

St Catharine's College MCR

Michaelmas Term Open Meeting

13 November, 2007

Present: Richard Jones (President), Tiffany Bogich (Treasurer), Amy Digout (Secretary), Rosie Fera (Welfare Officer), Dan Friess (Social Secretary), Martina Diep (External Officer), Cameron Rye (Green Officer), Mark Hopkin (Computer Officer), Dai Morgan (Sports and Societies Officer), Julia Armstrong, Natalie Au-Yeung, Elizabeth Curry, Pascal Firges, Owen Hammond, Joanna Heald, Max Kendrick, Jenny Morris, Catherine Roberts, Melissa Ruseler, David Sandifer, Rebecca Zeckoski, Mariano Zeron-Medina.

Apologies: Rachel Carr

1. Committee Report

Richard made a brief report on some items that have been discussed at MCR committee meetings during Michaelmas term, and things that have gone on since the Easter Term Open Meeting.

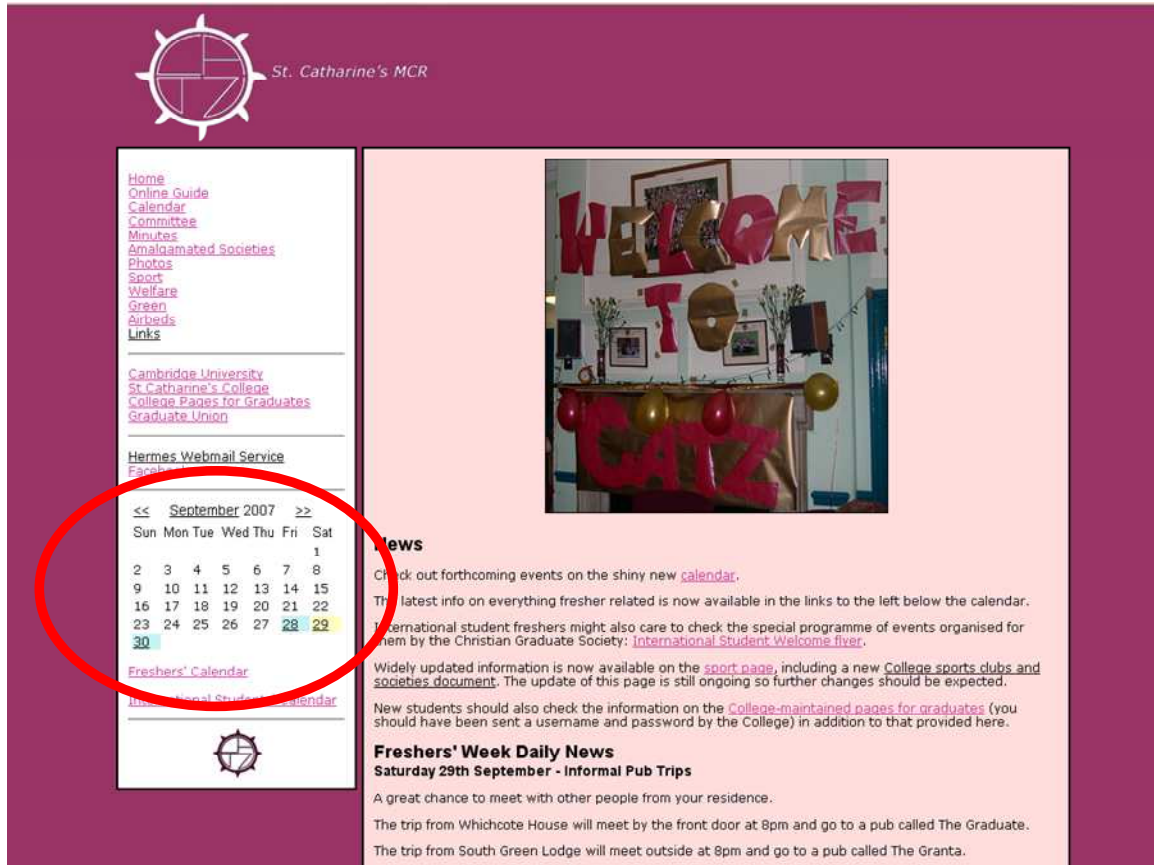
He told us that the redecoration scheme had been successfully carried out, and thanked everyone present for their participation in Freshers' Week and the Halloween formal. Some barbeques and a dinner over the summer, and other dinners this term, have also gone smoothly for the most part.

He then brought up the complaints that he had received regarding the new charges that were added to graduates' (and undergraduates') accommodation bills to cover the cost of electrical testing on all college sites. The college added this charge to the Michaelmas bills without informing students that it would be doing so, which has caused some concern amongst graduates who believe that all additional charges should be announced prior to the start of tenancy. The Junior Bursar's initial response was that it was the duty of last year's presidents to inform the graduate community of these changes. This, however, is not a favourable arrangement, and the College Consultative Committee agreed that this charge should be included as part of the tenancy agreement, and anywhere else where lists of accommodation charges are provided, so that in future students should be aware of the charge prior to agreeing a tenancy.

Richard has investigated the increase in cost of washing machines at Russell Street and in the undergraduate residences. The college has informed him that these prices are set by the external company that monitors them. College approved this increase, as they felt it was reasonable. Apparently, the same wash in the same machine remains more expensive at two other colleges, and the same price at three other colleges. College has reassured both the MCR and JCR that if the price of washing were to be significantly increased in the future the college would be prepared to look elsewhere for a comparable service.

A number of MCR members have inquired after the possibility of inviting partners to Fellows/Graduates dinners. Richard was told that the college is not in favour of this arrangement because these dinners offer an opportunity for fellows and graduates to share their experiences of academic life and research life in particular. Instead, Richard will look with the graduate tutors to arranging an event later in the year that partners (of both graduates and fellows) would be welcome to attend.

Finally, Richard drew our attention to the social calendar that Mark has added to the MCR website. This is regularly updated and contains important information regarding events such as our upcoming Christmas formal on 6 December. Some images highlighting the location of the calendar on the MCR homepage (below), and the full calendar in its expanded form, were shown.



2. MCR Accounts 06/07 and Budget 07/08

Tiffany made a presentation on the state of the MCR accounts, detailing income and expenditures for past years. In addition, she informed us on the budget that has been set out for the present year. A detailed account is given in Appendix A of these minutes.

3. Ordinary Motions

3.1 MCR Lockers

“That the MCR take steps to provide a small number of lockers on the college site, perhaps against one wall in the coatroom area, that can be rented out on a yearly basis, thus eventually covering and surpassing costs.”

Max introduced this motion, which he believes would be beneficial to the study habits of many members of the MCR. He has talked to the porters and the librarian about the feasibility of this project, and they informed him that the JCR had once come close to introducing a similar scheme. Susan Griffiths remembered which company the JCR had approached for an estimate regarding costs and installation of lockers.

Concerns raised by this motion were that there will not be enough space on the college site to provide lockers for every member of the MCR. Max proposed that the lockers be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis, as not all members regularly work in college. As for space, he thought that we might be able to fit a number of lockers into the coatroom area, as this is a space that is often not in use. By the estimate he received, a stack of 5 lockers would cost approximately £77, and several units could be grouped together. If the MCR charged just £10 per year the cost of the lockers could be made up in 3 years, and after that would become a source of income.

Dan thought that the locker scheme was a great idea, and agreed that there was a need for space for graduates to leave their things on the college site. He argued, however, that the coat room is heavily used, especially during peak times of the day and on the evenings that the MCR runs social events. Dan was also concerned that the demand would far surpass the availability, and questioned how lockers would be fairly assigned. He wondered if the lockers could be rented out in each term rather than for a whole year, thus ensuring that a greater portion of the graduate community would have access to them. Richard added that if the MCR were to charge an appropriate amount it might ensure that the people who wanted lockers most would be guaranteed one. Dan questioned if one wall of the lower MCR could be an appropriate space to put lockers. Dai proposed that if there were horizontal sets of lockers they could be placed under the coat hooks.

Max wondered if the coat room space could be reconfigured so that the lockers lined one wall, while on the other wall the coat hooks were doubled to offer more hanging space. The possibility of varied sizes of lockers also increases the potential for fitting between 10 and 20 lockers in this space.

Rosie voiced her opinion that the lockers should not be placed in the lower MCR because it would compromise the function of that room, which is supposed to be a lounge, and which has after all been newly redecorated. Richard agreed that compromises might have to be made because a lot of effort has been put into the redecoration of the MCR. He reckoned that about 4 stacks of lockers would fit across the coatroom walls, and investigated units that cost between £100 and £300 for varied designs and materials. The MCR would then be looking at an extrapolated cost of £500 to £3,000. The idea of coin-return lockers was also brought up, but these are actually more expensive. The JCR had wanted a coin-return system and gave up because of the high cost.

Max suggested that the lockers be installed on a trial basis in the coatroom. If the demand for lockers was as high as we suspect it would be, additional space could be sought elsewhere in college for the installation of additional units. Catherine asked if it would be worth asking the porters if we could install lockers in the basement somewhere, and Richard thought that the head porter would have some ideas about what (if any) space would be available. Richard then said that if the MCR was to agree on this motion, we would now have some solid ideas on how to move ahead with this plan. David questioned if the wording of the motion should be more specific, however Richard maintained that he liked the vagaries in the wording.

Those in favour — 20

Those against — 1

Abstentions — 1

3.2 Constitutional Amendment regarding Social Secretary and Events Officer

“That the Constitution of the MCR be modified, so that the composition of the full MCR Committee returns to having two Social Secretaries of equal remit, as opposed to one Social Secretary and one Events Officer.”

Dan began the discussion of this motion by explaining that this constitutional amendment would not take effect until next year. He told us that two years ago the Social Secretaries had difficulty sharing the role equally, and the committee at that time therefore decided to split the role into one Social Secretary and one Events Officer for the benefit of future committees.

Dan has noted several problems with this arrangement.

The Entertainments Officer had to put in an extraordinary effort when organizing big events like Burns' Night, as there is a lot to coordinate with such large occasions. On the night of events this places a lot of pressure on the Entertainments Officer, and in turn once the events are over there is much responsibility placed solely on the Social Secretary for setting out the rest of the social calendar. Dan believes also that having two Social Secretaries organizing the events throughout the year guarantees a greater range of activities, catering to differing interests. In this way the members of the MCR may have greater representation when it comes to social activities. Therefore, it is in the interest of both roles that the committee returns to having two Social Secretaries of equal remit, provided they share the work equally. Richard clarified further that the splitting of the role into Entertainments Officer and Social Secretary was originally intended to take some pressure off the Formal Hall Officer, who must be at dinner each Thursday, and who also has responsibilities during big events, where the Entertainments Officer was largely concerned with what went on in the bar after dinner.

Owen asked if it was possible to always have one female and one male Social Secretary to see that MCR representation was fair. Dan replied that the committee was reluctant to assign roles according to gender. Richard suggested that perhaps it would be beneficial to all if there were more than two Social Secretaries, and Joanna agreed that if there were more roles the time commitment for potential committee members would seem reduced, thus attracting more candidates in future elections. Max hoped that the duties of these roles could be more firmly set out in the constitution, whereas Dan thought that they should be defined internally with the Co-Presidents to ensure that the work load was shared equally. Melissa agreed that if roles are too tightly defined then it becomes difficult to negotiate future problems that may arise with a different committee. Dai concurred that with committee members changing up to every six months it is preferable to leave these roles as flexible as possible. Dan pointed out that at this time it is indeed too inflexible with the roles split. David, however, wondered if it was a good idea to turn back the clock when the roles had obviously been split for a reason. Richard then reminded us all that before the change there had been two Social Secretaries of equal remit for many years, and it had apparently worked okay except in the year which prompted the change in the constitution. He said that if people are unwilling to do their jobs there is unfortunately not much that can be done, but thought that in general the new arrangement raised by Dan would be the safer option. Indeed, in Dan's experience the splitting of roles into Entertainments Officer and Social Secretary was not to the greater benefit of the MCR committee.

Those in favour — 20

Those against — 1

Abstentions — 1

4. Any Other Business

David wanted to discuss the internet at South Green Lodge, which has been experiencing intermittent problems since the start of term. He told us that it has not been functional for the greater part of Michaelmas, and while the computer officers say they have been looking into the problem, it is unacceptable that it is still inaccessible to residents. Residents of South Green Lodge believe that since the problem has been ongoing for five weeks it may be time to hire a consultant to look into the problem. Mark read out an email from Stephanie Clarke, who has been looking into the problem. She informs us that the problem is not restricted to South Green Lodge, but is a quandary with the greater network. They are currently widening investigations to see if there is trouble beyond college, in the Point of Presence and/or the web cache, both of which are managed by the University Computing Service. Accordingly, Stephanie will be requesting that residents of Russell Street also send information about how their connections are working. She would like to receive residents' room numbers, IP address, and whether or not their connection has been okay. Russell Street residents present said that they were not experiencing problems with the college network. Mark will be forwarding Stephanie's request to graduates living in college accommodations. In addition, Mark can bring this issue forward at the next meeting of the Computing Services meeting.

Dai asked if maintenance could put the names of residences on the bells at South Green Lodge. He pointed out that the name plates are long out of date and said that he had already written in the maintenance book. Dan then requested a new ironing board cover at Russell Street. Richard asked if college was expected to provide these covers, and Dan said that he had been told so by a bedder. Richard suggested he write it in the maintenance book as well.

Appendix A: Budget Presentation



Tiffany gave a PowerPoint presentation of the accounts and budget.

The structure of the presentation was:

- Beginners guide to the MCR accounts
- Review of accounts for the year 2006-2007
- Budget for the year 2007-2008

Introduction to the Accounts

- Establishment and Membership Subscription Accounts
 - *Establishment Subscription*: Portion of College Fee given to MCR by College (£28 per student in 06/07)
 - *Membership Subscription*: Subscriptions paid by MCR members (£39 per year, split into £13 per term for Michaelmas, Lent and Easter terms)
 - Consistent expenses such as cleaners wages, newspapers, TV license, etc.
 - Incidental expenses such as food and drink, events, etc.
- MCR Key Account
 - £10 deposit is taken for every key issued, and returned on return of the key
 - Purchase of additional keys to replace those not returned



The first slide was entitled “Introduction to the Accounts” (see slide copied above).

Tiffany explained that although in reality the MCR has one bank account, with no divisions within it, the MCR keep track of it on their spreadsheets as if it were divided into three different accounts.


These are the Establishment Subscription Account, Membership Subscription Account and MCR Key Account.

The Establishment Subscription Account and Membership Subscription Account both contain money which is the MCR's to spend. The main incomes to these accounts are the establishment subscription (the portion of the college fee which the college passes on to the MCR - £28 per student in 06/07) and membership subscriptions (subscriptions paid directly to the MCR by MCR members – currently £39 per year, split into £13 per term for Michaelmas, Lent and Easter terms). The expenses which are met from these accounts include both: the fairly consistent expenses such as “cleaner's wages” (the fixed contribution taken by college towards the wages of the college employee who cleans the Christopher Waddams Room), newspapers, TV license, and so on; and incidental expenses such as the purchase of food and drink, money spent on events, and so on.

The MCR Key Account contains the MCR key deposits of members which we are holding but ultimately expecting to return, and so therefore isn't really ours to spend (except to meet the expense of replacing unreturned keys).

Tiffany explained that in this presentation she will be considering the Establishment and Membership Accounts together, since these both contain money which is the MCR's to spend one way or another, and the MCR Key account separately.

End of Year Accounts 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004				
	2007	2006	2005	2004
	£	£	£	£
FUNDS AND ACCOUNTS				
Establishment & Membership				
Subscription Accounts	10949	8071	10838	8354
MCR Key account	2853	2788	2328	1698
	<u>13802</u>	<u>10859</u>	<u>13166</u>	<u>10052</u>



Tiffany's second slide was entitled "End of Year Accounts 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004" (see slide copied above).

The slide showed the MCR's assets on 30th June 2007, 30th June 2006, 30th June 2005 and 30th June 2004. The numbers in bold were the total assets on these dates. Above that, the assets were shown divided into the two account categories Tiffany had outlined.

From the slide, it could be seen that the amount of assets the MCR held fluctuated quite a bit year-on-year, but overall remained in the range of £10-14k.

Establishment and Membership Subscription Accounts: Breakdowns 06-07, 05-06, 04-05

	06-07 £	05-06 £	04-05 £
Establishment Subscriptions	4907.00	4545.00	5083.00
Membership Subscriptions	7813.50	7059.00	6758.00
Other Income	6008.11	2407.47	5071.00
TOTAL INCOME	18728.61	14011.47	16912.00
EXPENDITURE	15839.65	16778.29	14428.00
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	2877.37	-2766.82	2484.00
BALANCE brought forward	8071.18	10838.00	8354.00
BALANCE carried forward	10948.55	8071.18	10838.00



Tiffany's third slide was entitled "Establishment and Membership Subscription Accounts: Breakdowns 06-07, 05-06, 04-05" (see slide copied above).

Tiffany stressed that this slide was just concerned with these two accounts, which are the money which is 'the MCR's to spend', and not the MCR key account (or the MCR's total assets).

The amounts given are sum totals for the period between July 1st and June 30th, for the given years (e.g. the right-hand column gives July 1st 2004 – June 30th 2005).

Tiffany pointed to the establishment and membership incomes and noted that she had already explained what these were, namely the portion of the college fee passed onto the MCR by the college, and the subscription which MCR members pay to the MCR directly via college bills.

Tiffany said that examples of what would be covered by "other income" would generally be reimbursements of things such as exchange formals. For example in the case of an away exchange formal, where we go to another college, the MCR initially writes a cheque to the college we are visiting covering the cost of all the places we have booked. We then go about getting our members to reimburse us that money, and that enters the accounts under the heading of "other income". Of course, an equal amount leaves our account within the bracket of "expenditure". Likewise in the case of home exchanges, where another college visits us, the visiting college will bring a cheque from their MCR to ours to cover the cost of all their dinners, which enters out accounts as "other income" and we then settle the bill with our catering staff at a later date using this money (which shows within "expenditure").

Tiffany said that she hadn't included this "other income" in this year's budget, nor included the expenditures which this income is meeting, since they should exactly balance one another anyway. This is in line with previous MCR budgets prepared by Tiffany's predecessors.

**MCR Key Account:
Breakdowns 06-07, 05-06, 04-05**

	06-07	05-06	04-05
	£	£	£
Deposits received	630.00	810.00	790.00
Deposits refunded (and keys cut)	564.76	350.00	160.00
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	65.24	460.00	630.00
BALANCE brought forward	2788.00	2328.00	1698.00
BALANCE carried forward	2853.24	2788.00	2328.00




Tiffany's fourth slide was entitled "MCR Key Account: Breakdowns 06-07, 05-06, 04-05" (see slide copied above).

Tiffany said that this account was fairly straightforward. The most obvious point to draw from the slide is that the account normally contributes a surplus towards the overall change in MCR assets for a given year. This relates, at least in part, to a relatively low rate of return of keys by departing students.

At the beginning of the previous year, the MCR had to get a large number of new keys cut to replace those unreturned, in order to have sufficient keys for the new intake of students. This expense (approximately £350) meant that the MCR Key account would wasn't contributing a surplus as it has tended to in previous years. More keys have been cut at the start of this current year too, so once again this account will probably break even, rather than contributing a surplus. However we do have quite a few spare keys this year so hopefully next year we won't need to get any cut.

End of Year Accounts 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004				
	2007	2006	2005	2004
	£	£	£	£
FUNDS AND ACCOUNTS				
Establishment & Membership				
Subscription Accounts	10949	8071	10838	8354
MCR Key account	2853	2788	2328	1698
	<u>13802</u>	<u>10859</u>	<u>13166</u>	<u>10052</u>
REPRESENTED BY				
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Cash at bank- Current account	5557	3964	7896	12789
Petty Cash	138	149	92	93
Due from College	8342	13849	8031	1685
Debtors	587	478	175	
	<u>14623</u>	<u>18440</u>	<u>16194</u>	<u>14567</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES:				
Due to College		5173	2297	4515
Accruals	821	2407	731	
	<u>821</u>	<u>7581</u>	<u>3028</u>	<u>4515</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<u>13802</u>	<u>10859</u>	<u>13166</u>	<u>10052</u>



Tiffany's fifth slide was an extended version of the second slide entitled "End of Year Accounts 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004" (see slide copied above), which was the slide showing the MCR's assets on 30th June 2007, 30th June 2006, 30th June 2005 and 30th June 2004.

The extra information on this slide meant it was now possible to see how those assets were represented on these dates.

From the slide we could see that the majority of the MCR's assets are often actually monies which it is owed but does not yet have. For this reason, it is important to the running of the accounts that the overall assets are kept high, so that there will be money in the account even when a large proportion of our assets are being owed to us.

Tiffany has concluded that the MCR should intend to break even in the current financial year and has budgeted accordingly. This allows us to save the surplus from last year for when we need a big expenditure, such as replacing the TV or hi-fi should they break and not be repairable, or contributing to some other major infrastructural project.

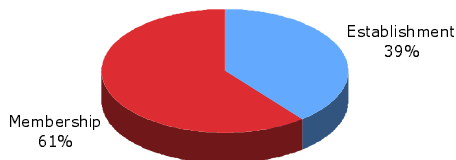
Projected Budget 2007-2008

MCR Projected Budget		2007-2008
Income		
Establishment		4500
Membership		7000
	TOTAL	11500
Expenditure		
Long Vacation Ents		250
Cleaner's Wages		1000
New Furnishings		600
Newspapers, etc		950
Audit fee		100
CUSU/GU subs		850
Multi-Gym		100
TV/Music license		250
Formal Hall Rep		250
Committee Formals		250
Freshers' Week		1400
Coffee, Drinks, etc		500
Mich Term Ents		1400
Lent Term Ents		1700
Easter Term Ents		1400
Contingencies		500
	TOTAL	11500



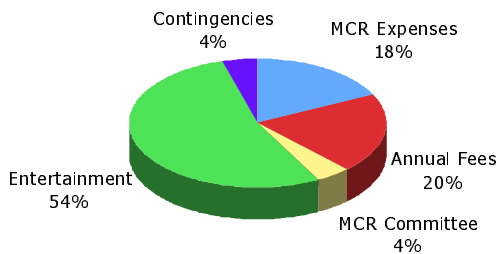
Projected Budget 2007-2008

Income



Income	
Establishment	4500
Membership	7000
TOTAL	11500

Expenditures



Expenditure	
New Furnishings	600
Newspapers, etc	950
Coffee, Drinks, etc	500
Audit fee	100
Cleaner's Wages	1000
CUSU/GU subs	850
Multi-Gym	100
TV/Music license	250
Formal Hall Rep	250
Committee Formals	250
Freshers' Week	1400
Long Vacation Ents	250
Mich Term Ents	1400
Lent Term Ents	1700
Easter Term Ents	1400
Contingencies	500
TOTAL	11500



Tiffany's sixth slide was entitled "Projected Budget 2007-2008" and came in two parts (see slides copied above).

Tiffany set about explaining how she had produced the budget:

- The establishment and membership incomes have been assumed to be approximately equal to last year.
- The first two expenditures, Long Vacation Events and MCR Redecoration, were committed to in part by the current committee and in part by the previous one, but appear in this budget as they were made in the current financial year.
- Of the next six expenditures, five are set by bodies external to the MCR (and have been assumed to stay equal to last year or increase with inflation). The newspaper bill is one which looks low on a daily basis, but adds up over the year. Nonetheless the newspapers in the MCR seem to be popular and well used so this expenditure seems a justified one.
- The next two expenses provided for are estimates of the cost of providing free formal to the Formal Hall Officer all year, and one free formal per term to the other MCR committee members. These customs were introduced by previous committees, with the current committee understanding the good reasons why they were introduced and feeling that they should be continued.
- The next area of expenditure listed was Freshers' Week, which like the long vacation events represents an expenditure which has already taken place. Tiffany reported that the budget for Freshers' Week had been set by following what the previous committee spent last year. She said that actual expenditure had been very close to the £1,400 target, probably slightly below. She also said that she felt that Freshers' Week had been successful, and that hopefully providing MCR subsidy to the events meant that no one would have been put off attending the events for personal financial reasons, which had been a good thing in encouraging integration. Therefore she was happy having large portion of the budget given to Freshers' Week is money well spent.
- This left four areas of expenditure over which the remaining portion of the budget is divided, with some left over for contingencies.
- Tiffany is assuming similar income to previous years, and aiming to break even. Tiffany admitted that since the eleven areas of expense she had first outlined are mostly quite fixed. The majority of flexibility comes in the last four categories.

A pie chart was then shown under that same heading (see slide copied above), which amalgamated certain categories of the budget to give a more easily amenable overall impression of how MCR funds were being spent. According to the chart, the MCR will spend around 18% on the room itself, 20% on annual fees, 4% on the Committee, and 54% on entertainments throughout the year, with 4% retained for contingencies.

Summary

- The net assets of the MCR on 30th June 2007 were £13,802, up from £10,859 on 30th June 2006.
- In previous years the MCR key account has contributed a surplus towards the overall change in the MCR's assets. However did not this past year, due to the purchase of new keys.
- Establishment and membership income is nearly £3,000 more than was spent last year.
- A budget aimed at meeting the MCR's goals has been outlined, with room for contingencies (and hopefully more!).



Tiffany's seventh and final slide gave a summary of key points from the presentation, and is copied above.

This brought the presentation to an end. Questions were invited, though none were posed. Tiffany was thanked for her presentation.