

Present: Gavin Lee (Chair, GUSRC), Jamie Wightwick (GUSRC), Andrew Keenan (St Andrews), James Shield (St Andrews), Joy Elliot (Aberdeen), Duncan McKay (Aberdeen), Magnus Taylor (Open University), Susan Scott (Open University), Cameron Ritchie (Dundee), David Macleod (Dundee), Colin McKean (Glasgow School of Art), Nicole McCaffery (Strathclyde), Martin Law (Strathclyde)

In attendance: Tom French (CARDAS)

Apologies: None

Absent: National Postgraduate Council representatives

#### 1. Minutes:

Steve Savage wasn't present at that meeting. Minutes accepted.

#### 2. Matters Arising:

##### 2.1 Local Income Tax

Proposal sent off and press release issued. Not much response – one MSP very hostile. Claimed CHES was acting too early (before act went to Parliament) and that we had forgotten the abolition of the GE. This MSP has a majority of 48 – worth remembering this man (Ken Gibson). Otherwise, little response. Lib Dems not committed, and leadership battles are getting in the way of decisions.

OU: Asks if English students would be paying. Should look at what students pay in England. Gav: The fact that they pay water.sewage weakens our argument slightly. Will look at ways of taking campaign to Government in Sep/Oct – focusing on Lib Dems.

Aberdeen: who else is arguing over this tax? Gav: Small Business federation is, but we should focus only on students otherwise our argument is weakened.

OU: LIT actually helps her as an OAP. Gav: We're pushing pro-rata part of the tax. Gav: We're asking for a student exemption. Paper with CHES contribution will be released soon.

**ACTION: Gavin Lee, continuing action on LIT**

##### 2.2 SLEEC

Update on SLEEC given by Aberdeen; website is up, officers can sign up and discuss on forums. Popularity of the website is unknown. Gav: Meeting is coming up soon – at end of September.

##### 2.3 Dental and Medical School fees

Milan was to invite representative to speak at this meeting. Dundee: he hasn't. Dundee is unsure of what the issue is – will look into it for next meeting.

**ACTION: Dave McLeod, will investigate issue of fees for next meeting**

#### 2.4 PG Funding

Gav: no figures from NPC as was expected. Gav will offer help to NPC; Aberdeen will too. Gav to take this forward.

**ACTION: Gavin Lee to contact NPC for further information**

#### 2.5 CARDAS

Tom from Cardas in attendance to update CHESS on Cardas.

Tom: In March/April, EUSA senior management meeting discuss possible Govt action on drinking age – unknown if it was onsales or offsales. Now focuses on offsales. Website created in May, giving arguments for and against and looking at international examples. Scottish Youth Parliament, NUS, other Associations have given support, as has CHESS. Issue is 'rights of young adults' – voting age may be lowered, join army at 16, etc, but no drinking until 21. Looking at past alcohol strategies. Student movement must be seen to give positive ideas of alcohol strategies – losing image of students as drunken 'wasters'. Should portray students as active, responsible, etc.

Conservatives 100% onside, as are Lib Dems (thought they may wish to campaign separately). Greens on side – but would allow local areas to decide individual policies. Labour have given mixed messages. Leadership contest has delayed decision. SNP are broadly in favour but some MSPs have sided with CARDAS.

Some success in getting Parliamentary support – could win a vote in Parliament as it stands. SNP is under a lot of criticism from various groups. Petitions being held in various cities in Scotland. Lobbying cards being distributed. Developing consultation response – looking to create a strategy for dealing with alcohol misuse. Stay away from minimum pricing, etc – could look irresponsible. Want individual responses from SRCs and Associations. Meeting Shane Robson (Public Health Minister) and Labour at end of month. Question: what is CHESS' view of this?

Gav: problem is funding from trade organisations.

Tom: we're working with these organisations to create a coherent response – they were non-committal. Offers of financial support – worried CHESS. Have kept funding within student movement – NUS, EUSA, and from the Responsible Drinkers' Alliance. Stayed away from trade movements:

Gav: asks for view, suggestions from CHESS policy.

Aberdeen: From perspective of student welfare: important to stay with CARDAS as drinking could be forced underground, dangerous drinking encouraged. Serious welfare issue – unique to universities due to age range of students. Safety view: stay with CARDAS.

Magnus: isn't welfare of students the entire point? On-sales still 18+ - safer drinking environment created. Aberdeen: impossible to police.

GSA: will affect some students but the policy is not aimed only at students, but an age group.

James: don't see a welfare issue – people under 18 are already drinking. Could help us commercially. But – no student will be happy with this raise, but is it welfare?

Dundee: increase to 21 over all sales is welfare issue: unions are a responsible environment, teaching safe drinking – safest environment in Dundee, campaigns being run, so off-licence issue won't make a difference – unless the price changes are effected. Main issue: freedom of choice, not welfare.

Gav: not convinced it's a CHESS issue, but a student movement one.

Tom: Rights and responsibilities of young adults is important – taking choices away from 18 years olds may have wider implications – what else might be suggested. Raising age won't solve problem, and may make it worse. In USA, binge drinking rates only increased, as people drink less often, but to more excess. Academics there propose lowering it. In Europe, responsible drinking is started within families – so drinking isn't seen as exciting. Student movement should put forward package of measures that actually tackles the issue of cultural changes.

Bob Hay: need clarification if this is a CHESS issue. Gav proposes that individual institutions join if they wish, but not CHESS.

Tom: agree but two points: students may not see it that way. Also, could hurt financial sales. General disagreement from CHESS. Dundee points out that this money would shift to on-sales and even more money would be made.

GSA: doesn't matter what way you're arguing, but financial arguments won't work.

Aberdeen: what does CARDAS want from CHESS?

Tom: CHESS' focus is important but questions whether CHESS faces difficulty supporting CARDAS. Questions what CHESS will lose.

Gav: political capital, and we're using a lot of it with other issues,

Aberdeen: questions whether CHESS can help, and says the waters will be muddied.

OU: needs to consult membership, will stay neutral.

Strathclyde: CHESS or not, the union is in support.

Dundee: Licensing is worrying about minimum pricing – commercial departments are dealing with it. Not a student-only issue – so should CHESS expand its remit to include it?

Gav: CHESS wants to remove its support from CARDAS. Agreement. CHESS logos to be removed from website and publicity – excluding that already printed.

**Summary: CARDAS falls out of CHESS' remit. Support removed; individual institutions can support or not.**

### 3. Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme

James: mentioned briefly at last meeting. Came to his attention when company went bust in St Andrews, losing students vast amounts of money. England/Wales have protection scheme. Have been looking at how to get this introduced: Housing Act makes provision for it to be introduced. Added by

Labour, and SNP are dragging heels. Claire Baker contacted, and she tabled a debate. SNP objections appear to be based on administration problems – Civil Service stalling and slowing things down. Working Group hasn't met for a year – have been asking about a new one, but nothing happening.

Recommend that CHESS looks at methods of encouraging SNP, esp. backbenchers, to go through with scheme. Need to contact SNP and Conservative.

OU: Am a landlord. Required to register by Edinburgh Council (doesn't take deposits). Registers exist in the cities – a legal requirement. Local authorities have the data already.

James: approx 90% of Fife landlords registered, which is good – there is someone to complain to, but that is a big step to take – takes too long, and deposit arguments are difficult to prove.

Aberdeen: already happening there, including deposit protection scheme created by three estate agents, based around inventories and an independent company to value an inventory. Worry that the inventory company will naturally favour the estate agent to ensure continued business – tenant loses out. Also, may fall out of CHESS' remit as CARDAS does. Welfare issue – many students affected.

Gav: housing is biggest welfare issue, so much so that it affects students' ability to come to university. Since it affects access to education, it falls into CHESS' remit. Bob Hay: proportionality – benefit students more than any other group.

Dundee: personal view: landlords can be so bad that education is directly affected. Supports CHESS taking action.

Gav: Actions that CHESS can take, as suggested in James' paper: James recounts measures. Gavs asks opinions: Bob asks if we should consult local authorities. Aberdeen: Aberdeen Council says that they would implement it, but they're in massive debt now so may fall through.

James: central scheme favourable as interest is to fund the scheme's costs.

Gav: will do action points 1 and 2, will circulate, and we'll work on 3 and 4 for next meeting. James suggests people get started on preparing that now.

Strathclyde: creating a policy document, then abandoning it? Gav: no, will be more careful.

**ACTION: James Shield – continuing work on TDPS**  
**ACTION: Gavin Lee – points 1 and 2 on TDPS briefing**

#### 4. EUSA Proposed Campaign

Efficiency of unified campaign is questioned – especially for CHESS.

Terminology is over-the-top. Gav will get back to Adam and say that CHESS is not prepared to give support to the campaign in the current form – more discussion is necessary.

**ACTION: Gavin Lee to contact Adam Ramsay of EUSA**

#### 5. ELIR

Suggested as a standing agenda point – different universities/union's experiences of ELIR.

## 6. AOCB

James: Was in Glasgow for QAA International Benchmarking Group – more exciting than it seems. Looking at ‘support’ of student experience, including student associations. Will write to all associations and ask for 3 ‘groundbreaking’ ideas – to be combined into one document. Interesting to see what others are doing, to uni and unions. James questioned their presentation – helping create a more interesting one for students.

Gav: suggests we all check if we’re in contact with them.

Aberdeen: there are two strands, QAA and Sparqs. Both doing similar things for the same end process. QAA strand cuts out the middleman.

Everyone should keep an eye out for this.

James: Widening Access Forums. University access officers questioning usefulness – extra layer of admin. Not a high-quality service. Does help deprived areas – but not many, approx 200 in Fife. Bursaries alone could help more people get into university. University schemes are more useful than the widening access forums’ effect.

Dundee: could coordinate efforts in metropolitan areas, but not in sparsely-populated areas.

OU: it gets people involved in education.

Gav asks for more national information. See if a common theme emerges across Scotland. James suggests talking to access staff at respective universities – is it duplicating work?

**ACTION: All – gather respective local opinion on Widening Access schemes for next meeting**

Date for next meeting:

10<sup>th</sup> Oct suggested

**St Andrews will host.**