



St John's College Junior Common Room

Minutes - 3rd General Meeting, Hilary Term 2021
Sunday 21st February, Zoom, 7:30pm

The meeting opened at 7:36 pm and was chaired by Zara Hussain (Chair), with minutes taken by Aoife Hegarty (Secretary).

1. Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Minutes were received.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

No matters were arising.

3. Reports from Officer and Reps

Vice President: Tara Daemi

Tara said that the room ballot had been moved to Trinity term.

Treasurer: Maya Blanco

Maya had nothing to report.

Welfare: Alex Foster, Ariadne Si Suo and Zoe Reed

Zoe said that they had met with college, and that there would be a second counsellor in college, probably next term. Other than that, they're sending out a lot of care packages and they encourage everyone to get baking!

Environmental Ethics: Elliott Cocker

Elliott had met with the Works Department to chat about the JCR's Sustainability Plan. They're planning to contact other departments and get the plan implemented.

Not present:

- Entz: Rónán Foley & Shaina Sangha
- E&D: Naomi Reiter
- Sports Reps: Felix Stocker and Milo Mallaby
- Charities Reps: Suzanne Kapelus and Freya Allery
- Art Reps: Ollie Parkes and Zoe Hind
- Bike Reps: Ozan Erder and Ben Robinson

- PRAT Rep: Sophie Whitehead and Daniel Hubbard

4. Ratifications

- Disabilities Rep

Nobody stood for Disabilities Rep.

- Facilities Rep

Nobody stood for Facilities Rep.

- IT Officer

After a few moments of awkward zoom silence, Joshua Sharkey stood as IT Officer.

Joshua gave a short, but brilliant, hust. They said that they are interested in this sector and hoping to get some experience in the IT sector.

Joshua was ratified **nem. con.**

The Chair was then handed to Tara Daemi.

- Returning Officer

Zara Hussain stood as Returning Officer. They would pledge to have wine, beer, amazing soft drinks and pizza at hustings. They would get a budget transfer from one of the meetings. They want laughter, fun and fair elections.

Tara was ratified **nem. con.**

Zara Hussain took the Chair back.

- Someone to organise yoga.

Zara Hussain (Chair) advertised that the JCR was looking for someone to organise the weekly yoga classes. This position is a casual one, and would be taking over from Hannah Pook. (If you are reading these minutes and are interested in doing this, please get in touch with jcr-president@sjc.ox.ac.uk!)

5. Items of Discussion

6. Agenda Items

a) The “Ruskin School of Art Degree Show 2021” Financial Motion

Proposer: Kirsty Fabiyi

Seconder: Alice Hackney

Kirsty Fabiyi gave a short speech in favour of the motion. Kirsty explained that the Ruskin School was holding an online show and that this money would go towards the costs of printing and building the website. The show would be online for all JCR members to see, and there

would be two print publications. One of the publications would be available to JCR members. This would be a nice way for the JCR community to see some art.

Emmet O'Leary proposed an amendment. They suggested that the motion be amended to reflect where the money would come from, adding "£200 from the Kendrew Arts fund."

This amendment was accepted as **friendly**.

This motion passes .[32 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstain]

b) The "Support ORB!" Kendrew Arts Fund Motion

Proposer: Shuichi Chiba

Seconded: Ben Jureidini

Shuichi Chiba gave a short speech in favour of the motion. Shuichi said that the ORB was an artistic publication, in a bit of a tricky financial situation, and that there were many JCR members involved. Shuichi has been putting copies in the pidge room, and the JCR benefits.

Emmet asked that the primary objective be made clear, and that the JCR would be contributing because it would be nice and enriching for JCR members. Shuichi said yes, members of St John's would be enriched for the next year.

Lachlann asked whether it would be an idea to add the ORB to the JCR subscriptions, and for the ORB to be bought along with the Cherwell and some other student productions. Maya answered that this could be done, but not from the Kendrew Arts Fund.

The JCR decided to take a broad stance on the question of art, and the artistic merit of the ORB was not questioned.

A POI informed us that the ORB had previously been funded from Financial Motions.

It was suggested that the JCR not conform to any restrictive view of what art is, and perhaps that should college take a narrower view, the motion could then be funded from the Financial Motions.

Shuichi, drawing on their experience as auditor, suggested that Kendrew Arts Fund was a more appropriate place to fund this art project, given the size of this budget and the artistic nature of the ORB. They felt that there was no reason not to take this from the Kendrew Arts Fund.

Shuichi added that the ORB is currently funded by the JCR on a yearly basis, and that they generally did not support the idea of moving this to a subscription. The JCR currently contributes because of the involvement of JCR members, and Shuichi does not want to presume what people might want in the future.

This motion passes .[31 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstain]

Zara Hussain handed the chair to Tara Daemi.

c)The “It should not take an EGM to condemn discrimination” Constitutional Motion

Proposer: Aoife Hegarty, Secretary

Seconded: Emmet O’Leary, President

There were no objections to Aoife proposing this motion and minuting.

It was noted that there had been an amendment for this motion which had been submitted by Emmet before the meeting.

Emmet O’Leary gave a short speech on this motion. They said that they wanted to have a conversation about how the JCR makes statements about situations. Emmet noted that there were many different forms of statement which the President could make. There are statements which the President makes as President, saying I think X because I am a person, and they can act as a trustee in the JCR’s interest and act on standing policy. Sometimes, the JCR votes to bring out a statement which has the full weight and support of the JCR. This motion introduces a procedure to have a vote to release a statement, proposed by the JCR President, without holding a meeting and this would allow us to respond to situations more quickly. Emmet said that often having a meeting is good, because we can hear the voices of the affected community but that perhaps we could have chosen to release a statement more quickly and then discussed this at a later meeting. Emmet noted that the proposed amendment would make the distinction between statements endorsed by the legislative power of the JCR and statements given by the President, using their executive power. This motion works to provide a framework to release statements quickly and decisively.

Emmet noted that although they and Aoife were bringing this motion to the meeting, they would welcome any thoughts around this motion and hoped to have a conversation about how we can better deal with these situations and release statements.

Short factual questions:

Lachlann asked what the significance of having this as a motion is. Lachlann said that the important thing of the JCR Statement was that it held the weight of JCR opinion, and wondered why this should be a motion instead of an opinion poll. Emmet replied that this could be represented poorly in the press, but acknowledged the problems around placing this procedure into the framework of motions.

Shuichi asked how a poll could have the same nuance as a meeting, as the opinions of JCR members could not be heard. They said that without the interaction, JCR officials could put out generic polls and nuance would be lost. They were concerned about the lack of clarity over

when these motions would be used. Aoife replied that this was a problem in JCR statements generally, which are usually submitted to a meeting as an Appendix to an Agenda before the meeting takes place. This motion does not fix that and they said that they did not really know how to fix this.

Matt Barrett was also concerned about the procedure, and asked if there would be a mechanism in place to improve the statement without a meeting. They suggested a period where ideas could be taken, and that a second draft be sent out after this time. Emmet replied that the motion tries to make a clear distinction between statements of the President and statement of the JCR, and wondered if the role of the President was to use their executive power to release a more general, broad statement quickly and then that we might accept that a more refined statement might take some more time, and an OGM or an EGM.

Emmet noted that both statements which they had made this year had been signed off as the President, and the second time as the President on behalf of the JCR.

Aoife liked what Matt was thinking about allowing for amendments, and wondered if there might be a place for the E&D subcommittee to check through statements before they went out and agreed that statements should be carefully considered before they went out.

Alex Foster was in agreement with Matt and Shuichi. They opposed because of the nature of a general, blanket vote and because they felt that having the statement revised by the E&D subcommittee would take away from the weight of the statement. Aelx wondered if in emergencies we could send out a statement from Emmet as President, and then send out a second statement which would be from the JCR itself.

Emmet said that they would caution that the audience for JCR statements might be quite small. They would not be keen to put out too many things and were in favour of the supremacy of the Ordinary General Meeting.

Matt asked what situation this procedure would be used for. Emmet said that they were not really sure, but a situation where we want to express something as a collective and where we were already relatively definite of the position of the JCR.

Jake Hatton asked when the decision would be made as to when this would be brought to the JCR and then brought to an EGM. Emmet answered that the initial vote was at the discretion of the President, and that the voting itself would be a simple majority. Emmet said that this would then mean that on the vote it would be made clear that voting against the motion was not voting against the principle, but would bring the motion to an OGM or EGM.

It was asked whether this would apply to PresCom letters and Emmet said that it would not.

Items of Discussion:

Zara Hussain suggested that this motion not be put. Zara was against this motion on three counts. Firstly, Officers cannot speak for all minority groups and that this motion would not allow JCR members to suggest amendments in a meeting. Zara noted that amendments are often suggested by members and then written into the motion by the Exec. Zara said that this

motion would be unfair and skip this way of contributing. Zara said that there was a contradiction in the motion, which said that statements should be both quickly released and carefully considered. Zara said that often friends voted the same way in elections, and that Officer's friends would have an unfair influence on these motions and no other JCR members would have the chance to debate. Zara said that it was healthy to discuss our views and that at the recent EGMS no one has been against the motions, but that the meetings have still been educational and allowed JCR members to ask questions. Zara said that it was an opportunity to be heard and have your opinion heard by the President and minuted. Zara said that there was a yes culture in the JCR and that people would not read the statements if they were voted on as the motion suggests. Zara said that statements could be offensive or be written lazily.

Lachlann Hinley had a POI and said that most statements rarely change at meetings, and are generally written carefully and responsibly from the President.

Zara agreed that statements do not change that much but said that the president could have slipped a controversial line into a statement and this could have slipped through the JCR vote and been picked up by the press.

Zara said that EGMs often have excellent turnout and that anything which encourages engagement is a good thing and boosts democracy. Zara said that the motion was saying that something was so controversial that it was urgent, but not that controversial because we're putting this to an online poll. Zara noted that a member of the E&D subcommittee was removed last term.

Emmet responded to Zara, and agreed that something which worked quite well was the time which they and Aoife had spent drafting the statement and wondered if the meeting did mean that the statement was written more carefully and facilitated a closer scrutiny of what the statement said. Emmet said that they were concerned that people might not read the minutes and proposed, to avoid any confusing online voting, that if we decide not to put this motion Aoife would withdraw.

Lachlann opposed this motion. They felt Emmet's framing at the beginning had been very important, and that there were many potential statements, which in most cases one would hope to be non-contentious re-statements of the JCR's vote. Lachlann said that the President should be able to write these statements on their own authority, having received the vote of the JCR. Lachlann said that the President should be like the SU Rep and that the JCR should trust them to work in the best interest of the JCR. Lachlann said that they had a rather anti-democratic stance and that if the JCR was re-stating a stance, against anti-racism for instance, it was not always desirable for JCR members to be able to voice an anonymous opinion on these commonly-held values. Lachlann said that in the rare cases where this motion would be used, they agreed with Zara and there were situations where it was crucial to hear from the people concerned. They felt that the JCR President had the mandate to release these statements already and should be trusted to do so, and that there were procedures in place to challenge the President if their statements were offensive. Lachlann did not think that the outside world really interrogated whether a statement came from the President of the JCR as President or the procedure between this statement. Lachlann also said that the JCR did not

need any more procedure and felt that “lines and lines” of the JCR Constitution were not particularly necessary or understandable.

Alex said thank you to everyone who had spoken so far. Alex said that we were lucky to have a conscientious president like Emmet and said that they had run for president, and that if they were president now and this motion passed, they would be done for. They said that the voices of minorities had to be heard in college and that the JCR could educate themselves as members of this community.

Alex wondered if we could hide a secret word in the minutes and include this in the online voting. Alex wondered if this would stop people voting without reading the minutes.

Lachlann said that the “yes culture” was perhaps a result of the JCR always doing the right and uncontroversial thing as opposed to a crisis of democracy. They said that this was perhaps something to do once in a blue moon as opposed to every week.

The JCR briefly discussed some motions which had been controversial and did not pass.

Emmet added another POI. Alex did accept this POI. Emmet spoke very nicely about the mutual trust between JCR and JCR President.

Alex abandoned the idea of secret words in the minutes. They reiterated the importance of speaking about these issues in JCR meetings.

The JCR then discussed the role of standing policy and how it could be used to give weight to statements. It was suggested that the JCR could have some more general beliefs motions.

Emmet thanked the JCR for the views expressed and this vote of confidence in the JCR president.

The fate of this motion was to “axe it”, as Aoife said.

Jake Hatton wondered if we were underestimating the value of a method of collecting JCR opinions that did not involve a JCR meeting. Lachlann gave a POI and said that the solution to increasing JCR participation was not to replicate existing structures and strip them of the need to participate. Zara asked what Jake’s approach would be, and Jake was not sure but had wanted to put this out for consideration.

The motion was **withdrawn**.

Zara Hussain reclaimed the chair.

d) The “Budget Reallocation” Motion: Funds for the Suspended Students Reps

Proposer: Maya Blanco, Treasurer

Seconded: Yvonne Clark-Lewis, Suspended Students Rep

Maya gave a short speech in favour of this motion. They had changed the motion from the last meeting and now was taking this money from financial motions. Maya said that the Suspended Students Reps were planning to run a takeaway night and perhaps some other events in the future, which they wanted to be able to organise without waiting for weeks for the money.

Emmet encouraged people to support this motion, and encouraged the spending of E&D Reps more generally.

This motion passes. [32 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstain]

7. Any Other Business

Lachlann raised the issue of JCR regulation. They said that the JCR is a student union and regulated by both college and also by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission does not intervene unless they get a complaint about us. The government this week released a white paper saying that there would be a new regulatory body for student unions, the Office for Students. The government is concerned about supposed “freedom of speech” issues and the point in their white paper about regulating Student Unions would directly affect the JCR. Lachlann asked if Emmet and the other Officer would put forward the view that Student Unions can exist on a very small scale, like the JCR and asked whether they thought that it would be helpful to the JCR to fill in more forms. Lachlann said that they did not think this would be helpful.

Emmet said that the JCR is in a good position to resist aggressive regulation and has good governance practices. Emmet said that it was strange that the JC was a student union, given that it is in some ways more comparable to a halls of residence. They’ll bring this up in the next PresCom meeting. They like the current system and think it would be unfortunate if this were to change.

Jake Hatton asked if the JCR could put out a joint statement with other collegiate universities, like Cambridge. They think this would perhaps be more effective. They did not like the idea of another regulatory body.

Emmet would work with the SU on this, and noted the positive relationship that the JCR has developed with the SU.

The JCR congratulated Zara on their appointment as Returning Officer, and noted that it had been a pleasure having them chair meetings. The JCR also celebrated the long-awaited election of an IT Officer!!!