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**TERMLY GENERAL MEETING – 04/02/16 – MEMORIAL ROOM  
HILARY TERM 2016  
BY ROSS SPEER, MCR SECRETARY**

**Attendance:**

Matilde  
Julia  
James R  
Tim  
Miles  
Elerie  
Sarah  
Ross  
Alex M (Chair)  
Henrik  
Lee  
Harry  
Alexis  
Natalia F  
Dan N  
Josephine  
Wiliam  
Jacob  
Guillame  
Dan IW  
Anna

**Agenda**

- 1. Constitutional Amendments**
  - a. A Two-Person Veto to Postpone Committee Motions to General Meetings
  - b. Extending Notification Time For Meetings
- 2. Ordinary Motions**
  - a. This MCR pledges to condemn any acts of sexual violence and to support victims of sexual violence and abuse.
  - b. Supporting Rhodes Must Fall
- 3. Any Other Business**



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## **Minutes:**

Alex M: Limiting this to 15 – 20 minutes per motion.

### **1. A Two- Person Veto to Postpone Committee Motions to general meetings**

Alex: Who wants to speak for the motion?

Matilde: Are we allowed to discuss constitutional motions?

Lee: Yes, not enough people to vote on them but we can discuss.

Harry: Most of the stuff we do on the committee is day to day stuff. It makes sense the committee meetings tends to be fairly flexible. People can discuss ideas without tabling them in advance. The lack of restrictions, however, makes this dangerous. Only three committee members need to be present, and only two need to vote in favour. It would be impossible to specify what is and isn't appropriate but we can have a two person veto. If two people veto it gets passed to the next TGM. As things are at the moment a motion was passed that committed every member of the MCR to oppose government policy, and prevented every member of the committee from talking about said policy.

Matilde: I would propose an amendment. I think that two people is not enough to veto on a motion because this makes you liable to the opinion of only two people and it could bring the committee meetings to a stall. Perhaps one third of the committee would be sufficient. And it makes no sense to say it can be applied retroactively.

Henrik: I agree with both of you. While I do believe that possibly both the terms of two people and in absentia are a bit too much, I don't see the problem with at least one of those things being on the bill why can't we include all of the people who couldn't make it. Or we can have the two person veto and scrap the absentia. I assume this number was chosen because two people can pass a motion.

Ross: The example used is disingenuous. It passed unanimously, and concerned Prevent, which many universities are up in arms about. This motion wouldn't even apply to the example. This will hamstring the business of the MCR and make it very difficult to do anything. Two people could obstruct the business of the committee, which is there to take decisions.

Harry: I selected the number two because fifty percent of the committee can vote through a



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motion. The issue of people causing trouble, abusing the veto, there are several responses: sometimes they might just be wrong and its uncontroversial, then it'll go straight through at TGM. If they're vetoing everything then either there is a problem with those committee members or there is a problem of the motions going through committee meetings, which should be discussed and go to a vote of no confidence. The reason I put the in absentia clause in is because we often hold committee meetings on stuff that's just come up and isn't circulated in advance. For what you were saying, Ross, about the recent motions – I wasn't there for the Prevent one so I don't know the vote for that. I would say still that as a political motion it committed the entire MCR to a position based only on the committee members, and I don't think it's always true to say the committee members are politically representative.

Julia: What is the definition of controversial?

William: The committee would decide what is controversial.

Matilde: The pertinent distinction is 'not appropriate to a committee meeting'.

Lee: It could not possibly be bad to make it more democratic.

Harry: What should be going through the committee meetings should be non-controversial stuff. We can always call an online poll. Finally, if something is considered not in the remit of the MCR its better to be cautious.

Julia: The whole point of having a committee is to represent members of the MCR in between of TGMs.

Alex: I want to only spend two more minutes on this.

Ross: I don't think this can be simply cast as 'more democratic'. We have a representative democracy for a reason, to fill in in between TGMs. the committee has to make rapid reaction to things. We have to take decisions. If we want to move to more regular general meetings like the JCR then we should think about that, but that's the motion that should be in front of us not this one.

Tim: Amendment: Resolves: 'any member present at the committee meeting can propose a motion to have the question of it being referred to a general meeting discussed. The committee then votes on this motion'.

Thrust of amendment accepted but dispute about applicable threshold.

Vote on 50% threshold to go to online vote:

**FOR: 6**



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**AGAINST: 11**

**ABSTAIN: 0**

30% threshold PASSES automatically, as favoured by the proposer

To include rounding down

'if 30% of the member present feel something should be referred to an online vote then it should be referred to an online vote'

Without absentia clause

\*The quorum for constitutional motions (20%) was not met and the vote taken is non-binding. The motion as amended will go to online vote\*

**FOR: 11**

**AGAINST: 5**

**ABSTAIN: 1**

## **2. Extending Notification Time for Meetings**

Henryk: There is not currently enough time to absorb and understand the motions. All I resolve is to change 48 hours to five days for notifying us for committee meetings and to change the motion embargoes to one week.

Ross: I don't feel exceptionally strong about this but the pace of Oxford life is fast and this doesn't leave enough time to organise. It's excessively burdensome on the organisers of these things.

Harry: this is mostly about when you get your motions in. A couple of days wouldn't make a huge difference.

Matilde: when the dates of the committee meetings are decided there is a sort of survey going on to check people can attend.

\*The quorum for constitutional motions (20%) was not met and the vote taken is non-binding. The motion will go to online vote\*

**FOR: 9**

**AGAINST: 5**

**ABSTAIN: 0**

## **3. This MCR Pledges to Condemn Any Acts of Sexual Violence and to Support Victims of Sexual Violence and Abuse**

Alex: Normal motions. Speaker in support please.



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Matlidge: This is a delicate topic so please be aware while we discuss because it can be difficult for some people in the room. Currently we have no consent workshops or training of officers on these issues. We based our motions on two surveys carried out by the NUS and one in Cambridge, the Oxford one is awaiting publication. They are similar in their findings and you can look if you want. Surveyed around 2000 people each, so a good sample size. They are both surveys of male and female students. What they found is that basically a huge proportion experience some form of sexual harassment or assault. The percentage that have been raped is about 15 – 20. It's highly likely that most people during their time at university will experience some unwanted sexual contact. Therefore we think it is within our role to take care of our members, we propose to do so by providing education on these topics, to both females and males in the MCR to be educated on the topic of consent. So we would like to mandate the next committee to work with OUSU to make consent workshops available.

Julia: They're present in 25 graduate common rooms, including 10 compulsory.

Matlidge: alongside the consent workshops we would like to have at least one member of the MCR committee to be trained, via OUSU, in first response, which train you in how to respond if someone comes to you with these issues. The workshops are free. Last, because this was raised in the committee meeting, we thought that if needed and requested by our MCR member for good reasons we should provide a safe space during events.

Julia: I'd like to add that out of the graduate common rooms that responded to me 10 have compulsory workshops.

William: Does this wording in the motion mean they are compulsory?

Julia: Yes I'd like to see them compulsory. But you can't force anyone to stay at these workshops. At the start, the trainer will ask if anyone wants to leave and those people may do so.

William: So you want to make them not mandatory but....

Julia: In the same way you have fire talks.

William: but those are compulsory.

Julia: But nobody really checks.

William: so inverted commas compulsory.

Lee: Aren't you saying compulsory but not compulsory. Compulsory means a fixed thing.



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Ross: well just like the fire safety talk, we're saying its compulsory. But you cant force anyone. Whatever we say, the reality is its compulsory but not compulsory, exactly like you said.

Matilde: The whole point is to strongly encourage people, hence we say compulsory. This is the reason we word as compulsory.

Anna: We are talking about graduate Oxford. Shouldn't we give them the freedom to come or not?

Julia: I felt the same about fire safety. These workshops are written specifically for adults. We shouldn't think about this as something 35 years olds shouldn't go to.

Henrik; I'm going to move this on a bit. Point 2 on your motion. Why is only one MCR welfare member mandated to go.

Julia: I accept a friendly amendment mandating all welfare team members to go.

Harry: If the position being taken is its compulsory but you won't be punished for not going, can we change the wording to say that.

Julia: Punishment isn't a word I'd want on that.

Harry: Can we amend it to say you can leave at any time.

Julia/Matilde: We accept that.

Resolves 2 'That all the members of the MCR committee welfare team must attend an OUSU training workshop as early as possible during their term in office'

Resolves 3 'That all incoming MCR members should attend a compulsory consent workshop during Freshers work, members are free to leave at any time for any reason'

Matilde: I wanted to add, I know that most of us think we're old enough and I don't really need someone from OUSU to tell me what consent is because we're old enough. But I think it is really important, because we have people coming from lots of different places who have different experiences and ideas about what consent means and as a woman its really useful for me to know what to expect from a relationship and an encounter.

William: We should exempt fourth years.

Guillame: With the safe space, I agree with it but who would be in charge and would it cost money to the MCR?

Julia: Somebody in the welfare team would do it. This is when requested. When requested



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the MCR welfare team would agree amongst themselves who would do it. It doesn't need to cost anything. We did this at the last event and it cost nothing. The JCR offers tea and toast but I know we don't have the budget for that. If we do in the future, it's the kind of thing we can do alongside.

*Amended*

Resolves 2 'That all the members of the MCR committee welfare team must attend an OUSU training workshop as early as possible during their term in office'

Resolves 3 'That all incoming MCR members should attend a compulsory consent workshop during Freshers week, members are free to leave at any time for any reason'

**FOR: 16**

**AGAINST: 0**

**ABSTAIN: 2**

Noted from Miles that because of the amendments the proxy votes may no longer be valid since they were voting on different text.

Ross: Good point to bear in mind for the future but thankfully the proxy votes make no difference to the outcome here.

Including proxy votes:

**FOR: 24**

**AGAINST: 2**

**ABSTAIN: 4**

MOTION PASSES

### **3. Supporting Rhodes Must Fall**

Ross; This relates to supporting the demands of Rhodes Must Fall. I won't go too much into detail about that, because everyone has heard it. My view is we should give the backing of Queens MCR to the campaign.

William: We shouldn't be involved in this. It's not within our purview. Even if we did vote to support it would have no legitimacy of the MCRs views as a whole. It is a meaningless gesture. Proposing this kind of motion changes the atmosphere of the MCR in a way that is not good. It's not good, it's another thing for reasonable people to disagree about. I think we should resist political motions as far as we can.

Matlide: I do not agree with what you just said. Which doesn't mean I agree with this particular motion, but I do not agree it is within our scope to debate this. We do have



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members of the BME minorities, it's a university wide debate, and we are part of the university. It's totally legitimate and we should discuss it.

Lee: I 100% agree that having the discussion is an important thing to do. But this discussion does not need to end in a resolution which ties the MCR to something that many people might disagree with. We can talk to each other, but we don't need to take a side. In my view that isn't a good thing.

Dan: This meeting and this motion was widely publicized, people have been able to vote by proxy, I don't think you can have a complaint about representation of the views. The second thing about causing some conflict, it might be ok if it tackles ongoing injustice. I think people of black and ethnic minorities are being excluded, this is an injustice, this is a small part of challenging that.

William: You must agree that a vote against this is a vote for institutional racism. Trevor Philips, for example, has not supported it because it's a distraction. It damages access to see this in the news all the time.

Ross You're shooting the messenger. The conflict itself precedes the discussion about the conflict. We should try and resolve that in a just way.

Henrik: If you want to support the RMF movement why don't you just do that? Why do you need to get the support of the MCR?

Sarah: Well getting the MCR involved is a level involvement beyond an individual. It's a level of support that exceeds what one person can provide. That's why its important

Harry: I kind of extend that by saying that it seems to me that every individual in the MCR has a position on Rhodes Must Fall. By committing the entire MCR is a representative of us all. Its using the voices in favour of one voice.

Ross: This vote could go either way. I think its not a very controversial principle that sometimes we take majority decisions.

James: Just when you said this vote could go either way, it could highlight a difference that it could be disagreeing with the right of the MCR to have a position on it collectively.

Matilde: I don't agree with what you said because of the very highly political connotation of this motion which is not exactly like how we are going to finance the next bop. I don't totally take the point.

Dan: I think it is a way of highlighting just how bad Rhodes was. Responsible for setting up concentration camps, he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of



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people. He thought black people were inferior. He thought white people should rule black people. He was an unambiguously awful person. Our recently elected BME officer seems to support this, its worth taking her views into consideration. RMF is run entirely by people of BME origin. Bear that in mind. Maybe you don't feel like you're excluded.

Guillame: This is a slippery slope. We will tear down loads of things.

Ross; The closeness of the harms matters. What Rhodes did is still hurting people today. He is also exceptionally prominent within our university. He was also judged as bad not just by the moral standards of our day, but of his own time. These things make it especially significant.

Henrik: This has turned into a debate on RMF not on the merits of the MCR supporting it as a whole. I draw the same comparison with people removing statues of Robert E Lee. Its removing history from the world. That's not what I'm debating. I'm no longer going to debate the merits or flaws of the RMF movement, we should make this MCR for everyone. Supporting a particular motion like RMF possibly is very divisive. This is too political.

Julia: I don't at all agree its an erasure of history. Nobody's asking for it to be destroyed. It's a confrontation of history, its what intelligent adults should be doing. It's a good thing we are discussing this.

Harry: It's an especially divisive motion, its about 60-40 against RMF, its very politically divisive. People have been debating it for months both in and out of the MCR. What I do disagree with is people being forced to put their weight behind something they disagree with.

Dan: Re-writing history was when Rhodes built a building and a scholarship to glorify himself when he was a murderous tyrant. That was re-writing history. Now we're trying to come to terms. It's trying to understand and confront history. On being too political: Why not? We're engaged in all sorts of political activities all the time. On disagreement: There's disagreement all the time. I really dislike that we spend thousands of pounds on guest dinners where privileged people enjoy themselves at the whole MCRs expense.

Harry: So I mean there's a big difference on how to allocate shared resources and voting on politics, because politics is something that every member can do individually. There's a big difference between an MCR taking a position on dinner. With politics everyone and should be free to follow wherever they lead them.

Tim: I very much believe that the MCR should be looking after its members and its future. With that respect I think RMF is wrapped up in so much controversy that this isn't the best use of our time. There are other things we could be doing.

Ross: This isn't an either or thing. We should do other things too. This is just a small



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contribution we can make. Some voices are more important than others when it comes to this, we should be supportive when these demands are raised by BME people.

William: What you just said is outrageous, that we should support these demands because they're on the right side of history. Both of you tried to tie up support for RMF with increasing access. BY supporting RMF we're supporting a sideshow. It's very focused on the statue.

Ross: I think these are issues of access. And I'm saying I'm not the receiving end of racial injustices. I'm a white British person. I don't have to suffer under seeing a statue of someone that butchered my people on the high street. I don't claim to know how best to fight racism, because I'm not the one on the receiving end.

**FOR: 6**

**AGAINST: 10**

**ABSTAIN: 2**

**Including proxy votes:**

**FOR: 19**

**AGAINST: 17**

**ABSTIAN: 2**

**MOTION PASSES**