

Item: 8

College Management Council Sub-committee: 24 January 2023.

Highlands and Islands Students' Association – Update.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To appraise the Sub-committee of the work of the Highlands and Islands Students' Association.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

The paper prepared by the HISA Orkney Student Voice Assistant, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, outlining the following matters:

- HISA Orkney staff:
 - HISA Orkney Depute President (one of the student representatives on the College Management Council Sub-committee) – resignation.
 - HISA Student Voice Assistant.
- Student Representation and Engagement:
 - Winter By-elections (including for the second vacant student representative on the College Management Council Sub-committee).
 - Student Voice Representatives' recruitment.
- Housing consultation.
- Student Activities:
 - Volunteers' Fair.
 - Student Pantry.

3. Highlands and Islands Students' Association

3.1.

Both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council continue to encourage colleges to ensure that students engage as fully as possible in the life and governance of colleges. Effective engagement of students features strongly in the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges published by Colleges Scotland.

3.2.

In order to encourage and enable students to present their ideas to the College Management Council, a written report is presented from the Highlands and Islands Student Association in a style decided by the students.

3.3.

Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a short update report from the HISA Orkney Student Voice Assistant (in the absence of the HISA Depute Assistant), setting out key activities during October and November 2022.

4. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

5. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this noting report.

6. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from this noting report.

7. Contact Officers

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Paper from Highlands and Islands Students Association.

Introduction

The following report presents a brief update on HISA Orkney for the period comprised between October and November 2022.

HISA Orkney staff

HISA Orkney Depute President's Resignation

The former local depute president Susan Taylor resigned from her role on September 16th, 2022. The resignation became public only a few weeks later in mid-October when the news was shared with the wider HISA body, UHI Orkney, and the Orkney Island Council. Whilst the Orkney Depute President seat currently remains vacant, a new student is expected to come in the role after the next spring elections. Although no dates have been set yet, the latter will take place early this year in order to accommodate the NUS conference, taking place between mid-February and early March. At the present time, HISA Orkney remains therefore understaffed.

HISA Student Voice Assistant

Recruitment for a new HISA Orkney staff member occurred between late September and early October. After interviews were carried out, Francesca Meneghetti was appointed the role of HISA Orkney Student Voice Assistant starting on October 14th, 2022. Francesca will be working closely with the newly elected local officer in the spring to come. Before then, her remits consist of liaising with UHI Orkney and OIC to overlook challenges and opportunities related to student engagement, representation, and support. Presently, Francesca works both remotely and in-person at the College and is line managed remotely by Mark Stanley, the HISA Communications and Development Manager.

Student Representation and Engagement

Winter By-Elections

Winter by-elections have been planned, promoted, and carried out by HISA in early November with the purpose of filling in local depute vacancies at HISA Orkney, Shetland, Inverness, North Highland, and Highland Theological College. Unfortunately, recruitment was not successful across all the academic partners, presently leaving Orkney, Inverness, and Highland Theological College with no nominees.

Student Voice Representatives' Recruitment

HISA Orkney Student has been liaising with UHI Orkney staff to organise class visits and carry out student voice representatives' recruitment across the departments. Whilst it has not been possible to arrange class visits to ensure full coverage of the student body, progress has been made and will continue to be made after

the Christmas break. The opportunity to become a student voice representative has also been advertised to students via email, on social media, and through posters and leaflets distributed on campus. Although numbers remain low at the present time, struggles with student engagement and representation have been noted across the whole of UHI and wider Scotland and therefore do not indicate a strictly local challenge. HISA is currently finalising a recruitment strategy for the vacant student seat on the College Management Committee. The latter has been already advertised to students and will be re-launched in the new year.

Housing Consultation

General Update

The housing consultation ran jointly by HISA Orkney and AspireOrkney has come to an end in autumn 2022. A final housing report is being put together by the HISA Orkney Student Voice Assistant and will be available in spring 2023. HISA Orkney is currently liaising with UHI to push the consultation through the UHI Graduate Scheme to alumni and possibly prospective students.

Student Activities

Volunteers' Fair

HISA Orkney organised a volunteers' fair taking place at the College on October 5th, 2022, to expose students to the diverse local bodies and initiatives to get involved with. Participants of the fair included ORSAS, White Ribbon, Orkney Youth Forum, Orkney Youth Café, and HISA. The event gained increased popularity through the outstanding contributions of the Hospitality Department, that provided the hosts with a delicious buffet. After advertising the event, HISA Orkney welcomed students to the College Lecture Theatre, where over sixty students visited the fair. HISA considers this event a huge success and boost in student engagement in Orkney.

Student Pantry

Two HE students have set up a student pantry with the help of HISA, offering students anonymously food and basic toiletries. All paperwork has been completed and the student pantry not progressively becomes self-sufficient, receiving donations and great feedback from students at Orkney College.