

St Catherine's College Executive Committee

Open Meeting Minutes

Sunday, 27th April 2014

Members Present: 40

1. Catz House:

Presentation by current tenants of Catz house seeking MCR support for keeping Catz House as a place for couples and families:

- Catz House was purpose built in the 1970s to deal with the unique needs of couples and families in basic but affordable accommodation. Without such family-friendly accommodation, access might be challenging for such students and so Catz House can be considered a valuable asset that promotes the principle of equality and fairness. It demonstrates a commitment to the Equality and Diversity Act and its creation and current designation represent important ideals. There are currently 15 flats for couples and all tenants have been issued notice that their contracts will not be renewed and they are to leave by the end of June. The decisions that are taken now will affect future generations, and so support is sought from the MCR.

Points made in discussion in favour of lending support to Catz House

- Intentions of the college poorly communicated to residents and no feedback given. More clarity and feedback should have been provided throughout the process.
- While imbalance between undergraduate and graduate accommodation is an important issue, couples and families should not be squeezed out as they too have important needs.
- Couples and families have an equal role in college life. This distinct contribution was recognised forty years ago and should continue to be recognised.

Points made in discussion against lending support to Catz House

- As is currently understood, the intention is to convert Catz House into single accommodation for graduates. This could address the current imbalance between accommodation provided by the college to undergraduates and graduates.
- Due to financial reasons, Catz House would always have been either sold or converted so that money could be made through higher density. Leaving it in its current form is not a financially viable option and Catz House families would have been asked to vacate anyway.
- The college would not pursue this route if there wasn't a valid reason for doing so.
- Couple and families are able to apply for accommodation in property managed by other college and there are other accommodation options available.
- Couples and families are not the only individuals that need to make sacrifices. Many single students also have to make sacrifices to come to Oxford.

Points made in discussion regarding alternative solutions or paths to pursue:

- Aim to get representative proportions of accommodation built.
- Apply to present to the governing body with a well-framed and convincing argument.
- Apply to the college to call a special meeting to discuss the situation.
- If the current situation is to prevail and tenant's contracts will not be renewed, the college should help current tenants to find alternatives.

Outcome of Discussions:

- Will wait to vote on motions until following Sunday when another open meeting will be held. Outcome can then be presented to college and await a response.

2. Application for Associate Membership:

David Casas-Mao:

- David is currently doing research at Harwell on structural biology. While he is technically a registered masters student in Nottingham, he is based in Oxford and not affiliated with any college. Would like to become an associate member of the MCR to experience college life.
- Associate membership approved.

3. Election of Regular Officers:

- Charlotte Baker elected *Fourth Year Representative*.
- Andrew Dooley elected *Bar Officer*.
- Junsong Lin elected *Men's Welfare Officer*.

There are still some regular officer positions left unfilled and if anyone would like to take up any of these roles they can contact the Executive Committee.

4. Any Other Business:

Announcement Regarding OUSU by OUSU Graduate Representative Charlotte Baker:

- OUSU Teaching awards are very important. If anyone has any staff member they would like to vote for, they can do so until next week. It's a good way of feeding back good teaching.
- Upcoming referendum coming up shortly on NUS membership. If interested in the referendum or in the work of OUSU, can talk to Charlotte.
- OUSU currently undertaking work on couple's accommodation and this is an example of the relevant work that it is undertaking.
- Work be great to get more opinions, views and input from the MCR that could be brought to the Council meetings.