

Item: 4

College Management Council Sub-committee: 18 March 2019.

Highlands and Islands Students' Association – Update.

Report by Executive Director of 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 Orkney Depute President of the Highlands and Islands Students' Association, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, outlining:

- Therapets.
- Sanitary Products.
- Regional Council.
- Time to Talk.

3. Highlands and Islands Students' Association - Update

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 paper from the Highlands and Islands Student Association is attached as Appendix 1 to this report, in a style decided by the students.

4. Links to Council Plan

4.1.

The matters in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Thriving Communities.

4.2.

The matters in this report relate directly to Priority 3.5: We will develop Lifelong Learning opportunities through the Community Learning programme, which will include a family learning programme

5. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Strong Communities.

6. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report.

7. Legal Aspects

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

8. Contact Officers

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1: Paper from Highlands and Islands Students' Association.

HISA Update for CMC

1. Therapets

The Therapets are a scheme run by Canine Concern Scotland Trust in a scheme called Paws against Stress. This scheme aims to help reduce levels of stress in university student by simply spending time with a dog, it has been scientifically proven that the simple act of sitting and stroking a dog can have positive effects on the brain and allows for the release of dopamine which is the chemical release that makes us feel happy and content. As a University it is important to help students feel calm, especially during difficult times when they are likely to be stressed due to exams and assignments. Our hope is that with the visits of the dogs Cora and Talisker over the next few months that the stress levels amongst students will lessen, allowing for a more pleasant experience. So far these visits have been successful with an average turnout of around 5 people for the hour where they can simply sit with the dogs but it also gives them the opportunity to talk and voice any problems or concerns they may have. This has been incredibly insightful for me as it has given me another opportunity to hear what students are thinking about the college.

2. Sanitary Products

As most people are aware, the Scottish government has provided funding for the provision of free sanitary products within bathrooms in schools and colleges. This is a fantastic thing as it helps tackle period poverty which is a serious problem that we have here in the UK as women simply can't afford to buy the simple things that allow them to get from day to day when they are on their period. We have already had a great response from students about this and they are pleased to see that it is being continued. I have been actively dispersing the products across the college in the women's toilets and in the disabled toilets although I am hoping to put some supplies into the men's toilets to cover any transgender students that we may have within the college.

3. Regional Council

Regional Council took place between the 30th of Jan and the 1st of Feb. This was an event that required myself and a few student representatives from Orkney College to travel down to Inverness for the three day event. This included updates from HISA Local and Regional Officers and sessions where we as students and HISA delegates were able to voice our opinion of what we like and disliked about UHI and how it is run. There were plenty of accountability sessions where we had the chance to question both those high up in HISA and local MP's. The four student reps that I took with me really enjoyed the experience as it allowed them to feel heard and that they were part of something bigger and more helpful than they could have hoped. One rep said *"I personally thought that Regional Council was a fantastic event to attend. It was a motivating and inspiring few days which embraced and celebrated our student roles within HISA. It was also very engaging and I think we would all agree that it made us feel like one UHI, rather than a series of campuses. I believe that I*

Speak for myself as well as the other class reps when I say that we have come back with even more ideas on how to enhance the student experience at Orkney College."

Going to Regional Council is an amazing opportunity both for myself as Depute and for the reps who may not necessarily be highly involved with HISA.

4. Time to Talk

We held a small event for Time to Talk on the 7th of Feb which is a day dedicated to highlighting mental health issues which are prevalent today and an aim of HISA's at the moment is to work towards better student mental health and making it more acceptable to talk about. We had a room booked for our small event where people were able to come in and talk about their mental health or simply to draw what they felt their mental health looked like and how they dealt with it. The turnout may not have been large but our main aim was to make people aware that it is okay not to be okay and that we are here if anyone needed to talk. As part of this we have a new selection of posters that have gone up around the college that encourage people to talk but obviously this is only a small step towards making mental health a topic that people are more willing to talk about and in the future I aim to make it clearer for students where they can go within the college if they are struggling.