



Minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Community Activities
25 November 2010

Present:

Ian White (Pro-Vice-Chancellor/CHAIR)
Nicola Buckley (Secretary/Community Affairs)
Sarah Peters-Harrison (CUSU)
Margaret Greeves (Joint Museums Committee/Fitzwilliam Museum)
Amina Rai (Graduate Union)
Julia Hawkins (Millennium Maths)
Karen Pearce (Physical Education)
Rob Wallach (General Board/Materials Science)
Frances Meegan (Careers Service)
Sue Oosthuizen (Continuing Education)
Sigrid Fisher (Human Resources)
Stephen Jolly (External Affairs and Communications)
Emma Wenborn (Minutes/Community Affairs)

Apologies:

Rahul Mansigani (CUSU)
David Good (Council)
Terry Ndee (CU Development Office)
Liba Taub (Whipple Museum)
Kate Pretty (Colleges Committee)

1. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting held in May 2010

The minutes of 27 May 2010 were approved.

2. Reports from other University bodies

There were no comments on the reports from other University bodies.

3. Membership of the Committee on Community Activities

The Committee welcomed Frances Meegan as a representative of the Careers Service, replacing Alison Walsham; co-opted Dr Kate Pretty as a representative of Colleges Committee; and Professor Liba Taub was also co-opted as a member. Dr David Good is the new representative of the University Council.

4. Operations

4.1 Report on Activities (CCA304)

This report, which covered activities delivered and supported by the Community Affairs team, was received by the committee. NB presented on some of the most recent events, such as the Open Cambridge weekend and Festival of Ideas, which have not yet had full evaluations produced. The committee discussed the integration of certain science-themed events into the Festival of Ideas where it was relevant, for example in discussions about the history of science.

The committee discussed the value of one-off events such as Festivals at enthusing people, but also the need to make the public aware of what is on offer year-round. For example, Open Cambridge could emphasise that people are welcome to the University and Colleges in throughout the year in a number of different ways.

It was also reported that the Bridge the Gap Charity Walk, held in September which visited 10 Colleges had raised £45,000 for local charities Arthur Rank Hospice Charity and Press Relief.

4.2 Cambridge Science Festival (CCA305)

The Committee received the evaluation report from the 2010 Cambridge Science Festival which incorporated feedback from members of the public and departmental event co-ordinators. The Committee discussed the monitoring categories used in the evaluation report and it was decided that a more comprehensive breakdown of categories was required. SF highlighted that where a service is provided to the public, the University is obliged to ensure that it meets equality requirements, and therefore suggested that census categories were followed in the evaluation of events. Interpretation of equality and diversity data should also be provided: for example comparisons with regional equality and diversity data, and/or comparisons with equality and diversity figures for public events in the previous year.

Action: NB to speak to SF regarding equality and diversity monitoring of public events.

The Chair noted his congratulations for the Cambridge Science Festival.

4.3 Cambridge Community Knowledge Exchange

NB provided an update on this scheme, which has so far matched 7 requests from voluntary sector organisations with student dissertation opportunities, mostly so far in Sociology, Social Psychology and Management.

5. University community engagement strategy

5.1 Operational objectives for 2008-11 (CCA306)

This starred item was received.

5.2 Draft Annual Report of the Committee on Community Activities to Council (CCA307)

NB reported that since the Committee was no longer able to allocate Active Community Fund grants, and there had not been a University-wide outreach survey since 2007, it was difficult to pull together a University-wide report on community activities. The draft report therefore focused on activities which had some co-ordination from the Community Affairs team.

It was agreed that with information missing from many departments and museums, the report did not currently provide a comprehensive overview of community engagement activity throughout the whole University. It was agreed that whilst public engagement takes place in many different parts of the University, the Committee on Community Activities only oversees some of the central support for these, and therefore cannot have oversight of the full extent of public engagement. With Millennium Maths receiving 1.4m web visits and the Museums welcoming 700,000 visitors each year, the number of people accessing University resources is currently being underestimated.

The Chair noted that whilst the current data may be a few years old, having an indicator of the extent of University outreach, public engagement and staff and student volunteering is still helpful.

Action: Chair and NB to discuss what kind of public engagement survey should be done. Committee members are asked to share evaluation reports from their activities with NB to ensure they can be included in reports.

5.3 Public engagement strategy review (CCA308 and CCA309)

The Chair thanked the Secretary, NB, for preparing a draft public engagement review paper. Public engagement is an area of growing strategic importance for higher education and it is important to be embedded within the academic affairs of the University. The Committee on Community Activities currently reports to Council, however, as public engagement directly feeds into teaching, research and transferable skills, the Chair suggested that a public engagement review might consider whether public engagement might be best aligned with General Board, or report jointly to Council and General Board.

In the following discussion, a series of points were made, including that public engagement should be seen as 'core' rather than fringe activity by the University. SJ emphasised the need for a coordinated approach in public engagement activity, which, in turn, might appear more attractive to potential funders. It was suggested that a marketing banner might make these activities look more coherent. A centralised brand and guidelines which could be used as an 'umbrella' could also be advantageous. MG reported that 'Cambridge Museums' was now being established as a formal coalition, driven by demands from funders.

Concerns were however expressed that smaller community engagement projects providing excellent services might not survive under different circumstances. S P-H also suggested that ethical considerations regarding corporate sponsorship of public engagement events should be taken into account.

SJ suggested that public engagement projects might start to extend their reach beyond the local community by using iTunesU and Youtube, for example. There was a recognition that many projects would need more resources in order to do this.

The Committee therefore agreed that a review would be worthwhile, particularly as the public and community engagement landscape has changed significantly since the Committee was originally established.

Action: Committee members would contribute to the public engagement strategy review document by email to NB before 22/12/10.

Action: The Chair would then consider the plan for the public engagement review.

6. Support for public engagement at the University of Cambridge

6.1 Allocation of grants from the Newton Trust (CCA310)

The committee approved the grants recommended by NB/EW.

6.2 Allocation of funding for CRB checks for Student Community Action (CCA311)

The committee approved the allocation of funding for CRB checks.

6.3 Update on current legislation on child protection, Criminal Records Bureau checks, Vetting and Barring Scheme and implications for public engagement at the University of Cambridge

NB provided a verbal update on the current status of Criminal Record Bureau checks and Vetting and

Confirmed

Barring Scheme, and said that the most up-to-date information was at <http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/> - the Government would report in January 2011. Until then, it was 'business as usual' regarding the CRB checks required for volunteering and outreach with young people and vulnerable adults.

RW said he would like to be involved in preparing guidelines for Colleges on meeting their responsibilities in child protection.

Action: NB and RW to work on this prior to the next Committee meeting

7. University outreach projects

Copies of the Humanitarian Centre report were provided and the desirability of having the Humanitarian Centre represented on the Committee was discussed, following the retirement of Alison Walsham.

Action: The Humanitarian Centre should be among the outreach initiatives to be reported on in the public engagement review.

S P-H reported that CUSU would have an initiative promoting women in science during March 2011.

Action: NB to discuss this initiative with S P-H

8. Financial Report (CCA312)

The Committee approved the financial report. NB reported that in the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, there had been mention of reforming the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) to encourage more economic benefits from research. The Community Affairs team currently receives HEIF funding as part of the overall University allocation from HEFCE. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research will be responsible for putting together the next HEIF plan in 2011.

Action: Chair and NB to discuss HEIF plans with the PVC for Research

9. Any other business

The date and time for the next meeting would be fixed by Committee members being contacted for their availability during Lent term 2011.