

DEPUTATION THREE – LEEDS STUDENTS UNION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's meeting. Can you make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MR F O'BYRNE: Thank you Lord Mayor and Councillors. My name is Frankie O'Byrne, I am the Community Officer at Leeds University Union and today I am joined today by Millie Cooper, who is the President of Leeds Met Students' Union, and by Miki Vyse, who is the President of Leeds Trinity Students' Union.

I am here today to speak to you about increasing the representation of students in the city to a policy making level. The city has a great record in youth engagement from its members in Youth Parliament to the Youth Council. However, there is no way of getting involved in local politics for the hundred thousand HE and FE students across the city and I think this is a great shame.

There is currently a lot of rhetoric around young people are disengaged, they do not care, they nor not going to vote because it does not make any difference. I would not be here if that was true and I do not think it is very accurate. 69% of students believe that we should be driving change in the city and this is what we are here for. *(Applause)*

That is always good! We would like to create a Standing Council of student representatives where a member from each student union would regularly meet with the relevant Council Executive Officers to discuss how we can make this city even better.

One in seven people in this city is a student and they deserve to be properly represented, as well as given the opportunity to help make Leeds the best city in the UK by 2030. Our ideas fit with your vision but we have not been explicitly mentioned, nor have we had services tailored to best fit our needs.

We asked our students what areas they wanted to improve. They want to see a sustainable city with better recycling infrastructure (of course) as well as a healthier city. They want to feel engaged with the city from their arrival through volunteering, through local politics and having campuses that community members feel a part of. They also want to feel safe through an extension of the zero tolerance policy across the city. However, that is only a small fragment, that is not all. We also want a forum flexible enough to discuss any issues that may arise in the future. Ultimately, we do want a partnership.

Now we do not want just something for nothing, we believe that we can help you. If you will allow us to be a little bit smug, we do like to think of ourselves as the experts of talking to students. Using Leeds University Union as an example, during a Leeds City cuts consultation we actually consulted 500 students on what they actually wanted to save, what they thought was most important. We also recruited 500 students to the Citizens' Panel and through our Leave Leeds Tidy Scheme have managed to divert 70 tonnes from landfill.

If we were key partners, we can help you meet your targets. Also, we have a hundred thousand students who are learning from the most up-to-date research available and they are also keen to make a massive difference. If we harnessed the potential of those bright minds, I think we can create innovative services that work for the city and for its residents.

All the student unions in the city already meet on a regular basis (as you can see) to discuss the issues that affect us. We have shared problems but we also have shared goals. We believe that the city of Leeds is a great place and that we can help to make it even better.

Each student union works in partnership with this institution and it has allowed both of us to flourish. Now we are asking for the same opportunity with the city because we want to make each other flourish. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us vote. All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) I think that has been CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon. Thank you for coming. (*Applause*)