

Firstly, I want to thank the councillors for being supportive and open to working with the Students' Union since the new elected officer team started in July. It has been great to have regular contact, and the councillors' surgery held for students within the Students' Union appears to be successful development. Furthermore, the introduction of Rent Smart Wales is a welcome improvement which will hopefully make the housing market more transparent for students.

The actions taken in regard to the new HMO planning regulations is however an unwelcome change. This introduces a cap on the number of HMOs that can be developed within a certain radius. It has been pointed out that in the majority of the Cathays area this will restrict any new HMOs from forming. This development in our opinion arguably causes many concerns. Below is the statement we released explaining these concerns:

Hollie Cooke, Vice President Welfare, 'HMOs are a key source of housing for students, without which Cardiff University's student experience would be completely different. With the both the number of students and young professionals growing, it is clear that the continued development of HMOs is necessary to meet demand. By restricting, and essentially prohibiting the development of HMOs in the Cathays areas, students will be forced to move into other areas of Cardiff. This will not only create greater costs for students as they are forced to travel further, it will also cause individuals to rent in areas that are not used to student neighbours, causing greater community cohesion problems. Additionally, by pushing students to live in other communities, safety becomes a greater concern, as the frequency of students having to walk longer distances in the dark will increase. Aside from this, due to the location of Cathays, it will remain as the 'golden location'. This will most likely cause rent prices to inflate, as the number of students exceeded the number of HMOs. Furthermore, with the same number of HMOs remaining, these restrictions do little to address the core problems highlighted, as the population density in Cathays remains the same. Therefore, this is an unwelcome change, that will likely be detrimental to the student population, and do little to benefit the community in, and around, the Cathays area.'

Unfortunately, this decision was voted on by the council much sooner than anticipated, meaning that we had limited time to discuss these concerns. Although, it had been suggested that the Students' Union had been consulted in January, it was unclear what extent this had happened. In the future, any changes which affect students in such a way as this, should be discussed with the student body prior to the council making a decision. It was unfortunate that we weren't informed of the upcoming vote. In addition to this, the arguments put forward by the councillors in favour of capping of HMO failed to see the student side, which is arguably worrying as they represent a large majority of the population in Cathays. Furthermore they were based on concerns such as waste and antisocial behaviour, which can either be attributed to the council not dealing with Cathays as a high density area or are problems which cannot foreseeable be solved by this change.

In addition to this, it appears that the waste problems that exist with the Cathays areas have not be solved by the additional licensing as suggested. We have had numerous conversations with the council about waste enforcement and have explained our concerns with the process. In particular the requirement that students must conform to different rules depending on the street, and that a

fine can be issues on the spot with no appeal process. There have been many productive meetings, however changes within the council seem to take a long time, so the discussion so far has only led to a few changes.

As mentioned previously, the councillors' surgery in the Students' Union is a positive development. However, some more work at communicating the difference that talking to a councillor can have would be positive. This way, through positive examples, we might be able to get more individuals attending the surgery and consequently making change within the community.

I would again like to take the opportunity to thank the councillors and council representatives for being approachable and communicative in most regards.

Hollie Cooke

Vice President Welfare | Is-Lywydd Lles