

Young Liberals Executive 2019/2020 – Emergency Meeting 5 (Virtual) – March 21st 2020

- 10.00 Apologies
- 10.03 Erasmus - Alex
- 10.20 Summer Conference – Michael
- 10.45 Access Fund – Finn, Tara
- 11.10 Young & Winning – Guy
- 11.35 Strategy – Tara
- 12.45 AOB
- 1.00 Close

Attended: Charlie Murphy, Tara Copeland, Chessie Flack, Finn Conway, Alex Howarth, Kathy Macy, Jack Worrall, Guy Benson, Chloe Hutchinson, Dan Schmeising, James Bliss

Apologies: Cat McDougall, Michael Chappell

Absent: Chris Wilson

Erasmus:

- Alex: Email sent to everyone who ordered a freshers pack saying the physical portion is postponed indefinitely. Still scope to run an online campaign but due to the Brexit timeline probably not as critical. Some universities are still organising students year abroad
- Guy: How was the Erasmus going to work anyways
- Tara: I think it's a good idea that we fill the void of this campaign with something else, maybe something related to COVID-19, but also maybe something a bit different so we can also have a wee break from all the news about it
- Guy: needs to be somewhat corona virus related
- Dan: need to be careful how we frame it so people don't accuse us of taking advantage of a national crisis, the federal party are toeing a line where they don't outwardly criticise the government
- Kathy: Mental health and what to do in this time, easy to make non-partisan
- Chloe: Also thinking mental health, a lot of student unions run "study aid" activities that provide activities like yoga classes or revision help, something to help build community. Could also do something to help support gig economy or self employed workers
- Chessie: Can use Amanda's webinar and take some ideas and information from that
- Mental Health Group: Kathy, Diversity comm, Chessie, others to obviously feed in on this as they like. Will incorporate information from the webinar as a kickstart

Conference:

- Tara: Reads out Michael's message: "So pushing the summer bookings to November for winter conference, identifying a backup location for August if there's a possibility to hold one then (with free bookings hopefully) and asking federal conf for a big room for a 'YL AGM' if we need to have it at Brighton"
- Dan: What are we going to do if we can't have an AGM?

- Finn: Would this AGM at Brighton be the full commendations, no-cons etc
- Jack: Michael said it would be yes
- James: We should still have constitutional amendments at this AGM too but probably not policy
- Guy: Why don't we consider doing something virtually around the same time that the summer conference was supposed to be?
- Tara: I'm not sure about the practicality of having a virtual conference with the amount of people we would have attending and the lack of ability to control it
- Guy: I think it is possible, we have had an away day with my work with over 80 people with Q&A sessions and everything so it is possible to do
- Jack: We did discuss it in conference committee and we thought it might be too difficult to do, so we are hoping that August will be workable, if not a fall back to an online conference is a possibility
- Guy: Okay just wanted a fall back
- Charlie: Would it be possible to use the mivote system so we still have democratic accountability for officer's reports and constitutional amendments?
- James: There is provision for us to do online voting in the constitution
- Chloe: LYMEC are doing digital conference let's see what we can learn from them maybe? Going back to having AGM at federal conference, if we do that can we make sure that you don't have to be attending federal conference to attend the AGM? Federal Conference is a lot more expensive than ours so having it free to attend would be helpful for our members
- Alex: No reason to charge anyone for attending an AGM at Brighton. To the idea of exec scrutiny by email, we obviously need that scrutiny, but I don't think by email is constitutional, and if it is, we then lack the ability for people to speak on behalf of one another, and I'm somewhat uncomfortable about holding a vote of no confidence without giving someone the chance to explain or defend themselves
- Jack will report back to Michael and the rest of Conference Committee and a lot of these decisions will have to be made by him and conference committee

Access fund:

- Tara: We've had a couple of people asking about whether the access fund will still be paid out to those who have applied for it
- Finn: We would need proof that they've tried to get a refund and didn't get it
- James: Federal access fund is still paying people and aren't asking proof, so I think it's bad faith for us to do so
- Finn: People have already cheated money off the access fund so I am going to assume bad faith
- Kathy: I do think we need to be repaying them, especially because some people got like their train ticket refunded but not their hotel, I don't think it's bad to necessarily see if they asked for a refund
- Chloe: Agree I think that asking to see that people have put some effort in to getting money back is reasonable. *Asking for clarification on how the access fund works: Do*

- we have a system of first come first serve with our access fund? If you've already had it do you go lower down on the priority? If so how will this effect that?
- Finn: We have a question asking how many conferences you've been to before, and if we run out of money for that conference we may start giving priority for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and someone who hasn't been to conference, but we never get to that point and also this conference didn't actually happen so it wouldn't count anyways
 - Chessie: Have we actually paid out any money?
 - Finn: I haven't received any receipts so no
 - Guy: Do we know ballpark what the total amount we would be paying out?
 - *Total is £40*
 - Kathy: Why did we have such low access fund applications? I thought we really advertised by the lib dem groups?
 - Finn: We did it quite late this time, so there was less time and people may have already booked and didn't want to apply after the fact, but hopefully now that we've done it in this new system and done it properly we can have it set up to go early for next time
 - Finn and Chessie to sort, if there is proof of attempt to get a refund and no refund given we will pay out

Young & Winning

- Guy: We got 15 applications for Young & Winning and a lot of diversity, actions days were about to be set up, but obviously haven't gone through, nothing has been paid out, but had agreed to pay out £300 to Sheffield as they had three YL members running in target seats, sent an email to all the applicants saying thanks for applying and that it'll be up to the campaigns officer in 2021 as to what happens. If we don't end up paying out anything from the budget, the next exec should probably look at rolling the money over to next year as we'll have double the amount of elections
- Chessie: The grant from the English party is a use it or lose it basis, it's not a rolling system unfortunately
- Finn: It is plausible that we could tell the next finance officer to double the Young & Winning budget because there weren't elections this year
- Guy: One of the reasons we got so many applicants is because it was so late and so campaigns were already running, getting in the money early is more helpful, I'd like to work with the new campaigns officer to make sure that the form is out earlier
- Jack: Send the applications out once a month and have it something that you can continually apply for as candidates get selected
- Guy: It could almost be at the bottom of every email
- Finn: Freshers needs time tabling so it happens at the same time every year, we might want to informally (formally) start timetabling Young & Winning, January is probably the latest point as candidates will be selected and their long campaigns will be started
- Chloe: I agree with what Guy was saying, if it's a rolling thing it'll be handy for by-elections. When this has blown over is there any money to maybe do digital innovation campaigns? Try new ideas and see if we can campaign in new and better ways

- Guy: By-elections are suspended at the moment as well, but they will probably start sooner than the other elections, agree with Finn, January is probably the latest, but I would like to start it during out term assuming the new campaigns officer agrees
- Tara: So if we don't use the money that has been given to us this year, does that potentially mean we won't be given as much the following year?
- Finn: We just dip into the grants as and when we need it, and whatever we don't use doesn't get taken out
- Tara: If we don't spend the money is that going to be problem
- Finn: I don't think that'll be a problem
- James: Would there be any scope for us to give people money in advance if we know for a fact that they'll be running in the may elections?
- Guy: That's kind of what I was suggesting by trying to get it set up this year, especially we might run into a situation where they might be starting their campaigns a bit earlier
- Jack: The English party treasurer unfortunately passed away during an English party meeting, Tara and I should write a letter to send our condolences, and I also don't see the English part looking to cut our grants anytime soon, English party finances are looking quite healthy, and I don't think the new treasurer will be

Unfortunately the Document did not save correctly so minutes are missing from the rest of the meeting but an overview of what was discussed is below:

Strategy:

The main portfolios that are impacted by the current situation were identified as Campaigns, Membership Development, Events, Policy, and International.

Michael and Cat were not present at the meeting so Events and International were not discussed, Campaigns is still in the Co-option process so they're strategy is also TBD although we imagine it will involve a shift in focus to online campaigning.

Alex has decided that this is the perfect opportunity to work on putting together the webinars as promised by his manifesto and will focus primarily on those. They will have a training emphasis working potentially on things such as nation builder and lighthouse for example. Other ideas to be decided. He will also be focusing more on getting the Age Range changes sorted, and will arrange a meeting with Mark Pack and Tara to discuss.

James acknowledged that as conferences are delayed and cancelled a vast amount of his portfolio has been eliminated. He plans to shift his focus to updating the policy book utilising a traffic light system suggested by Chloe (which she is using for Welsh policy) to determine which policies need to be updated or removed. As well he is considering taking suggestions from the membership over which YL policies they would like to see debated at Federal Conference, including new policy ideas.

Chloe mentioned that she is still trying to fill out the rest of the Welsh Young Liberals Executive and is struggling to field candidates. She has asked if anyone has any suggestions on how to reach out to the Welsh membership and get people to engage.

Jack mentioned that the Regional Chair roles have also been impacted by the current situation and that they will be discussing a new strategy at the next EYL meeting which Tara will also be attending.

AOB:

Chessie explained in more detail about the upcoming Mental Health Webinar being hosted by Young Liberals and Amanda the Pastoral Care Officer. Tara has emphasised the importance of having the exec members attend. Guy suggested that the webinar be recorded so that people who are unable to attend will be able to still access it at a further date.

A discussion about our online communities occurred, mainly around Forum. A debate over the membership acceptance and rejection rates was had with Jack, a previous Forum admin voicing the opinion that we don't need to be as strict as the mods are currently being, that if someone is added by an exec member, for example, but doesn't answer the questions, it's probably still safe to add them to the group as they're being added by a trusted person. As well, he said that we should not be rejecting people outright for not answering the questions, but should leave it for a while and message them to follow up and nudge them into answering the questions either via that message or through the Forum application process. Kathy voiced concern over the idea of messaging people she doesn't know with her personal FB account. She raised the idea of maybe getting Exec Profiles set up. Tara will look into practicalities of such. Alex explained that he doesn't think it's enough to allow people in if they don't agree to the rules. He would rather not have to kick people out and just have them be aware of the rules and follow them in the first place. Alex also made the point that the vast majority of people who request to join Forum are not rejected. A desire to not revert back to an atmosphere similar to chatbox was expressed by many. Many people agreed with the points made in support of keeping the current system and Forum Mods will use their own judgement at the end of the day as they always have but people will still be required to answer the entry questions.

Tara wanted to once again bring to the attention of the exec the importance of being champions of our own organisation. She emphasised the importance of us promoting and attending Young Liberals events (in person and online) and to remember, particularly now as most of our interactions will be via social media, that the things that we tweet and post on social media can reflect on the role and organisation. We are elected officials and our conduct should reflect as such, which means we don't necessarily have the same freedom of language and expression of the general membership when engaging in online debates and discussions.

Meeting Closed.