

Minutes of the JCR Open Meeting

Thursday 13th May - 7pm

1. Apologies

Samantha Osborne (Women's Welfare); Dean Ryan (LBGT).

2. Matters Arising

3. Reports of JCR Officers and questions

President - College is intending to sell 65 Lensfield. There was previously mould growing up the wall. College has now installed air vents and painted the rooms with anti-mould sealant. They were intending to sell earlier but this was delayed due to the recession. The rooms above Charlie Chan's are to be ready December 2011.

- Question: Will the rooms above Charlie Chan's be for undergraduates? This will depend on the numbers of undergraduates/postgraduates. College policy is to accommodate all 1st year postgraduates if they need accommodation so it may be used for postgraduates and other rooms converted to undergraduate use.

First meeting with bursar was held over the holidays. Update on the draft proofing of rooms: college has been draught-proofing Lensfield Road rooms - a list will go up on the JCR website of rooms which have been draft proofed. Any problems should be brought to the attention of the President.

Vice President - Cambridge University is not going to twin with a university in Gaza which was founded by somebody affiliated with Hamas. There was a very close vote on the issue but it is not going ahead.

Treasurer -Ents are getting new equipment. DCAC has approved a stand for TV in the bar to be put on the wall. There will be a budget for swimming and water polo cuppers fees next year. Thinking about giving the sports officer a budget for equipment.

Conversion of 22 new rooms above Charlie Chans to provide Howard Court standard rooms. Getting rid of 65 Lensfield, hopefully. Thinking about maybe getting rid of one of the Gonville houses because the leases are running out. Rooms above Charlie Chan's will not have 38 week contracts.

Ents - Ents has received money from DCAC for new equipment and repairs. The Ents officers have been through equipment with the tech guys and are selling, buying, repairing some equipment. They may have to start to charge for the use of equipment to prevent damage. They have organised the JCR Garden party and Thorpe Park trip (booking on JCR website)

- Question: What equipment exactly is being purchased? Some repairs to lighting equipment. Need a new mixer because they have been using the previous Ents' officers equipment. The speakers need repairing. They are buying some new microphones and leads.

- Question: Would it be more economical to hire equipment? In order for hiring to be viable the purchased equipment would have to be broken after 9 ents (1 year), it usually lasts for 4-5 years. It is not worth hiring as it does not save money. This has been thoroughly researched including hiring from the ADC theatre etc. They have also installed shelves to better look after equipment.

Comms - The JCR now has a facebook page.

Sports - The sports officer is applying for a budget for better upkeep of sports equipment. The college now has a croquet club. The sports officer has drawn up a list of captains - email any changes in captains to sports@downingjcr.co.uk. He is going to associate all college sports club with national societies as this may offer perks for the clubs - some are already affiliated e.g rugby.

Internet - The internet officer has set up the booking system for the JCR Garden Party and Thorpe Park trip. He has been updating random things on the website. Formal menus and slops menus are now available on the website.

Services - The heating is going off in the next 10 days. The JCR will try and send an email when it happens. The JCR is going to get a Wii for the TV room over the summer holidays, and it will hopefully be in place for freshers week (subject to head porter approving the system). They are going to finish decorating the TV room.

- Question: Will the Wii controllers be left in the TV room? They are likely to be held in the p'lodge with a signing out system.

- Question: Will it be okay for students to use their own games? The JCR will provide some but you can bring your own.

- Question: The Kenny laundry rooms are disgusting and have not been cleaned in ages, can something be done about this? It is difficult because responsibility is split between an external company and the college. The services officer will get on to college to sort it out.

Green - College have installed energy meters on the staircases in college. These give live updates which will be put on a website. College is currently a bit behind on our energy targets but this is due to the cold winter. They have been making little changes e.g. installing light sensors etc. One issue that has been raised is the installation of paper towels and soap dispensers in houses but this was a swine flu measure.

Freshers' Reps - They have had a successful wedding formal and are submitting a first plan to the college for Freshers' week. They have some ideas for freshers week - UV night etc. Sponsorship is starting to come together so they will have some money.

- Question: Have they spoken to Sophie Wawro about hiring casino equipment from the ball committee? Yes.

Academic affairs - College are thinking of taking on more graduates with their own accommodation. They are introducing a library self-service system this week and have sorted out the loud beeping issue. They want to put up subject profile web pages written by the relevant directors of studies. Water coolers in the library have been saved.

Point: Students should look at subject pages and inform the relevant DoS if they think it does not represent their subject.

International - Storage went well and is getting better every term. The deposit system worked well apart from the volcano disruptions. They have had some socials which went well. College has agreed that international students with small rooms can store empty boxes/suitcases in P staircase during term time.

Griffin - They have made some good progress, there has been lots of interest with articles. Considering a budget to pay for the magazine due to lack of interest in sponsorship. What are students' views on charging 50p to peoples college bills to cover the cost.

- Discussion: Would this require an opt out system?

It turns out there is currently a DCAC budget for the Griffin. This lasts until the start of the next academic year and can be used to fund the current issue.

- Question: Have they considered an online version instead? They are currently using both and it looks nice in print.

Welfare - The welfare officers have been running doughnut days to get people out of their rooms/library. Drop in sessions on Sunday afternoons are still running. The welfare officers are always accessible by email.

Access - Thanks to those who have signed up to the access mailing list. The access officer will be sending out an email for volunteers for South West open day in Downing (tours, talks to potential applicants). Trying to get together a facebook access group so that applicants can ask questions after open days. He is considering the possibility of student video diaries to go up on the website.

4. Motions:

i) Lensfield road holiday rent

- Proposal - People should be able to keep their stuff in their rooms over holiday periods without paying the full amount to reflect the fact that they are not occupying the room themselves.. Paying the full rent adds up to a lot of money.

- Against - College needs to have a certain number of rooms available for people who currently live on domus. Lots of people do organise systems among themselves and college encourages this. From the JCR perspective, this is not going to be available to everyone, and there would need to be criteria to decide who gets the opportunity to do this: a deadline, distance from college, difficulty of transportation? This is not going to be an easy fix and is not going to be in the near future - long term.

- Questions and discussion

- Would this replace the current system? No, it would operate in conjunction with currently allowing 38 week contracts. Those with 30 week contracts could apply to store things in their rooms over the holidays.

- Treasurer - the college is against it because they use most of the rooms.
- College do not use most of the rooms - e.g. M staircase is not used for conference guests.
- There is a difference between keeping rooms open and allowing them to be filled up at the beginning of the year.
- If the rooms are not being used then this is a guaranteed source of income for the college. There is no problem with the JCR to approving of the idea even and having more detailed discussions.
- There will be less chance for maintenance people to repair rooms etc. Propose a survey on the JCR website to assess willingness to pay etc.
- On experience - there is no point in speculating as there are so many rooms and systems in college. Would it be better to work out exactly what is feasible and then come back at the next open meeting? Need more information.
- Should they be improving storage facilities in general rather than tying it to a room.
- Could the party room be used for storage? No it is used by conferencing. The Kenny's have locked cupboards.

Vote

Against - 8 votes

Abstaining - 16 votes

For - 25 votes

Motion passed.

ii) Communications policy

- Proposal (Ali McWhirter) - reads out the current communications policy from the JCR website. Recognises that people do get annoyed with the number of emails. However, JCR participation has gone down and the ugs system is very easy to use and is a good resource for contacting the JCR. There are situations when more than 3 emails will need to be sent in a week e.g. CUSU elections, ents. The current limit of 3 has never been observed. He does not want an excessive amount of emails but the current limit is arbitrary - there should be a discretion. The President and Communications Officer will be more vigilant in using yeargroup lists rather than ugs.
- Against (Andrew Featherstone) - at the moment there have been careless emails which could have been included in newsletters instead. Other parts of the website should be used along with TV screens in the bar. The approach to JCR communications needs updating to be better.
- Questions and discussion

- There are not too many emails. Students are ditzy and need reminding of these things. Irrelevant things don't get through. People can just delete the email if they read the title and are not interested.
- Are there actually too few emails. Newsletters are sometimes out of date. Information should be dispersed more frequently as this would deal better with deadlines rather than getting a newsletter the night before an event.
- Should use other sources but email is the best way to reach the whole college. There are not that many emails.
- Nobody would read the entire list in a newsletter so information would be ignored.
- Why can we not have an opt in system with various lists e.g. ents, sports etc?
- The bar weekly email is helpful to let people know what the bar is doing.
- Sports - a reasonable number of people will consider sports emails to be irrelevant but they are incredibly rare and are used in last ditch scenarios. They are usually invitations to support the college. Long lists of events do not work.
- We are clever people why can't we set up a filter if we have a personal problem with the amount of email?
- Handling and managing an email inbox is not difficult to do.
- Lots of lists is a good idea but we need clarity and that system would be too confusing. We don't want to segregate who gets emails for what and risk missing people out.
- The JCR cannot send out an email for everything and the extra emails are for exceptional things. This is reflected in the changes.

Vote

Against - 0 votes

Abstain - 2 votes

For - 47 votes

Motion passed

5. Emergency Motions

6. Any Other Business

Minutes taken by Gary Horlock

Appendix - JCR MOTIONS

i) Lensfield road holiday rent

The JCR notes that students in Lensfield Road have to pay the full weekly rent price to keep all their belongings in their rooms even though they are no longer occupying these rooms outside of NPR.

The JCR believes it is unfair to ask students to pay the full weekly rent price when they themselves are not occupying the rooms.

The JCR resolves that it should propose a nominal fee (to be suggested to the bursar and accommodation office) to be introduced to replace the full weekly rent charge when a student wishes to keep their belongings in their room even though they have left Cambridge.

Proposed by Ella Writer

Seconded by Edward Ball

ii) Communications policy

The JCR notes that the current JCR Communication policy, formulated in 2004, no longer reflects the current uses of the ugs system.

The JCR believes that the ugs@dow lists are an invaluable resource for JCR communication and that, extended, they could still be used effectively without leading to 'information overload'.

The JCR resolves that the Communication policy should be extended to include the Communications, Ents and Sports Officers, but changed so that emails may be sent as required, with final discretion lying with the President and Communications Officer to keep emails to a minimum.

Proposed by Ali McWhirter

Seconded by Katie Marshall