

## **Minutes of The Sexcentenary Club (Peterhouse JCR) Open Meeting 13/03/06 – 7pm – Upper Sex**

The meeting was chaired by Pete Davies, JCR President.

The minutes were taken by Emma Blackburn, JCR Academic Affairs & Welfare Officer.

There were 34 members of the Sexcentenary club present at the start of the meeting, and it was therefore declared quorate. There were 2 late arrivals who were present by the first vote.

There were no questions to the JCR executive.

### **Motions for debate**

- **Prospective Second Year Rooms Ballot**
- **Information about Room Rents**

### **Prospective Second Year Rooms Ballot**

**Proposed by: Charlotte 'Lady' Sayers (First Year Representative)**

**Seconded by: Amy Lindley**

#### **The Sexcentenary Club notes that:**

1. The current prospective 2nd year rooms ballot system is too stressful and pressurised as it resembles a cattle-market.
2. The deadline for room balloting papers is too early in the term for a considered decision to be made as to groupings.
3. The actual ballot itself is not for some time after the deadline.

#### **The Sexcentenary Club believes that:**

1. More time could be given to individual first years in choosing their second year rooms.
2. The deadline for prospective 2nd year forms could be later in term to allow more time for groupings to assemble without adversely affecting the rooms ballot timetable, as no points decisions need to be made and the ballot is random.

#### **The Sexcentenary Club resolves:**

1. To hold future prospective second year ballots over a full day or afternoon rather than in 30 minutes one evening, with each group/individual having a 5 or 10 minute appointment with the Rooms Committee in which to make a considered choice.
2. To retain the same system of random ballot and non-attendance penalties, with people who miss their appointments being placed at the bottom of the ballot.
3. To move the prospective second year ballot form deadline to a point later in term, as the forms are not involved in the points system and can be simply put into a random order closer to the ballot date.
4. To append these and other notes on how the rooms ballot should be run to Appendix B of the JCR constitution, to be approved at the next open meeting (Easter Term 2006)

There were no speeches for the motion.

Alex Collins spoke on behalf of the Rooms Committee about the ballot this year. He made clear that they didn't rush anyone, and as a result the ballot this year was quicker, calmer and more polite. Students from other years have indicated that this year's ballot is better than last year's. If the deadline is pushed later, there is more time for room politics and bickering. He noted that, as finalists, the members of the Rooms Committee have to fit this thankless job around their lives. Holding the ballots over a full day is more complicated and takes more time – and who is

prepared to administer them? It would be nice to spread out the ballot but then the points system would have to be scrapped. The ballot cannot be at the weekend as it must be supervised by the domestic bursar. It would be difficult to fit the ballot into weekday afternoons – if there are no groups, it would take 13 hours in total, and what is to be done if people can't make their appointments? To sum up, a more relaxed ballot is a good idea but it would be difficult to implement well.

Phil Adsley and Paul Powlesland said that despite breaks, the number of people in the room would be pressurising. It was noted that it would take less time for second years as there are no points to work out.

The Rooms Committee likes the idea of shifting the deadline. Sam Roberts commented that the 2<sup>nd</sup> years took less time to process as they didn't have points claims, and there was no reason their deadline had to be the same as that of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years.

Pete suggests splitting the motion into two parts:

- (A) Split the second and third/fourth year ballot form deadlines.
- (B) Spread the 2<sup>nd</sup> year ballot out over a day.

John Dalton said that the system can't be changed just because a few people feel pressure – they have to deal with it themselves. Beth Guard suggested that, rather than spreading the ballot out (which would be a waste of time), we could do the ballot in the Theatre with only one year at a time. Chris Ziegler remarked that if the date was moved later it must not be too close to the ballot, as the second years need to check rooms – and they need to know their position in the ballot early enough. It was suggested that this period would be about 3 weeks, and the order of balloting list be published 2 weeks before the ballot.

To take away the 'cattle-market feeling', it was suggested that the ballot be spread over an hour rather than half an hour. Pete suggested the Lubbock room with people called to the front etc., silence in the room otherwise. Duncan said that we can't kick people out after they have chosen their rooms, as they might need to switch rooms.

(A) Make the second year deadline later (2 ½ weeks before the ballot).

Motion passed, 35 for, 1 abstention.

(B) Spread the 2<sup>nd</sup> year ballot out over a day.

Motion failed, 34 against, 2 abstentions.

## **Information about Room Rents**

**Proposed by: Peter Whalley**

**Seconded by: Moira Johnson**

### **The Sixcentenary Club notes that:**

1. At the moment, the only source of information about rooms available to undergraduates is the Rooms Database on the JCR website.
2. There were errors in the aforementioned database this year, in which the published room rents (for *e.g.* G staircase and Noah's Ark) were lower than the actual rents. The errors were not noticed by most students until the actual night of the ballot, which meant that they had been working with the wrong rents while trying to choose their room.
3. Last year, some available rooms were not listed on the database.

4. The online Rooms Database, though useful, is not a definitive guarantee made by College, and this should be recognised by its users.

**The Sexcentenary Club believes that:**

1. The JCR Rooms Database should not be the only means of communicating room-related information to undergraduates.
2. College should publish an authorised list of available rooms and their rents to all undergraduates.

**The Sexcentenary Club resolves to:**

1. Request College to provide a definitive list of available rooms and their rents to all undergraduates each Michaelmas term.
2. Introduce necessary wording on the online Rooms Database to warn users that it should not be used as the definitive guide for room prices and other information, and that the first point of reference should always be the list from college mentioned in (1) above.

There were no speeches for or against the motion.

Duncan Morgan says that College can't give a definite list in Michaelmas since the incoming first-years only get offers in December. There was a list in the JCR before the website went online, but it was stolen. It was asked whether we can make the website as definitive as possible by liaising with College as much as possible; John Dalton says that this is what has happened.

The meaning of the phrase 'correct and final' on the website was discussed. Duncan Morgan clarifies that 'final' referred to the list of rooms available rather than the rents.

Joe Veale suggested that an email be sent out nearer the time with a proper list. However it was also noted that a separate email might be confusing if there are discrepancies between it and the website.

Matthew Carroll said that a 30 pounds raise in room rents wasn't terrible, so what's the problem? John Dalton remarked that one could buy a hundredweight of coal with 30 pounds.

It was pointed out that the word 'definitive' should be removed as college will raise rents without warning. The problem seems to be with the bursar – he isn't going to change (????), so we must make everyone aware that this isn't a 'definitive' list.

It was suggested that the bursar be held to account and people demand to only pay the rents given at the rooms ballot. Duncan Morgan said this would be ridiculous; the rooms ballot cannot set the rents for next year.

Stuart Cuthbertson asked if we could beg for more room reviews. It was suggested that the things said on reviews should not change with time. The point was set aside to be discussed at a later date.

It was suggested that we put pressure on the bursar to give out earlier rents, but that it may not be right for all undergrads to know their rents pre-summer. However there was a comment that it was realistic to want rents published a year in advance. The list could be put in the JCR in the locked cabinets (and this would take precedence over the online version).

Motion passed, 28 for, 1 against, 7 abstentions.

**Emergency motion by Matthew Carroll: JCR Open Meetings should be held when bar is open, more fun.**

There was one speech against the motion: Pete says that people are now listening.

It was noted that we need more Powerpoint presentations in JCR open meetings.

Motion was passed, 23 for, 8 against, 3 abstentions.