

The Draft Minutes of
THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
3rd Week Michaelmas Term 2018
October 22nd 2018
The President's Office, 15:00

Present:

The President (Mr Stephen Horvath, *New College*), **The President-Elect** (Mr Daniel Wilkinson, *Oriel College*), **The Librarian** (Ms Genevieve Athis, *Christ Church*), **The Librarian-Elect** (Mr Brendan McGrath, *Oriel College*), **The Treasurer** (Mr James Lamming, *Exeter College*), **The Treasurer-Elect** (Ms Amy Gregg, *Somerville College*), **The Secretary** (Mr Nick Brown, *Magdalen College*), **The Bursar** (Ms Lindsey Warne), **The Senior Treasurer** (Mr Stephen Dixon, *Downing College, Cambridge*), **The Chair of Debate Select Committee** (Mr Andrew Seow, *Lincoln College*), **The Elected Member** (Mr Robert Cootes, *Christ Church*), **The Elected Member** (Mr Thomas Laver, *Balliol College*), **Standing Committee Delegate** (Ms Gemma Timmons, *Magdalen College*), **Standing Committee Delegate** (Ms Mahi Joshi, *Trinity College*).

Attending:

The CCC (Mr Patrick Cole, *Lady Margaret Hall*).

Apologies

No apologies.

Absent:

None.

The President opens this Ordinary Meeting of Finance Committee at 15:10 in the President's Office.

Ratification of Minutes

The President moves to ratify the minutes written by **Mahi Joshi** from the Finance Committee meeting last week.

Passes Nem. Con.

Requests to Pass Absences from Previous Meetings

- **The Treasurer-Elect** asks to pass her absence from the meeting of the Finance Committee last week as she had a medical emergency to which to attend in her capacity as sub-dean of Magdalen College. **The President** moves to pass this absence as a pressing and extraordinary engagement, with good reason.

The President grants the CCC speaking rights.

Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

- **The President** confirms that the CCC purchased a remote controller for speaker presentation, as per the request of the last meeting of the Finance Committee.
- **The CCC** confirms that he has since been reimbursed for the remote controller.

The President

Business of the President

The President has no business.

Questions to the President

There are no questions to the President.

The President-Elect

Business of the President-Elect

Update on the Membership Drive:

- **The Bursar** announces an improvement in the Membership Drive since the last meeting of the Finance Committee, with the Membership Drive being greater than those of the last three years. **The Bursar** thanks the **President** for putting on well-attended events.
- **The President** thanks the **President-Elect** and **Treasurer-Elect** for their good work. **The President** comments on the misconstruction of the membership drive in the press, highlighting successful initiatives including: The Nexus OUSU mailshot; flyers; high attendance of non-political speaker events (the Science debate and Jon Stewart and Dave Chapelle event had over 700 members each in attendance).

The President passes a formal motion of thanks to the President-elect, Treasurer-elect and Bursar.

- **The President** notes for future terms and Membership Drives that there should be more social media promotion of the Oxford Union, including but not limited to: A-level results day; before freshers' week; during freshers' week.
- **The Senior Treasurer** comments that while Oxford Union finances have been stable due to a small net contribution year on year for (but not limited to) the past few years, the finances of the Union have not been stronger for a number of years.
- **The President** reminds the Finance Committee that they cannot release comments to the press without first sending a formal written request to the President via email, which will be authorised on a case-by-case basis. **The President** notes that he is not aiming to restrict the free speech of Committee members, but rather to ensure that the Committee speaks with one voice, collating their views and solving problems together.
- **The Treasurer-Elect** asks whether the **President** will relay updates on the Membership Drive to Cherwell, and whether he will ask for a clarification and/or apology.
- **The President** states that he will inform Cherwell that the Oxford Union is in good financial health, with a better Membership Drive than the last three years. He comments that the **Senior Treasurer** is not to be blamed for the termcard, and that he (the **President**) will ask Cherwell to clarify their errors in the next printed edition of Cherwell on Page 2 and will ask them to remove the erroneous material from the Cherwell website.
- **The Bursar** mentions that given that the Cherwell article in question features on Google, the Oxford Union will need a higher profile apology.
- **The President** comments on the general good health of the Oxford Union's finances, and that the Membership Drive went well. As such, he will work with the **President-elect** and ask Cherwell to remove the online article in question. **The President** mentions the well-attended events in Second Week and the success of promotional materials.
- **The Senior Treasurer** and **President** confirm that Cherwell is subject to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) (part of the Independent Standard of Press Organisations (ISPO)). The President suggests taking an intermediary, moderate step of asking for an apology and clarification before taking further measures with the PCC and ISPO.
- **The President** and **Bursar** comment that there is time for growth ahead in the terms to come.
- **The President** mentions that a committee member of the Mansfield MCR asked him about waiving the membership fee, due to their physical disabilities and limited financial means. **The President** mentions that he told the student in question that he is unable to waive the membership fee due to Oxford Union policy. **The President** did not highlight instalments to the student in question as he felt it would be inappropriate (given that the student had no financial means, they may not be able to pay by instalments either). **The Librarian** confirms that the student in question is aware of the method to pay by instalments.
- **The Senior Treasurer** asks about the effect of the Cherwell article on membership numbers. **The President** comments that the extent of a possible direct causal effect is hard to establish.

Questions to the President-Elect

- **The President** asks the **President-Elect** if he has any other Membership Drive-specific events planned. **The President-Elect** replies that he does not.

The Librarian

Business of the Librarian

The Librarian has no business.

Questions to the Librarian

There are no questions to the Librarian.

The Librarian-Elect

Business of the Librarian-Elect

The Librarian-Elect has no business.

Questions to the Librarian-Elect

There are no questions to the Librarian-Elect.

The Treasurer

Business of the Treasurer

The Treasurer moves that the Finance Committee recommend to the Standing Committee that they pass a motion to pass DSC expenses totalling £3474.35

The President seconds the motion.

Passes Nem. Con

The Senior Treasurer leaves the room at 15:22.

- **The Bursar** comments that these expenses are particularly high.
- **The CSDC** explains that 2 WUDC (World University Debating Competition) expenses have just been submitted, which contributed to the high expenses claims this week.
- **The Bursar** asks about the £1675 per person cap on expenses claims for flights, which still seems expensive.
- **The CDSC** explains that this sum allows for some leeway in case flight prices checked and earmarked in advance are not available later on. **The Bursar** asks about 'STA' travel agency, which often provides lower prices, and asks if it would be cheaper to use an alternative agent.
- **The CDSC** mentions that the current travel agency used offers cheaper prices for flights to and from Cape Town. **The CDSC** mentions an aim to avoid long transit hours (which can total up to 19 hours on one flight). **The Bursar** comments that she would like a happy medium.

Questions to the Treasurer

There are no questions to the Treasurer.

The Treasurer-Elect

Business of the Treasurer-Elect

The recruitment budget:

- **The Treasurer-Elect** comments that the Oxford Union contracted a banner for the Oxford Union on the Cherwell website. The Oxford Union contracted this through OSPL (Oxford Student Publication Limited); the company which owns Cherwell and had no direct dealings with Cherwell on this matter. The banner was agreed to be displayed for 4 weeks, covering the recruitment drive period.
- **The Treasurer-Elect** comments that other firms' banners were also displayed on the Cherwell website. When contacted, OSPL stated that the Union is on a rolling basis with other companies. **The Treasurer-Elect** claims that this was not stipulated in the original contract and that the Oxford Union was not provided with a 'rate card' outlining terms and conditions of the contract. **The Treasurer-Elect** confirmed that OSPL will reduce the cost of the contract based on people reached, from £450 + VAT to approximately £270. OSPL will invoice the Oxford Union for this difference.
- **The President** asks that next week's Finance Committee mention the new recruitment drive format under the business of the President-elect.

Questions to the Treasurer-Elect

There are no questions to the Treasurer-Elect.

The Secretary

Business of the Secretary

The Secretary has no business.

Questions to the Secretary

- **The President** asks whether preparations for the Ball are all ok. **The Secretary** confirms that they are.

The Bursar

Business of the Bursar

The Bursar has no business.

Questions to the Bursar

There are no questions to the Bursar.

The Senior Treasurer

Business of the Senior Treasurer

Senior Treasurer has no business.

Questions to the Senior Treasurer

There are no questions to the Senior Treasurer.

Chair of the Debate Select Committee

Business of the Chair of the Debate Select Committee

Chair of the Debate Select Committee has no business.

Questions to the Chair of the Debate Select Committee

There are no questions to the Chair of the Debate Select Committee.

Mr Thomas Laver:

Business of Mr Laver

- **Mr Laver** asks that, following discussions of the Finance Committee in previous terms, Rule 66 is defunct by creating a remit for a separate audit committee. **Mr Laver** discusses either abolishing, removing or changing the audit committee as it stands. He highlights some benefits of the committee and comments on the distinction between the audit committee and the whistleblowing committee.

The Librarian leaves the room at 15:27.

- **The President** comments that he wants to ensure that members be able to scrutinise the finances of the Oxford Union. Currently, members are able to ask about accounts. However, this does not account for current practices (whereby the Oxford Union files expenses with auditors and does not keep every receipt).
- **The President** agrees that it seems like a good idea to reform Rule 66.

The CCC leaves the room at 15:27.

- **The President** considers bringing some of the provisos of Rule 66 under the mandate of the Finance Committee.

The Secretary leaves the room at 15:28.

- **The President** mentions that bringing some of the powers of the audit committee under the Finance Committee would be good in order to update and harmonise the Finance Committee, bringing things in line with current standards.
- **The President** asks **Mr Laver** to tidy up Rule 66, bringing it in line with modern standards, and to speak to **The Bursar** about it.

Questions to Mr Laver

There are no questions to Mr Laver.

Mr Robert Cootes:

Business of Mr Cootes

Mr Cootes has no business.

Questions to Mr Cootes

There are no questions to Mr Cootes.

Changes to the Composition of this Committee

- **The President** mentions that Mr Adithya Menon is no longer a member of the Finance Committee and asks that the **RO** should organise an election for a new member of the Finance Committee.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of The Finance Committee was set for Monday 29th October, 4th Week Michaelmas Term 2018, at 15:00, in the President's Office.

***The Secretary** enters the room at 15:29.*

***The President** closes this Ordinary Meeting of Finance Committee at 15:30.*

Signed,

G. TIMMONS

Gemma Timmons

Magdalen College

Ordinary Member, elected Member of Standing Committee