

# MCR AGM Minutes 5<sup>th</sup> October 2014

## EXEC MEMBERS PRESENT

- Craig Fisher (Chair)
- James Collinson (Acting Secretary)

## GUESTS PRESENT

- Nick Klein – JCR President
- Will Hockedy – JCR Financial and Commercial Services Officer (FACSO)
- Andrew Robertson – Hatfield MCR President

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES

- Charlotte Walsh

## AGM

### **REFERENDUM**

The MCR is required to conduct a referendum into its future, with 2 options being open to it. Option 1 is the merger of the MCR with the Junior Common Room (JCR), currently run as an independent charity. Option 2 is for the MCR to become an independent Durham Student Organisation (DSO). The meeting attendees heard from Nick Klein and Will Hockedy, the sabbatical Executive Committee (Exec) members for the JCR, on behalf of Option 1, and Andrew Robertson, on behalf of Option 2. The purpose of these guests was to inform the MCR of how each option would work, rather than persuade particularly one way or another, and answer questions from MCR members.

### **Summary – Option 1 – Nick Klein:**

As Nick sees it, there is a divide between the JCR and MCR, in spite of the fact that both co-exist in Grey College, with many members of each living/socialising alongside one another yet not necessarily having much to do with the other, which is a shame. They would like to see an improvement in the interaction between the 2 groups.

The JCR is run as an independent charity, with about 800 members. An elected Exec runs the JCR on a day-to-day basis, but there is a team of trustees that oversee the Exec. There are 4 external trustees, which are voluntary positions, and they bring a lot of experience to the table, as they are former JCR Presidents/secretaries/etc. There are also student trustees, including the sabbatical JCR Exec members, and the external trustees meet with them to ensure the JCR is being run well.

Were the MCR to merge with the JCR, Nick foresees little change to the MCR on a day-to-day basis, the Phoenix Room would remain the sole use of the MCR, as it is now, and MCR members would be able to still use the bar etc. The MCR, which currently subsidises JCR-run events on behalf of its members, would then not have to subsidise events any more, as MCR members would only pay the same prices for events as JCR members. MCR members would then be included in the

Yearbook/Grey Matter, and would be able to join the Bar/Shop/Toastie Bar execs. Postgraduates would be able to run for JCR Exec positions, vote in JCR elections, and as the JCR is accountable to its trustees, there is potentially a faster turnaround on decisions, and less bureaucracy (from Nick's experience talking to other JCR DSOs).

**Summary – Option 1 – Will Hockedy:**

The MCR would become a subsidiary common room under the JCR, as is the case with St. John's College. Its events would have to conform to the charitable goals of the JCR, so events cannot be solely oriented around drinking (for example a cocktail night) and funded from the MCR account. (Such events could, however, be run if they were ticketed – e.g. each member pays a small amount to join). The price of MCR membership would go up to the same price as JCR membership, £47+VAT. But members would no longer have to pay extra for events. Will has calculated, based on current spending, that £15 from each member's contribution would go into the MCR account, to be directed by the MCR Exec (subject, as described above, to conditions of charitable aims).

Finally, MCR members would still be able to join all-college formals, treated on the same level as JCR members.

**Summary – Option 2 – Andrew Robertson:**

Andrew stated that he is here on behalf of Hatfield MCR, a DSO, to describe why they became a DSO, but that they were offered a different alternative in their referendum, as their JCR is also a DSO. The decision was hence whether to become an independent DSO, or a merged DSO with their JCR.

Hatfield is run differently to Grey, as it has a separate campus where many of its members live, and they operate lots of research grants and research events, which are quite MCR specific. The JCR also has no sabbatical officers. Responding to Nick's statement about the DSO administration being a slow process, he agrees it can be a pain at times, but it is a good system.

From an independence point-of-view, the DSO probably offers more autonomy, but MCRs famously have a 'bad memory', with MCR Exec members leaving before they are able to adequately hand over to their successors. The DSO option can help with this, identifying problems before they arise.

**Questions from the floor:**

Andrew Robertson: Would the MCR have representation on JCR Exec?

Nick Klein: Yes, PG on representative committee.

Maciej Matuszewski: Would we (MCR) have financial independence when dealing with PG-only events/space.

Will Hockedy: MCR would have own bank account, of which the MCR treasurer would be in charge. But it would be legally overseen by the sabbatical officer (FACSO).

Andrew Plygawko: What role would the MCR treasurer have in the event of a JCR merger?

Will Hockedy: There would still be the charitable goals to abide by, and while the FACSO and MCR treasurer would both be signatories, the MCR Treasurer would handle the day-to-day accounting.

Renju Mathew: Will other people be able to then apply for MCR exec positions?

Nick Klein: No, only postgrads/4<sup>th</sup> years would be able to run.

Maciej Matuszewski: Would we get the same money from membership fees?

James Collinson: Not quite, for instance we currently don't pay VAT, so difficult to say how membership fees may change in the future.

Nick Klein: We've worked out a figure of £15 per MCR member for the JCR option based on current spending, but it will be adjustable if required.

Will Hockedy: If the JCR merger is voted for, it will come into effect in Jan 2015, however, fee changes won't occur till start of 2015/16 academic year.

Renju Mathew: Is it more autonomous to be a DSO?

Andrew Robertson: Yes, if you're worried about being lost as part of a big group.

Will Hockedy: As a DSO you would be more autonomous from the JCR, but not from the University.

### **Summing up:**

Craig Fisher: So there are 3 things to think about with this referendum, consistency, autonomy and money. Please vote, however that is, as we need to reach 25% quorum.

[Nick Klein, Will Hockedy leave.]

### **EXEC ELECTIONS**

The following members gave 5 minute husts – see manifestos

- **President**
- Maciej Matuszewski
- Andrew Plygawko
  
- **Vice President**
- Ben Daniel-Thorpe
  
- **Treasurer**
- Yanxin Xie
  
- **Secretary**
- Craig Fisher
  
- **Social Secretary**
- Laura Braun

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

- For the Presidential candidates

Andrew Robertson: (For Andrew Plygawko) How will you protect the close-knit nature of the MCR following the referendum?

Andrew Plygawko: I will ensure that if we merge with the JCR, we will have a PG rep on the JCR Exec, and also ideally the MCR pres. Will ensure that during induction week, for instance, the PGs are made aware of the MCR, and that should help maintain the ethos that we have.

Renju Mathew: (For both) Have you thought about the time commitment for this role?

Maciej Matuszewski: Yes, as a PhD student, I will have some lectures at the start of the year, however, following this, I will have complete flexibility so will be able to take time out for the presidential duties.

Andrew Plygawko: Yes, I am lab-based, but am masters by research, so will have complete flexibility. I have also got experience in other Exec roles [with DUS], so know well how to manage my time.

- No questions for other candidates.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

**None**