

GM 3 TT25 – 08/06/25

Key

CT = Callum Turnbull

MS = Mukund Soni

EW = Elsa Wester

TN = Toby Naldrett

OMG = Oliver Milroy-Goulding

FG = Frederick Goodfellow

IB = Idabell Binns

IW = Isobel Wanstall

AS = Adam Sherwood

Officers' Reports

Quorum is reached. CT delighted with the number (at least 40).

Discussion of changing control of the housing ballot (Callum Turnbull).

CT – in discussions with Keeley to hand over control of housing to College. Reasons for this:

- 1) that this year there have been issues with ballot on mainsite, unprecedented, Dean is leading an investigation, may cause a lot of stress for people who are unsure of where they will end up, very late in term and with exams.
- 2) The way in which housing officers have been treated in recent years has been disgraceful, have received lots of abuse, very sensitive topic for many people, should not be something JCR members have to go through.
- 3) Will be done in a standardised way by Keeley, reduces stress for all.

This is his position, keen to hear views of all.

Questions.

Harry Lucas – how do other colleges do it?

CT – many have students doing it, but often also have chaotic processes. Change to JCR control due to desire for greater autonomy, role also used to be more oriented towards helping people live out.

Luke – is proposal to scrap housing officers entirely or change their role?

CT – change role to mainly a welfare role, experts, source of info,

Dom – have college addressed issues with lack of housing? Upon clarification, suggests that this is about ballot running out of rooms for student this year initially?

CT – source of issue is that ballot done too late. If we do it earlier, then there will be enough space, college can then sort out undergrad/postgrad split in accom easily.

Vik – what involvement will college continue to have?

CT – Keeley wants to continue conversations with us, hopefully still have control over priority, how running of ballot is done.

Raghav – why not try to solve current issues by formalising rules without going to college? Likes the autonomy we have, thinks it is important.

CT – whenever we attempt to formalise, someone will always lose out. If it comes from college, people will respect that more, otherwise those making decisions will suffer abuse in way that we have seen in previous years.

EW – wouldn't formalising the way it has been done be a better way to ensure college doesn't abuse its power in future, even if Keeley is really nice right now?

CT – only people who will want to do this role is Freshers who don't know what they are signing up to. Formalisation could change in future years by future committees, whereas handing to college is more permanent.

Issa – what is actually being given to college?

CT – college will be doing the ballot and room allocation, housing officers to explain system to us.

Issa – how would you avoid abuse, might still get it

CT – wouldn't, Keeley would ensure that doesn't happen.

Luke – do housing officers have any negotiating power, if so, may be subject to abuse? If they do not, what is the point of having them?

CT – they will have a role to play, they will lead JCR position alongside president in discussions with Keeley.

EW – wouldn't we have more power ourselves if we formalised in constitution, risk of future abuse of power.

CT – college could do lots of things with regards to abuse of power, but won't due to good relationship between JCR and college. E.g., with regards to bar, hall

OMG – why not formalise priorities in constitution, which seem to be main reason for passing power to college? If fixed, then no abuse for housing officers? Maintain more control

CT – will only hand over to college a proposal that we are happy with, will make sure it goes through GM. Coming through college gives it more gravitas. Even if in Constitution, many will be happy, JCR reps more prone to abuse.

Melanie – is main reason for switching more recent issues with ballot or question of abuse?

CT – both, discussion started with recent issues but both relevant.

Vik – given that housing officers will still exist as a position, isn't it pertinent to think of how to prevent abuse, many not subside even after this?

CT – true, unsure how to stop it.

Vik – this does not stop core problem of abuse of housing officers.

CT – disagrees, housing officers will only explain system, do not control it, or have responsibility for ballot itself.

Harry – will this tangibly benefit lives of rest of us other than housing reps? Just passing buck to college?

CT – ensures stability over housing ballot.

MS – if we try and agree in a GM on priorities, is that something that we will be able to agree on without issues?

CT – something that will have to happen regardless of whether in Constitution or College's control.

Issa – feels that abuse will be directed to housing officers even if not in control, maybe scrap role itself?

CT – doesn't think we should do that, maybe shift their name to 'living out' officers and focus on that area.

Dom – what issues are brought up by those abusing housing officers?

CT – anything possible related to housing.

Raghav – any procedure for taking back control in future? Or any way of agreeing with a procedure with College in future without giving control of conduct of procedure? If procedure set in stone, no reason for abuse? Transparency issue?

CT – leaving power to students leaves open abuse while giving control to college. No transparency issue if Keeley does it, knows her job well.

Raghav – so should we make things more transparent?

CT – tried to this year, opportunity for people to come to GM and express their concerns. 10 people turned up, people don't seem to take up opportunity of transparency.

Eli – agrees with Issa that housing officers may still be open to abuse, may be worth losing the role?

CT – could be something worth exploring.

Toby – will we have discussion with college on how to run housing?

CT – yes, will have a vote at end of this discussion, and take next steps accordingly. Keeley may bring a proposal to GM, if it passes, will become new way housing is done.

Bella – will college take up extra responsibility happily?

CT – their decision, seems to be yes.

Luke – given abuse of power seen in housing officer role this year, do you think JCR should impose repercussions such as barring them from running for roles in future?

CT – under Dean's investigation, for JCR to decide. You can submit vote of no confidence if you so desire.

Points of support and debate.

FG – supports it, every year people bicker, if we standardise and let college do it, loss of control doesn't matter too much. Even if housing officers give them abuse, less likely because they know it won't change anything.

Keira – also supports, happened 3 times, different errors each time, each time come from ballot process, so they are unlikely to get too much flak if allocation not down to them.

Elsa – point of debate, if we updated constitution and clarified there the priorities and still having housing officers in charge of it could be useful. Or even if college ran it, having this in constitution would be useful.

Evie – another way abuse would stop is if we clarified housing role at the start, and their lack of control.

Oli New – supports, Keeley pretty much runs ballot already, e.g., issue when we ran out of flats, officers didn't know what to do, Keeley did as she has greater knowledge. Keeley has been wanting to do this for 8 years, housing officer position is a relic of previous autonomy.

Will – supports, will benefit entire student ballot. Every year, lots of people have issues and stress with ballot, this will be avoided.

Dom – supports, very hard to have a handover between roles as housing is a once a year thing.

Daisy – supports, finds it weird that we have housing reps. Good that college offers us on-site and off-site accom, shouldn't be down to students as housing is so important, would feel a lot more at ease knowing that college has control over this.

Raghav – point of debate, if we do give control to college, will have to make sure JCR is happy with this even in future.

CT – same with everything, role of JCR President is the ongoing dialogue.

Issa – point of debate, a lot of abuse of power and frustration comes from allocation, may be better to have random allocation rather than current process.

CT – no, very good reasons for non-random allocation, mainly financial.

Issa – point of debate, if you are at bottom of ballot, may still be given worse rooms than the one you wanted with regards to financial issues. And also other issues, where those on bottom of ballot are worse off.

CT – there are issues, but randomisation would be worse as there would be more issues. Financial, but also in terms of welfare issues, interpersonal relationships.

Toby – after this, we have a second discussion that may help answer Issa's concerns.

Raghav – could use price bands as well to solve issues that Callum mentioned

FG – support, we have discussion like this about how to run ballot every year, if we let College decide for once and stick to that, we can avoid the endless bickering.

Daisy – point of support, actual issue is about formalisation. Technicalities on how we formalise is a different issue, question here is if we want someone from college with greater knowledge, experience and expertise or students deciding how we do this.

Oli – college are already aware of access and financial issues, most people will be more reluctant to pass these issues to students, who also have less power to help resolve..

Indicative vote of 38-5 in favour of giving ballot process to college. Callum to start discussions accordingly.

Discussion of changing the housing system (Toby Naldrett)

CT – running discussion in a way similar to in Hilary, each person gets 2 mins to talk, if you interrupt, you don't get to speak.

TN – separate ballots for short and long lease would be very useful with regards to financial uncertainty. Otherwise if at bottom, may face up to £2000 higher cost, for example, with Masters' Field compared to Jowett short lease.

CT – will not be voted on, but CT to use minutes to lead his discussion with Keeley.

Oli – makes a lot of sense, would be easier for Keeley. No reason why college can't free up more rooms for one or the other.

EW – may have to increase price of long-lease rooms if you have more short-lease rooms, but agrees with idea.

TN – important is fact that college has the capacity to give people the types of rooms get.

Harry – doesn't understand why groups of 7s were not at the top and neatly organised, and why individuals were placed randomly higher.

Keira – you can't penalise people because they have a smaller group. Ballot is randomised.

Alfie – if you are smaller groups, you can slot around other groups, whereas if you are a seven, then you will be split up if lower down ballot. Means everyone can live with people you want to live with.

Eesa – supports that if people are randomly allocated rooms such that groups are kept together that would be good.

Melanie – medium-sized groups will still get split up if larger groups are at the top.

CT – you are welcome to respond to someone else then make your point as each person can only speak once.

Felicity – ballot works in a way that is random, if we want larger groups to be at top, that would not be randomisation.

CT – agrees, then you are prioritising based on number of friends.

Freddie – big differences between main site and Jowett ballots, what is being discussed in Jowett ballot. Surely a way to do it to minimise groups being split up is to allocate rooms accordingly, e.g., if you get a bored CompSci student. Agrees with splitting short and long lease.

Eli – prioritising larger groups may not remove randomisation as we already have some priorities within broader process of randomisation. Splitting short and long lease makes sense.

Rob – need a system to ensure those who really need short lease can get it.

Will – supports this view, separating into short and long lease shouldn't create issues for groups being split up. If anything, should make it easier.

Raghav – agrees in principle, but issue that Elsa raised about greater cost for long lease. Or is there a way of ensuring groups do not get split up.

AS – would it be limited or not (in terms of number who can get short lease).

Dom – college likes whole flats being short or long lease, so would have to do it in multiples of 6/7 etc. Does college have an overall amount that it wants to collect in rent?

Callum – Yes that is correct, minimum total from conferences and students. College needs to know if rooms are available for conferences.

Bea – random allocation of rooms would reduce stress if we could randomly allocate as groups and select short lease vs long lease.

MS – if you look at issue of long lease cost through perspective of forcing people who want only short lease to take long lease to share greater cost among more people, that's incredibly unfair. Seeming problem of greater cost for long lease if we have more short lease isn't really a problem or unfair, just status quo bias to how things are currently run.

Henry – what happens if amount of people applying for each exceeds the limits set by college?

TN – have a cutoff at end of short lease ballot, if college really is unwilling to provide more rooms, bottom 10 people may be randomly allocated to long lease. Shouldn't happen as college should be able to negotiate correct proportions with us.

James – supports FG's point. They ballot as groups, college fits you so that groups are not split up, wouldn't really matter which flats you are in.

TN – agrees, would be better if college does this rather than students to remove all possibility of bias.

Discussion of Motions

Motion: Update the Constitution to Prevent Individuals with a financial conflict of Interest from Voting on motions (CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT)

EW – explains motion, preventing those with financial conflict of interest

Questions.

Harry – any chance of going further than this? Doesn't stop people packing JCRs with friends.

EW – if we stop all conflicts of interests, that is very difficult to enforce, lots of friends and relationships. This is a simpler motion to enforce.

Melanie – doesn't understand how this benefits JCR?

EW – discussion with Amanda about JCR as a charity, most charities have rules about financial conflict of interest. Shouldn't stop most motions, if you can't get a motion through without just those benefiting financially voting for it, maybe it shouldn't go through.

IB – aren't there other conflicts of interests too, that you should target. E.g., voting for yourself in JCR election.

EW – potentially, but that is not my focus, this is just an anti-corruption measure, that goes far beyond this.

Raghav – asks for clarification on motion?

EW – motion prevents anyone who would directly benefit an individual financially from voting on that motion. For example, in the motion for subsidising coach journey to St Johns ball, people on that journey benefit financially and wouldn't be able to vote on it.

Points of support and debate.

TN – point of support, really good measure

Will – point of debate, agrees with sentiment, but will it not make it difficult to generate interest in GMs?

EW – that is why focus is specifically on money, not on other conflicts of interest. But is problematic if only those who financially benefit from a motion vote.

Fails to pass on second occasion, 22-16 (needed 75% as it was a constitutional amendment).

Motion: Funding for 'The Writer', Pilch Week 7

OMG – describes motion, really good play, quite expensive to run due to intimacy coordinator, rights.

Keira – any other Balliol people involved?

OMG – no, just me as production director. In Pilch though.

Oli New - in interests of corruption, I am not involved even though seconder.

Passes 26-7.

Motion: One-time payment of £300 to support the development of Oxford University Racing

FG – 80-100 people do it, mainly undergrad, mainly engineers, at least 6 Balliol engineers involved, 3 really significantly involved. Always looking for funding. Work really hard on project throughout year, need money to put design into practice, the money here is specifically for cooling. Dan Collins has led the team that will use the component this will fund.

Points of support or debate.

AS – supports this, hopes Lindsay sponsorship will be plastered on car.

FG – will also get Balliol logo on it if we sponsor, will be pretty cool for any potential students too.

Passes 34-1 (needed 60% as over £200).

Motion: Funding for Coach Travel to St John's College Cambridge May Ball

IB – asking for £1,400 for JCR to provide funds for travel to St John's May Ball. As our sister college, we get option to purchase tickets for ball. Coach travel can be expensive. Entirely for JCR members, would help with cost of travel.

Questions.

Raghav – what exactly is the cost for?

IB – coach journey.

Keira – how come it is so expensive, was much cheaper last time?

Idabell – quote from company, 3 hour coach journey there leaving Oxford at 2pm and returning from Cambridge from 7am, maybe due to inflation or timings.

Felicity – are all people going to ball taking the coach?

IB – asking for max amount in case all agree, if not, we can take reduced amount accordingly.

EW – you mentioned MCR people may also take coach. Will you ensure they will pay for their share?

IB – yes.

TN – have you asked the treasurer and has she approved it?

EW – yes, conditional on IB doing everything to minimise cost and ensuring we only pay for JCR people.

Eli – what will you do with rest of money if you don't need to use entire amount?

CT – way GM money works is that you can claim it only via receipt, so she might not receive the entire amount itself if not needed.

Dom – can buy a bus ticket with Cambridge for 6 pounds, do we need this coach ticket?

IB – to do with timings, coach preferred practically as a result.

Raghav – how would people travel otherwise?

IB – has always been coach travel, previously people attending have paid for it. But as it is such an expensive event, as it is a JCR event, would be good to have funding for us.

TN – under ticket swap system, do you pay guest or member prices?

IB – Balliol students may not necessarily pay guest or member prices, but really it is a right to buy in the first place. But we provide far smaller number of tickets as we have less capacity.

TN – how much do tickets cost?

IB – unsure. Ball committee have free tickets based on committee swap system.

TN – how many people on ball committee?

IB – 15.

Raghav – point of info. Balliol students paid £290, but £275 for St Johns members.

EW – would cost £32 per person on average for coach if we do not give funding, also harder logistically for IB.

MS – how many St Johns people came?

IB – 22 via committee swap, around 18 who bought tickets.

Points of support and debate.

Melanie – supports, people at a ball drink a lot, throw up, coach would be useful for safety reasons. Do not want to go on public transport

TN – great point, but does not think JCR has responsibility to pay for you to enjoy a party. If you can afford a £290 ticket, you can afford a £30 journey there and back. If you are not paying, you have 2 balls for free.

IB – did not get to enjoy ball like everyone else did, a year of work.

TN – doesn't understand committee swap.

IB – tradition. JCR organised event, has every right to ask for money.

TN – surely a better use of this money would be to carry it over for next year and reduce access prices, this is using money where it is not needed.

IB – we had access tickets for Balliol Ball, that is a completely separate issue. If you want to support access tickets even more, you can surely bring forward a GM motion related to that.

Melanie – we have already passed so many motions giving money to people, doesn't see issue in this motion for 44 people.

Eli – giving money to a play or engineers, it is something that people from Balliol can enjoy, join in future, whereas no one other than these 44 people can now buy a ticket, exclusive.

IB – did send email to everyone about ability to purchase a ticket, not exclusive.

Jade – it is exclusive if you are paying over £200, compared to a play mentioned earlier today which cost a ticket of £7.

Tanya – worth noting most of people going were committee, put in a lot of work, why shouldn't they be able to have a cheaper ticket and safe travel?

Keira – thanks for the work at the ball, but you got a free ticket for St Johns ball, isn't that your reward?

IB – not tradition, but an anomaly this year, was approached for committee swap. Reiterates that JCR is only giving £30 per person for coach journeys.

Keira – you keep on saying only £30, but then it is also £30 for you to pay for travel. Unprecedented, 2 years, ago, asked for only £10 and were still turned down for Treasurer.

IB – understands that, but isn't this the point of new GM motions. Wasn't part of this last time.

Closing argument for (IB) – would be a really great opportunity if JCR could pay for this, committee members worked tirelessly for an entire year, have heard positive feedback, small matter of providing funds, is a JCR event, specially a nice send-off for finalists.

Closing argument against (Toby) – this motion flies in face of any ethical responsibility for JCR. Not an inclusive event, only makes event more inclusive for a small number of people. Same amount of money could be used for other things to benefit far more people, e.g., coffee machine (MS approves). Fact that you ran ball doesn't mean you deserve free travel to St Johns ball, already have a free ticket.

Fails to pass 13-25 (needs 75% as over £500).

Motion: Revision of the Senior Tutors' Committee Guidance on Undergraduate Suspension of Status

IW – guidance for suspended students has not been updated for last 6 years, referred to as a 'distraction', wants to reverse language of stigma towards suspended students, many others who suspend for mental health reasons or course change agree. Other colleges often grant students with rights to come to college grounds, book rooms, not case in Balliol. Not changing that, but wishes to counter stigma. Otherwise will deter people from suspending even if it is the right step for them.

Harry – how do you distinguish between students who are suspended for disciplinary reasons or not?

IW – not relevant.

Harry – surely it is, part of reason for stigma is for good reason to discourage bad behaviour.

IW – suspension usually not for disciplinary reasons, whereas rustication is.

CT – college distinguishes internally between the two.

EW – supports motion, no need for current college stance.

Harry – if you are suspended for disciplinary grounds, shouldn't there still be something in place? E.g., if for decking someone in quad.

IW – not relevant, asking only to overturn official language and guidance for college. Students are not distractions, agrees that if you have been disciplined, shouldn't be allowed back on college. But if you have suspended for reasons such as mental health reasons, no reason why you shouldn't be allowed onto College grounds when even guests can.

Will – supports motion, treatments of suspended motions is one of the biggest failings of college, we have an obligation to address this as JCR. College will of course be able to distinguish between those who have suspended for own reasons vs disciplinary reasons.

Avri – supports motion. Not our responsibility to ensure there is stigma around disciplinary reasons, can be contentious, people change.

Oli – supports, will work better if Jack Owens came back.

Keira – supports, if there is a stigma created, then prevents people from taking necessary steps for their own mental and physical health.

Harry – supports, wants to emphasise he does not hate suspended students, but just thinks that the guy who cooked FMDA in his room shouldn't be allowed to return though.

IW – minimal number of students are suspended for disciplinary reasons.

Nikita – lots of issues in how college treats suspension and rustication. Is this just the first step?

IW – yes, has only just returned, small change to get ball rolling. Wants to do more, but needs more student support and data from Balliol students and other colleges.

Passes 31-2.

Motion: Purchase a replacement Wii for Master's Common Room

AS – Wii broke down, want to play Wii, it is fun etc.

Harry – what about what happened with PS5?

AS – have had it for several years, nothings happened.

Jade, FG, Dom, Toby, Oli in support.

Passes 35-0.

GM Adjourned.