

St Catharine's College MCR Lent Term Open Meeting
Thursday 13 March, 5pm
Ramsden Room

Present: Richard Jones (Co-President), Doug Speed (Co-President), Max Kendrick (Treasurer), Joanna Heald (Secretary), Dan Friess (Social Secretary), Melissa Ruseler (Social Secretary), Jun-Young Kim, Jenny Morris, David Sandifer, Helen Waller

Guest: Simon Summers (Senior Bursar)

Apologies: Mark Hopkin (Computer Officer), Martina Diep (External Officer), Julia Armstrong (Food and Beverages Rep), Rosie Fera (Welfare Officer)

1. Graduate Accommodation: Question & Answer Session with the Senior Bursar

Senior Bursar explained that St Catharine's College needs more graduate rooms, which means some disturbance from building is inevitable. The decision has been made to build 22 new rooms at the Russell Street residence. There is to be a two storey block running at right angles from the existing building, with bike racks underneath, and a ground floor block around the other two sides of the garden, completing an enclosed courtyard. Most ground floor rooms will have a small upstairs mezzanine, except disabled rooms. There will be 20 single rooms and 2 flats for couples or fellow / warden. The aim is to start building in July / August 2008 for completion by October 2009.

This year we are losing Assisi House (due to its unpopularity) and Whichcote (which is being returned to King's) therefore meaning St Catharine's is losing 40 rooms, of which about 25 are currently occupied. In 2008-9 college plans to rent accommodation from Peterhouse in the form of two eight-bedroom houses near Parker's Piece. Each of these has a large 'double' kitchen which also acts as a communal area. MCR reps will go to look around to confirm that graduates would be expected to want to sign up for this accommodation. This will provide 16 new rooms, internet connection will be confirmed.

Building means there will be some disturbance at Russell Street, but the aim is to do the noisiest work over the summer months when occupancy is at its lowest. Those in residence will be given the opportunity to move to front-facing rooms in Russell Street, or to rooms in the main college site – or possibly even St Chads – over the summer months. There will be a rent rebate for those in residence, reflecting the level of disruption of work being undertaken.

New rooms will not be superior to the existing Russell Street rooms, therefore rent levels will be the same, except for the two-person flats.

Helen Waller enquired about moving out, and whether the three-month notice period on college accommodation could be waived. She explained she had found that private lets expect you to move in straight away. Senior Bursar thought this notice period would probably be negotiable for those moving out in the summer, but would need to look into this. He advised all those seeking private lets to start with the university accommodation service.

The Senior Bursar confirmed that there is, as yet, no definite start date, until final contractors have been selected, but college preference would be to begin in August, when more rooms

will be available in college, although building may begin from mid-July. College will inform MCR when a final date is arranged.

Despite having found new accommodation for next year, there will still be a small discrepancy between the current number of rooms and those available next year. The Senior Bursar assumed some students would be able to rent rooms / houses on Mill Road. Having spoken to the graduate tutors it is acknowledged that next year will be tight for accommodation.

Question from Dan by proxy, who was concerned whether college's ability to provide accommodation for fourth year graduates would be less next year, than it has been this year. Senior Bursar's response was that the situation should not be worse for fourth years than third or second years, although acknowledges there will be more difficulty in general compared to previous years.

The Senior Bursar suggested that the college maintenance van could be made available to help any student move rooms over the summer who do not have parents / their own car to move their possessions across Cambridge. The responsibility for packing and unpacking, and loading the items onto and off of the van, would remain with the student.

Anyone moving rooms over the summer months will be able to leave possessions in their own room in Russell Street while they reside in alternative college accommodation temporarily. There will, however, be a small number of rooms which will not be accessible for part of next year, where the new building will connect to the existing building – expected to be room 13 on the ground floor, and the kitchens shared by rooms 15-19 on the first floor and rooms 31-35 on the second floor.

Moving in summer will be optional, but there will definitely be noise. People will be able to decide to move in advance, but it will still be possible to make a decision once building has begun. Rooms should definitely be available as there is little conference uptake in August.

Doug expressed concerns from graduates with cars, due to the loss of parking spaces. The Senior Bursar acknowledged this situation would be difficult, and has not yet found a solution.

The Russell Street garden will be made slightly smaller, but the lawn will be redone with a memorial tree, to form a proper courtyard.

Contract for Assisi House ends in July; contract for Whichcote ends September.

The intended rent reduction has been discussed by the Senior Bursar and MCR Presidents on 11 March 2008 but has not yet been finally agreed. The Senior Bursar suggested it may be around 20% for the summer months, with rebate to be reduced as time goes on and noise becomes less. Richard Jones remembered the negotiated figures from the 11 March meeting as 30% for back-facing rooms, and 20% for front facing rooms. The Senior Bursar will refer back to his notes from the meeting to confirm the amount discussed for the back-facing rooms.

Max Kendrick expressed concerns that noisy work may overrun, and wanted to know how this would affect rent reductions / alternative rooms. Senior Bursar said college would be open to ongoing rent reductions if noise continues.

No more questions, Senior Bursar thanked the students, was thanked for coming.

Senior Bursar left the meeting.

2. Previous Minutes

There were no objections to the minutes of the previous MCR Open Meeting. **ACTION: Mark to remove “(provisional)” label on MCR website**

3. Ordinary Motions

Motion: that the MCR propose to college to buy at least one condenser dryer for South Green Lodge, at an estimated cost of £200 delivered, after previous combined washer-dryer machines were replaced by washers only, leaving most South Green flats without drying facilities. It is anticipated that a single machine could be shared by the occupants of the adjacent flat.

All South Green residents have a key to the middle house so could have access to this machine. Current drying facilities consist only of outdoor dryers, which are impractical during winter. Max also reported that they spin in the wind, causing clothing to fly off and land in the bushes. MCR agreed the existence of an outdoor washing line is a good idea environmentally, and should be retained alongside any new provision. There is space under the stairs for such a machine.

Max proposed striking the final sentence of the motion, and asking college for one machine for each house, in the hope that after negotiation college would supply at least one overall. Dan expressed concerns that college may dismiss the proposal out of hand.

MCR agreed to remove the final sentence, so motion would read:

“Motion that the MCR propose to college to buy at least one condenser dryer for South Green Lodge, at an estimated cost of £200 delivered, after previous combined washer-dryer machines were replaced by washers only, leaving most South Green flats without drying facilities.”

Ten people in attendance voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.
No abstentions, no opposition.

4. Committee Report

No particular updates.

MCR is continuing to work with Senior Bursar over accommodation issues, and with Dr Oliver regarding lockers.

There was acknowledgement fewer graduates will be accommodated by the college next year, despite college gaining the Peterhouse residence. MCR doubted its ability to encourage further accommodation to be found as the Senior Bursar implied he had ceased looking for anywhere else.

MCR expressed concerns that Senior Bursar had not provided sufficient response regarding housing priorities for various year-groups. MCR is concerned that second and third year students will get first refusal of rooms, meaning fourth year students would be worse off. However, it was acknowledged that college does not guarantee accommodation for fourth years.

Dan expressed broader concerns about accommodating fourth years in a time when research councils are moving towards four years of funding, whilst college still focuses on three years of accommodation. This is a longer term issue, but particularly significant next year.

5. MCR Accounts Michaelmas Term 2007

(See Max Kendrick's report, attached)

Max presented MCR accounts. Projections from previous open meeting over budget for this year have not yet been fulfilled due to many outstanding items, for which bills have not yet been received.

MCR agreed to enquire about getting the student rate for newspapers (20p Guardian and Times) if possible.

Affiliation to CUSU is expensive. It is possible to opt out as it is a legal requirement that we are still represented. CUSU did not provide a freshers pack to every Catz graduate student this year. Nonetheless we are keen to retain access to Graduate Union and keep CUSU cards.

Formal Hall – college not up-to-date with their figures on how much we owe them, or how much rebate we need.

Committee formal – MCR committee members get one paid formal per term, in return for the work involved in the MCR and to encourage interaction with the MCR members. Formal Hall officer gets free formals weekly – this prospective formal hall officers are not discouraged from the position due to the financial commitment of paying for formals every week.

Coffee provision should be increased. If there is no milk in the MCR, it can be obtained from hall during regular hall opening hours. Inform the cashier that the milk is for the MCR.

6. Any Other Business

There have been two instances of vomiting in the MCR in the past two weeks. Graduates should refrain from vomiting in the MCR! Graduates should be vigilant about ensuring the MCR door is not left on the latch when empty, allowing access to non-MCR students.

ACTION: Doug will email MCR

W1 Blade (Lent Bumps 2008): At the previous regular Committee meeting, it was suggested that if College or the Boat Club wanted to purchase this blade, we would be happy to provide a prominent location for it in the upper MCR. It now seems College unlikely to pay, if boatclub pays, they will want it in the bar. MCR could put forward a proportion to pay one quarter of the cost of the blade, the rest to be paid by others. **ACTION: MCR will propose £50 towards blade, and putting it up in the MCR.**

Open Meeting Projected Expenditures Update
March 13, 2008
Presented by Max Kendrick, MCR Treasurer

Expenditures:*

Long Vacation Ents	239.09	(250)
Cleaner's Wages	unpaid	(1000)
New Furnishings (Rug, Midsummer Photo, Fish)	465.66	(600)
Newspapers, etc. (Through half January)	520.45	(950)
Audit Fee	unpaid	(100)
CUSU/GU subs	unpaid	(850)
Multi-Gym	unpaid	(100)
TV/Music License	unpaid	(250)
Formal Hall Rep	unpaid	(250)
Committee Formals	unpaid	(250)
Freshers' Week	1219.69	(1400)
Coffee, Drinks etc.	13.74	(500)
Mich Term Ents	1295.09	(1400)
Lent Term Ents	1288.13	(1700)
Easter Term Ents	unpaid	(1400)
Contingencies (speaker component and lapsed cheque)	46.23	(500)
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Total	5088.08	(11500)
Closed Expenditures	4042.00	(4750)

Conclusion: For closed/finished expenditures MCR is running a surplus of £708.

* (projections in brackets, "closed/finished" expenditures in **bold**)