



Chair: Junho Hyun-Sack (Speaker) **Minutes:** Alex Connolly (JCR Sec)

Referendum Motion: Anonymous voting

This JCR notes that

1. The current system of voting in JCR meetings is vulnerable to peer pressure
2. The JCR should represent the honest opinions of the undergraduate student body

This JCR believes that

1. Anonymous voting is a fundamental principle of a democratic organisation
2. Any voting system should be as convenient as possible

This JCR resolves to

1. Mandate the President and Secretary to hold a referendum on the voting system in JCR meetings

Proposed Question: “Are you in favour of the Junior Common Room adopting anonymous voting in General Meetings?”

2. Should the referendum be held and votes fall in favour of anonymous voting, trial some methods of anonymous voting in the first two JCR meetings of TT13

Proposed by: Andy Paine

Seconded by: Hal Hainsworth

Issues raised:

Factual Questions:

Speech in Proposition by Proposer (Andrew Paine):

Spoke about this in a committee meeting last term and decided to put it to the JCR in a referendum. Anonymous voting is a very common thing in a democratic organisation as voting shouldn't be susceptible to peer pressured. There is a tendency for this to happen in the JCR meetings, e.g. in the Israel debate. There can be pressure to vote a certain way, so we are trying to remove that pressure.

Issues surrounding the Proposed Question:

- So this is the question? Isn't this question about adopting the process properly?
- Proposers and the RO need to decide the question.
- Amendment to the question proposed – it should reflect the 'trial period' as the most important aspect of it. Permanence needs to come after it has been tested.
- **New question: “Are you in favour of the JCR conducting a trial period of anonymous voting in the first two meetings of Trinity Term 2013?”**

Issues surrounding the trial period:

- Trial period is open to interpretation on what methods we would trial. Suggestions will be taken well. This is what we proposed to do in the Committee Meeting - one week would be one method and the other week a different one.

First way: Everyone looks at the floor and votes are counted. Speaker keeps this in line and can discount someone's vote if they look up. Hopefully people would be mature enough.

Second way: Online voting after a meeting, committee didn't like that as it takes away the point of the meeting.

Third way: boxes with voting slips, as next motion is discussed, two committee members would count the slips. Given this will have to go through the JCR, we will be open to suggestions.

- We're holding a referendum as the committee was divided, so we're putting it to the JCR to decide whether it would be a good idea.

- Alternative procedure: don't have automatic anonymous voting automatically – secret ballot can be requested in the meeting.

- How do you decide what is worthy of secret ballot or not?

- Would need to have someone to email before the meeting.

- Contentious motions do stand out, could the speaker decide? No, can't be left to his discretion.

- What would work better? Before or during the meeting?

- Peer pressure might apply to requesting the secret ballot.

- Having two weeks to trial is still necessary. Trial periods should be about practicalities.

Issues concerning next stages:

- Would there need to be a further referendum to make it permanent? **Response:** It could be brought up at two meetings to make a constitutional change.

- How long do constitutional changes to come into effect? **Response:** Constitutional changes apply immediately.

Points of debate:

- Anonymous voting done by referendum because can't have open voting if it's about secret voting, only way of doing this at the moment is by referendum.

- Frankly, a lot of people don't really care.

- If it goes through on Thursday and then people don't like it then they can reject it in the meetings.

Speech in opposition:

This catering for people who won't stand up and defend their opinion. If they lack the conviction then that should mean their vote is worth less. We should be encouraging conviction and members standing up for what they believe in.

- Where is it in the constitution that someone's vote is worth less if they are too worried to voice their opinion? You think that voicing their opinion isn't worth it?

- This is not about anonymous speaking – this is about anonymous voting. We should have a culture of honestly expressing our views and keeping intimidation to a minimum. But it is true that some people don't feel comfortable speaking up. We have spoken about people who don't want to vote due to peer pressure. If people don't feel comfortable speaking, they should feel comfortable voting.

- Do we agree that some feel don't feel comfortable speaking?

- One of the advantages of the system as it is, it means you can see how the elected representatives are voting, to see how the committee votes.
- Do you think that idea should nullify anonymous voting?
- No but it's an example of the negatives of anonymous voting.

- One point is we don't want to put people off meetings, but the college has said that the meetings can be filled with 'friends' and votes secured that way, but when dealing with college it would be a benefit to have anonymous voting as a way of demonstrating

- It's fairly obvious that in an open voting situation it does affect how people vote, and what you personally think is the right choice should not be influenced by the people around you. Anonymous voting is the only way to proceed.

Concluding remarks:

- At the end of the two trial meetings we can still talk about different proposals, we can limit anonymous voting to only certain things.
- This isn't the only discussion we're having on it. We will be debating it in JCR Meetings after we trial it.

Questions:

- What's the etiquette about posting things on Facebook?

Response: It's like any other vote, we can advertise it like a normal election. Can't campaign online. Constitutions says treat it as a by-election (see SOs 7)

Meeting closed.

Approved Question: *"Are you in favour of the JCR conducting a trial period of anonymous voting in the first two meetings of Trinity Term 2013?"*

Vote to be held Thursday 25th April 2013, 8am – 8pm.