**Student Council**

**23 November 2021**

**Present**:

**Chandler Jeon** Chair of Student Council

**Ifrah Farooq** Union Affairs Officer

**Leah Martindale** Equality Liberation & Access Officer

**Ruth Day** Student Living Officer

**Lu Macey** PG Education Officer

**Muazam Tahir** International Students Officer
**Obafemi Alabi** Sport & Development Officer

**Seb Key** UG Education Officer

There were 212 voting members in attendance. The meeting was quorate.

1. **Welcome and Introduction**

**Ifrah:** General housekeeping and explanation of the process.

**Chandler**:

* Welcomed everyone and introduced student council. Explained the online process, how motions are debated and voted on after the meeting.
* Explained that there is the DSC help desk if anyone has any issues or questions.
* Ran through the code of conduct.
1. **Ratification of previous policy**
2. **Motions**

**Motion 1: Free sustainable period products for students**

**Speaker for - Elena Venturelli (motion proposer)**

200,000 tons of unrecycled period waste goes to the landfill in the UK each year, 1 billion products go into the sea each year and one pack of period pads contains the equivalent of 5 plastic bags worth of plastic.

Motion asks the university to make biodegradable, reusable, and plastic-free alternatives available to students when on campus.

**Speaker against – Nina Skinner**

Would you not consider that providing these products the university would be overstepping its bounds in terms of providing products to students? This grows the boundaries of the institution.

Chair identified this as a question, rather than an argument against.
 **Elena** (answer)**:** The University already provides toilet paper to students, so why wouldn’t they provide period products. They’re not any less essential.

Chair asks for any other questions.

**Avantika Jindal** (question)**:** How do you plan on implementing the menstruating products? Monthly subscription or will it be free whenever and however they want it?

**Elena** (answer)**:** The idea is to have sustainable products available in the university toilets for students to use while on campus.

**Pandelis Sfinias** (question): What stops students from taking all of the period supplies?

**Elena** (answer): Trust, in the same way people don’t steal toilet paper. Has worked with other projects like the existing period products that are available.

**Motion 2: Did you know that the university funds its own slaughterhouse and dairy farm? We want more transparency with what goes on there.**

**Speaker for – Natasha Nadel (motion proposer)**

The university has its own abattoir and dairy farm, no other university has one. Many students have never heard of this, so it raises questions about what is going on. It is non-grazing so once the cows have their first calf, they don’t go outside again, raising concerns about animal welfare.

The university are aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and cattle farming is a huge contributing factor to climate change.

Motions asks the university for more transparency on this issue and wants the Officers to be offered a tour of the abattoir.

 **Speaker against – Oliver Wilkinson**

Oliver explains that he is a vet student and there are some inconsistencies in the motion. The vet school has reached out to the officers and proposers, they are willing to show you around but have not received a response.

**Ifrah** explains that she personally not contacted by the vet school, however other officers might have been but no knowledge of this.

Chair asks for any questions.

**Bailey Clark** (question):The motion asks for someone from the SU to investigate the welfare of the animal, how would we do that? Could we bring someone who’s qualified in animal behaviour to investigate?

**Natasha** (answer): We need an independent outside party to investigate, rather than just allowing the vet school to say that they are committed to animal welfare. Access was denied to a student once before.

**Josie Croad** (question): Vet students get training to monitor welfare. How much training will the officers have to determine the welfare of the animals?

**Charlie** **Griffith** (answer): The main goal of the motion is transparency and letting that information become available for the wider student body. The training status of those who go inside doesn’t matter as much, there is very little information present despite the vet school saying they have nothing to hide.

**Josie** **Croad** (question): The motion says that the officers will assess the welfare of the animals, so I was just wondering how much training they will have?

**Motion 3: Bristol SU’s Response to University Industrial Action**

**Speech for – Lu Macey (motion proposer)**
UCU recently balloted on taking strike action and the academic staff have voted to take action. ASoS (action short of a strike) is set to go on indefinitely. The officer team recognise the different frustrations, but we respect the right of staff to strike. We recognise that Bristol SU also has an important role to play in helping students understand the strikes.

Motion asks for the SU to work with UCU and the university to resolve disputes and to mitigate the impact on the student experience, as well as to inform students about the strike.

**Speech against – Bella Atfield**

Explains that this is the second strike in three years which reflects similar issues. The SU should advocate for students more and say that if we’re not being taught, we should be compensated for missed tuition. It is unfair for students to pay for services they’re not receiving.

**Lu**: One action we want to put through is campaign for compensation for classes missed. Especially international students or those only here for one year. Part of the motion includes the SU supporting that issue.

**Speech against – Emillie Cooke**: There should be more transparency with how the money is spent. We should be able to see where it’s going.

Chair asks for any questions.

**Callum MacGregor** (question): Why isn’t the SU questioning why other strategies aren’t being taken? Multiple strikes over the years but nothing has changed.

**Lu** (answer): The best way for the strikes to end is for all organisations involved to negotiate. Passing this motion would mandate lobbying involved parties to end the striking, the SU doesn’t have power to stop it but does have power to try influence and resolve the situation.

**Seb Key** (answer): We recognise that this is very disappointing, but we can’t control what UCU do. We have to respect the vote, but we are in constant conversation with the university and UCU so that we can be resolve the situation.

**Bailey Clark** (question): Can we organise access to last year’s lectures in order to lessen the impact?

**Lu** (answer): This is classed as breaking the strike under the university’s policy so we are unable to do this.

**Proposed Amendment to “Bristol SU’s Response to University Industrial Action”**

**Speech for – James Fishwick (motion proposer)**

Need to support the staff at the university strike to ensure better conditions and pay to create a better quality of learning environment for students. Equally if we received refunds, it would mean students are customers rather than students. This isn’t about students.

Amendment asks for the SU to support all UCU industrial action and to combat the marketisation of higher education.

**Speech against – Bella Atfield:**

In reality, we are customers, we pay for our education and take on a huge amount of debt. To say we’re not customers is not correct, the university is a business and during strikes, just gets richer. So why shouldn’t students be able to save some of this money? Think of students from lower income backgrounds.

**James:** If we are going to talk about it as a case of business vs consumer - students aren’t legally classed as a customer, no receipt or consumer rights thus not customer. Universities are not classed as a business, they are charities. I am involved with a lot of widening participation activities and the vast majority of lower income students agree with the strikes.

**Bryce Yoder:** I think it’s much more complicated when it comes to the terms of consumerism in education. Students can be allies in this strike but can also demand compensation as a result of the strikes.

No questions on the amendment.

**Ifrah:** Amendment voting will take place on Wednesday.

**Motion 4: Fossil Free Careers**

**Speech for - Tom Southgate (motion proposer)**
This motion is about removing oil, gas, and mining industries from the careers website. The number of graduates taking jobs in these industries dropped by 60% in the last 4 years. The SU also passed a motion declaring a climate emergency in 2019 with an action to promote action on the university’s sustainability pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030. There is precedence to remove these industries, they already did it with the tobacco industry.

**Speech against - Hisham**:

Opinions of the council shouldn’t be dictating students’ opportunities. This would have unintended consequences such as cutting out other resources like lithium, silver and platinum which are essential for renewable energies and net-zero global initiatives.

**Tom:** The motion is about the SU lobbying the careers service to cut ties, we are not saying that students can’t get jobs in these industries. The university should not be promoting these jobs as they have made sustainability pledges. The argument about transition metals is also false.

**Hisham:** Transition metals being a false argument is a false argument. Some of these materials are still essential for renewable and can’t be substituted.

**Speech against - Minseok Shin**: Prime interest of the SU is to ensure that students have the most opportunity and support in their student life. It is not the SU’s position to take people’s chances away and some careers will be heavily affected by this motion. It is not the SU’s role to disenfranchise these students.

**Tom** (answer)**:** Reiterates that students can still pursue these jobs. But as the university has made pledges to sustainability, it has a responsibility to remove them from the career service - especially when they are in a paid capacity.

Chair asks for any questions.

**Katy Pinnell** (question)**:** Do you want the motion to include companies that focus on transitioning or sectors that work with taking existing technology and making them more sustainable?

**Tom** (answer): There is a full list of companies on the People and Planet website that we want the university to blacklist. This motion is aimed at these companies.

**Shivum Gupta** (question): For a motion that so disproportionately affects science students, during a time that the job market is so tough, is this the best time to pass this motion?

**Tom** (answer): Yes, because irrespective of this issue the climate crisis is as bad as it has ever been.

**Motion 5: Student representation in selecting new Vice Chancellor**

**Speech for -** **James Fishwick (motion proposer)**

The university is conducting a search for its new Vice Chancellor, I believe that students should be included in this process. Students vote for a variety of other services and should have influence over this too.

**Speech against – Minseok Shin**

This isn’t realistic, we’re going to miss out on 25% students who miss out on a vote and students will have to live with the chancellor for more than one year.

**James**: We run elections each year, there is no reason why we can’t run this process for the VC too. In terms as time frames, they are hired to do it for as long as they like. I don’t understand why people have issues voting for the person who runs the university when they vote for other things.

 **Speech against - Nina Skinner**

These are fundamentally different issues. When we vote for students, we are voting for people to represent us. Where there is democracy, there have to be frequent elections with set processes. A potentially permanent position is a separate issue, the university is not a democracy.

Chair asks for any questions.

**Ella** (answer)**:** Isn’t it more important to say who gets nominated for these positions? A student consultation would be more efficient than letting the entire student body vote with a pre-selected group that doesn’t regard student opinion. How is that more democratic than a recruitment process?

**Xenia** (answer): The university is refusing to have any engagement with anyone students. Bristol is the only university that doesn’t embed student voice in the recruitment, but they are refusing to enter this into dialogue.

**Ewan** (question)**:** How would the election process work? Would students have a veto over the appointment of VC or would it be more of an electoral college?

**James** (answer): Not specified in motion, imagining implementing it would be part of a negotiation with the university. There is not much reason to specify at this point, but it should be as democratic as possible with as many students as possible.

**Motion 6: End the use of the cruel and debunked forced swim test**

**Speaker for – Natasha Nadel (motion proposer)**

Small animals are put into a swim tank where it is meant to swim to determine the success of anti-depressants. Majority of research groups and companies no longer use this experiment as it is seen as inaccurate. Don’t want Bristol to fall back in scientific research as well as engage in cruel action.

**Speaker against – Minseok Shin**

This issue is unimportant. The problem is the credibility of the SU, the voter turnout is only 12%. It is a waste of political power and effort that could be used in actually improving student quality of life.

**Natasha:** The test isn’t a standard, rather a policy choice by the university. Meaning it is feasible to put a stop to it immediately.

No questions on the motion.

**Access Break

4. Officer Updates**

**Ifrah Farooq *– Union Affairs Officer***

* Lobbying the university to move graduation from Ashton Gate
* Worked with the council on their ‘Get Tested for Bristol’ campaign
* Internal SU democracy review, covering networks and reviewing offer roles
* Worked on the Senate House refurbishment and student consultation on new spaces to be added on campus
* Lobbying the university to extend Senate House’s opening hours to the weekend
* Culture society talent show
* Building a strong BAME alumni network
* Consulted on the VC recruitment strategy
* Undertaking a sexual violence research project with the university
* Consulted with the university to support new students, particularly those housed outside Bristol
* Anti-racism steering group
* Planning group to tackle Islamophobia
* Internal SU recruitment

**Sebastian Key *– UG Education Officer***

* Investment in sustainable development and accessible education
* Training resources for tutors to make tutorials better for students in all schools
* Helping to reform extenuating circumstances process
* Planned the People’s Assembly of sustainability month
* Assessment review of the failings of last year
* Academic planning, helping to improve library space and make sure as much in-person teaching takes place as possible
* Reopening libraries at max capacity
* Pressuring the university to make January assessments fair and transparent
* Promoted and shortlisted for the Sustainability Champions role

**Lu Macey *– PG Education Officer***

* Industrial action meetings with key stakeholders
* Zero Waste Shop
* Redeveloping personal tutor online training
* Attended the UoB mental health steering group to represent the interests of postgraduates
* Met with university stakeholders to discuss unregulated fees
* Working on unregulated fees
* Meeting PGR faculty reps and the Bristol Doctoral College to discuss upcoming plans
* Meeting with stakeholders to discuss university expansion
* Working on ongoing space issues with the arts and engineering PGR space
* Attended and assisted with academic rep training
* Other working groups and usual university committees

**Ruth Day *– Student Living Officer***

* Pushing the university to improve access to wellbeing services, new staff including 2 trans counsellors
* Shaped the final draft of the university’s mental health strategy to ensure student priorities are reflected
* Working with Project Talk to set up a peer support network for students
* Helped to develop personal tutor training
* Ran the All About Drugs campaign and continued to provide students with free drug testing kits
* Planning Sexual Health and Guidance week, providing consent classes, by-stander training, STI testing, contraception, etc.
* Safer Night Out campaign and lobbying the university to provide funding
* Secured financial support package for students living in Bath and support for students living in hotels
* Won a blanket affordability commitment for university halls
* Secured the housing co-op a surveyor
* Secured £140,000 for students in halls to have cheaper formals
* Lobbying the uni to set up an in-house guarantor service
* Set up the My Rents My Rights campaign
* Sent a delegation of students to COP26 and ran the People’s Assembly
* Bristol Zero Waste shop
* Lobbying the university to halt its unsustainable expansion

**Obafemi Alabi – *Sports & Student Development Officer***

* Increasing the number of BAME students within sports clubs
* Working on disability and accessibility inclusion within sports, setting up a focus group with SEH to learn more about this
* Worked with the sport network chair to learn about MH and wellbeing in sports club, looking to create a centralized support system
* Working with SEH to promote sports careers and to put on a Sports Careers Fair
* Working with the Black Students’ Network on Black History Month events
* Alumni grant panels and activity hardship fund panels
* Internal SU recruitment
* Organized two club captain forums

 **Muazam Tahir *– International Students Officer***

* Enhanced representation in key areas, reassessing current structures and how we can consider international students’ opinions
* Other forums and working groups to encourage student participant
* Working on the International Students’ guarantor scheme
* Hardship funding for international students
* Improving confidence for international students as we emerge from the pandemic
* Secured quarantine support

**Leah Martindale *– Equality, Liberation and Access Officer***

* Supported Bristol students who were stranded in Bath
* Supported Afghanistan students
* Welcome fair with thousands of attendances
* Attended equality, diversity & inclusion training
* Led a training session for all SU staff on disability and ableism
* Working on freedom of speech and the complaints service
* Began democracy review to help liberation network chairs and their future job prospects
* Part of the anti-racism steering group, involved in implementing the Race Equality Charter
* Various events relating to Black History Month, Islamophobia Awareness Month, Reclaim and Disability History Month

**Olivier (DSC):**
 I’d like to address the point made just before the access break about turnout in elections, it was quoted that 12% of students voted in the last election. In TB2 elections, voter participation was at 23.5% and in TB1 it was at 16%. Not sure where the 12% figure comes from but all the information presented here is accurate.

Chair asks if there are any questions for the officers.

**Bailey** (question): For one of my course’s modules, we were given 4 days to write one essay and 3 hours for another. A lot of students have expressed their concern and anxiety about this.

**Seb** (answer): I’m aware there’s a lot of discrepancy across the university, each school has been given a degree of autonomy on how they run their assessment. Please send me an e-mail and we can follow this up right away.

**5. Closing notes**

Chair closed the meeting, thanked participants, and reminded everyone to vote for the motions online.