

Minutes of Churchill College MCR Termly General Meeting

Date: 30 October 2013 - 7.30pm

Location: Sandy Ashmore Room

Minutes

1. Apologies: Lorna, Carl, (Suzan Ok), Tom Collett, Jan Freyberg, Arthur Zielinski, Meng Zhang.
 - a. Present: Sonke Hee, Alexis Kaminski, Matic Horvat, Eric Mooring, Electra Panagoulia, Jordan Ramsey, Dave Roche, John Brown, Mike Vella, Will Clemens, Ankur Dhar, Kent Griffith, Marcos Lanio, Jacqui Poon, Yvonne Flory, Jenny Mills, Jess Walsh, Lisa Volpatti, Mike Kang, Karthik Nilakant, Karolis Misiunas (some later arrivals omitted).
2. Confirmation of Easter TGM Minutes
(<http://mcr.chu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/TGMMinutes-462013.pdf>)
 - a. Taken as confirmed.
3. President's summary (see attached paper)
 - a. Consultation on Graduate Accommodation. Questions:
 - i. I thought there was a plan to raise rents to market levels? Mike: says that this is a long-term plan. Jordan: we discuss rent prices with the bursar on a yearly basis. Last year, the prices were kept at the same level.
 - ii. Can we bargain price increases against new accommodation? This is outlined in the site strategic plan.
 - iii. How much of an increase is 2% per year? About 2 students.
 - iv. What are market prices? Mike: this has been a long-term goal for some time, but no concrete figure has been posed. Realistically, the college is likely to face fierce opposition if it institutes a dramatic increase in prices.
 - v. Does a 2% increase in admissions mean a 2% increase in offers, and will this necessarily translate to a corresponding increase in admissions? This is the target for admissions - typically the college will aim slightly higher than this due to an expectation of refusals. Note that the MCR is not involved in the admissions process.
 - b. Reformatting the CoE. Questions:
 - i. Why are we making it smaller? We really weren't filling the room, which gave the impression that the event wasn't very interesting. It also meant that people had to take a lot out of their days (and weekends). The other point that the working committee discussed is to make the talks more accessible and appeal to a general audience.
 - ii. Can we allow people to come and go? This has been implemented in the past, but didn't seem to help us.
 - iii. When will details be released? Once the new academic officer has

confirmed the plan for next year's conference, these will be advertised.
The date of the conference has been set for April 26.

- c. Summary of Committee Activities
 - i. No questions.
- 4. Any other business / questions for committee.
 - a. None raised.
- 5. Hustings (candidates listed alphabetically)
 - a. Uncontested roles (elected unopposed)
 - i. First Year Rep: Suzan Ok & Lisa Volpatti
 - 1. No questions.
 - ii. Environmental Officer: Jenny Mills
 - 1. No serious questions.
 - b. Bar Secretary
 - i. Marcos Lanio: He's been bartending for four years or so. Knows about drinks. Has experience through union club at Princeton.
 - ii. Kent Griffith: Wants his manifesto to speak for itself. Kent hopes to teach everyone the delights of an activity known as "post-gaming".
 - iii. Questions:
 - 1. How long are you here? Kent - PhD. Marcos - masters.
 - 2. What sorts of events do you want? Marcos: beer tasting. Kent: fun activities that aren't games but involve drinking. We could do a Cambridge-themed Sporcle.
 - 3. Do you think you'd be able to check if people show up for their rota? Both yes.
 - 4. How will you accommodate for people that don't drink? Marcos: we do offer non-alcoholic drinks, and I'm used to going to events that don't revolve around drinking. Kent: I think everything that you can do with alcohol, you can do the same without.
 - c. Equipment Officer
 - i. Thomas Collett (see prepared statement below)
 - ii. Arthur Zielinski (see prepared statement below)
 - iii. Mike Kang: Hasn't been here very long, but is keen to get involved. Doesn't have a pre-determined direction at present as to which approach to take. So proposes to take a consultative approach, i.e. talking to as many people as possible. Making the equipment run smoothly is a key part of keeping the MCR going. Mainly though, he'd like to be part of the MCR community in general, and wants to help it thrive.
 - iv. Questions (to Mike only)
 - 1. What do you think of the lockers? [Apparently the lockers have recently been removed from the MCR, making this question irrelevant].
 - 2. Can you come up with a better system for borrowing things? I am interested in improving things like this and other issues that I hope

to reveal in my consultative process. For any identified issue, he will evaluate and prioritise the effort required to address it and if necessary, manage the issue with one or more delegated volunteers.

d. Computing Officer

- i. Meng Zhang (see prepared statement below).
- ii. Matic Horvat: He's a first year PhD in computer science from Slovenia. He thinks the computing officer doesn't seem to have as many responsibilities as the other roles, so it's hard to make any grandiose policies. However he has experience with running Wordpress sites and running mailing lists. He'd also like to engage the college on local issues such as network access and the main college website.
- iii. Questions (to Matic only)
 1. Are there particular issues you'd like to raise? There was a network renovation going on over the summer, and he'd like to know what this achieved.
 2. Those living in hostels get a complex pamphlet showing how to connect to the wired network, could you improve this and wireless access? The way it is done now is using static IPs, which he thinks is possibly cumbersome but may be justified. He would like to look into it.
 3. How much time do you have for my IT problems? [Answer unminuted]
 4. We are trying to get automated payment systems set up, would you be able to help out? Yes he could help with that. He thought that the college could also do more about online management of student expenses.

e. Academic Officer

- i. Jan Freyberg & Sonke Hee: Running jointly, so they have more energy as a combined unit. Asked how many wanted to present or were really good at presenting, but seemed to be taken rhetorically. He wants to try to get the PPD group at Cambridge to help out with courses in the college. He wants to make academic events more accessible, more open, and bigger.
- ii. Eric Mooring: He's doing an MPhil in Veterinary Science. He'd like to contribute to the MCR, and feels that fundamentally Cambridge is about being an academic institution. He thinks there's merit in making connections across disciplines. He has experience organising large events - back in the USA he was involved in putting on a 5 day leadership workshop for school students. He wants to put some of that experience into practice here.
- iii. Questions
 1. The problem we usually have is in attendance - how would you address that? Sonke: depends on budget - we could put banners

up for instance, if the budget allows. Eric: there are lots of ways to market activities. It might be useful for presenters to include in their abstracts some information about how their work relates to other subjects.

2. Could you get other colleges involved and fellows? Sonke: we want to make sure its a friendly environment for practice - if we get the PPD involved this may help. Eric: some presenters may want this experience, it might be worth looking into.
6. The president and secretary thanked the outgoing committee for their distinguished service: Yvonne, Ben, Suzanne, Liwen, Nassos and Steve.
7. Karthik wrapped up by noting that voting would take place from 12 noon Thursday to 12 noon Saturday, via an online ballot - more details would announced by email. Sonke asked what rules were in place about further publicity - these are documented in the [Rules and Procedures](#), under section 406. Section 400 deals with elections in general. Meeting concluded at 8.30pm.

Prepared Statements

1. Tom Collett: Apologies that I can't make it tonight; I'm giving a seminar in Portsmouth so I'm probably on the train right now. I've been an active member of the MCR at Churchill for the past two years, and I want to give back to the MCR. I'm a big fan of our board games collection, and if you elect me I'll be getting us some more games to play. I'm also a big fan of expanding our film collection - and I'm keen to run film nights for us all to watch the new acquisitions!
2. Arthur Zielinski: Hi everyone, I am a first year PhD student in Chemistry and this is my first year at Cambridge. Currently I am a part of the bar rota, but I am hoping to increase my involvement with the MCR as the Equipment Officer and continue to promote the international community we have here. My main goal with this position would be to ensure everyone knows how - and is therefore not anxious - to use any of the MCR equipment whether it is sporting equipment, books, or gowns. In terms of board games and sports this can help involve some of the MCR members that don't enjoy the drinking-orientated events as much. Beyond that, I'd like to have some fun with new gear (be it sporting equipment or board games) from different cultures just to help expand the international feel associated with Churchill so I hope people take the time to suggest new equipment that the MCR can purchase - regardless of who is elected. On a personal front, I hope to see some floodlights become available to let some of the night owls - who are stuck in their offices during the day - play outdoor sports before it gets too cold (if it isn't already). I apologize for not being able to make it in person, but if anyone has any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at atz23@cam.ac.uk. Thank you.
3. Meng Zhang: Nothing special to say. Hope you guys have fun today :-). If anyone has some problems (for computing officer, other IT problems or daily staffs) add my facebook <https://www.facebook.com/zhangmeng1010> or send email to mz342.

President's Summary

1.) Graduate student accommodation survey: update

Background: Every year the MCR (President and Secretary) and TAS office allocate rooms to continuing students (largely 2nd and 3rd year PhD students; MPhil students transferring to PhD). Last year more than half of students applying were turned down from the rooms ballot. In addition, the University will increase the number of graduate students admitted (2% increase each year), meaning that the accommodation problem may grow in years to come. The MCR sought to explore this and other issues relating to College accommodation in its graduate accommodation survey conducted last year (ET 2013). We asked a number of questions related to room quality and price; use of College services; and sense of community and participation in the MCR.

We found:

- Quality and price of College accommodation was largely satisfactory (with the exception of a couple of hostels)
- College services were underused, particularly among those living outside of College and many concerns were raised about the catering fixed charge (CFC)
- Sense of community and participation in the MCR were satisfactory, but lower for those living outside of College.
- Many concerns were raised over the lack of graduate accommodation for students in the later years of study.

We prepared a document based on the responses

[\(http://mcr.chu.cam.ac.uk/useful-stuff/graduate-accommodation-survey-2013/\)](http://mcr.chu.cam.ac.uk/useful-stuff/graduate-accommodation-survey-2013/).

- a. We presented the graduate student accommodation survey responses at College Council in the last meeting of ET 2013
- b. MCR President, Secretary, Treasurer met with the Senior Tutor over the Long Vacation and came up with several action points:
 - i. Preparation of a strategic plan for graduate student accommodation (<http://mcr.chu.cam.ac.uk/useful-stuff/graduate-housing-strategy/>) and making electronic College Council and Governing Body minutes available to students (in progress; College Council agree in principle but details of implementation to be discussed).
 - ii. Simplified rooms ballot for Advanced Students: 1st/2nd year students to be offered guaranteed accommodation (in progress).
 - iii. Abolishing the CFC for students living out and rolling CFC into rent for those living in (in progress; to be completed for next academic year).
 - iv. Renovation of the MCR and adjoining TV room (in progress; small working party to be set up).

- 2.) Reformatting of the Conference on Everything (Churchill College graduate student conference; held prior to the Advanced Students dinner in late April).
 - a. Shorter conference (2-3 hours); shorter talks (5-10 min)
 - b. More intimate venue (Fellows' Dining Room)
 - c. Poster session to be held in Buttery/Jock Colville Hall (pending permission from Senior Tutor)
- 3.) Summer formals and MCR formals
 - a. Another successful year of summer MCR formals
 - b. After the success of our MCR formals last year, we will be hosting more this term (half-term formal; 22 Nov MCR formal). Note that due to a clash with the Spring Ball Launch formal we have had to cancel the 1 Nov MCR formal.
- 4.) Rebuilding the GU
 - a. After a vote of no confidence forcing the previous GU President to resign last year, the GU appears to be on track under the leadership of Richard Jones.
- 5.) And a very successful Freshers' Week!
 - a. Thanks to Jess and Karolis for organising it all and to all committee members for pitching in.

Jordan Ramsey
MCR President