



RCSA Open Meeting Minutes



Sunday, 4th March

8pm

JCR

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence or lateness
Annalise Whitehead – Varsity match
Without apology - Teddy Mack, Juliette Blanchard, Alice Gilderdale, Anna Maloney, Tiara Ataii, Michael Croghan
2. Announcement of the presence and purpose of guests
N/A
3. Approval of the presence and speaking rights of guests
N/A
4. Approval of the order of the agenda
N/A
5. Reading by the secretary on request by any member, amendment if necessary and approval of the minutes of any previous Open Meeting not yet accepted by an Open Meeting.
N/A
6. Matters Arising from the minutes
N/A
7. Committee Reports and Resolutions
N/A
8. Questions to the Committee
N/A
9. Extraordinary Motions
N/A
10. Ordinary Motions
 - A) 'Sustainability' position on May Ball committee
 - B) Declaration of support for UCU strike and raising awareness of the reasons for the strike in college
 - C) Acceptance of offer regarding rent arrangements in college

Ordinary Motions

A) 'Sustainability' position on May Ball committee

RCSA Notes:

1. That it would be beneficial for there to be a 'Sustainability' position on the May Ball Committee starting the beginning of next academic year, to ensure that May Balls are planned in accordance with Robinson's commitment to sustainability.

RCSA Believes:

1. This will be beneficial to Robinson as most colleges do already have a similar position, and the promotion of sustainability in college would be beneficial both for the college and the wider community.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To ensure a new 'Sustainability' position is created on the next May Ball Committee, for a student to focus primarily on the green impact of Robinson may balls in the future.

Proposed by: Alice Gilderdale

Seconder: Joe Farnworth

Jess Henderson: Alice believes that there should be a position on the May Ball Committee for making sure the ball is sustainable, green, minimises waste – things like that.

Mark Driver: Have you spoken to the May Ball people about this?

Jess: Alice attended a conference, Sustainaball, this term or last, where she asked the May Ball Committee and president Cecily Guild if there could be a sustainability position this year, they said no.

Sam Lewis (May Ball President): All ball presidents have a committee, we had a talk at the start of the year. They went through all the options for having sustainability officers or not. Most common was for committees not to have an officer. We have one, just not in name - Callum this year is co-ordinator of Health and Safety and Sustainability. For all positions to have even responsibilities we merge the two roles – so we technically already have an officer. The RCSA's role is to elect May Ball presidents but it is the president's role to fill the committee. The two are detached, separate things – it feels like a change of positions.

MD: Can I propose a **procedural motion** that this not be put forward – to make changes to the May Ball Committee it has to be through the May Ball itself, this motion has no bearing.

James Hedge: The May Ball is quite sustainable already - it would cost another £400 for ball tickets to pay a new committee member. They're doing their best already to make it the most sustainable.

MD: Is my procedural motion okay, can we vote on it?

Valentine Lauwereins: Yes. (*Explains*) A procedural motion – when someone thinks there is a problem with the procedure of the meeting, that the motion is not relevant to RCSA.

Jess: It is difficult too because Alice is not here to represent her motion. I'm not as clued up, I don't know what she'd say if she were here.

Thomas Hinch: Can we add an amendment? Say the RCSA believes that... (the May Ball Committee should add a position, and encourage the committee to be sustainable)

VL: First we must vote on Mark's motion, then we will see.

Procedural Motion – This motion should not be put.

Vote on procedural motion:

For: 11

Against: 11

Abstentions: 2

This procedural motion does not pass.

VL: The procedural motion is rejected - back to the normal motion.

Jess: Alice perhaps could have answered a lot better, she attended a conference too. I'm not as knowledgeable.

Alex Williams: Could we find a way to get Alice to speak?

MD: My reason for doing the procedural motion is that the May Ball is completely separate, the RCSA has no say on the committee - their constitution says they make all the changes. The RCSA cannot change anything. The result of this motion can resolve nothing other to have the RCSA bring it up with the May Ball.

VL: We could amend the motion to say we invite the May Ball Committee to be sustainable.

Ben Margolis: I think we should delay this, as it would not make a change anyway until 2019 – we should leave it until Alice can have a say.

Vote on motion: N/A

No vote is taken

B) Declaration of support for UCU strike and raising awareness of the reasons for the strike in college

RCSA Notes:

1. 89.4% of voting Cambridge UCU members voted for 14 days of industrial action in response to proposed changes to pension policy.
2. A relatively high proportion of students go from their degrees to further studies and potentially careers in academia, whom these policies will affect.
3. There is currently not great enough awareness of the reasons for the strikes (particularly the involvement of Oxbridge colleges in lobbying UUK to change the pension scheme), the nature of strikes (e.g. what picket lines are and what it means to cross them), or of ways to support university staff in the strike.

RCSA Believes:

1. Lecturers have the right to be on strike, and student associations should openly join them in solidarity.
2. The potential effects of students in turning people away from academia due to instability of pensions, both on current students with ambitions in academia and future students, should be emphasised.
3. That the student association should be responsible for facilitating the distribution of information throughout the college, explaining the nature of strikes, picket lines, reasons for the industrial dispute, and how to support their staff in solidarity.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To publicly announce support from the Robinson student body for university staff in the ongoing dispute; promoting it through CUSU, our own social media, and Cambridge Defend Education.
2. To distribute literature via email lists, social media, and on paper (resource dependant) explaining above reasons for and issues at stake regarding the strike; and to invite a UCU representative to give a talk in college about the reasons for the strike and how it affects students.

Proposed by: Ben Margolis

Seconder: Fin Oades

Ben Margolis: As you know, we've all had some disruption due to the UCU strikes. 89.4% of UCU members voted for 14 days of action, and there are far more members now than there were before. A relatively high proportion of students go into academia, they will be affected by the pension

changes and so this has an effect on students for the future. I believe from talking to various people in this college and others that there is not enough awareness about the reasons for the strikes and picket lines, and about people taking alternate routes around picket lines. I want to promote other ways to support the strikes than not crossing lines and not going to lectures. I want to announce the support of the Robinson student body. If the motion passes, the RCSA has the right to say they as a student body support the strikes. Lots of other colleges have done it, King's and Jesus, and through Facebook groups etc. We don't want disruption to lectures - I will have only one day of lectures left - we want the action to end but the university has had a complicit role in the pension changes. We want as little disruption as possible, the best way is to show that the students are angry at this. Some suggestions for other ways of support are a photo campaign, social media... invite a speaker from UCU to speak to students and explain their reasons rather than coming from students – someone involved in the action. My suggestion is also that James (Hedge) send an email that would give detail about the strikes (like CUSU who have made a good infographic, and info from Cambridge Defend Education).

James Hedge – I will distribute stuff if this passes, but focus in addition to what you said about encouraging people to pester their DOS about missing lectures – I would want to encourage people to do that as well. It has been bad for staff, but we must make sure the RCSA is supporting students.

BM: There are bad conditions for staff, bad for students – not good for either. We need to keep up the pressure.

Natalie Johnson: I agree with your proposal but many people involved in picket lines have been harassing students – we want to include in the email that those on picket lines should not be doing that, and maintaining a decorum

BM: I agree there has been some aggression, I've heard two reports from students about picket lines – it's completely right but has been a bit exaggerated. The theology department has sent an email about it but I've been on lines and everyone's been very nice.

NJ: Some are isolated incidents, but it has still happened – it should be included in the email. As the welfare officer, I have heard a lot of reports of people being anxious and afraid about it.

BM: -and James (Hedge) if you could make that clear in the email that would be fantastic. And my wording (for the motion) is vague enough that it covers that.

Sophie Adams: We should also include about sending an email to the university vice chancellor.

BM: Yes, and this is part of CUSU's list of ways to support.

VL: Are there any other comments? We can proceed to vote – I just feel that it is not the RCSA's place to support or not to support the strikes. I understand your point of view but am unsure how democratic it is that only the few people in this room, even if it is right by the constitution, get to

represent all students. Lots of people have been or felt harassed, even if we don't agree that this did or didn't happen, it should be up to individual students to decide.

BM: As we're having a discussion and voting on this motion now, it is democratic, if it passes there is support. I agree some have been harassed but from talking to people, the general feeling is that there is support – I wouldn't propose if it wasn't the general feeling.

VL: My thought is that even though it is constitutional, it is only 27 people here, it doesn't represent the student body.

JH: I don't think it's in our remit to support this, but either way it will not change the tide, people don't seem to care what is said in the meetings.

Matt Kite – I think it is untrue that people don't care about what happens with their JCR – King's college had a motion... (regarding a significant student/college dispute) ...that was able to reverse the decision.

JH – Generally I think if I do send an email, people won't be too offended by what I say.

Sophie asks Valentine to clarify the motion.

SA: Can we separate the two parts?

VL: If we want to amend it, we need a procedural motion.

SA: Yes, can we amend it as two individual parts to vote?

Procedural Motion – The two resolves to be split into individual motions.

Vote on procedural motion:

For: 23

Against: 2

Abstentions: 3

This procedural motion passes

Motion 1 – RCSA Resolves:

1. To publicly announce support from the Robinson student body for university staff in the ongoing dispute; promoting it through CUSU, our own social media, and Cambridge Defend Education.

Vote on motion:

For: 17

Against: 0

Abstentions: 11

This motion passes

Motion 2 – RCSA Resolves:

2. To distribute literature via email lists, social media, and on paper (resource dependent) explaining above reasons for and issues at stake regarding the strike; and to invite a UCU representative to give a talk in college about the reasons for the strike and how it affects students.

Vote on motion:

For: 26

Against: 0

Abstentions: 2

This motion passes

C) Acceptance of offer regarding rent arrangements in college

RCSA Notes:

1. That after meetings with college, following the cut the rent petition, the RCSA have received the following offer from college:

¥ The Number of Value Rooms in the main college building will be increased from 5 to 13.

¥ The College will keep the price of standard shower rooms at the same level as standard rooms.

¥ The College will limit the increase in the residence charge for incoming freshers to 2%.

¥ The College have agreed to apply a series of spending credits to EPOS food accounts of each undergraduate student. Everyone's food card will be topped up with £50 per term until they graduate or until June 2020, whichever is sooner.

RCSA Believes:

1. That this is a good deal for students.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To accept this offer

2. To mandate the RCSA President to inform the college steward that the student body accepts this deal.

Proposed by: James Hedge

Seconder: Anna Maloney

James Hedge: After lots of you signed the petition calling for rent decreases, I had meetings and negotiations with college and they agreed to the things laid out in my email and this motion, but it has to be accepted by the RCSA and a meeting of the finance committee next week. They are likely to approve it; the warden and bursar are on board with this compromise. There will be an increase in value rooms from 5 to 13, no new higher band for standard shower rooms, next year's residence charge goes up less than inflation so a real cost cut in rent, and college agreed to give students £50 a term in Garden Restaurant and café/bar spending until students leave or until June 2020. This is a good deal, it's not going to get any better, if we vote on this it mandates me to tell college we accept it.

Chris Cheng: I agree it's a good deal, but if possible can we make a point to college not to balance this loss by increasing international student fees?

JH: As far as I know there have been no plans to increase international fees.

JH: One reason college agreed to this is that (their) costs go down over time as students leave, the financial loss is significant in the short term but their costs will go down in the long term.

Mark Driver: Is this going to have a bearing on graduate accommodation costs?

JH: No, I spoke about it to them and they're not changing it – they're not giving the £50 a term and the MCR president will have to ask Nick Milne to get the same.

James Timmins: What is the situation with fourth years? In terms of rent – what will be the increase?

JH: The 2% increase is across the board

JT: Is that 2% on what I pay now or on what the incoming freshers pay?

MD: Normally cost for fourth years is the same as for second years, what second years pay is what fourth years pay. Accommodation is only fixed for three years.

Valentine Lauwereins: Any final comments?

MD – Can I make a small amendment – that the RCSA believes this is a good deal to undergraduates?

Friendly Amendment - RCSA Believes: That this is a good deal for undergraduate students.

Vote on amended motion:

For: 26

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion passes

Note that the 36 proxies submitted for the motion pre-amendment by undergraduate students were invalid for the amended motion.

[Any other business](#)

N/A