



Downing MCR Open Meeting Minutes 3pm Sunday 5th March 2017

1 | Minutes from the Previous Open Meeting

- Last meeting consisted solely of Hustings.

2 | Committee Reports

President (Andreas)

- Plenty of really nice events this term, from Burns' Night to swaps to wine and cheese night to bumps support.
- Plenty of meetings with College that have been productive.
- The return of drop-in sessions.
- Beginning to build the open 'slush fund' for members to start events.
- We're getting ever closer to having lockers in the MCR, it is now reaching the big meetings in College to be approved.
- Reminder that we have access to storage space in College (relevant for e.g. international students and students going on extended fieldwork), please contact Beverly Calvey (Accommodation Officer) for more.
- College have proposed making the main entrance through the Porter's Lodge only in the evening after incidents this term in the bar. Any feedback about this should be directed to Andreas. Emma raises concerns that so long as they are not limiting who can stay and how often this is fine. Andreas says that this already exists (no single guest more than 3 days in a row etc.) for rent and insurance purposes.

Vice-President (Tom)

- Organised Burns Night.
- Meetings with College went well and we're still engaging on various issues relevant to the MCR.
- Meeting with the Graduate Union went well, they appear to be far more together than in previous controversial years, and I hear similar good reports from others that have to deal with the GU in their roles (e.g. the Senior Tutor).
- Helping out here and there with other members (brought cider back to the MCR!)
- We have an idea to allow third year undergraduates to take advantage of the MCR bar during the Easter Holiday, as many of them opt to stay in Cambridge to revise. This will provide them with a nice social location during the run-up to their finals, and also act to 'promote' the MCR to them (e.g. for those who are affiliating as fourth years next year, or for those who might choose to stay on for postgraduate study).

Treasurer (Parsa)

- Compared to previous budgets, which go back for a number of years we appear to be doing better than ever before at this point in the year
- This is matched by a greater amount of engagement from MCR members -- we also have more responsibility!
- Committee members have a lot to work with so hopefully should have a lot more freedom than before for various costly events.
- Sat on various finance and investment committees.

Welfare & Education Officers (Josh)

- Welfare is going well. We are working on self help books, and seminar night was positive.
- Will be introducing themed months for welfare soon hopefully, now that we're more in the swing of things.
- Welfare have been doing drop-in sessions but haven't been overly subscribed. Please do drop by if you're having any problems!
- Suggestion by Cindy that we have a Red Nose Night charity event at the bar on Friday 24th March.

Communications Officer (Emma)

- Met with head of development and alumni relations. We've got approval for an instagram and a rejuvenation of the public Facebook page (it previously hadn't been updated since 2013!). This is an important face of the College for prospective students, and we've received feedback that suggest we could be doing more here. The Instagram and Facebook are now active and being engaged with.
- Since starting the post reach has been in excess of 1000 people.
- We're going to be getting an MCR camera to record our events and continue to upload them to the public pages.
- We're going to plan a re-do of the text of the website, which in some places is quite out of date. Work to make it more inviting for new students.

Bar, Sports, & Amenities Officers (Dido)

- We've changed our gin and vodka to higher premium products (Smirnoff and Bombay Sapphire) for the same price: better value for money. The profit margin is slightly smaller but we're still making a profit on it.
- We've also now brought cider back, and are looking to add cocktails and apple juice to the range.
- Bar cupboards are now a lot cleaner.
- (Minor distraction by a wasp in the MCR)
- If you want a specific drink in the MCR, let the bar officers know and we'll see what we can do.
- With summer coming up, we're going to bring the sports back. The croquet set will be making a reappearance, and we're considering getting a darts board put in (certain fellows are very much in support of this for an MCR-SCR tournament...). A table football tournament will also be coming up.
- A newspaper tray has been introduced and in negotiation with the cleaners to stop newspapers being thrown away too early, and mean we have access to monthly publications for longer.

- We've got new mugs and are going to get a couple of cushions and blankets. Please don't steal them!
- Some early discussion about applying for a grant from College to replace the speaker system.

Social Secretaries (Pranay)

- Three swaps this term that went well, another planned for this term next week with Emmanuel (St Patrick's Day themed swap)
- Wine & Cheese Night this term went well, we'll have another because, same for Karaoke night
- Friday 17th is a St Patrick's Day themed bar night, themed food and drink

International Officer (Sushmita)

- A number of bigger international events e.g. Chinese New Year; International Pot Luck. Expect these events to happen at least once or twice a term.
- Highlighting that we're having our St Patrick's Day event on Friday 17th March.

Equal Opportunities Officer (Christine)

- A number of behind-the-scenes meetings in College this term with Senior Tutor etc.
- Introduction of 'ground rules' based on the respect policy. A draft is being created.
- Christine has been consent-workshop-trained, so can now give consent workshops -- we did not have any in fresher's week so we'll be looking to rearrange when appropriate.
- A committee-specific diversity workshop was arranged and attended, and further workshops are arranged open to all JCR/MCR members and members are encouraged to attend.
- Anonymous messaging system has been set up, but one issue is that this is not closed to Downing MCR members. Some propose that the link to this should only be posted in the MCR room itself, not online.
- Pride flag flying for LGBT month.

Environmental Officer (Sam)

- Apologies.

3 | Review of College Rents and Accommodation

3.1 | Future Room Distribution (Parsa Akbari)

- As described in the motion, internal College reports suggest the MCR have a higher demand for cheaper rooms than the JCR but the allocation does not reflect this, with our stock skewed to more expensive rooms in College. The committee would like the consent of the MCR to begin negotiating to trade away our more expensive rooms.
- Concerns from Aneira that College won't trade out Battcock Lodge rooms. Tom points out that is our prerogative to change, in negotiation with the JCR. Cindy affirms that she believes in most cases College wouldn't care. However, bear in mind that Battcock Lodge was built and funded by donors based on a promise of new graduate accommodation, and some might be disappointed to see more

mixed usage. Aneira suggests that maybe we just reduce the price of the rooms we have. This is met with skepticism.

- Tom says that as graduate students are largely funded, we do not need to argue for the *cheapest* rooms, but as we are generally not funded extortionately well, we have a good case for *cheaper* rooms. This provides a good compromise with the JCR, with the very cheapest rooms in college reserved for those who can afford it, as well as the most expensive for those who can afford it and desire it.
- Cindy asked whether all of Battcock were the same price: general agreement from those present that they're ranged somewhere between 2 and 1*.
- **Motion:** To give the MCR Committee a backing to petition College and the JCR exchange some of our more expensive rooms (incl. In Battcock) for mid-low range (approx. band 4) rooms.
- **Passed unanimously**

3.2 | Ballots Points System (Andreas Bedorf)

- Desire to redistribute points to give the treasurer points based on contribution.
- Proposal:
 - President 6 points.
 - VP 4 points (-1)
 - Treasurer 4 (+4)
 - Welfare 3 points (-1)
 - Bar and amenities 3 points (-1)
- Dido raises the point that why should anyone need to lose points anyway? Cindy agrees, based on her experience the committee does a lot of work and major events such as the mini-ball work a lot smoother if everyone can be nearby. She suggests why doesn't everyone get (at least) a point? Christine points out that we don't want it to become a motivator for people who don't otherwise care, but Matt suggests that it's never advertised as such, and he certainly wasn't aware when applying that he would receive preference in the ballot.
- Some concern raised by Aneira and Emily that this amendment might not be fair: as a significant proportion of the quorum present are members of the committee, it introduces a bias in those voting for their own well-being. After some discussion, a compromise is reached: the motion for treasurer is fairly uncontroversial and will be voted on today, but an additional online vote will be held on the CUSU voting system in the hope that the vote will allow those unable to make it the open meeting to contribute.
- **Motion:** Should the Committee be able to redistribute points to allow the treasurer get more points, and this be to instituted this year?
- **Passed Unanimously**
- **Amendment Motion:** Should MCR committee members currently without bonus points in the ballot (e.g. Equal Ops, International, Environmental, Comms) get one point (to be instituted next year)? (Proposed by Cindy and seconded by Dido).
- **Agreed to go to an online vote**

3.3 | Catering & Facilities Charge (Tom Chudley)

- Tom outlines the motion with Andreas, as described in the documentation distributed in advance of the motion.
- Giles opens by expressing his support for the motion, and others affirm.

- Cindy points out that in her experience , students living externally with the external CFC did not complain, and was not of major concern as people understood why they paying it and what benefits they received.
- Emily says she is planning to move out next year, said she felt she benefit regularly from facilities provided by college, and would support an external CFC so long as it was reduced relative the amount that internal students were paying.
- Andreas and Tom agree that as they envisage the system, it would still be a reduced CFC: enough to subsidise internal members against the increased rates under the new system.
- Andreas raises that equivalent charges occur in some European Universities, even without Colleges, and that such a charge is considered relatively uncontroversial.
- Aneira points out that this does not solve the situation this year for those also paying extra (relative to the old system). Tom brings up the offer made by the Senior Bursar for some summer 'sweeteners' (his words, not the Senior Bursar's) that might make people feel that their CFC costs are benefitting them in the summer.
- General discussion in support of this, with the following suggested:
 - Reduced formal rates: the MCR currently arrange private formals over the summer, and are charged private formal rates. This was brought up at rent negotiations as an example of something that could be easily offered and the Senior Bursar supported. General support for this, although Tom suggest out that this should not be the sole offer: it in no way balances the extra cost burden.
 - Others suggest more summer formals be put on for the MCR.
 - Aneira puts forward the idea of a form of 'minimum service level agreement' with the College, outlining what we should expect from from our weekly £13 CFC over the summer. Tom highlights some relevant numbers from Geoff Jameson, who said that hall was only provided on 48/105 nights in 2016 (45.7% of the total). He also says attendance never exceeded 10 people, although this was provided without context: we don't know how many people attend during term, and how many people we lose over the summer. Also, these nights are not being lost, but filled by weddings/conferences and the kitchen might not necessarily be able to arrange meals for an unknown, but small number of people in advance. Others suggest that it could then be a sign-up system in busy weeks. Generally the minimum service level agreement is well received, and it is agreed that we could propose to arrange this with College.
 - Relevant from the last motion, Dido points out the over Christmas, hall provision stopped entirely (but CFC didn't) -- it is important we understand what is happening over Easter as well.
- Ultimately, it was concluded to propose these ideas to the Senior Bursar at the first instance, and to send out a request for more ideas about how people feel their CFC could be satisfied in the Summer.
- **Motion:** For the MCR to petition to reintroduce a reduced external CFC to subsidise the newly increased CFC costs for internal students.
- **Unanimously Passed.**

4 | Refugee Scholarship Fundraising Event (Andreas Bedorf)

- Request for donations from the MCR to fund an MPhil place for a refugee in Cambridge. As a rule we do not give out money but could offer a fundraising event in kind.
- Not a lot of information on this Andreas.
- Ideas: formal, bar prices etc. Or we just provide the bar.
- **Motion:** If the committee are

5 | Magazines in the MCR (Dido O'Reilly)

- Majorities voted to end subscription to the Observer (£120/yr)
- Major vote for the *i* newspaper, but this is *more* expensive than the Observer.
- However, Nat Geo and Vogue popular. £34 for two year subscription to National Geography, and £20 for one-year Vogue. Go for this:

6 | Matters Raised by MCR Members

6.1 | Donation to Cambridge University Foodbank Society (Emily Prinsloo)

- Call for donations.
- Andreas and Tom highlight that usual College policy is not direct donation, but to offer services in kind. Recommend collaborating with Sam and Jed (JCR Green Officer) for themed formal equivalent.

6.2 | Emergency Motions (if raised)

- None raised.

7 | MCR Matriculation Photo 2017

- Successfully hung on the wall!