

MINUTES OF THE  
LENT 2016 TERMLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE  
DARWIN COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (DCSA)

Held in the  
Common Room  
Darwin College Cambridge



On Monday  
15<sup>th</sup> February 2016  
at 20.00

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The chairperson, Stephanie Ashenden (DCSA President), called the meeting to order at 20:08. The DCSA Secretary, Elaine Gray, recorded the minutes of the proceedings.

**II. CERTIFICATION OF NOTICE AND QUORUM**

Approximately 27 students were in attendance at any given time during the General Meeting. The quorum of 50 fee-paying students (10% of current Darwin students) was not reached.

**III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES**

Those present were informed that the minutes from the last Michaelmas 2015 Termly General Meeting, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015, were available on the new DCSA website and unless anyone objects by 20.00 on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 they will be taken as approved with no amendments.

**IV. MATTERS ARISING**

**1. Cuban Salsa Society**

Someone from the Cuban Salsa Society asked whether permission could be granted for the society to use the speakers in bar and they were informed this cannot happen as they cannot have access to the bar. They then requested extra money from the budget for

speakers and Stephanie informed them they have to submit a proposal to the DCSA for this and then they will be invited to an Executive Committee meeting to discuss it.

## **2. Bradfield Court**

The issue of what Bradfield Court will be used for was raised. Darwin College website states it is being built for student purpose, but the boards in the Parlour indicate it is for functions. Stephanie stated she would talk about the issue at the College Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

Several students raised concerns over Bradfield Court, including that the likely outcome is that it will mostly be used for external use and not as a space for students to use as stipulated by Trinity College (who is partly funding the build). It was said that during previous Buildings and Grounds committee meetings that the DCSA/students would be consulted on what Bradfield Court could possibly be used for to aid the planning of the building, for example, the best flooring for the activities envisaged to take place there.

Another concern raised was the loss of the green space. Darwin College does not have a lot of green space and what we have is valuable – the question of whether losing this green space in return for such a building would not be worth it unless students can use it. On a similar matter the concern of how the building would look from both inside and outside the College grounds was spoken of, including the views it could potentially block.

## **3. Library books**

A student asked whether funds could be raised to buy new books for the Study Centre, as many of the books the student needed were quite expensive. Stephanie stated that this cannot be funded through the DCSA, and that the library committee is responsible. Another student stated that the current Librarian, Girish, is active and accepting book recommendations and buying new books when possible. However, Girish has informed the student that there is not budget to buy the books he had requested. Another student also stated that the College does not try to hold all books – it is technically a study centre and not a library, and the University Library is available for such issues. Stephanie told the student she would contact John Dix, the bursar, to ask for more funds to be released in order to buy new books for the study centre.

## **4. Staying in College during Darwin May Ball**

A student asked whether it was true that students staying on main site and cannot stay in room during the night of May Ball. Stephanie confirmed this was true and because of security issues. Stephanie explained that the Accommodation Office would try to ensure anyone affected would have somewhere else to stay on the night.

## **V. BUDGET**

Eric, the Treasurer, updated those present on the annual budget. The annual grant has now been transferred to the DCSA. This happens every year and is made up of a percentage of the student college fees. The exact amount the College receives will not be known until Easter term, but the same estimate as last year was used this year, despite there being 20 fee-paying students less. However, the realised grant is lower than Eric budgeted for which has resulted in the budget currently being in the red. Changes to the college and course fees no longer being combined may account for this. There has been suggestion that this might change in future, which may change the budget calculations, but it will not affect this year's budget. Eric stated we need a higher percentage if this continues and he will contact Finance.

Due to the lower budget, all the societies' budgets will remain the same and Eric stated he would not cut any societies' budgets mid-way through the year. Little has changed since the budget was presented at the Michaelmas GM, however there is an issue with women's basketball who have a setback of £750 due to late receipts. Eric is trying to ensure it is paid off in instalments over the remainder of this year and the forthcoming year(s) rather than all at once.

Eric updated everyone that how CUSU charges fees may change in future – instead of a fixed amount it may change to £2.50 per student. Three years ago the DCSA tried to disaffiliate from CUSU and since then the DCSA has not been billed or paid for CUSU fees. However, Eric has been informed we will be billed in Lent term this year and has already budgeted for it. Eric has stated that there has been some discussion regarding how the fees are paid – whether through the DCSA or directly through college. The question of whether the DCSA should stay affiliated with CUSU was raised, but not discussed.

Stephanie and Eric emphasised that all societies must bring back receipts in a timely manner in order to keep the budget up to date.

## **VI Declaration of motion submissions**

Before discussing the motions Elaine declared to those present that motion 1 was submitted on time, but was given the chance to edit the text, as it was unclear if what was received was meant to be the text to the motion. The changes were only submitted on the day, but were accepted as the text to the motion was much clearer and people would know beforehand what the motion referred to.

Motion 3 was received after the deadline, but was accepted as the Elaine was informed that those proposing the motion were clarifying some of the details before submitting it.

A fourth motion was submitted without text and without a consenting seconder. Elaine gave them the chance to add text and have the seconder approve it, but the motion was never received and therefore not on the agenda.

## **VII. MOTION 1: To create a DCSA Arts Officer position**

Proposer: Karoliina Pulkkinen (kjp41)

Secunder: Ala Alenazi (aa796)

*Text of the motion:*

“The DCSA committee has two positions for sports officers to represent the interests of the sports societies of college. In this light, it is surprising that the arts societies of the college (e.g. The Photosoc, Darwin Drink and Draw, the film society) do not enjoy a formal representation in the DCSA committee. I propose that such a position is created.”

Stephanie stated that the DCSA Executive Committee would deal with this motion and the discussion at the GM was only to gather views and to take questions. Karoliina, the proposer, stated that art societies are not represented on the committee and a discussion was had as to what an Art Officer may be responsible for.

*Discussion of the motion:*

*A. You make comparison with Sports Officers, as if they are representing the sports societies, but they are independent - it is not in their role as stated in the constitution to do this. The Sports Officers oversee and support sports societies. They ensure all sports societies have Presidents and Treasurers and maintain the sports cupboards/equipment. There might be a place for an Arts Officer to oversee equipment from other societies.*

*Q. Perhaps there could be Sports Officers and then an officer for all other remaining societies?*

*A. Other societies do not have nearly as much physical equipment.*

*A. Non-sports societies have been purchasing more equipment in recent years.*

*Q Perhaps the Sports Officers' duties should be split – one just organising sports day and the second deals with other matters.*

*A. The Sports Officers considered this, but it was determined it would not work.*

*A. Other colleges are known to have a single officer responsible for both sports and arts.*

Following the discussion Stephanie stated the DCSA Executive Committee would discuss it further and get in contact with Karoliina.

## **VIII. MOTION 2: For the college study centre windows to be cleaned urgently**

Proposer: Girish Nivarti (gvn22)

Secunder: Amani Zalzali ([zalzali27@gmail.com](mailto:zalzali27@gmail.com))

*Text of the motion:*

“The study centre is not merely a place for bookshelves; instead, it is a critical part of student life at Darwin. Throughout the year, students use the quaint premises to engage in academic coursework as well as in contemplation of their research problems. The study centre is not a luxury — in fact, for almost all Masters students and many PhD students, it is the only place in the university which provides desks to study. In particular, the Lent term witnesses the heaviest usage of the study centre because of the imminent examinations.

Over the last few years, the windows have gathered copious amounts of dust, cobwebs and, most importantly, bird excrement. A student motivated in the morning is often discouraged by the dark and depressing environment this creates. Of course, the excrement also hinders what could have been a rather delightful sight — that of the Cam and the island.

Since my appointment as the student librarian in October 2015, this issue has been brought up several times: 1) at the library committee meeting, 2) directly with the Clerk of Works, 3) by speaking to the accommodation office, 4) by communicating the need to the Domestic Bursar, and finally 5) by requesting the cleaning staff. Despite these attempts, the current situation and progress both appear grim at best. In this light, I propose that all window panes of the college study centre be cleaned urgently and thoroughly.”

*Discussion of the motion:*

Stephanie stated that the Bursar had been in contact to confirm that the date for the windows to be cleaned has already been set for spring or early summer time, therefore the motion need not be taken further unless anyone wanted to add to it. No further comments were received and no discussion was had.

## **IX. MOTION 3: To mandate the DCSA to negotiate with the college in order to minimise adverse effects of VAT charges on the student body and a requirement to communicate price changes to college members**

Proposer: Florian Roessler (fdr20)

Secunder: Giles Shaw (gwhs2)

*Text of the motion:*

“Due to increased external catering and events activity, the college has exceeded the maximum allowed value of sold goods to stay VAT exempt as a charity and is now required to pay VAT on all alcohol sold to students and on all food/services sold to (non student) guests. The price of a normal meal for students is unaffected, but alcohol purchased during normal serverly hours is now 20% more expensive. The change which is likely to affect students the most is a price increase of 20% for formal hall tickets, starting in Easter term. This price increase is due to the inclusion of wine as part of the formal hall ticket but is an increase of 20% of the total cost, rather than of just the (unknown) cost of the wine served during the meal. Especially affected by this are students who choose not to consume alcoholic beverages and will unfairly suffer from this price increase. This motion aims to mandate the DCSA to negotiate with the college in order to reduce the adverse effects on the student body. If the college wishes to increase its income through catering and events, this should not adversely affect students.

Additionally, as part of the mandate, the DCSA should negotiate a requirement for the College to communicate any price changes that affect students or their guest. Recently, price changes in the hall and for guest accommodation have been increased without prior announcement. This pushes the student body and the DCSA into a reactive role as opposed to a participatory one.”

*Discussion of the motion:*

Florian, the proposer, began by stating that since the motion was published he had received extra information from Ivan the Catering Manager and Helen from Finance. The college has had to register to pay VAT due to the revenue made from non-student events. Anything deemed as for students’ educational interest/purpose will not be charged VAT. Ultimately, this means prices for students are not severely affected and only Formal hall prices will change. Formal Hall is not deemed to be for educational purpose – it is entertainment – so VAT has to be charged on alcohol. The price change has not yet come into effect because the Darwin Lecture Series is deemed educational, thus no VAT is charged, however, this will change in Easter term. There will be an increase on Formal Hall prices to £16 for students and £22 for student guests and £25 for non-student guests.

It was stated that VAT on the guest rooms must be paid if used for a non-student.

It was also clarified that students who buy food at the serverly, whether from Darwin or elsewhere, do not pay VAT. However, students outwith Darwin do have to pay a 30% surcharge, and non-student guests have to pay VAT and the 30% surcharge.

Florian stated that Ivan and Helen agreed the announcement of price changes in relation to the servery and accommodation could have been better and both wanted to make an effort to improve this in future by publishing changes earlier and making a bigger effort to communicate these changes.

A discussion was had following Florian's update on the motion:

*Q. Will Formal Hall booking change? It doesn't say if a student is being booking in?*

*A. There is no way to book like this now.*

*Q. Is it possible to buy/book in for non-alcohol Formal Hall tickets?*

*A. Florian enquired about students bringing their own wine, but the alcohol license held by the college may prevent this.*

*Q. Suggestions on how to change the system so non-alcohol ticket holders can be purchased?*

*A. St John's do this by using different glasses to identify who has paid and not paid for alcohol.*

*A. Name cards with ticket type printed on them (including the date).*

*Q. It is possible to sit in the Common Room/bar with alcohol, so why not the dining hall?*

*A. You are not allowed to bring your own alcohol into the Common Room/Bar area.*

*A. Florian has also enquired about corkage fees for the Hall should non-alcohol tickets be allowed.*

*A. The technical details can determined by the college - it is unclear how a way to identify alcohol and non-alcohol tickets would be too difficult to solve.*

*Florian stated that Darwin is the last Cambridge college to be VAT registered.*

*Q. Can we not get rid of VAT?*

*A. No, it is a legal requirement.*

*Q. Is Catering making money on formal halls?*

*A. The food quality has gone up and so has prices, which is justifiable, but the price has gone up again in last 12 months, which is maybe not justifiable.*

*A. If they make money on wine they should drop the price of wine on the ticket, as they will still make some money - Formal Hall is normally full. They shouldn't make profit on wine, just food.*

*A. Formal Hall makes a profit which subsidises food prices at regular meals.*

*A. Maybe they hope these price increases mean food is not subsidised?*

*A. Reducing price of wine isn't going to solve the problem, but if they buy/use cheaper wine it could help?*

*A. If the option is to keep formal prices as they are or increase prices at servery then most students are likely to agree increased formal prices is better.*

*Q. Is it possible to get itemised bills?*

*A. You can ask for receipts.*

- A. You can watch the till each time to see running total for the month.*
- A. If you ask the college they will give you an itemised bill.*
- A. Florian said he would look into itemised billing.*

**X. AOB**

No other items were raised.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Stephanie (President) at 20:56.

*The foregoing minutes were approved by the DCSA Executive Committee on \_\_\_\_\_.*

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*Stephanie Ashenden  
Chairman, DCSA President*

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*Elaine Gray  
Secretary, DCSA Secretary*