

Minutes of a General Meeting of the Worcester College MCR

15th November 2009

Present: MCR President, MCR Secretary (Chair), other members of the committee, members of the MCR (number of attendees exceeded required quorum)

- 1. International Rep**
- 2. Coffee Machine**
- 3. Archives**
- 4. JDC report**
- 5. Welfare report**
- 6. Computing Committee Report**
- 7. Any other business**

1. International Rep

Motion proposed by Samin Khawaja, who was not present. Samin had put forward the idea of creating a new position on the MCR of 'International Rep'. The new member would represent "international students and religious and ethnic minorities", providing information and useful contacts about living in the UK (particularly in Freshers' Week), attending OUSU committees and organising international events in college. Following committee discussion it was decided that the motion would be presented to the MCR as a whole.

During the resulting discussion various points were raised (mostly by members who are themselves international students): the possibility that this position could be divisive, creating an 'us and them' culture; the related feeling that the MCR is already very welcoming to international students, testified by the number present at the meeting; the dangers of relying on one student to have all up-to-date information about visas, banks etc; the overwhelming amount of info that is already sent to freshers, and the likelihood that most questions would be resolved in the handbook or through Cath anyway.

The suggestion was made that there could be e.g. an international dinner in Michaelmas, with home students also included. It was also suggested that an MCR committee member could be designated during Freshers' Week as an international point of contact, on a more informal basis.

VOTE: For = 0, Against = 21, Absentions = 2

Kate agreed to inform the proposers of the outcome, and to pass the concerns that had been raised onto next year's committee.

2. Coffee Machine

Antonios Kouroutakis put forward a proposal to purchase an espresso machine for the MCR, on the grounds that the current coffee provision was not great, and that such a machine would attract more people to the MCR, especially in the evenings when coffee shops are not open, but people want to work somewhere other than their rooms. He suggested a machine could be bought for under £100, with refills of coffee also having to be purchased.

Points raised in the discussion were as follows: would it be worth spending more and getting a better quality machine, that is less likely to break? Could other types of machine be considered? (tablet-operated, like in the SCR; domestic Nespresso-style; rented vending machine) Would such a machine just add to the current problem of mess in the MCR? Is it even safe to have a pressurized-air machine in a communal space?

It was suggested that a more concrete proposal, include types of machine and costings, would have to be provided before a decision could be taken. Furthermore, it was suggested that it would be productive to ascertain the demand for such a machine – of those present, 12 felt they would welcome a different type of coffee provision; 8 were happy with the status quo, and 3 abstained. The final vote was taken not on the purchase of a machine, but on the idea of mandating Antonios to look into the issue, and come back with a concrete, costed proposal.

VOTE: For: 19, Against: 0, Abstentions: 4

3. Archives

Jess relayed a brief request from the new college archivist for any archives pertaining to the MCR in general, or any college societies.

4. JDC report

Kate reported back on the recent meeting of the JDC, in which two MCR backed motions were successfully passed.

- i. Bike racks or parking will now be provided for the Worcester Place and Richmond Road houses.
- ii. A list of requests for basic but crucial improvements to graduate accommodation, in particular the Mitchell Building, was accepted by the Provost and other members of the committee, who made a commitment to carrying out tasks like repainting, security lighting and deep-cleaning as soon as possible. A meeting between MCR officials and the Domestic Bursar in the next week will confirm the proposed timetable for these improvements. Furthermore there should be a yearly inspection and a long term review to establish the future of these buildings.

Kate also outlined the proposed changes to charities legislation which mean the MCR will have to register as a charity. The recommendation by the University and by OUSU is that MCRs register as subsidiaries of their colleges – it was agreed that this recommendation should be brought to the next GM so that the MCR President has a mandate for taking this course of action.

5. Welfare report

Emily updated the MCR on Swine Flu plans, and reiterated that everyone needs to inform Kate of their Swine Flu buddies. The college is confident that it will still be able to provide food etc and run normally even if the possible pandemic does materialise.

In other Welfare news, as the JCR condom machine has broken again, the college will buy one or two new ones to replace it.

6. Computing Committee Report

Jamie reported that the online formal sign in system is under development and should be in its testing phases soon. He and the Dean are pushing for the MCR to be included in the test group along with the SCR.

A second Computing Committee issue was the new sign in policy to allow college accurately to monitor bandwidth usage: this will involve signing in using the single sign on every time a computer is switched on. Questions were raised by MCR members about the system itself: would this involve signing in if a computer had gone into hibernate? Would users running their email through an email client like outlook need to leave an internet browser running in the background? Will this replace the current system of registering mac addresses (which causes problems when users are also registering computers within their departments etc)? Could this sign-on be made e.g. weekly rather than daily to minimise disruption? Jamie agreed to raise these issues with the college.

Another question raised by this issue was that of the reserved business section of computing committee meetings. Jamie was happy with this, saying there are issues that should not be open to students, however many other MCR members felt this was a potentially dangerous policy. It was suggested that student representatives should be (and indeed already are) trusted not to divulge confidential information to their peers – this already happens in several committees, including the general governing body briefing given to the two presidents by the Provost, in which details are not given, but general questions are raised. It was suggested that IT reps should at least be told the content of reserved business, even if they could not be told the details. Furthermore, it was felt that and private details of IT policies should be ironed out before they were brought to the public forum of a committee.

It was agreed that Kate and Jess would take this question to the JCC, with a view to establishing what should and shouldn't be in reserved business, and the extent to which students should have access to it (especially given the similar issue which was raised last term with regard to P2P software).

7. Any other business

- Jamie requested a paper-recycling box in the computer room.
- Kate brought forward a preliminary proposal to allow post-doctoral students to affiliate to the MCR as associate members, if their supervisor is in Worcester. It was felt that this would be a good idea (as long as there was provision for them to be removed), as many post docs (especially in the sciences) have no college affiliation and thus no social base. It was agreed that the full motion would be brought to the next meeting.
(NB I have subsequently found out that Christ Church are in the process of doing a very similar thing)