that Industrial Action isn't the most impactful on students, Boycotting is more so.
- HJ – Moving onto 7.6.1, proposer is development committee, asks whether chairman committee wants to speak in its favour.
- ?? Issues are broad In proposal.
- JS adds this goes into the marketisation of education and the cost of living crisis. This marketisation are too broad and would be better in another motion. Problems include 1A which would be whether we do or don't support UCU strikes, could be struck by trustees.

- HR Shold build campaign around cost of living in and out of uni, emphasise how we are members of local community, workers, renters as students, undermines spirit of motion. UCU issue is understandable but can stay if both motions do pass. Working with UCU isnt conflicitng policies.
- HR says we cannot remove an amendment once it's gotten to student council and so it cannot be revoked.
- KB says we should do something with 1B
- ?? Says we should leave 1B. NUS president removed as antisemite, recent news but should discuss relationship as mistake if we do anything with this.
- ?? Says its much easier to enact and to deliver on.
- ?? Agrees with NUS problem but removes cost of living that isnt being considered.
- TA students are workers.
- Support Marginalised students, NUS is only body representing students, should engage to get victories with connections, if they are only issue in 1D then amendment to remove NUS not remove 1E. Should represent students
- Tom- Only made issue with NUS, not other organisations.
- HJ says 1A should remain as development committee agrees collectively. 1E concern of development committee is that they do a large part of what SU does so shouldn't be in proposal. Don't implement parts, should do all so goal of amendment isn't removed.
- HJ concludes that the amendment passes and goes to ASV.
- JS talks about motion as codifying what they do already.
- Meeting Concludes

8 Adjudication Panel Recommendations

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9 Board of Trustee Report

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10 Motions to Student Council/All Student Vote

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Motion –
> Proposer:
> Seconder:

Motion – does pass

Motion –
> Proposer:
> Seconder:

Motion – does not pass.

11   Ratification of Policies

9.1

9.2

9.3 Say your Goodbyes to STIs (128)

9.4

12   AOB – N/A

13   Date of next meeting:

- Student Council 5
- 09/03/21 – WebEx
- Warwick SU Democracy