**GENERAL MEETING**

**ST EDMUND HALL MCR**

**MCR Teams, 7PM 10th June 2020**

**Committee present:**

Freddie Soerensen (FS, President), Hannah Sharpe (HS, VP), Kate Murnane (KM, Welfare), Andrew Gibson (AG, Treasurer), Fernando Jiminez Gallardo (FJG, NSE rep) Paul Röttger (PR, Academic rep) Thomas Woodhall (TW, Sports rep), Ben White (BW, Steward)

Absent: Henry Blest (HB, Welfare), Robin Solberg (RS, Steward), Jacob Harrison (JH, IT officer)

The meeting was chaired by the Independent Chair (RG, Ronnie Guthrie)

Quorum met: 24 in meeting

1. **Approval of the minutes from the last GM**

Approved  
  
**2. Matters arising**

RG said the revised Charity Constitution has still not been updated to the website, despite being completed in Michaelmas and twice having previously asked. It should be up soon as we are debating charities tonight. FS promised to get it up.  
  
RG said the minutes from previous meetings are still not up on the website and that the IT Officer has attended only one GM so far. RG said he has asked for them to be updated at every GM this term and that the one time the IT Officer tried to upload the minutes, he deleted old minutes and re-named “current” minutes. FS said he had spoken to JH about this but had not received any answer. RG suggested that the new IT Officer and the new committee would be the best people to update the website, as the current IT Officer does not seem to be able to.

1. **Updates from MCR committee**

President

* I have sent out election results: it is up to new president, Ben White, when the ancillary positions are advertised (Sunday 10th week is formal handover date)
* COVID-19
  + Keep the log of how your work is disturbed using the form that has been sent out.
  + I have sent out a questionnaire. It can be filled out continuously if something is not working or needs highlighting in how the college/MCR handles COVID-19.
  + The gym is still open – please use the sign up sheet, no more than 2 people at a time and remove your name if you don’t need it anymore.
  + If you have any problems with supervisors not reaching out, please go to Richard Wilden for support or contact Freddie who can put you in touch.
  + It is currently not part of PHE advice that cleaners and scouts wear PPE (masks and gloves)
  + Currently working with domestic bursar for guidelines on recovering belongings if they are still in college accommodation without unnecessary travel.
* BLM movement and issues of racism
  + Broader view: work is occurring at all levels for anti-racist changes and to establish new policies – e.g. JCRs, MCRs, colleges.
  + Activist work is also going on and petitions are being circulated.
  + Freddie has signed as MCR president: one letter from (African and Caribbean society) ACS in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and condemning the Christ Church racism incident, and one letter from JCR president’s committee. FS signed this letter, but his signature did not appear on the initial copy due to time constraints.
  + Freddie would like to re-iterate that we have to abide by the university’s code of conduct and SEH grey book, especially if you are contacting staff.
* Thank you everyone for a wonderful year as President

VP

* If you have any announcements or news that you would like circulated within the MCR, please contact me and I can do so.

Stewards

* MCR leavers will get a proper event in the future as Trinity dinner has been cancelled, depending on restrictions being lifted.
  + We will also try and get a photographer for the MCR so we can still have a Trinity dinner-style photo.
  + Ben has spoken to college to try and get a room for people who no longer live in Oxford and who would be returning for the leavers dinner.
* Handover meetings will need to be done before 10th week Trinity.

Treasurer

* Still in contact with college to sort out finances

Welfare

* If anyone wants to chat please let welfare know and they can talk on the phone or meet up if you in Oxford
* We will try and send out more welfare resources over the next few weeks.

IT Officer

* No news

NSE rep

* No news
* Question from KM: Has been told the heating in 17 NSEhas been turned off? This will be investigated

Academic

* Academic grant and varsity grant is open for 2 more days
* Academic grant now covers more things than previously to allow for purchasing for lockdown work.

Sports rep

* Please keep gym spreadsheet up to date

1. **Charities nominations**

Movember Foundation (Gianfranco Messina – not present to present)

Registered charity 1137948

Amount requested: £500

* I have been supporting Movember since my first year at the Hall (2014), taking part in fundraising with the College team throughout the years and helping to coordinate the University wide MCR Movember campaign with the University of Oxford Student Ambassadors team for the academic year 2019-2020 – in which I ranked 2nd student fundraiser nationally, Teddy Hall ranked 2nd college in the University leaderboard, and the University of Oxford ranked 2nd university nationally in the Big Moustache on Campus Challenge;
* The Movember movement sets itself to tackle men’s health issues such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention, which sadly affect all of us and our loved ones in one way or another. This charity has a very concrete approach to improving men’s health, both by establishing initiatives at the community level and by supporting worldwide medical research. Their latest project, born out of the specific pressures of lockdown, is Movember Conversations, an interactive online tool that encourages and supports you in reaching out to mates who may be struggling through job loss, family pressures and social isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. You can browse through their website and get a better idea of their work at <https://uk.movember.com/> .

Tingewick Trust (Tomasz Szeligowski)

I would like to nominate the Tingewick society on behalf of myself and Lydia Koffman, and below is all the required information:

1. Name of charity - Tingewick Trust
2. Charity number - 1121860
3. Me and Lydia Koffman are on the committee running Tingewick for the year 2019/2020
4. I would like to request £500 from the charity fund
5. the manifesto:

The Tingewick Society ([www.Tingewick.org](http://www.Tingewick.org)) is a charity run by Oxford medical students, which has been raising money for various charities for over 80 years. Our core fundraising event is the annual Tingewick Pantomime, but we also run a number of other events throughout the year, including ones you may have seen like Tingewick COVID Companions, the 7200km cycle for the NHS, or our charity single.

This year we are raising money for two fantastic charities:

1. **Oxford Hospitals Charity**, who support Oxford hospitals through provision of new equipment, improving facilities, as well as funding research and courses for staff
2. **SeeSaw** -  who provide direct support for young people experiencing bereavement, through one-to-one home visits and courses for school staff on managing death in the school community.

With the current situation, the amazing work of both these charities is more important than ever, and we would like to really encourage you to support them through the MCR Charity Fund.

Bone Cancer Research Trust (India Brough)

Registered charity: 1159590

Requested amount: £500

In 2016 Matt Greenwood, a student at St Edmund Hall and a member of SEHBC passed away from bone cancer. Every year since, the SEHBC has held a charity BBQ to raise funds for BCRT. Due to the current lockdown situation, SEHBC held the 1861km charity event whereby members and alumni collectively aimed to exercise for over 1861km. We surpassed our target massively and exercised a total of over 4500km! We are therefore asking for £500 from the MCR (as donated to the BBQ by the MCR in previous years) in donation to BCRT to help with the life-saving work they carry out. BCRT are the leading charity dedicated to fighting primary bone cancer, and do so by funding important research projects, increasing awareness of bone cancer amongst the public and healthcare professionals, providing information to newly diagnosed patients and their families, and providing support to those affected by bone cancer.

The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust (Kate Cullen)

Charity no. 1102267  
Involvement with Charity: no connection, no conflict of interest. I just personally support their mission and aim

Amount requested: £250 as I am not involved directly

Statement

I strongly believe that the MCR has a responsibility in this moment to support organizations that are actively confronting and dismantling deeply-rooted white supremacy in the UK. This aim is directly aligned with recent statements made by our College Principal and MCR President that now must be brought to action.

Although I am not personally familiar with the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, I believe it is a very compelling organization for us to support. It was formed in honor of Stephen Lawrence, a black British teenager who was murdered in a racially motivated attack in 1993 in London. The Trust aims to address the systemic roots issues facing the UK Black community, and other BAME communities, through the lens of improving access to education. Through youth educational empowerment, they seek to address issues of social inclusion, community cohesion and intergenerational poverty alleviation.

I believe the theory of change of addressing systemic racism through educational empowerment uniquely aligns the values of Teddy Hall and the MCR community. However, I want to disclose that I am not directly aware of the effectiveness or operations of this charity, and welcome any further information that others may have.

1. **Motions**

**Motion: Motion regarding racism at Christ Church**

Proposer: Freddie Soerensen on behalf of the MCR Committee

The MCR notes that:

* Racism and racial inequality is a systemic problem we all have a duty to fight.
* College administrations, JCRs, MCRs and SCRs together are representative of Oxford University as a whole.
* Christ Church JCR TT20 Cake hustings candidate (redacted) made a crude, callous insensitive and racist analogy about George Floyd.
* The JCR President of Christ Church sought to prevent other JCRs from debating these issues by appealing to the presidents of these JCRs to abuse their powers in his favour
* Christ Church has a history of racist incidents, which shows that a more thorough and systemic change is needed.

The MCR believes that:

* When one college fails to uphold the principles of equality, other colleges have a duty to call it out.
* In making their crude comment on George Floyd, the Christ Church JCR candidate exhibited exceptionally poor judgement.
* The Christ Church JCR President and committee failed to deal with this issue appropriately.
* Calling out insensitive racist remarks made by office holders across the university is a duty for all of us.
* Any incident of potential discrimination, whether it be because of race, sex, gender, disability or other protected identity must be investigated in an open and transparent manner.
* Christ Church JCR Committee and the Christ Church deans have sought inappropriate and wholly oppressive measures against a student who sought to challenge a racist and insensitive comment.
* That the statement provided by Christ Church on this matter failed to adequately apologise for their efforts to other and shame Ms Onovo in to keeping quiet about the incident for fear of their own reputations.

The MCR resolves to:

* Condemn the Christ Church JCR President and other committee members who were negligent in their duties.
* Condemn the Christ Church censors for their handling of the situation.
* Affirm their support for Ms Melanie Onovo.
* Request the public and wholehearted apology of the JCR committee and Christ Church deans for their actions.
* Refuse to accept any collaboration project with Christ Church until these measures are carried out.
* Call upon Christ Church to change the way they deal with incidents of racism.

Comments from Freddie (FS):

* This incident occurred Sunday before last during a Christ Church hustings meeting. The student who tried to speak out about it was asked by the censor (equivalent of dean) not to do so.
* This motion is drafted by the ACS and is in line with what message they would like us to send.

Questions:

Raghul Ravichandran (RR): Most of the motion’s points are making statements, and there is only one actionable statement (refusing collaboration projects with Christ Church). How will the MCR act on this?

Answer from FS:

* Agrees that the motion is mostly making statements, however this is what we have been asked to do in support of the student involved. The point regarding collaborations with Christ Church has been left purposefully vague and will be up to the committee to judge what will be taken part in where Christ Church will be involved – e.g. exchange dinners. Sports are coordinated by clubs and not a direct choice of the MCR so this will be up to the university or college sports clubs.
* Continued from the question: It is possible that engagement for this will die out over summer
* Answer FS: This motion has already been voted through by the JCR. If it passes tonight, the JCR and MCR presidents will send email to sports captains to outline the position the MCR and JCR take.

Mark Baker (MB): our harassment policy is almost word to word to Christ church harassment policy. What are we planning on doing to prevent a similar situation to this in Teddy Hall?

* Answer from FS: That is a good question. Kathy (Principal) and the college is taking a hard look at all policy levels with the diversity and equality sub-committee. The harassment policy is in this list to be looked at but currently I am not sure of the exact plan.
* Further point made by KM: The next motion proposes assembling a working group, and we want college to look at endowments and their sources. This is discussed more generally in the next motion.
* Comment from RG: We are not perfect as a society and we must accept that passing this motion opens us up to criticism too. Normally we do not get involved in other college’s internal business but in this instance, I think we have to make an exception.
* Comment from FS: I think MCR whilst the time I’ve been here has a good record of passing motions on being progressive, and this is an extreme situation which requires speaking out about.

Agata Rumianek (AR): Do we know how many of the other committees are going to debate and present this motion? It will only work well if it is taken widely and seriously.

* Answer from FS: 22 or 25 MCR presidents signed the ACS statement that is in line with this motion and expects the same number will also present this motion and debate it.

Voting occurred via office forms on Microsoft teams

For: 17

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

(the vote was originally 18 for, but the independent chair accidentally voted and his vote has been removed)

**Motion passes**

**Motion: St Edmund Hall MCR stands with Black Lives Matter**

Proposer: Freddie Soerensen, on behalf of the MCR Committee

Seconded: Zak El-Machachi and Siân Brooke

The MCR notes that

* The recent mobilisations and demonstrations in the UK, USA, and internationally are part of an effort to recognise and motivate action on the systemic problem of racism.
* The recent brutal murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota (U.S.) has brought global attention to and activism against police brutality and the continued injustices towards the Black community in the U.S.
* Injustices and racism against the Black community, and BAME in general, is not limited to the U.S., but is present globally.
* Racism is endemic on both sides of the Atlantic. In the UK, people who are Black are twice as likely to die in police custody. Such bigotry and violence show that racism is deep and pervasive in the UK.
* The murder as well as the subsequent protests and demonstrations have had an impact on students in the Black and BAME community, within and outside of the U.S. and the U.K. as well as within the wider University and within St Edmund Hall.
* Diversity and Equality is a prominent part of the College strategy, and that all College committees now have Diversity and Equality as a key guideline.

The MCR believes that

* Deep and systemic changes are required to fight institutional racism internationally, and at the University of Oxford
* While the University has made some improvements in recent years with respect to access for BAME students after continued pressure from student leaders, current measures aimed at ensuring equal opportunity and treatment within the University remain inadequate.
* All students should always feel welcome and valued at St Edmund Hall, regardless of their race and ethnicity.
* The MCR and the College should make a conscious effort to become an attractive college for prospective students from BAME backgrounds in order to improve equality in access.
* The student community and colleges across the University of Oxford have both a moral and legal duty and responsibility to support, in both their words and actions, the fight for equal and fair treatment of all people regardless ofthe colour of their skin.
* The university should release admissions statistics/data in a prompt manner, regardless of the current political/social climate, in the spirit of transparency. These statistics should be easily accessible.

The MCR resolves to

* Financially support charities whose aim is to move our society towards equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of background, by donating
  + £250 to the Black Minds Matter UK
  + £250 to the Stephen Lawrence Charity Fund.
* Assemble a working group consisting of students as well as relevant fellows with the aim of thoroughly reviewing committee structure and communications, Fresher’s Week, and MCR events throughout the year, to ensure that no member of the MCR should ever feel excluded because of their race and/or ethnicity.
* Mandate the MCR Committee to develop and uphold the Zero Tolerance Policy which explicitly lays out that racist and other bigoted forms of speech are unacceptable, regardless of intention. The procedure for reporting violations to the Zero Tolerance policy are required to be clear and easy to find, as are the consequences for racist and otherwise bigoted speech. This policy needs to be widely publicised, so that it is clear what the values of the MCR community are.
* Mandate the MCR President and Committee to, through the MCR President Committee and relevant Oxford Societies, act upon incidents of racism against any student at the University of Oxford, regardless of the student’s College affiliation.

Comments from FS

* This is a more collaborative effort than the previous motion, written by the MCR committee and the proposers of the motion.
* This motion does not intend to write out a lot of specific things right now, it is proposed to get things moving to generate ideas and policies that can be implemented.
* One point of the motion is assembling a working group within the MCR and fellows. We have spoken amongst the committee, however time pressure has meant we have not had time for the entire MCR to have an input into this motion. This way the whole MCR can be involved if they would like to be whilst moving forward.
* We need to address the point about money. We do not know if we can donate money to other charities outside of charity fund. If we cannot, this will be taken out before ranking the remaining charities if we cannot use MCR money but this will be looked into by FS.

Questions

Ben White: Clarification – we are not sure where the money can come from, if it comes from charity fund, would it limit the money from charities nominated?

* Answer from FS: Yes

AR: Do we have any way of quantifying or checking up of the zero-tolerance policy and the final point about standing up to racism?

* Answer from FS: The committee will be required to develop a zero-tolerance policy. It is up for discussion for whether this is part of the working committee.
* Part of having fellows involved is so we write a proper document that makes sense and covers everything.
* The final point of the motion links to first motion and will mean the president can say that the SEH MCR supports students at other colleges if they are in the same position.

\*\* Minutes from this point onwards were taken by Agata Rumianek and Yasemin Zurke \*\*

Statement from Ben Fernando who was going to miss the meeting, but arrived late instead:

I am glad to see that both the MCR committee, and MCR members, are taking steps to address the challenges facing the BAME community within Oxford. It would be remiss for me to say that it is a shame that we are only having this conversation under such circumstances - racism is not new, and the diversity and inclusion work of MCR members has been underway throughout this, and previous, years.   
Whilst the second motion proposed is admirable, I cannot help but feel that it is a bit light on concrete action, and almost entirely focused on inclusion rather than diversity.   
Firstly, it does not actually require the vast majority of the MCR members, or indeed most of the MCR committee, to actually do anything. Diversity and inclusion are achieved through actions, not motions.  
Secondly, other than the donation of £500, it does not consider the wider structural problems facing BAME communities in the UK (or indeed abroad). Our MCR cannot be a truly diverse place until the University is truly diverse too - this means looking long and hard at the students studying at Oxford who make up our membership: the under representation of people of colour at the PGR level, the over-representation of students who did their undergraduate degrees here, and so on. Improvement at this level is only achievable through concrete action on education and outreach to disadvantaged communities. Although we cannot solve the world’s problems single-handedly, we should commit to making community engagement a central pillar of the MCR’s diversity and inclusion strategy. I realise that this may be a policy that the committee were planning to develop in the future - but I see no reason we cannot make a commitment to this right now.   
 I have been told that I cannot propose an amendment to this motion without being at the meeting - and to be honest, having not heard the discussion tonight, perhaps it is not my place to do so. But I would ask you to consider what I have said and to make a commitment to concrete, outward-facing action. These things take time, are often hard, and not always rewarding - but they are necessary if we are serious about our objectives.

* Question from Mark Baker: What is the amendment you are proposing?
  + BF: Not for me to say because I wasn’t here during the first part of the meeting.
* Olga Mun (OM, diversity officer): Supports Ben’s proposal, but it is important to look internally Diversity role should be a formal position on the elected committee. Teddy Hall has it’s problems too and has had racist incidents that have not been addressed.
* KM: Agrees with Olga, it has been discussed already that ancillary roles should attend committee meetings.
* FS: Agrees that there has to be more done than only looking inside the MCR. However, it is outside the remit of the MCR committee to force people to be involved.
  + The idea of the working group is to bring in more people from the MCR to take part
  + FS is happy to make this actionable and to set a deadline for the outcome of the working group (e.g. the GM in MT2020).
  + FS also agrees with KM and OM, and suggests that committee meetings are made more inclusive by including ancillary members, and proposes this will improve collaboration in the committee.
* BF response:
  + Every action should be framed in the context of being a public sector organisation. We lack inclusive events and a point was made noting the lack of gender balance on the MCR committee.
  + We need to create a culture where it is expected to look out and inside. By GM of MT2020 people will have lost interest.
* FS response:
  + Did not speak against BF’s amendment (it is a friendly amendment)
  + The development director and finance bursar in college are looking at making a donations acceptance policy to inform the acceptance of donations of a certain size. College will put down a committee to review all donations and donors and decide whether they fall under the ethical code they work by (academic freedom, ethicality, legal, college standing)
* Kate Cullen (KC) question: What would the structure of the working group be? A timeline would be helpful, and also the outputs and implementations. Working groups often lose energy and it can be hard to implement changes after this happens. Action should happen now to engage those who are concerned about actually implementing outcomes. Previous, KC has worked with trainings and workshops about anti-racism and inclusion in leadership and how to be a better advocate in your community.
* AR comment: Issue of attendance at workshops. There was a lack of attendance at the diversity workshop in MT18, how can we ensure that people attend? RG comments that this may be a task for the working group.

Friendly amendment proposed by BF: The MCR commits to organising, promoting, and supporting initiatives to combat both structural and educational disadvantage beyond the University of Oxford setting. Whilst acknowledging that we do not have the resources to solve this problem single-handedly, we will play our respective parts in this effort.

FS: Proposes a friendly amendment proposing a timeline for the working group: Assemble a working group consisting of students as well as relevant fellows with the aim of thoroughly reviewing committee structure and communications, Fresher’s Week, and MCR events throughout the year, to ensure that no member of the MCR should ever feel excluded because of their race and/or ethnicity. The working group will be advertised widely to the MCR before Saturday 13th June, and the MCR Committee will convene the working group by Saturday 27th. The working group will deliver a report with suggestions to the Committee before the first meeting of MT2020.

* Comment by OM: It is important to provide care for communities of colour, not only educating about anti-racism, as this is too focused on the white-privileged group. The President should play a key role to integrate a new culture of inclusivity.

Other amendment: college are looking at gift policy – how procedure is for accepting donations of a certain size – will reach GB next week

Motion voting

For: 18

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

(the vote was originally 18 for, but the independent chair accidentally voted and his vote has been removed)

**Motion passes**

BF: proposes EGM over summer to implement recommendation of the working group or to discuss the initial report. BW agrees with the initial plan to have a meeting over the summer

**Meeting ended: 20:59**