

Community Committee Meeting, 15.11.2020

Present: Serge Chapman (external trustee), Sarah Panek (VC of trustees), Emma Stephens (SWO), Jack Pearce (trustee), Saskia Wootton-Cane (president), Alfie Whillis (SRO), Ben Thomas (chair), Chiedza Mhondoro (external trustee)

Apologies: Lottie Brand (Outreach)

Absent: Kirstin McCann (trustee)

Agenda Point	Discussion	Actions and Owners
1. Welcome and Minutes of Previous Meeting	<p>SC welcome</p> <p>All members introduce themselves.</p> <p>Minutes passed.</p>	Minutes Passed
2. Communities Committee	<p>SC is there an update as to where this committee is sitting, have the positions been filled, and are there any concerns?</p> <p>SWC discussed it with the people on the committee and GovComm and think the committee should exist as a committee but without the community chair role as people do not seem keen to be the overarching person rather than working with the community you represent. More of an admin role for the positions people are actually attracted to.</p> <p>SC can we just introduce how the committee was made up and what it's role was</p> <p>SWC a committee chaired by communities officer (had 2 resignations before they even started so not really counting as having been filled), consisted of LGBT, SwD, local students, working class, international, ethnic minorities and</p>	

	<p>assistant reps, with the officer sitting on the exec.</p> <p>SC and the reps would run their campaigns and represent the minority groups?</p> <p>SWC yes a position with lots of freedom and autonomy, but this made the role challenging as people take up these roles because they have ideas and the officer is left coordinating and not channelling their passions. This is a current suggestion to the JCR meeting on Tuesday - the officer role should be removed and replaced by an internally elected chair. The same job but with a couple extra responsibilities. Able to send a delegate to exec meetings and for the purposes of those meetings will get a vote, and provide a direct voice and line to the exec but will not have the responsibilities of being an exec member. Still allowing these voices to be heard when issues are presented to the exec. Hasn't been passed yet, needs to be in the JCR meeting, but there has been lots of consultation with the relevant people so hopeful that this will be a more promising solution than what has come before.</p> <p>SC how does the rest of the committee feel about that? You say you've consulted them and they seem supportive? Any questions?</p> <p>SC sounds like the governance side is being addressed, certainly from a structural standpoint, keep this as a standing agenda point while this settles.</p>	
<p>3. Current (anything pressing that needs discussing)</p>	<p>SC is there anything particularly current that falls within our remit to discuss that isn't covered later on in the meeting?</p> <p>SWC one thing - in terms of Cuth's Welfare doing harm reduction campaigning. I don't think we are pushing boundaries but it is there. It is something I am pursuing within the university, as Durham has zero tolerance drug policy which doesn't tend to play out in practice. I think this is more damaging and stops people getting help as they are worried about repercussions. The private nature of lockdown means that people are less aware of problems, and so this has been flagged. Wondering how far we can go with harm reduction campaigning, having spoken to some trustees and college staff. Keen to see where we can</p>	

	<p>go from that. I think Welfare have done a good job keeping to practical advice and signposting</p> <p>CM what kind of things have you done?</p> <p>SWC it's very broad -- hoping we can do more specific ones in the future. We have done ones on drugs and signposting around where you got them from, your friends, whether you consented to taking the drugs, medical attention, research mixing and the outcomes from that etc. Pushing the message of signposting for further information and who you can contact within the JCR and college, and most importantly that there is no guarantee about what will happen but in most cases college will check you are ok rather than calling together a disciplinary meeting. The number one priority is always student safety and them being fit to study.</p> <p>SC do both SWC and ES feel ok in your support if students come to you in relation to this, are you ok with your role in that and do you have access to all the resources you need.</p> <p>ES something I have discussed with college about where our boundaries are in a sense of if someone came to us with that issue. Our policy is that we operate confidentially unless there is a risk of harm or permission - I wanted to know where we stood in relation to the zero tolerance policy, but we don't necessarily have to unless it is causing considerable detriment to themselves or others. In terms of external resources it is something I've done a lot of research on and so that is where a lot of the information for this campaign has come from.</p> <p>SC you are ok then with knowing where your boundaries are and having discussed with college?</p> <p>ES yes definitely, and having discussed with college about the boundaries was very helpful in terms of confidentiality. In ourselves we all have our own personal boundaries which we all set and adhere to so I think we are all ok on that front.</p>	
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	<p>SWC I think it's something I'd like to know more about. I have contacted the SU first aid society and they want to give training to any JCR president who would like it. I've been looking for this personally since second year for JCR presidents and welfare teams, and hopefully one day for freps. Since presidents live in college this training would hopefully cover that base. Hoping to set up a link for that for future so something can be done before freshers week next year. Not formal training, but more about knowledge and confidence. I have asked if ES can come along, and they likely will say yes since it is online, and it is reasonably priced at £2 per person. In future I think that would be something good to be continued, and also trying to make sure that the things that ES is talking about is handed over to the next SWO and JCR president. Might be a conversation that needs repeating, but good to have a basis.</p> <p>SC that all sounds good. Any further comments or questions? Well done to both of you for taking this head on, it's a difficult situation with a zero tolerance policy, and well done for researching it all. Congratulations for getting further support, engaging with college and just well done for looking after yourselves. Thinking about handovers is very important, you clearly have a good grasp of how important that is, so good to be thinking of the future.</p>	
4. Freshers	<p>SC last meeting we spoke about freshers week and the impressions of it. Seems largely to have been successful and done the best we could given the circumstances. How is the integration going under the current circumstances?</p> <p>SWC it's ok. I don't think it could be any better given the circumstances. Positively a lot of freshers are involved in committees, but the problems are obvious ones -- a difficult time to come to university, the biggest problem being if people don't get on with their household or if there is difficult behaviour within your household (whatever that may be), these problems still exist but it is harder for us to see it. People are only coming to me when they are at breaking point and when these problems have been long standing, which is frustrating as there is little I can do at that point with immediate effect. The one positive to take away is that they are sometimes coming to me which could not be</p>	

	<p>happening. It's been a difficult line to walk this year given where my flat is. The most important thing is that they know someone is here for them who isn't on the lookout like porters and police (already had instances of police interference). I view my contribution as being supportive rather than watching them. When sports and societies were running people were getting involved, so should things open up before the end of the year there won't be any long term damage to the JCR, but it hasn't been an easy first term</p> <p>ES from my perspective there was a lot going on in freshers week and right after where people were reaching out almost exclusively to me over other officers, but since then it has been non-existent. The only thing we've been doing is dispersing information through campaigns and I don't know if that's good or not. Can't go looking for people and making them reach out, but it could be a positive in a sense that everybody is fine but I don't think that's the case. One of those ones where I'm struggling to come up with solutions.</p> <p>SC any comments from AW and BT or JCR engagement?</p> <p>BT not very good fresher involvement, some are keen and have turned up to meetings, but there are a few volunteer librarians. A lot of them are going for application roles rather than husting in meetings.</p> <p>AW would echo this. Having put together a list of everyone who holds a JCR position it seems like there are a fair few freshers on committees. Spoke to a few people about their applications and in retrospect a lot of freshers applied so they are there but no one has run for a position. Maybe 4 freshers who hold a method 2 or 1 position. The bigger concern for me is GovComm as there is no fresher interest at all, which is to be expected since people get prodded from JCR meetings, so worried that it will be empty next year.</p> <p>SC that is a useful insight. Are there any questions, comments or thoughts related to this? It strikes me that this term has been very challenging and feeling that sense of community. Presumably you all felt that after your own freshers weeks, but that must be missing this year as that is what gets you</p>	
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	<p>involved in these committees and sports and socs. Is there something that is being considered around trying to re-engage this community of first years with other people outside of their households when that's allowed, with different societies or other ways of engagement? Maybe looking again particularly at committees or positions where there may be succession issues?</p> <p>SWC broadly there is an effort within the confines of the law, more about general support but there is still an element of community. We are doing some online events, uptake is patchy, but with things like formals being such a big thing in the community we hoped things would get better not worse but then they got worse. We are going to do online formals which we had hoped would be in person, but we will do some christmas ones. I hope freshers did meet older years through sports and societies and freshers, and that they used the opportunity to meet new people and get out of the house. We did do college families, but whether they have met or not I don't really know. There doesn't seem to be an appetite to do it online, but about pushing it again once things open up. I don't want to be overly optimistic, but with the mass testing this seems to be the ticket to wider student experience. When things open up, we will do a refreshers fair and redo college families. I'm willing to throw all my energy at this once things open up, we will push in the right direction but there is only so much we can do right now.</p> <p>SC well done for all being done so far, thinking ahead is great. Hopefully mass testing does work, but online activities seem like a good back up. Any more thoughts or comments?</p> <p>AW for exec elections, I think we have to have the biggest promotional push ever. I've been thinking about it already and thinking of throwing some money at it. I think we'll get people.</p> <p>BT I think this year will be fine, my worry is next year when it is this year group as the incoming exec.</p> <p>SC sounds good, you're right that if there's ideas there that money will aid that</p>	
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	sounds successful.	
5. External Outreach Projects	<p>SC looking at ways or opportunities that students at Cuth's have to work with other local organisations/charities/take up voluntary roles. Are those things happening?</p> <p>SWC no. But volunteering as a whole hasn't stopped across the uni, but we can't do those. Outreach is focusing on fundraising and doing some online things. Thinking of 'eat in to help out' where you pay for a formal and eat at your own house. It depends on the outreach chair usually, obviously we keep both going normally but focusing on fundraising for now makes more sense. Confidence in LB that when we can these things will reopen. Still a lot of university projects are going on. Limited onsite activities, as members of the public cannot come. Pretty much just packing food boxes or similar. Within the JCR there are not the resources, ability or legal exemptions to do so.</p> <p>SC any questions?</p>	
6. Internal Charitable Projects	<p>SC these are generally more projects that are only within the Cuth's community, which SWC you've already mentioned through internal fundraising. You said LB is looking at doing internal fundraising? Do you have a sense of this?</p> <p>SWC I think it is going ok, gearing up to the 12 days of Cuthsmas as not a lot happens during the first half of term. A shame with this travel window as people won't be in Durham when this is happening, but it will be online. The naked calendar is still going to be put together, TB is telling people to take selfies and he will merge them together. All that money goes to charity. Had a few foodbox donations in the JCR so hopefully people are using them, but since no one can really go in unsure how useful it is.</p> <p>SC not nothing going on then, so that sounds good. Any questions? I would ask what charities the JCR is looking at supporting this year, and ask what the process is for deciding on those?</p>	

	<p>SWC I don't think they've been chosen yet, the Outreach committee will decide on them. Sometimes it's a vote for ball tickets, but not usually for smaller fundraising opportunities. TB hasn't decided yet for naked calendar, but has asked for suggestions.</p> <p>BT it's usually a positive body image charity.</p> <p>SWC I haven't spoken to the president about the fashion show yet, as I'm not sure it will go ahead in February, but they might postpone it and it'll happen in the summer? Will find out more for the next meeting.</p> <p>SC can check back in next time, but that all sounds positive.</p>	
7. Inclusion and Accessibility	<p>SC primarily concerned with how all members can participate and how different communities interact. Without the communities officer being present, is there any update on this area in relation to the JCR?</p> <p>SWC various things - doubled the participation fund for this term (from £1000 to £2000), there is a cap on what one person can apply for (£200) and there is no deadline anymore, just a rolling fund. Does mean that we can mainly offer people what they apply for. DU sports are sometimes very expensive, but £200 is still a significant contribution, and in special cases we could negotiate if they wanted to talk to me and Maddy about that. Have been able to fully fund so far. The most expensive sport in the JCR is by far rowing, so there has been a substantial change to the subs system (it might have to go through the JCR but has gone through the rowing AGM).</p> <p>BT: JR has a motion to change it.</p> <p>SWC I know MW took it to the trustee finance committee. The way it changes is that they are reducing subs, and if they have a big expense, e.g. a new boat, they go to the trustees for permission. Not building up reserves in the same way, handing over a large degree of control to the JCR rather than doing it internally. Has been discussed in detail, it makes rowing a lot more accessible,</p>	ES to enquire about Nightline training for minority reps.

	<p>and they are happy to sacrifice some of their freedom to do that. Does mean that all sports and societies are now very affordable, plus participation fund, it is feasible that you don't need to pay for the JCR in a situation where you couldn't. The levy is a separate issue which needs discussing. In terms of other things we are still thinking of doing these forums where the president and a minority rep create a space where students can come and speak about their experiences and make suggestions. An aim to take action otherwise I wouldn't be there, not a pastoral listening service. Gives people a space for their voices to be heard at the top of the JCR and move things forward. Reps seem to think it is a positive idea that can gain traction. All Reps are doing their own events as usual.</p> <p>SC does anyone have any questions or comments around this? From me, it sounds like a lot of consideration is going into the financial accessibility of Cuth's which is excellent. There seems to be a move away from representative groups falling under welfare and now having an active campaign based group.</p> <p>SWC need to speak to the SU about reps being able to do ad hoc drop ins as there is something about talking to someone with shared experience, but currently the reps don't feel like they have skills. Created an anti-racism society which will be based around readings and discussions. Anti-racism workshops in freshers week, so positive moves.</p> <p>BT same with working class society.</p> <p>SC: ES?</p> <p>ES I was going to add that I think it's in the standing orders that minority reps are mandated to do nightline training allowing them to do drop ins. It doesn't seem to have ever happened before. Not quite sure why it isn't focused on for minority reps.</p> <p>SC would you be ok to get that organised for the reps?</p>	
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	<p>ES yeah that's fine. I remembered that they don't get it because Nightline only allow you to have two reps per training session and they are usually taken up by incoming welfare officers which means that reps are getting trained at different times throughout the year.</p> <p>SC yes that does sound familiar. Would you be ok taking an action away to find out possibilities of training to be in touch with Nightline and who runs it as maybe that is something that should be looked into.</p> <p>ES yes no worries.</p> <p>SC thank you. Any further comments in this area?</p>	
<p>8. Democracy and Participation</p>	<p>SC looking at areas such as JCR meetings and positions and good for student prospects in the future as well as participation in other activities.</p> <p>BT JCR meetings are lower in attendance, expected at this point in the year. For the future due to not having spent any money, we are thinking of having a decent raffle which will promote engagement. If people can just turn up they will hopefully stay for longer than the raffle. Good uptake on positions, mainly from older years, but almost all method 1 positions are full after this meeting. There is a contested election for assistant librarian which shows interest. Moving method 1 and 2 husts to being on the call during JCR meetings has been successful in getting people to turn and actually run for positions.</p> <p>AW all I would say is that the common thread that seems to run between the positions that go unfilled are the ones where people only run because they were prodded into running through conversation e.g. JRO, SU committee, sports and socs reporter. Might be why we had an issue with the community committee being filled, the need to reach the person and say that they would be good is proving difficult. A matter of reach. We are doing a good job as we are filling positions but need to keep up the reach.</p> <p>SC: SWC on the sports and socs front do you have an update for where things</p>	

	<p>generally stand about what can happen at the moment and what it could look like after mass testing</p> <p>SWC at the moment nothing is going forward really. They took a proposal to county council about mixed households in outdoor sports, but that was not allowed. There has been a good job to open up outdoor spaces, allocating slots for colleges so livers-in can go and play sports (livers-out can too but have to do it directly). We as a JCR have asked a lot of sports and societies to bring their equipment back so we can lend out the equipment to people. Broadly I don't know the involvement of that, but the slots are getting filled for sports. They are offering fitness classes with your household and online fitness classes, patchy uptake on that. I have tried to publicise this. People do seem to know what is going on. If things can function online they are, and if they can't they're not. There may be some socials online which is nice. In terms of the future, it's unpredictable. Hopeful that mass testing and the plans going ahead implies regular mass testing from January, allowing for wider student experience opening up and starting quite quickly.</p> <p>SC sounds like there is more going on than what I had anticipated. Any questions? Not having a mailing list, SWC do you expect to have that?</p> <p>SWC wasn't expecting one, we don't have that data sharing agreement with the university. Could see if we could fit it into the SLA but given the trouble I'm having for that currently seems unlikely. I think it would have to be in there if it was to be anywhere as college is not separate from university. Do we want a data sharing agreement with the university? Would it cut both ways? Solutions to this are collecting emails through the website somehow, but this doesn't seem to be a huge issue as college sends out things for me. This does mean it goes to everyone in college though not just JCR members but this isn't a real issue. Never had a mailing list before.</p> <p>SC as long as you can communicate with students through college this seems ok. Shame you can't email students yourself though. Just going back to some discussions that AW and BT had mentioned about positions remaining unfilled</p>	
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	<p>due to lack of reach, do you have any thoughts about how you might do that in virtual space?</p> <p>AW we ran a drop-in that was not fabulously attended. One person came, and another person came after we had already left. I think if we did another one specifically more general about 'why run for the exec?' with a presentation/drop-in this might have more reach.</p> <p>BT would you be more likely to go to a drop in that you knew was more us talking with questions rather than you bringing questions? Lots of pressure to bring a question or have a purpose.</p> <p>SWC the online freshers weeks where every committee did an intro the committee, you could do a similar thing for running for positions.</p> <p>BT if we can go back to in-person at some point in the future then that would be a good opportunity to get people involved at the end, even if only for a term.</p> <p>AW one thing I've thought about a lot is that meeting 2.1 has no positions a fresher can run for, make that meeting have a big splash which can start conversations amongst freshers for the sabbs and VP this might trigger some awareness of the JCR which would make people run for later elections.</p> <p>SC sounds like a good idea there, to take advantage of the sabb elections. From my job in volunteer management, something viewed as helpful in terms of recruiting is making the positions seem more real by having quotes from old holders of the role and their experiences, the training etc. something to create a human context to increase engagement.</p>	
9. AOB	<p>SC is there any other business? Excellent, complete.</p> <p>SC Thank you all for attending, invaluable information and great to have wider input around what's going on in these areas. The next meeting will likely be next term after a full board meeting.</p>	

