



## TRINITY HALL M.C.R.

### First Official Committee Meeting (Open), Lent 2024

5pm, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

College Lecture Theatre

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**Present:** Chair: Jake Bransgrove (President); Emily Shaw (Vice-President), Soham Kar (Treasurer), Benjamin Iago Gibson (Secretary), Martin Kirsch (External Entertainments Officer), Angus Fotherby (Alumni Officer), Shaashwat Saraff (International Officer), Jannis Jakobs (Welfare and Disabilities Officer), Niamh Divers (Academic Officer), Thomas Frick (Academic Officer), Rob Wiseman (PDRA Representative), Noah Cadwaladr Evans (Steward), Clara Kraebber (LGBTQ+ Officer), Tiana Maria (Gender Officer), Laura Espinoza (Gender Officer), Louisa Yapp (Internal Entertainments Officer), Emma Chapman (Internal Entertainments Officer)

**Apologies received from:** Constantin Schmidt (International Officer), Grace Varnham (Computing Officer), Milly Parsons (Computing Officer), Chris Haggard (MCR-JCR Rep), Michael Baker (Welfare and Disabilities Officer), Zoya Yousef (Green and Ethnical Affairs Officer)

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### Matters Arising:

- 1) Declaration of conflicts of interest
- 2) Approval of minutes of the previous meeting
- 3) Approval of persons taking up formally vacant positions on MCR committee
- 4) MCR funding and spending excess
- 5) International students in upcoming UK elections
- 6) Review of planned and possible events
  - i. Upcoming superhalls
  - ii. International Women's Day event
  - iii. Upcoming swaps
  - iv. LGBTQ+ Events
    - a. Possible MCR central calendar.
  - v. Proposals for the celebration of other cultural events in the MCR
    - a. Noticeboard for events
- 7) EDI training being actively sought

**8) Formation of new societies**

- i. Extension of deadline to submit budgets for new societies
- ii. Voting on societies proposed so far
  - a. Women in Pub Sports Society
    1. Legality of its activities
  - b. Puzzles Society
  - c. Jimmy Buffett Appreciation Society
  - d. Wine Society

**9) Moving into the new MCR**

- i. Date set for move
- ii. Decoration and furnishings of rooms
- iii. Fate of the former MCR space
- iv. Scheduling events in the MCR.
- v. Television?
- vi. Respecting the space
  - a. New mugs

**10) Other matters arising**

- i. Alumni business
  - ii. College punts
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**1) Declaration of conflicts of interest**

None.

**2) Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

**3) Approval of persons taking up formally vacant positions on MCR Committee**

The President briefly introduced those Members of the MCR committee who had taken up their positions since the MCR elections held last year: Niamh Divers and Tom Frick (Academic Officers); Martin Kirch (External Entertainments Officer); Zoya Yousef (Green and Ethical Affairs Officer); Michael Baker and Jannis Jakobs (Welfare and Disabilities Officers); and Angus Fotherby (Alumni Officer). Their appointment was approved by the Committee without a murmur.

#### **4) MCR funding and spending excess**

The Treasurer was invited to report on the current finances of the MCR, and placed in the unusual and exciting position for an MCR treasurer of being able to report a spending excess, currently standing at £28,000. This was, the President clarified, largely as a lingering consequence of reduced spending during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Treasurer went on to clarify that the MCR intends to work through this saved amount until it is brought down to *c.* £15,000 before accepting any more funding from College.

In response to a question from Kraebber asking for clarification as to how exactly this money was to be spent, the Treasurer explained that College usually provides the MCR with £6,000 per term, which amount will, for the immediate future, be drawn from the MCR's savings instead of from college funding until the target balance is reached. Responding to another Member's question, he further clarified that the precise plan for this spending was not yet set, but would be determined in a future closed meeting.

The Vice-President added that the Treasurer has copies of MCR budgets covering the last five years, and that these would be used to outline predicted expenditures.

The President emphasised that this excess, whilst a thoroughly pleasant situation to be caught in, was not an excuse to throw money away on any old thing; it was important to make the most of the good fortune to pass on some money to the next MCR. He warned, too, that College does sometimes peer into the expenditure of the MCR, with reckless spending sometimes criticised.

#### **5) International students in upcoming UK elections**

Saraff spoke to inform the MCR's international Members of the elections both general and regional scheduled to take place in the United Kingdom this coming year, in which some resident foreign nationals might be eligible to vote. Though the precise rules on eligibility vary from nationality to nationality, this opportunity applies particularly to citizens of Commonwealth countries, and to some EU citizens. He announced to Members his intentions to circulate an information pack soon with full clarification as to who might be eligible to register to vote, and how they might go about it, along with links to further resources.

The President added his own voice to the call to make the most of the opportunity to participate in British politics, and reassured that he himself, as a Kiwi now registered to vote in the UK, had found the process painless and easy.

## 6) Review of planned and possible events

- i. The Internal Entertainments Officers announced the themes for superhalls scheduled in the coming term: though the Harry Potter superhall is traditional in Lent, it had been decided to delay it slightly this time round in order to give more time to work out how it might best be run with sensitivity. Instead, the theme of the next superhall of term is to be 'Outer Space', with a St. Patrick's Day-themed event to follow at the term's end.
- ii. The Gender Officers put forward a proposal to host a talk by a particular artist whose work is concerned with women's and non-binary issues in Uganda, to celebrate International Women's Day. The President suggested that this might be an idea which he could raise as MCR representative to the Arts Advisory Group.

In response to a question from the Vice-President as to whether this might be the sort of event for which College could have some funding, the President suggested that it may indeed be better fashioned not as a project exclusively of the MCR, but as a College project on which the MCR Gender Officers could take the lead; though he warned that scheduling issues could mean that if the event were to go ahead it might not be able to coincide precisely with the week of International Women's Day.

- iii. Kirsch announced that there was to be a swap at Gonville and Caius the following week, and advertised that there was one highly desirable ticket left, expressing his gratitude to the MCR for subsidising their cost. Following this swap, there was to be another in February for Valentine's Day, hosted by Clare. He also informed Members that the hill colleges had reached out to him to organise a joint Trinity Hall/St Edmund's/Murray Edwards/Fitzwilliam bop, also to celebrate Valentine's Day, with more details to follow, and the current price expected to be £25.

At Fotherby's prompting, Kirsch clarified that this price will include drinks.

Wiseman enquired whether this bop would be held with the expectation that Trinity Hall would host a future event in return. Kirsch had received no indication that this was the case, and highlighted the lack of available space at Trinity Hall as a possible source of complications if trying to host an MCR event of similar size.

- iv. Following the decision of the last unofficial MCR committee meeting to accept the JCR's offer of allowing graduate Members to book on to Thursday night formals, the President informed Members that this move had been approved, and it would now be possible for MCR Members to attend formals on a Thursday. These nights would not be subsidised by the MCR, but rather will be at full price, and with no pre- or post-drinks. They would, however, allow Members an extra chance in the week to bring guests along.

The Vice-President clarified that this opportunity was not to be abused, and that it remained the JCR's night first and foremost, with the JCR retaining the right to review and

perhaps rescind the invitation of graduate attendance whenever they might feel that the setup isn't working.

- v. Kraebber asked for some clarification on what exactly reps can do in organising events, what they can host, what they can spend, and how they might get reimbursed.

The President replied that the precise remit of the reps in this respect could be found in the Constitution; that reimbursement could be sought from the Treasurer by sending him relevant receipts; and that reps usually had a budget of some £100 per month for events, depending on uptake. It was, however, usually a good idea to set out projected events ahead of time and bring a proposal to the executive committee. Even if the MCR were unable to fund the proposed event directly, they might usually be able to find someone who can.

The Vice-President added that for LGBTQ+ events in particular, feedback given to previous reps had persistently indicated an appetite for more events not founded upon drinking, and added that she was heartened to hear that the Gender Officers were planning to do more in the line of film nights and talk-organising.

- a. Following on from the advice from the President to propose events in advance, Maria mooted the possibility of some sort of externally-hosted central MCR calendar, in order to make sure that no double-bookings occurred in the course of these proposals. This idea met with warm feeling in the room, with several potential online calendar formats suggested.
- vi. The Vice-President suggested that, though the MCR already marks some cultural events, such as Burns Night and St Patrick's Day, the Committee would welcome feedback on any other events celebrated by MCR Members which could be incorporated into the calendar. She expressed the Committee's desire to respond to the wants of MCR Members, and to make sure that these events are celebrated in the way that those who observe them would prefer.

The President added that though the College and MCR alike are both very keen to put these events on, their success depends entirely on uptake—if nobody comes along, there's nothing that can be done.

- a. Kirsch wondered whether there was any way to gauge interest in events before they were added to the official calendar—Maria suggested that a noticeboard in the MCR might be a good venue, promoting direct engagement, rather than relying on a round-robin email and associated online poll, which was much more likely to generate a passive response. This met with general approval from the room at large.

Gibson at this point indicated that if the Scots and Irish were both going to get College events in their name, he would be very grumpy if St David's Day were to go unobserved in March. He received little satisfaction in the suggestion that leeks could be added to the lunch menu in hall.

## 7) EDI training being actively sought

The President updated those in attendance that EDI training for Committee Members had been in the pipeline since last year, with College currently actively seeking the best provider. The delay in sourcing a provider has largely been caused by demand issues: everyone in Cambridge is looking for training at the moment. Any thoughts from the Committee whilst the search was ongoing could be fed back through him to the Junior Bursar or Senior Tutor.

Maria raised the point that EDI training should be tailored to the needs of those who were seeking it out, and not generic and placatory. She added that the Committee should, therefore, have a full understanding of the content of a proposed training programme before undertaking it, in order to ensure that it would prove useful and worth the MCR's while.

The Vice-President strongly agreed, elaborating that one of the complications in finding a provider so far had been making sure that the project didn't just become an exercise in tick-boxing.

The President pointed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Advisory Group on which the LGBTQ+ and Ethnic Diversity Officers sit as ways to make sure that the Committee's opinions on this matter could be passed on to College. He suggested that it might also be worth emailing the Senior Tutor or the committee chair to ask whether Maria would be able to sit in on this Advisory Group as Gender Officer.

Jakobs asked whether this training would be a recurring, yearly need—and that if so, given the expense involved, might it be possible to get an internal provider? The President stressed that it would be much better to find an independent, specialised, external provider, even with the expense involved—that EDI training is important, and it's important to get it right.

## 8) Formation of societies

- i. It was observed that, although one of the items on the agenda for this Open Meeting—as with all open meetings commencing Lent terms per the Constitution (§13)—was to vote on the formation and funding of new societies, few MCR Members seem to have been aware of this fact, the meeting itself being sparsely attended by non-Committee Members, and few proposed budgets for societies having been received in advance. Fotherby suggested that the constitutional deadline could be extended slightly in these exceptional circumstances; the motion carried, with a new deadline set for the following week.
- ii. Voting on those societies which had already been proposed to the Executive at this point took place.

- a. The President had received a proposal from the Women in Pub Sports society, its aim to create a space for women to play in particular pool and darts, clubs and activities which tended, in Trinity Hall as elsewhere, to be dominated by men.
  1. Fotherby pointed out that it was a requirement of the Constitution (§13.1.c) that societies affiliated with the MCR cannot explicitly be gender-exclusive. The President clarified that this was indeed the case, on the grounds that MCR funds cannot be spent on things not in theory available to all Members. However it was generally acknowledged by all that what is written on-paper of a society's membership and what is to be expected in reality are two different things, and that there would, at any rate, remain mechanisms to eject from the society any of its members who behaved malevolently or inappropriately.

The proposal submitted on behalf of W.I.P.S. was accepted unanimously.
- b. A declaration by the Puzzles Society was accepted also without objection. Fotherby asked what exactly was involved in the Puzzles Society. It was suggested that this might be the puzzle.
- c. Fotherby then presented his own proposal for the re-formation of the lapsed Jimmy Buffett Society, its intentions being to listen to and appreciate the music of American tropical-rock artist Jimmy Buffett, whilst enjoying refreshments of a sort most suited to a celebration of the man's life and music. This proposal was accepted, again unanimously.
- d. The written declaration of the Wine Society was also accepted without murmur.

## 9) Moving into the new MCR

- i. The President was pleased to announce to those gathered that the newly-refurbished MCR was to be opened to Members the following Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January, with the MCR's Burns Night dinner that evening to inaugurate it. There will also, down the line, be a grand formal opening, with accompanying bop.
- ii. The Committee has been looking for art to decorate the walls of the new space, sourced both from College's collection and by commissioning from within the Membership. There will also be noticeboards and chalkboards, and a big board behind the bar to be covered in photos.

In response to questioning from Fotherby, the Vice-President stressed that the present MCR Committee had had little input in the precise furnishings of the new space, particularly in the instance of the orange barstools in the Blue Room.

- iii. In response to a question from Cadwaladr Evans, the President clarified that the room which had so far been used as a temporary MCR space would, upon vacation, revert to its former purpose as a quiet space for College staff.

- iv. Maria enquired as to how much warning would need to be given before scheduling an event in the MCR, to which the Vice-President replied that if nothing else in terms of leaving enough time to publicise the event, at least a week would be appropriate, as well as urging Members to consider the time involved in setting up and clearing the space before and after an event.
- v. A enquiry was made as to whether the new space would include a television, Wii, or similar for group use. The President recalled that at the previous Committee meeting some objections had been raised to this idea, with Fotherby chiming in at this point to remind the room of those objections: that the Wii in the unrefurbished MCR had never been used, and had, by the time the old space was vacated, come to be felt an impediment to the MCR's use as a social space. Instead, when films were screened or anything was being watched communally, a projector was wheeled in and pointed at a wall. Those gathered thought that this seemed like a good solution.
- vi. The Vice-President urged all Members to respect the new space, with Kirsch adding that this applied especially in the case of mugs, the stocks of which in the previous MCR had been, over time, entirely stolen.
  - a. Maria asked where new mugs were going to be sourced from, to which the Vice-President replied that she was planning to do a charity shop search in the very near future in order to get some more sustainable (and whimsical) crockery.

## 10) Other matters arising

- i. Fotherby spoke briefly to urge Members to send him any alumni business which they wanted addressed, in advance of his meeting in the near future with the Alumni and Development office.
- ii. Following this, Jakobs raised the point that at some other colleges, such as Clare, a fund on behalf of alumni pays for current Members to use the college's punts. He asked if it might be possible to look into how feasible a similar scheme at Trinity Hall might be. Fotherby took warmly to the idea, and indicated that he'd raise it in his meeting with A&D; the Committee at large voiced its disgruntlement with having to pay to use college punts, which it was pointed out never used to be the case in the good old days.

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*Meeting concluded 6.40pm.*