

Oxford SU

Conference of Common Rooms

18:00-20:00, Tuesday 28th October, HB Allen Centre, Keble College

Minutes

Present: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates; Wantoe Wantoe, SU President for Postgraduates; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Chair: Shermar Pryce (President for Community & Common Rooms)

Deputy Chairs:

- Janek Czarnek (JCR President – Magdalen) - elected with 16 out of 18 undergraduate common rooms JCR at CCR on 28th October 2025
- Rhys Inward (MCR President - Jesus)

In attendance:

Balliol JCR
Brasenose JCR
Exeter JCR
Hertford JCR
Hertford MCR
Jesus JCR
Jesus MCR
Keble JCR
Lincoln JCR
Lincoln MCR
Magdalen JCR

Merton JCR
Merton MCR
New JCR
Oriel JCR
Pembroke JCR
Queen's MCR
Regent's Park MCR
Somerville JCR
Somerville MCR
St Antony's GCR
St Catz JCR

St Catz MCR
St Cross SRC
St Hilda's JCR
St Hugh's JCR
St John's JCR
St John's MCR
St Peter's MCR
Trinity JCR
Univeristy MCR
University WCR
Wadham SU

Apologies: No apologies received.

1. Introduction

- SP (Shermar Pryce) introduced the Presidents and CCR for the academic year.

2. Governance Matters

- The Chair requested nominees for the position of JCR Deputy Chair.
- JC (Janek Czarnek), Magdalen JCR President stood forward and had one minute to raise a case for election as JCR Deputy Chair.

- JCR Presidents were asked to vote, and JC was elected as JCR Deputy Chair
- This role was uncontested.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Officer Updates

- SP introduced the Officer Updates and current Committees and University Working Groups being serviced by the SU Presidents.
- SU President projects and initiatives were also presented including the Community Fund, Oxford Student Voice Podcast, Term Card Launch, Black History Month 2025.
- SU provided an update on MSL improvements, including:
 - Common Room election functionality.
 - Committee management.
 - Editing access for Common Room mini sites.
 - New website design to be published by end of week, which should improve site navigation.

Questions:

- Queens MCR: Is there scope for SUMS integration?
- SU: Yes, but subject to Trustee Board discussion and approval. Implementation would be expensive and would not be a short process. SU Confirmed this would require a tender process to be established and that we are currently in contract with another provider
- Lincoln MCR: has accuracy of elections been improved?
- Lincoln MCR: Has election accuracy improved?
- MCR Deputy Co-Chair: Some flaws remain.
- SU: Acknowledged ongoing issues; improvements are under review and feedback is welcome.
- Univ MCR: Currently running elections, what layout changes have been implemented? Also queried about society landing pages.
- SU: Society pages have been discontinued following the Transformation process. SU will provide technical support offline.

3.2 Officer Action Log

SU Presidents discussed updates on the Action Log:

- Supreme Court Ruling Response: AB provided update following the EHRC consultation and shared attendance at relevant University Committees, including Joint Committee for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI).
- St Catz MCR: Where can we find a copy of the recommendations?
- AB (Alisa Brown): Recommendations are not yet public, but we will request more transparency and updates to be circulated to students when appropriate.
- Dark Skies: SP provided an update, while non-substantive, the SU Presidents will be meeting with the Council and Lord Mayor to discuss next steps.
- No comments raised.

- Admissions Testing: SS (Seun Sowunmi): raised student concern in Admissions Executive (AdEx) and reaffirmed SU mandated position.
- No comments raised.
- EIRRS: AB
 - St Catz MCR: Is this in relation to the student consultation conducted last academic year?
 - AB confirmed.
 - Brasenose JCR: Was the consultation and subsequent position formed through CCR?
 - SU: The submission was based on wider consultation and predated CCR. The full submission can be viewed on SU website
 - St Catz MCR: When will more information be available from the University?
 - AB: No confirmed date yet; discussions remain confidential but have been referred back to the University.
- International Fees: WW (Wantoe Wantoe): we have put in a position statement on behalf of the SU to the relevant committees and the discussions are ongoing. Also made a submission to HM Treasury on the international student levy and the SU mandated position again.
- No comments raised.
- Think Twice: SP discussed collaborative communications campaign with
 - SP: Noted that the motion did not reach quoracy at CCR last term.
 - However, as it was on the University's agenda and the SU had capacity, the SU proceeded with developing the campaign.
 - The SU collaborated with the University to advance the initiative and applied pressure for institutional support.

Items for Discussion

4. College Disparities Monitor

Proposed by: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates; Wantoe Wantoe, SU President for Postgraduates; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Decision Type: Conference Mandate

Amended by: Jess Ryan-Smith, Lincoln MCR

Presented by: Shermar Pryce

SP: introduced the proposal, noting that previous College Disparities work had lapsed. He emphasised the value of having comparative data to support Common Room advocacy and

proposed establishing a College Disparities Working Group to revive and strengthen this work.

Questions:

- Balliol JCR: Will this motion have power to change conditions for financially poorer colleges
- SP: Financial resources are only part of the issue; the mandate aims to expose broader student needs and encourage colleges to reprioritise. The monitor will include contextual information to support advocacy and influence college support structures.
- St Catz MCR: Since transparency varies across colleges, what strength does this motion have in securing financial information from colleges?
- SP: Will raise the issue with the Chair of the Conference of Colleges. Outcomes from the working group could be taken forward as a call to action, encouraging systemic transparency and reform.
- Univ MCR: Thanked the proposer. Asked whether there are plans to republish past data and how college income will be measured, noting that even well-endowed colleges sometimes claim financial strain.
- SP: Previous data has been lost. The new working group will determine appropriate measures and methodologies for income analysis.

Comments FOR the motion:

- Wadham SU: Noted that colleges spend money differently, and even wealthier colleges may require encouragement to reprioritise resources (e.g., addressing high rents). The proposed tool would be valuable for lobbying and advocacy.
- Queen's MCR: In rent negotiations, colleges often cite comparative positioning without data. The proposed monitor would provide essential context. Also noted the tool's usefulness for ongoing projects, such as catering cost reviews.
- St Catz MCR: Expressed hope that the working group will ensure data is archived and published online for transparency and use in future negotiations.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments against.

5. Fair Student Finance and Maintenance Reform

Proposed by: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates; Wantoe Wantoe, SU President for Postgraduates; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Amended by:

Decision Type: Conference Policy

Presented by: Wantoe T. Wantoe

WW introduced the motion, calling for reform to maintenance support for students. He noted that many students face shortfalls of £3,000–£4,000 per year between the available student

loan and actual living costs. The cost of living in Oxford, in particular, is significantly higher than average, intensifying this gap.

Questions:

- Keble JCR: What is the proposed funding model?
- WW: The Government's proposed model is public; the University's model remains confidential. The outcome of this motion could inform and influence both. The motion is therefore critical to ensure student representation in future frameworks.
- St Catz MCR: Raised concern over regional uplifts in student loans for more expensive areas, suggesting this could create disparities.
- WW: Some elements remain confidential, but outcomes may disproportionately impact international students.
- SP: Added that while some motions relate to national lobbying, the CCR continues to act sensitively on behalf of its constituent groups. The work aligns with national campaigns through the RGSU (Russell Group Students' Unions) while maintaining focus on the lived experience of Oxford students.

Comments FOR the motion:

- No comments for.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments against.

6. National Hardship and Travel Support

Proposed by: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates; Wantoe Wantoe, SU President for Postgraduates; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Decision Type: Conference Mandate

Presented By: Seun Sowunmi

SS: introduced the motion, explaining that travel in Oxford is expensive for students and that the motion seeks to address this by advocating for free bus travel for students under 22, a no age-limit railcard, collaboration with Oxford Brookes University/Brookes Union on a city-wide campaign, and engagement with colleges to strengthen local support. It also calls for a ringfenced student hardship fund dedicated to travel grants, both locally and nationally in partnership with the NUS. Meetings have been scheduled with Anneliese Dodds MP for Oxford East, Layla Moran MP for Oxford West and members of Oxford City Council.

Questions:

- Lincoln MCR: Noted that students already have access to a railcard, and that the motion's wording is not inclusive of postgraduate and/or mature students.
- SP: We can work on wording to ensure that the motion is inclusive.
- Oriel JCR: Suggested lobbying for a free or discounted model similar to Oxford Brookes.

- Queen's MCR: Pointed out that Brookes' bus scheme was discontinued due to cost and questioned whether such a model is realistic for Oxford. Also queried why collaboration with Brookes is being pursued if the scheme proved unsustainable.
- SS: Clarified that the motion mandates exploratory work. Collaboration with Brookes will focus on ensuring feasibility and sustainability.
- St Catz MCR: Asked for clarification on the "budget submission" referenced in the motion.
- SU: Explained that the budget refers to a submission sent by RGSU to the Treasury on travel issues. Oxford SU also submitted a localised proposal to support lobbying efforts, marking the first time such an initiative has been undertaken.
- Keble JCR: Where would the funding come from? Would it be University or local council? if local council cover costs this could create tension with the local community.
- SP: Funding could come from either the Council or the University, specifics to be clarified.
- Merton MCR: Asked whether the SU is advocating for all under-22s or specifically for students.
- SS: Clarified that the campaign is student-specific and aligns with the SU's charitable objectives. Wording will be refined for clarity.

Comments FOR the motion:

- St Cross SRC: Noted strong support, highlighting that such a scheme would ease financial pressure for students, particularly medics and those with mobility or health conditions. Collaboration with Oxford Brookes could also improve inter-university relations.
- St Hugh's JCR: Shared that their JCR has previously lobbied for similar support and would welcome a broader campaign.
- St Catz MCR: Expressed support and suggested expanding advocacy to include a wider range of travel options beyond bus and rail.
- MCR Deputy Co-Chair: Clarified the existing funding structure differences between the 16–25 Railcard and the one-year postgraduate card.
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Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments against.

7. Opposition to the International Student Levy

Proposed by: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates; Wantoe Wantoe, SU President for Postgraduates; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Decision Type: Conference Policy

Presented By: Seun Sowunmi

SS: introduced the motion, explaining that the cost of study for international students continues to rise and that a proposed 6% increase in international student fees would add further financial strain. He emphasised that this increase risks reducing international student

enrolment and, in turn, threatening University finances. The motion seeks to formally oppose the levy and advocate against additional financial burdens on international students.

Questions:

- Balliol JCR: Asked whether the motion is intended to oppose the Government's introduction of the levy or the University's implementation of it.
- SS: The motion would cover both.
- Somerville MCR: Asked how the 6% figure was determined.
- SS: The figure originates from discussions within NUS and RGSU.
- Christ Church JCR: Asked whether other Students' Unions are working on this issue.
- SS: Confirmed that other Russell Group Students' Unions are actively involved.
- SP: Added that at the recent RGSU Conference, opposing the levy was identified as a top three priority, with unanimous agreement to take a collective stance.

Comments FOR the motion:

- No comments for the motion.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments against the motion.

Below the Line (final approval – not for discussion unless requested)

8. Common Room Election Platform

9. Fee Model Consideration

10. Oxford Water Safety

11. EIRRS Expansion

12. AOB:

- Lincoln MCR: suggested that all supporting or reference documents should be linked directly in meeting agendas for ease of access.
- Merton MCR: highlighted the need for more frequent reminders about CCR meetings to encourage engagement and attendance.
- Several members raised concerns about website navigation and accessibility, particularly regarding policy documents and insight reports.
 - SU: Confirmed that the website is currently being improved to address these issues.

University Endowment Transparency

- St Catz MCR: raised concerns about transparency surrounding the University's endowment fund, noting strong opposition within their MCR to investment in arms companies and signalling plans to proposed submitting a motion demanding greater transparency at the next meeting.

MCR and JCR PresComs

- WW: thanked MCR Presidents for their engagement and confirmed that the next MCR Presidents' Committee will be held in Week 7 at St Anne's, thanking Lincoln MCR for hosting the most recent meeting.
- SP: also extended thanks to the JCR PresCom hosted by Magdalen College JCR.
- SP: confirmed that future CCR Action Log updates will include PresCom information and offered to facilitate more informal discussions on upcoming motions if time permits.

University Sports Facilities

- AB: requested members' views on University sports facilities, particularly regarding access and quality, to inform a potential motion on the issue.
 - Jesus MCR: said that sports provision varies across colleges and described University facilities as poor compared to other institutions.
 - Somerville MCR: inadequate University gym facilities push students to pay for expensive external gyms, mentioned paying around £30 per month for Buzz gym which is full of fellow students due to poor college provision.
 - Wadham SU: Raised concerns about limited access to pools, high costs (at Iffley Road Sports Centre), and push to unsafe wild swimming at Hinksey Lake, linking to the Think Twice campaign.
 - Queen's MCR: Agreed that both University and college facilities are lacking but warned that pushing too hard on University reform might complicate college-level lobbying.
 - Jesus MCR: Suggested that water safety issues relate more to alcohol consumption than facility access.
 - Hertford JCR: Shared that Hertford replaced its gym with Iffley Road Sports Centre memberships, but engagement was low due to distance and accessibility issues.
 - St Cross SRC: Emphasised that sport is closely linked to wellbeing, and the quality of Iffley Road equipment is poor. Some students prefer to use external gyms despite living close to Iffley, reinforcing concerns about equipment quality and value for money.
 - Jesus JCR: Noted that the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport), Alex Betts, is interested in renovating the Iffley Road Sports Centre and asked whether this could connect with AB's motion.
 - AB: Confirmed that plans for renovation exist and I am working closely with Alex Betts (PVC Sport) and will feedback CCR comments, but current facilities remain unfit for purpose; called for a more centralised and accessible University sports offering

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 25th November (Week 7), 18:00-20:00, location (same): Lecture Theatre, H B Allen Centre.