

St Catherine's College Middle Common Room

Open Meeting Minutes

Sunday November 8th 2020
at 1900 on Zoom

In attendance: 30 members

Executive Committee Members Present:

Henrique Aguiar – Co-President (Meeting Chair)

Chloe Colson – Co-President

James Ayre – Social Secretary



Minutes taken by MCR Co-President, Chloe Colson

I. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

Minutes approved, no matters arising.

II. Election of Executive Committee Members

Candidates

Co-President 1: Isavella Vouza

Seconders Valerieane Buslot, Jacob Fisher

IS: I have taken up leadership positions in the past, and this would be a great opportunity to leverage on my previous skills. I will be a DPhil student here for three years, so I want to take the opportunity to offer something back to the community. From my previous time in Oxford, two years ago, I believe the MCR community can have a great impact, the stronger the community the better, especially during these difficult times. I will focus on bringing in previous expertise, especially interpersonal skills.

VK: What were you doing in Oxford 2 years ago?

IV: An MSt at St Cross College.

VK: You experienced an all-grad College, which is different to Catz. What do you think are the different requirements graduates have than undergraduates?

IV: For the MCR, it is important to have social activities, adequate library access. The MCR needs a bigger social presence, online and in person, as this has been most lacking.

NW: How do you view the environmental problems that could be tackled via College?

IV: Liaison with other colleges is key, a collective movement is necessary, and the online community can raise awareness a lot more. Student led or general initiatives?

NW: Both, in particular with regards to divestment, energy and food usage.

IV: Happy to support 100% any such initiatives.

HA: This role is demanding, you sit on many committees and have to communicate with the MCR regularly – a lot of hours! Are you aware of this? What would you like to change about the MCR this year?

IV: Time and effort: as much as needed, 7h a week minimum in my opinion. Answering students is helping out, not an obligation. The situation this year did not help the MCR in organising events, but there needs to be more social events to enhance the sense of community – a lot of people are in need of additional contact. Something to bring people together. I want to promote brilliant ideas like Sydelle's.

VK: What you mention sounds like a role centred around that of a welfare officer and/or social secretary. The president's role is setting directions and communicating these with the College. How are you differentiating your ideas from that of a welfare/social officer?

IV: Organising events needs someone to coordinate. I can overlook the different aspects of MCR life, I would like to liaise and talk with everyone.

VK: Catz House has had a long history of being disconnected from College and there have been several initiatives to try to bring it closer. Have you thought about these?

IV: I'm not sure what initiatives you're referring to. Online events are the main thing that could be implemented at this time, e.g. online board games.

Co-President 2: Chloe Colson Seconders: Oshmita Ray, Wolfgang Stockinger

HA: I have no questions as I've worked with her for one year.

VK: MCR has benefitted from having her as Secretary then Co-President.

Social Secretary 1: Valentina Semenova Seconders: Federico Zilic Arcos, Giedré Cepukaityté

VS: Welcome to Catz! I am most excited about working with as many of you as possible to organise the best events, given the constraints we have. Walking with people, one-on-one events, zoom events, with all the necessary precautions in place. I hope we can keep the college alive and have fun!

Social Secretary 2: Misha Kaura Seconders: Ananya Sharma, Noah Wescombe

MK: It is wonderful to be a candidate. I am new to Catz but I am fond of pizza and partying. Would like to bring fun, zoom parties to the MCR. I am fond of Karate and would like to plan some Karate classes, similarly to the yoga we already have.

SS: Out of curiosity: how would you organise online Karate?

MK: I would teach online, explain basic katas and people could try them out.

Secretary: Lucy Bartel Seconders: Mairi Clarkson, Reine Alroumhin

LB: I would like to get involved, I have been secretary for several other societies. I take good notes and am organised. In covid times, online communication is key to make the experience the best it can be. I am doing a Masters in Comparative Policy and from the US.

CC: What communication platform would you like to use? We currently have weekly bulletins, but these are often overlooked.

LB: It is hard to find a format that gets read, I have written many newsletters that were often ignored, so we have to think about it. I like the idea of message boards and doing more through the website, potentially. Who manages that?

CC: Website is the IT officer's responsibility, but we used to have an active blog on there and we do want to revamp the website. We also have an instagram account that used to be run by our digital communications officer.

HA: **Positions still open:** 1 social secretary, 1 bar manager

III. Election of Regular Committee Members

Candidates:

Merchandising Officer:

Elizabeth Holz

Seconders: Ashpica Ashpica, Aditi Agarwal

EH: I am a fresher reading an MSc in Archaeology. I want to get involved with the MCR. Seeing other students wearing college stash is enticing, especially in these times where you may feel like you're missing out. It could help boost morale and foster a sense of community. I was in a sorority during my undergrad, and we did campaigns for shirts, water bottles, bags, etc. Even though I may not have all the answers, I am not shy to send lots of emails and reach out to people. I want to hear out everyone and represent the MCR.

SS: I would love to help organise some sustainable stash. I know a few companies in Switzerland that can help.

EH: Thanks, and I am very interested in your help. I encourage collaboration and sharing of idea. If anyone has any input, please email me and we can work together.

LGBTQIA+ Welfare Officer: Chris Jones

Seconders:

CJ: New to Oxford and Catz. I would like to get involved with the College and the MCR. I would like to promote / increase awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues: especially sexual and mental health services. Next term, February with LGBTQ history month is particularly important. I would like to develop links with the JCR and the OU, which has amazing resources: e.g. Rainbow peers. I think an initiative could be to provide advice and support for individuals that are currently forced to spend a lot of time with family and friends that they are not out to.

CC: Thanks for your nomination, this all sounds great. Just so you know, the previous LGBTQIA+ Officer was very keen on fostering links with the JCR and organised weekly MCR drinks before a night out with the JCR. Would be great to keep that going.

AS: Frazer organised weekly drinks, but it was very alcohol centric. There need to be less alcohol-centric events. Frazer did craft evenings for example, he loved knitting.

CJ: That's very important, we should definitely have activities that are not alcohol-based. It's especially important due to the drinking culture. I look forward to working closely with the Female Welfare Rep.

Female Welfare Officer:

Ananya Sharma

Seconders: Noah Wescombe, Sally Edmondson

AS: This is my 2nd year at Catz. If you're wondering why the role is called "female" welfare officer? Why are we working under these gender biases? Because I am female, I am looking to take care of people's needs, female and female-identifying. Menstrual health is very important to me. I would like the MCR to provide more bio-degradable products and products in recyclable packages. The JCR can provide menstrual cups and we could do this too. I think university dog walks really help with mental health, I am contact with them and looking forward to organise walks in small groups after lockdown. Consent workshops were missed last year and I think they are key, so I will be working to organise some. I was here for the entire spring and summer lockdown, and I felt left out. Other colleges organised gardening, board games on discord, etc. but I felt abandoned at Catz and I don't want anyone to feel that way. I plan to send a weekly welfare bulletin: explain how to get in touch with peer supporters, etc., make welfare more accessible. As a person from the BAME community, I understand if you feel under-represented, feel far from home, and need a confidant, I will be there.

CC: We did have consent workshops this year - success!

AS: That's fantastic to hear!

VK: Ananya is very enthusiastic, especially with dog-related events. She has been very active in environmental aspects of the College. This was confirmed by NW. The MCR and JCR buy menstrual products directly from the student union, are the menstrual cups from there?

AS: Yes, they are just supplied in smaller quantities.

VK: Do you think that if these are popular, it would be worthwhile to have a small stock of them readily available?

AS: Yes, but we should have them either way.

Romana Meereis

Seconders: Alexandra Hertlein, Rafael Hunt-Stokes

RM: I'm a 1st Year MPhil in Buddhist studies and Sanskrit. I have ideas for different initiatives online that would translate well when lockdown ends: welfare Netflix and chill, meditation on zoom as it translates well over zoom if you have someone leading you. If you have to quarantine and you don't have enough pads, pills, etc. there should be people to help take products to you. I have worked for childline for a long time, used to being in a welfare position. I would like to be an ear, someone to talk to, and can advise about who to talk to.

VK: There is a mindfulness organised by the university and there is yoga provided by college. Do you intend on starting a brand new event for Catz or do you want to collaborate with other colleges?

RM: Depends on what people want to do. If they want larger or more intimate groups, etc.

SS: The mindfulness course is not free and it is quite expensive.

NW: Some medication is only sold under prescription, how would that work?

RM: I can get consent to pick up medication for a student. Case-by-case.

Environment Officer:

Noah Wescombe

Seconders: Ananya Sharma, Misha Kaura

NW: I am really pleased to hear from Coco on what to work on at Catz, which are actionable things. I want to focus on: continuing work from last year with the environmental committee. I am committed to improving food sustainability (net zero and sustainable eating that complies with world leading and food research), to being more energy efficient, enabling better energy use and preventing inefficiencies. I would like to increase biodiversity through bird feeders, and also increase awareness of the wildlife we have in our backyards (e.g. badgers, etc.). Seminars would be great to talk about environmental issues, get some scholars in. Started up the environmental committee this year and I am back to working with College.

Coco Shi

Seconders: Georgina Papavangelis, Ana Kisovar

CS: I am currently studying a master's in archaeology. I want to contribute to the community in any way I can. It is very difficult in the current situation. Eating take-out and wearing disposable masks is not helping. Wearing re-usable masks, using lunch boxes, etc. would be steps to take. Recycling is a very important thing. Different countries have different rules and we need to make things clear about the rules in Oxford. Make a pdf and posters to help people understand their recycling responsibilities and how to fulfil them. I am keen on buying re-usable cups, tote bags, etc. for MCR members. I would like to organise online sessions for people to discuss their thoughts on the environment and how to improve greenness of the MCR and Catz more generally.

AS: Good idea to have a written down set of rules for recyclables. Recommend it being put in all the Catz kitchens. It would be great to collaborate with the Stash reps for tote bags and keep cups.

HA: Re-usable masks would be great.

AS: St Anthony's has them.

SS: ST Anne's: you can buy it. We could that as part of our stash.

Academic Officer:

Sydelle de Souza

Seconders Kan Li, Ilayda Karadag

SS: I am new to Oxford, doing an MSC in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition; working with university level and research level individuals. Work-experience at University of Lisbon,

liaison officer, weekly and monthly etc. reports to the department. I am very organized so I think I would be a good academic officer. I want to focus on online skills, since we have to resort to these the most in these times. I emailed the previous academic officer and she said there was no real definition of the role. I am therefore hoping to work with the committee to define the role. I have a meta-science-based goal for the academic officer position so that everyone can improve their academic skills, irrespective of subject area. I also want to thank my seconders, they're great!

Sydelle was unopposed and duly elected during the meeting.

4th Year Rep:

Charles Blake

Seconders: Calum Cunningham, Meirian Evans

CB: I am still an undergrad, 4th year engineer. I think I might have been at Catz longer than everyone in this call. I joined in 2016, and I am now in my fifth year. I've been Welfare and LGBTQIA+ Officer, in my third year as a peer supporter, and also was on the ball committee. I love being here, it is my final year here and this is a job for me. I have a good understanding of college committees.

HA: We have **positions still open!** Biscuit officer: we need biscuits and sustainable biscuits. MCR has tea and coffee and someone needs to do that. Sports Officer, Male Welfare, OUSU Rep, Catz House Rep, Staff Liaison Officer...

IV. Motion: Start a virtual writing centre for the MCR at Catz

Raised by Sydelle de Souza

Seconders: Kan Li, Ikuya Aizawa, Wolfgang Stockinger

VK: Is this similar to writing classes offered by different departments? These are free if English is not your first language.

SS: This is not a class, but one-to-one tutoring.

VK: Is this similar to College and University writing clubs?

SS: This is not really a club, but rather an academic resource.

HA: With regards to the logistics and how you will implement this – have you thought about this?

SS: I was thinking of advertising the writing centre and ask any interested students to send me an email to set up a time to chat. We could then have a 45 min session over zoom. If there is high demand, I can look for volunteers as I can train them.

Motion passes.

V. Motion: Make the environmental officer position as joint position

Raised by Noah Wescombe

Seconders: Misha Kauri, Ananya Sharma

NW: I believe it could be beneficial for the role to be partnered: the more the merrier. JCR has 2 officers, it would make it easier to gain a larger understanding of college and its environmental policy.

HA: Just a reminder that only one Committee member can attend a College meeting.

Motion passes.

VI. AOB

Meeting closes at 20.50