**GENERAL MEETING**

**ST EDMUND HALL MCR**

**MCR Zoom, 7PM 3rd March 2021**

**Meeting Agenda**

Committee present: Ben White (BW, President), Julia Carver (JC, Vice President), Thijs van der Plas (TVP, Steward), Fernando Jimenez-Gallardo (FJG, Steward), Andrew Gibson (AG, Treasurer)

Absent: Raggy Ravichandran (RR, Welfare); David Cruz-Walma (Sports Rep), Julie Hechler (JH, Welfare), Caine Lewin-Turner (Academic Rep), Yana Lishkova (YL, IT Officer)

Quorum met: in meeting

1. **Approval of minutes of last MCR General Meeting (Hilary W2 2021)**
2. **Reports from MCR Committee Members**

President, Ben:

*Renovating MCR:*

* We are planning to renovate theMCR. We are open to ideas and suggestions about how you want to see the MCR changed. The approval of plans will happen for TT, and work will take over the summer. Permanent seating (cushions) redone; stones around fireplaces moved for more space, refurbish the bar, and we are open to other suggestions.
* Sue will send out Google doc for people to write suggestions.
* We will bring the formal plan to a GM next term, and vote with how we want to go ahead with it.

*Accommodation:*

* We took students’ complaints to college, and asked for more space in firt year accomm for first year grads. 4th year undergrads have opportunity to access rooms before they’re given to 1st year grads. This preents first years with a lot of difficulties and challenges. We took this issue to college, and they said that they would not change this. They were also aware that they can’t accommodate the number of graduates they take on, and instead to limit the number of grads they take in. And they also decided to create a working group on how

Freddie: What constructive alternative is there for college? There are way too few rooms in total, and faced with a choice to house 4th year or 1st year grads

Ben: That’s true, but the argument we made is that most of our grads are moving to the UK to the first time, find a college community, whereas 4th year undergrads already have established social links, they are already familiar with the city and how to find accommodation there.

Fernando: Ben and I are going to be part of this Working Group and try not to let this issue die down. Some of students’ feedback was appalling; people do not feel like they are prioritized by college. And because of this pandemic, it has created a void in the MCR.

India: Why does college allow fourth year undergrads to have accomm in Norham, but not fourth year medics on 6-year programs?

Ben: College says that fourth years have research projects, which is the reason why they’re given accommodation. But 4,5,6 year undergrad medics, who are also counted as MCR are not eligible for college accomm because they do not have these research projects.

Ronnie: What about future accommodation building, that college has been talking about for years?

Ben: This is in the Five-Year strategic plan, and the next two building projects (in the back of Norham) are for undergraduate accommodation. It’s going to get to a point where almost every single undergrad year will be accommodation, but not everyone in the *first year* of their graduate programme

Sally: Money-wise, have undergrad alumni gifted more money to Teddy compared to graduate alumni?

Ben: The MCR at Teddy is relatively new, although this should not be relevant as there 350 graduates now and they should be accommodated.

Freddie: Undergraduate alumni do donate more money. But before Bessie (most recent renovation) have been renovations for graduate accommodations in Norham, costing 2-digit million pounds.

Ben: I’d like to give an update on the working group for BLM, and this will be discussed by Freddie.

Freddie:

* A Working group was established to thoroughly review how the Committee was organizing things, and whether we wanted to change things
* And that was my responsibility to put that group into place, but due to the abundance of COVID-related responsibilities, and attending an unexpected amount of college meetings, and my own research, it never really took off.
* Unfortunately, I do not really have the time at the moment to get this off the ground, due to having to submit my PhD dissertation soon.

Ronnie: Ok, thanks for the update. So where does the MCR go on now?

Ben: We will start again from this. We will still form the working group and reset it for now. We will form the working group and get it up and running by the next GM.

Julia: the working group has attracted interest in the MCR community, and perhaps we could put out a call for the Diversity Rep, which is a Committee position that is unfortunately not yet filled.

*VP:*

*Julia*

* I’ve been sending out the weekly notices, as always. I’m considering of putting forth a motion (with the support of the Committee) for an MCR canoe in the next GM, and I’d love to hear the MCR’s thoughts on this—please feel free to shoot me an email.

*Stewards:*

Fernando:

* There are a few upcoming events: a pub quiz on Saturday, and next week we have another event, co-chaired by Amanda Lyons, which is painting by numbers, so if you want to get a kit delivered to your pigeon hole, sign up in the form (sent in the last email).
* Also, I spoke with Sue McCarthy following the govt’s announcement of ending the restrictions in the UK, the college is open to hosting a normal dinner after the 21st of June, which will be in week 9. I also changed the date from the 10 of June to the 24th for Freud’s.

Thijs:

* Our next event will be online, in week 9. The rest is TBD (a surprise).

*Treasurer:*

Andrew:

* The MCR has finally got our money back from College, which is fantastic.
* Otherwise, not much updates.

Ronnie: Can you tell us how much money it was? It’s been going on for years.

Andrew: It was about $10k.

*Welfare:*

Raggy:

* I am running Good Lad Workshops. I am really disappointed that Sports Captains haven’t responded to advertising it. Rowing have been the only sports captains to advertise it; was disappointed that MCR Football team did not do this. It’s frustrating, as Teddy has a reputation about this. But worst case scenario, if there is a bigger demand later in the year, we can always pick this up again.
* We have welfare packages, we’ve been organizing those. We will be sending them out this Saturday. We’ve been given permission to use the MCR for this distribution purpose. The care packages are going to have loads of tasty treats, it’s going to be very fun.
* Also, I popped in and people were using the MCR as a facility, whereas they should be only be using it for tea and coffee at this time due to COVID restrictions, just as a reminder.
* We also have a sleep workshop coming up some time during the vac, and sexual health supplies forthcoming as well.
* India has been very consistent with her LGBTQ events, which has been great.
* I need an update from the Treasurer about funds, as we’ve been spending recently—but hearing about these recent funds from Andrew has been great.

*NSE Rep:*

Will:

* The care packages have been a substitute to my duty of providing NSE brunch, which I have been unable to fulfill to COVID
* Thank you to Raggy and Ben today for helping me with driving to the Big Tesco in North Cowley and putting together these packages. We will hand deliver them to those living in Norham, and those in Oxford can get them from the Teddy MCR.
* Hopefully I can come up with some workable brunch thing in TT, COVID restrictions depending.
* Myself and Fernando have been asked to sit on the Accommodation Working Group, and we will sit on it and convey the views of the MCR
* I remain available to listen to people’s concerns regarding accommodation as well, so feel free to reach out.

*Academic Rep:*

Fernando (on behalf of Caine)

* Caine says that the turnout has been great, and we’ve already exceeded the voucher limit for Deliveroo (it’s gone over 20 signups)
* We’ve asked Robert Priestland to increase the budget for catering to accommodate more signups

Sally (*Access Rep):*

* Access Summer School is coming. I planned it with Ben Fernando last year, and I’m looking for people to help me. I’m wondering if there can be some MCR-wide email advertising this.
* I’m unsure about whether this will be done in person or online.

Fernando: I would be happy to put you in contact with the right people, and I can send you the email with the information.

Ronnie: What are the dates planned for this?

Sally: I have not yet determined the dates.

Ronnie: Are you thinking it will be during term-time or a summer time?

Sally: I was thinking it would be around September, so people can prepare for December application deadlines.

Ron: I think it would be harder to prepare for something virtual, and then have to plan in person. But the reverse is also conceivable and could be difficult. Kate Murnane also helped with it last year, as well as Ben Fernando.

Julia: I would be happy to distribute an email with all the details/advertising this event.

Raggy, on behalf of *Women’s Rep:*

* We are planning something for Women’s Day in March. We are going to try it into Teddy Hall’s ‘green initiative’
* If anyone has ideas for it or wants to do something, I’m very keen—let me know.

1. **Nominations for Guest Membership**

* *Currently on hold due to COVID restrictions*

1. **Motions for Discussion**

**Ronnie:** A reminder that for voting on motions, it has to be a simple majority, unless it is a constitutional motion.

1. Motion title:

Gender Expression Fund

Proposed by: India Brough

Seconded by: Raghul Ravichandran

Motion:

* Provide £200 per academic year to reimburse students for items that aid in their gender expression, including but not limited to binders, packers and breastforms.
* Allow students travelling to Gender Identity Clinics for appointments with gender specialists during term time to claim reimbursements for travel expenses.
* Mandate the MCR LGBTQ+ Rep to reimburse trans, gender non-conforming, and questioning students from this fund on a case-by-case basis of up to a recommended £40 per student per academic year, subject to increase or decrease depending on remaining funds and the individual’s circumstances.
* Mandate the MCR LGBTQ+ Rep to maintain the anonymity of students requesting reimbursement from this fund by sending anonymised receipts to the treasurer, who would reimburse the LGBTQ+ Rep, who would in turn reimburse the individual.
* In the case where there is no LGBTQ+ Rep available or an individual wishes to maintain anonymity from this Rep, mandate the Welfare Officers to fulfil the role set out above.
* If no one accesses the fund one year, or if not all of it is used, the next year’s provision will be added to the fund- to an upward limit of £400 in the fund at any one time. Having a larger fund would mean that we could accommodate larger purchases in future years i.e. if a student comes to SEH before owning anything at all, or if there we get an influx of trans / non-conforming students one year.

Background:

* There are, and will continue to be, transgender & gender non-conforming students at SEH whose welfare can depend quite significantly on being perceived as their gender, and on their appearance.
* Gender dysphoria is a feeling of distress associated with a disconnect between an individual’s perceived gender and appearance, and their gender identity. This can have a negative effect on trans people’s welfare and mental health.
* Items of clothing exist to help alleviate gender dysphoria, including binders, concealing underwear, packers and breastforms. These items can have a significant impact on wellbeing and mental health. These items can also improve welfare for gender non-conforming students who may not experience gender dysphoria.
* The OUSU 2018 Trans Report shows evidence of higher levels of anxiety and stress in trans students, with two thirds stating Oxford has had a negative or extremely negative effect upon their mental health.
* Over 10 other colleges have established Gender Expression Funds, with a survey being done by the Oxford SU LGBTQ Campaign to try and encourage more.

Applicability to the MCR:

* All students who may benefit from these items deserve equal access to them, regardless of financial circumstances.
* Students’ welfare is important, and the MCR should strive to develop suitable welfare provisions for all of its members.
* Establishing this fund would show to current and prospective trans and questioning students that St Edmund Hall is a safe and supportive environment to explore one’s gender identity and expression.
* The trans and non-conforming members of our community deserve our continued support.

India: There are transgender and non-conforming people at Teddy Hall, where their welfare depends significant on them being perceived as their gender. There are things that can alleviate their sense of distress. What the motion is to provide students (up to 200GB/year) with a reimbursement for gender expression items and related transport.

Ronnie: If you’re rolling over the money, are you talking about a battled system?

India: No, this would be 200 pounds set over from the Welfare MCR budget, which could be rolled over if this is not used.

Andrew: If anonymity is required, but reimbursement is needed will the Treasurer still get receipts?

Ronnie: You could redact the name on the receipts.

Andrew: That would be fine. I think including this as part of the budget (as opposed to rolled over) would be the best idea.

Raggy: Are we cordoning off the Welfare budget, or are we creating a new battel every year, sort of like the Anniversary Grant?

India: I am open to either of these.

Raggy: This is something very much used for an individual and applied to an individual, very similar to the Anniversary Grant. Maybe setting it aside as part of the Welfare budget

Ronnie: It’s fine if it’s set aside as part of the Welfare budget or part of the Welfare budget, and it’s preferable to batteling. There is precedent for the fact that we reimburse personal things from the Welfare budget (such as rape crisis centre visits)

Ben: I did look into the Constitution, and the money can go to individuals for personal needs, so there should not be any problem with the motion as is (e.g. incorporating it into the Welfare budget).

**Vote outcome: Passed unanimously.**

Motion title:

Motion for the SEH MCR to support the Oxford Living Wage (OLW) and the Real Living Wage and to demand that the College becomes a formally accredited Oxford Living Wage and Real Living Wage employer by paying the Oxford Living Wage rate to all its directly employed staff and contractors.

Proposed by: Fernando Jiménez-Gallardo

Seconded by: Molly Ross

A Cherwell investigation published on February 221 found that several colleges are not paying all their workers the real Living Wage. Sadly, Teddy Hall was among them.

The real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate that is voluntarily paid by UK organisations who believe their staff deserve a wage which meets everyday needs2. This was established to be £9.50 (2020/2021) per hour for workers outside London. The Oxford Living Wage (OLW), established by the Oxford City Council3, is a minimum wage that recognises the high cost of living in Oxford, and it is set annually at 95% of the London Living Wage (£10.31 for 2021/2022). These rates are well above the statutory Minimum Wage (£8.36) and the National Living Wage (£8.91)established by the government for the same period4.

But, why? The government wage is not calculated according to what employees and their families need to live. Instead, it is based on a target to reach 66% of median earnings by 2024. Under current forecasts this means a rise to £10.50 per hour by 2024. The real Living Wage and OLW rates are higher because they are independently-calculated based on what people need to get by. Therefore, all employers that can afford to do so should ensure that their employees earn a wage that meets the costs of living, not just the government minimum.

The University announced in February 2020 that it was committing to paying all its employees at least the OLW5. However, colleges were left to make their own decisions about the OLW. Cherwell’s investigation found that, as of December 2020, 59% of Teddy Hall employees, including casual workers, were paid below £10.21 per hour – the OLW for 2020/2021.

We believe that, with more than £21m in unrestricted funds6, the college has the capacity to extend the Oxford Living Wage – and in doing so the Real Living Wage – to all its directly employed staff and contractors.

We therefore propose that the MCR:

* Supports the Oxford Living Wage and the Real Living Wage.
* Demands that the college becomes a formally accredited Real Living Wage and Oxford Living Wage employer by paying the OLW (£10.31, 2021/2022) to all its directly employed staff and contractors.

1. <https://cherwell.org/2021/02/22/ten-colleges-not-paying-real-living-wage/?fbclid=IwAR37AAx0Kvl6B1RkOMQQu7zXLy0Bs-RVxagz8DYWc_m8grSPbmI1UkdKWc8>
2. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>
3. <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20027/welfare_reform/1011/the_oxford_living_wage>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>
5. <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/university-signs-up-to-oxford-living-wage>
6. <https://www.seh.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/St-Edmund-Hall-Annual-Report-and-Financial-Statements-31.07.20.pdf>

Fernando: Recently there was an investigation by Cherwell that demonstrated that 10 colleges were not paying staff a living wage, and Teddy is one of them. Beyond that, the Oxford City council established the Oxford Living Wage, and they set the Oxford living wage to be 95% of the London living wage. When you look at the percentage of College staff paid below the minimum living wage, it is 59%. They do have a surplus of 61million pounds in cash (some of it is restricted). But considering the huge pot of money they have, they have no excuse to not provide this. So we demand that Oxford becomes an Oxford Living Wage Employer; we want the MCR to support the real living wage and the real Oxford living wage.

Thijs: What do you mean by ‘proposing that the MCR demands the College does this’

Fernando: We could raise this internally with the college.

Thijs: But what does ‘demanding’ mean in this context

Fernando: We want to ask, to pursue an outcome. We want them to pay this wage. We can’t force them to do that.

Thijs: It’s more that how much effort the Committee should take on for this.

Fernando: I’m happy to take this on, and try to make them pay. But showing our support for our staff is very important.

Ben: You quoted 21 million of unrestricted cash flow on the report. But that doesn’t mean anything by itself, and the report also states that it is 20million pounds in debt, and its expenditure is 15 million pounds. Also, I can’t say actual numbers, but the college has a lot of money (in the millions of dollars) due to COVID.

If the College is paying more out, the charges will be passed on to the students, including raise of college fees. PhD students are being paid way less than the minimum wage, if you account for the number of hours they work, and for Masters students who have to pay full fees, it will be even more difficult. Students will be taking on the major cost for this.

Julia: The purpose of this motion is to show solidarity with the staff, correct? I think the tone should reflect this and emphasize it more clearly.

Ronnie: This has been brought up before. Two years ago, this was passed by the MCR, and I took it to the GBPC, and the MCR said that they stand in solidarity with the Oxford Living Wage campaign. I asked them, ‘Can you do this’ and they said ‘No’, and I asked them about the number of people on this. College said that the numbers are so few that they’d be at risk of identifying them, and I’d have to send an FOI. If they don’t have that many people, why don’t they just raise the wage? College also said at the time that, although staff are paid below the minimum wage, they have benefits: they get free meals in college, they get additional bonuses, which add up to over 700 pounds.

Fernando: We’ve been having a similar issue with our graduate accommodation problem, where the numbers don’t add up.

Ben: From what they’ve said to you, they’ve said almost contradicting things. I do agree that the staff should be paid well. But now, college is a worse financial position than before, so I doubt they’d be amenable.

Julia: We could publish an open letter on our MCR website regarding our solidarity with the staff. It would express our views to the community and could pressure college to fix it.

Sally: I think it’s important to pay the people a living wage. You’re asking for more graduate accommodation, and you need to have more staffing. It has a lot of moving parts, and I appreciate that. It’s also COVID-19 issues, and college is in financial strain currently. We’re also being checked by college, so we do have to figure out where we put pressure to get things that we want. Is there a middle ground to this?

Fernando: This could be something to propose to them, after they refuse (which they likely will). Future MCR quorums could hold them accountable for that.

Raggy: People could lose a benefits from college—having meals for free is not significant, and they’ve estimated their bonuses etc.; an increase in salary might detract from any bonuses. I don’t know if these bonuses add up to a living wage. This might be quite cynical, but college doesn’t seem to be interested in doing anything the MCR wants to do anyway.

Fernando: The scouts this year do not have meals, and they used to have a meal allowance (3 pounds per day), but now they took that off. Having a salary they don’t touch is more important than having benefits they could take away.

Will: Whether or not we’re fobbed off should not be the main point. The argument that college are unlikely to do it should not matter whether or not we support it I think they probably can afford to do it, as colleges are pretty well-endowed. We should say that, from the point of view of students, that staff should be provided the Oxford living wage, and they should not lose any benefits during it.

Thijs: I find that in this motion, Fernando hasn’t formally consulted with employees of Teddy. I feel like we’re involving ourselves in their businesses. We should consider their perspectives.

Fernando: I think at this moment that many people are fearful they will lose their job. There was an example in particular where they did not want students to interfere with cleaning houses during COVID. They preferred to put their salary and their employment before their health. I understand that we should ask them.

Julia: I think with the motion as-is, there is a risk of putting staff who are already in vulnerable employment position at further risk by pushing this for right now. Perhaps we can re-word it to demonstrate that we are in support of paying the staff the Oxford Living Wage (as opposed to demanding it) and consider further consultations with staff.

Ronnie: We can state that we are reiterating our position during the GBPC. And you can decide after Ben reiterates our support of the minimum wage during this meeting what the next steps will be.

Fernando: I think it is good to speculate and think ahead about what this might do. I am happy to resubmit the motion and amend it to have a friendlier wording.

**Friendly amendment: Change ‘demands’ to ‘asks’:**

Motion for the SEH MCR to support the Oxford Living Wage (OLW) and the Real Living Wage and to **ask** that the College becomes a formally accredited Oxford Living Wage and Real Living Wage employer by paying the Oxford Living Wage rate to all its directly employed staff and contractors.

Fernando: Ten colleges were found to be paying lower than the ‘real’ minimum wage, not even the Oxford living wage. The University recently made a commitment to pay all of its staff the Oxford Living Wage. And we as the MCR should ask the college to pay all of its staff the Oxford Living Wage.

**Vote: 2 Opposed; 7 For; 4 Abstentions**

**🡪 The motion passes, 7 to 2. The next step will be Ben going to the GBPC and saying that we support the Oxford Living Wage, and it is up to the MCR to decide further actions.**

**Hilary Term Charity Nominations**

***MCR Charity Nominations HT21***

1. Fernando Jiménez-Gallardo nominating CALM (Campaign against living miserably)

Registered charity number: England and Wales (**1110621**); Scotland (**SC044347**)

Amount requested: £250

* Nominator’s involvement with the charity (incl. potential conflicts of interest): I am not involved with the charity and I have no conflict of interests.
* CALM is leading a movement against suicide. Every week 125 people in the UK take their own lives. They run a free and confidential helpline, 7 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone who needs to talk about life’s problems. CALM supports those bereaved by suicide, through the Support After Suicide Partnership (SASP).

Fernando: I am not associated with them and I have no conflict of interest.

1. Cherona Chapman nominating Be Free Young Carers

Registered charity number: England and Wales (**1042708**)

Amount requested: £250

* Nominator’s involvement with the charity (incl. potential conflicts of interest): None - just a locally-based charity supporting a cause of importance to me.
* Be Free Young Carers is a local charity supporting Oxfordshire-based young carers aged 8-24 thrive as individuals whilst managing their caring responsibilities. It is the only specialist organisation supporting young carers in Oxfordshire. They utilise three key approaches to achieve their aim (which funds received would go to support this continued work):
  + 1. Emotional Support – meeting with young carers, their families and schools to provide emotional support and help tackle issues of anxiety and isolation.
  + 2. Training – developing skills such as first aid and cooking to help improve their self-confidence and ability in their caring role.
  + 3. Social Activities – providing opportunities away from their caring responsibilities among peers of their own age from a similar background.

Cherona: It’s a local Oxfordshire charity that supports young carers up to age 24. They also provide emotional and mental health support; training opportunities, first aid. I’m not personally linked to the charity or have any conflict of interest.

Ronnie: Amanda, our Charities Rep, when will the email go out and everything?

Amanda: Probably Friday.

1. **Any other business**

Ronnie: Can you ask the IT Rep to put the meetings up onto the website. This is important, as we’ve seen tonight, having the minutes helps us to have an account of what was said and could be present. It’s now been two years since the meeting minutes has been up.

In week two, we will open up nominations for the next MCR committee. There will be hustings in week three, and open up elections subsequently.

* *Next GM is in Week 2 of Trinity Term 2021.*