

ASCR Committee Meeting
Friday 24th April 2009, 11.00 a.m.
Housman Room Bar

Minutes

Present: Bob Barber (Acting Chair), Richard Simons (Hon. Secretary), Frank Penter (Treasurer), Diana Manuel, Jane Spender (Manager)

Apologies: John Brodholt, Peter Cadley, Ruth Dar, Lars Fischer, Steve Miller, Brigitte Picot, Jacqueline Readwin, Talvinder Sihra

1. Welcome and apologies for absence. Everyone attending was welcomed, and apologies for absence were as noted above.

2. Minutes of the last meeting. The Minutes of the meeting of 17th February 2009 were approved as a true record.

3. Catering update

Real ales and second hand-pump. The second hand-pump had been installed. Marcel (for Scolarest) had proposed that there should be a house beer on the new pump, while the original pump would carry regularly changing guest beers, and would be meeting John Brodholt shortly to discuss it. This was felt to be a good idea. **Action: John**

Coffee machine income. The credit note for the £2,349.62 owed by Scolarest to the ASCR had been received, but was not yet entered on the ASCR spreadsheet. It had been confirmed with Scolarest that the 50% split would be of theoretical cash receipts from the machines based on the monthly machine counts, and not of actual cash receipts, and that this had started on 1st April. The ASCR carried the large risk of sachet losses and it was right that this should be to an extent balanced by Scolarest carrying the risk of small losses from the machine sales.

Coffee machine notices. These were drafted, and would be installed shortly. **Action: Jane**

4. ASCR website

The original webpage had now been converted into a small website, with photographs, and the information on it expanded and updated. It was agreed that AGM and Committee minutes should be posted on the website, starting with the AGM in November 2008; and that the web address should be given to members in the next circular, and should also be included in Jane's e.mail signature. **Action: Jane**

5. Membership checks

There had been no membership checks during the Second Term, but arrangements would be made shortly to carry them out during the Third term, according to the new procedure agreed at an earlier meeting: that for each check a Committee member would sign up and would undertake to provide a second person to help them. Checks would be made on both entrances to the Housman Room. Swipe card access was again discussed but, although it would have advantages, it was felt that the considerable number of retired members, and of those with the right to occasional use of the ASCR, militated against such a system. **Action: Jane**

6. Review of membership issues

The discussion centred round the issue of whether the ASCR should be open to all staff, or only to those of Grade 7 and above, i.e. those of management status. It was agreed that the current membership constituted about 25% of staff currently eligible for membership, although the exact figure was not known. Of the other 75%, many chose not to join, for a variety of reasons; some were unaware of their eligibility, notably those who had become eligible to join when salary harmonisation had taken place but had not been informed of this by Human Resources. This would change of the next 5–10 years, as harmonisation became a thing of the past and new employees were taken on, and the membership could be expected to increase.

If the ASCR were to be thrown open to all, it could not be run as it is – those who chose not to join would nevertheless have to contribute, or UCL Estates & Facilities would inevitably have to take it over. The current constitution and committee had come into being ten years ago precisely to ensure that this did not happen.

The crucial question was: is there spare capacity? If not, as the Committee believed, then the current restrictions should not be changed.

7. ASCR survey

The response had been good: of the current 1,421 members, 250 people had completed the online survey, and there had been two written responses (17.73%); as expected, on some issues the positive and negative free text comments balanced each other. Jane had made a preliminary analysis and would be meeting Ruth, who had kindly agreed to help, as soon as possible after she came back from holiday on 27th April. A number of good suggestions had been made for minor improvements (such as additional magazine subscriptions) which would be acted on. In due course a response with thanks and information would be circulated to the membership.

Action: Ruth, Jane

8. Refurbishment

Richard briefly ran through the situation to date: the architect in Richard Furter's working group had prepared a feasibility study for the proposed refurbishment; Richard Furter had subsequently told Richard that the current financial climate meant that UCL could not contribute this year; Richard had then contacted the Provost to say that the committee still planned to redecorate this year, paying for it out of members' subscriptions, and to ask that the College should pay the approximately £10,000 costs relating to new hanging and alarm systems for the artworks in the Housman Room which neither College Collections nor the ASCR could afford. The Provost had responded by mentioning that he would prefer to bring about real improvement of the Housman Room 'worthy of an SCR for UCL' and suggesting a meeting of about half an hour in early May. Richard and Bob would meet him, and Richard Furter would also be present. The Committee agreed that no further financial contribution should be asked for, and it was also agreed that the Provost should be asked to enlarge on what he believes would constitute an SCR worthy of UCL. The Committee also felt that a discussion of membership issues was not relevant at this meeting and should not form part of the discussion. [The meeting has now been arranged for 10.30 on Monday 11th May.]

Action: Richard, Bob

It was felt that sufficient funds were available to do a good job on the room: some of the costs of redecoration and refurbishment would be carried over into the 2009–2010 financial year, and expenditure on furnishings would be reserved for a rolling programme. The Haldane Room had been booked for the ASCR from 28th June until 29th August as an alternative common room space. Concerns about china going missing during the refurbishment were expressed, and it was agreed that Jane would arrange for the china from the Housman Room to be locked up with the rest of the stock in Marcel's cellar. Jane would also contact the warehouse to see whether a desk more suitable to the room than the one she used was available.

Action: Jane

9. Financial Report

Frank was happy with the financial situation. As noted above, the £2,000+ owed by Scolarest had not yet been entered in the ASCR spreadsheet, but the money was in the account. Other points made about the coffee machine income were: coffee sales were stable; income from the machines was about twice the expenditure – this was not always clear in the spreadsheet, because the college financial system meant that income entries were always delayed; in due course he would analyse the numerous entries for small amounts of coffee income; the final reconciliation would be done at year end.

For the refurbishment this summer he calculated that £40,000 would be immediately available, and he expected a further £10,000 to be added to that by delaying some payments until the annual membership subscriptions had been received at the end of October. He was clear that there should be no loan from the college.

There was a short discussion on what should be done with ASCR reserves in future, since they could be expected to build up quite fast. It was agreed that the Housman Room could be kept in better shape, and that repairs and improvements should be made on an as-and-when basis.

A small change in the presentation of the accounts was suggested to improve their clarity, and this was agreed. Frank was then congratulated on the budget, which was holding well.

10. 10th Haldane Event, 19th March 2009. John Aiken's talk, with a film, on Bartolomeu dos Santos had been interesting and lively and much enjoyed, but had been sadly under-attended.

11. 2nd John Klier Event. Helen Beer had been extremely enthusiastic about arranging a programme for this. Jane had met her once, and would be meeting her again on Monday 27th April. The date had been provisionally fixed for Thursday 11th June. **Action: Jane**

12. Dates for future events. It had been agreed to suggest 27th or 29th October to the performers giving a Hardy recital as the 11th Haldane Event, and 24th, 19th or 26th November to the pianist performing at the AGM. **Action: Jane**

13. Date of next meeting. It was agreed that the meeting should take place during the week of 8th – 12th June. Jane would circulate Committee members for their availability. **Action: Jane**

The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.