

Minutes of the Capitation Committee
27 June 2017
At 11.00am in the Elizabethan Room, House 6

Present: Brian McGing – Senior Dean, Aidan Marsh – Secretary, Elaine Sharkey – FSD, Kevin O’Kelly – Dean of Students; CSC – Una Harty, Dahnán Spurling, Joseph O’Gorman; DUCAC – Donagh McDonagh, Brian O’Ruairc, Aidan Kavanagh; GSU – Shane Collins, Geoff Bradley; Publications – Aisling Crabbe; SU – Kieran McNulty, Padraic Rowley, Dale Whelan

Apologies: CSC – Benn Hogan; DUCAC – Christina Connaughton; GSU – Pia Helbing; Publications – Lia Flattery; SU – Aoibhinn Loughlin, Simon Evans

In Attendance: Joseph O’Gorman, Aidan Kavanagh, Dr Geoff Bradley, Aisling Crabbe, Clare McCarthy

Aidan Marsh, Committee Secretary, Circulated the attendance sheet for members signature.

Professor Brian McGing as chair of the Capitation Committee opened the meeting. Introduced Aidan Marsh as new Committee Secretary.

Item 1: Minutes of the Last Meeting of 17 March, 2017 (Draft Previously Circulated)

Senior Dean Brian McGing raised the minutes. Shane Collins GSU raised a point about Item 5 and a mention of his name in the 2nd Paragraph. He believed this to be the incorrect individual and suggested that the point would more likely have been raised by Kieran McNulty SU. It was agreed that the minutes would be amended to reflect this alteration before signing and circulating.

As there were several individuals who had not previously attended a meeting of the Capitation Committee, Brian McGing suggested that each person in attendance introduce themselves.

Item 2: Matters Arising

Brian McGing checked with Donagh McDonagh DUCAC if he wished to raise the issue of the 30k from Global Relations. Donagh McDonagh accepted that sum is ringfenced and the issue was not one for this meeting, but for discussion in the next year when the matter would be reviewed.

Item 3: Final Student Numbers and Allocation Figures 2016 - 2017

Elaine Sharkey FSD presented the final figures to the committee, and reminded all present that any final funding requests should be submitted to FSD as soon as possible as the year was approaching its end. Capitation module would continue into next year. The effect on the figures from the introduction of new online modules was discussed. Elaine Sharkey confirmed that she had spoken with FSD about whether students engaged in the module would be included in the capitation fee and informed the committee that those students were included in the figures presented, but noted that this may change in future. Elaine Sharkey wanted to flag this as something that may need to be discussed in meetings next year.

Senior Dean Brian McGing queried if there was any known reason for the decrease in EU students. Kieran McNulty SU suggested that it may be due to a reduced number of Postgraduate students, many of whom are from the EU. Shane Collins GSU agreed, noting a reduction in the number of Computer Science postgraduates. Overall however, it was shown that student numbers had increased slightly. Brian McGing commented that the committee should keep the growth of the student body in mind later in the meeting when discussing item 5. Brian McGing then asked if there were any further queries on the student numbers. None were raised.

Item 4: Student Levy

Kieran McNulty SU noted that the referendum concerning the student had been passed by the student body, and that as part of the referendum it was stated that a sub-committee (a steering committee) would be created to manage the levy. As such he wished to propose that such a body be created. The sub-committee would be responsible both for the management of the levy and for the approval of projects under €10,000. He also stressed, given nature of the sub-committee, the importance of appointing a representative from Estates & Facilities.

The sub-committee would be chaired by the Dean of Students, and reports on the subcommittee's activities would be presented at every Capitation Committee meeting. Kieran McNulty stressed the importance of the Subcommittee as it would be necessary for them to hold regular meetings so that progress could be made quickly on matters relating to the levy without risk of being mired in bureaucracy.

Senior Dean Brian McGing presented a query about the usage of spaces provided and renovated by the levy: Would said spaces be open for all students? Kieran McNulty responded that as he sees it the spaces would be available for all students to use.

Dean of Students Kevin O'Kelly stated that he was willing to take on the chairmanship of the Subcommittee, and that he agreed with Kieran McNulty that a Subcommittee would be necessary for managing the levy to ensure fast movement.

Shane Collins GSU queried whether any funds from the levy would be used to provide or improve spaces solely for the use of postgraduate students. Kieran McNulty confirmed that it was intended that this would be the case. Joseph O'Gorman CSC raised the issue that a number of student spaces are often dominated by a single department, and that it would be necessary, if funds from the levy are used to improve these spaces, that steps be taken to ensure that these do not become spaces that only Departments may use. He agreed with Shane Collins that it would be necessary to have spaces that are purely for the use of postgraduates, but does not want departments using the money from the levy for what they should be financing themselves. Brian McGing confirmed that the levy is not a means for departments to get extra money.

Related to the matter of postgraduate space, a query was raised regarding the progress of the renovation of 1937 Reading Room. Kevin O'Kelly confirmed that renovations were progressing well. Shane Collins reaffirmed this statement.

Kieran McNulty stated that a plan was in progress to identify what spaces are used regularly by students and what space can be accessed during the planned Arts Block renovations. Kevin O'Kelly elaborated that during the space revamp, surveying was being carried out to ensure that space is properly utilised thus ensuring better access for all students.

Brian McGing raised a question concerning the use of the large amount to be raised next year by the levy. Kieran McNulty answered that, as per the referendum, initially only 1st and 2nd

year students would be subject to the levy, and that 3rd and 4th year students would be added to the levy in future years.

Concerning renovation of existing student spaces, attention was drawn by Kieran McNulty to the D'Olier street renovations currently in progress, and a summary was provided of the additional features being added to the building for student use as an example of what renovations the levy would go towards.

A question was raised as to whether there was a directory of student spaces in existence. This was answered by Kieran McNulty who stated that one was currently in progress as part of the ongoing surveys. Kevin O'Kelly further clarified that is intended that in the future a map of student spaces will be produced, after which signage will be put up outside all existing spaces. This will also allow them to ensure that the rules and procedures for each space will be made clear. Dr Geoff Bradley GSU suggested that once complete the map should also be included on the student app.

Joseph O'Gorman raised a query concerning the development of student space in broader sense as the CSC has a requirement for specific storage areas and the like for the needs of students and societies. He wished it clarified that such 'student space' would not need to be accessible to all students all the time as some spaces, examples given of rooms in House 6, are not of a suitable size. Kevin O'Kelly clarified that there would not be a single set of procedures, but each space will have its own procedures that apply to it and that this would be made clear on any signage.

Elaine Sharkey confirmed that she would be willing to be the FSD representative on the sub-committee and queried with Kieran McNulty SU if thought had been given to how costs would be processed ie would the SU incur costs and then request reimbursement? Kieran McNulty confirmed that for smaller sums, the SU would pay and have the money reimbursed, but different procedures would be required for larger amounts [No figures provided]. Joseph O'Gorman stated that in previous circumstances, levies were transferred to the Capitation Committee and from Capitation Committee to the appropriate bodies.

A query was raised by Elaine Sharkey whether Academic Registry would be charging a fee for collecting the levy? Kieran McNulty stated that he had spoken with Academic Registry regarding this and that the initial request was for a 6% administrative charge but discussions were still ongoing. Kevin O'Kelly stated that currently the money is ring-fenced and agreed that any collection fee should be challenged, particularly one as large as 6%. Brian McGing confirmed that the Capitation Committee would not approve a 6% charge. Brian McGing then asked if anyone knows if there was a charge for the collection of the Sports levy. No-one present was able to confirm this. There was general agreement among the committee that a charge should be resisted. Kieran McNulty asked if a letter should be sent to Academic Registry on behalf of the Capitation Committee, but it was decided that this should not yet occur until further talks had taken place.

Brian McGing asked Kieran McNulty who from Academic Registry had met with the Students Union and was informed that they had met with the Head of Academic Registry and the Chair of Student Services.

Joseph O'Gorman suggested that the committee look at previous documents relating to levies collected from the student body to see what the situation was in those cases. He added that although the money was being collected for the use of the student body, it was ultimately to be collected at the college's behest and that this should be made clear during negotiations. He also stated that there would need to be clarity of where the money is going so that representatives of students can demonstrate to the student body exactly what is happening.

The Students Union are currently waiting for further response from Academic Registry. Brian McGing confirmed that the sub-committee would need to engage in discussion with Academic Registry, but would have the full backing of the Capitation Committee.

A query was raised about ring-fencing the money from the levy. Elaine Sharkey confirmed that the money could be ring-fenced in and activity and would not be diluted by any other funds.

Joseph O’Gorman requested that the wording of the Referendum be incorporated into the minutes of this meeting so that it could be referred to easily in future on any questions in relation to the matter of the levy. [See Addendum 1]

Kevin O’Kelly stated that, in principle, a cost of managing the levy is understandable, however 6% was too high. Elaine Sharkey asked if the Student’s Union had discussed the levy with Academic Registry before the referendum. Kieran McNulty confirmed that the Students Union had made Academic Registry aware of the possibility of the levy. He also added that it may be suitable to demonstrate that this is an internal cost/levy rather than the fees collected on behalf of the National SU.

Brian McGing proposed to vote the Steering Committee formally into place.

In answer to the question of whether there would there be a need to incorporate the sub-committee into the College Calendar, Joseph O’Gorman confirmed that it would not be necessary.

Sub-committee was established. No objections were raised.

Brian McGing congratulated the Students Union on the introduction of the Levy.

Item 5: Review of Capitation Fee

Senior Dean Brian McGing outlined the history of the Capitation Fee. He wished to highlight that in the coming year the fee would need to be reviewed by the Capitation Committee. Brian McGing stated that if, in the coming year, the Capitation Committee feels that the fee needs to be increased, there will have to be solid arguments put forward. He urged all capitated bodies to spend time before the next meeting building a case to justify why capitated bodies are underfunded. DUCAC was specifically referenced as being underfunded in comparison to sports clubs in other Irish Universities. He stated that there would be a need to demonstrate the importance of the work done by capitated bodies, and how the College benefits from these bodies as they form a large part of the student experience.

Dean of Students Kevin O’Kelly clarified that capitated bodies provide service to students, not College. Brian McGing acknowledged the clarification. Kevin O’Kelly emphasised that he did not wish for College to think that the capitated bodies served the College. Joseph O’Gorman CSC pointed out that strictly speak the capitated bodies do not serve the student body either, but exist as representatives to provide services that are needed.

Brian McGing asked how the Capitation Committee would envisage discussions with FSD and suggested that they consider assembling a working group to discuss the matter with the Vice Provost and FSD.

Kevin O’Kelly said that the weakness when Capitation Fee came in was that it was not indexed with inflation, and that it would be good to compare growth in relation to student fees as that would be representative of inflationary influence on student fees. Shane Collins GSU noted that Postgraduate fees have increased several over the past few years.

Kieran McNulty SU said that there would be a need to look for money for Freshers week and Graduate Orientation week and that there was a necessity to apply for small grants for maintenance costs and spaces. Joseph O’Gorman advised caution when making such applications to ensure that they will not lead to arguments being made e.g. “You got this so we’re not giving you this as well.” He emphasised that when making submissions they should make sure to know what is the position that they are making, and what are the arguments against that position.

DUCAC said that they have been keeping a record of what students are spending towards Trinity Sports on top of what DUCAC is spending to ensure that they have examples on file of what students are contributing towards the function of Trinity Sports and Sports Clubs representing the college.

Donagh McDonagh DUCAC stated that it was important that when information is brought back to future meetings, the response of the student bodies to the possibility of an increased Capitation Fee should be measured. Brian O’Ruairc DUCAC pointed out that since Capitation Committee consists of student representatives, they represent the student viewpoint. Joseph O’Gorman emphasised that it does need to be shown that students are getting value for money. Additional costs for programmes can make it difficult for students to participate and that the committee needs to be aware of those who are unable to participate because of their financial situation, and also those who are unable to participate due to time constraints, as is the case with many participants in the new online modules. Shane Collins added that many those taking online modules are postgraduate students.

Elaine Sharkey FSD advised that the committee be aware of the profile of potential students as demands of students may change. She suggested that each capitated body over the next few months put together a document for presenting their case, looking at Achievements, Plans, and Challenges

Action Point: Senior Dean – Form a working group of experienced individuals to prepare a case for increase Capitation Fee/ Capitation Fee that advantages students to the optimal capacity. It is suggested that the Vice-Provost should be included as well Working Group.

Item 6: Any Other Business

Brian McGing thanked the Committee for his time with them. He Announced the new Senior Dean as being Professor John Parnell. He stated that the contribution that the Capitated Bodies make to the college is of great importance. The student experience at Trinity College is extremely special and he congratulated all Capitated Bodies for their contribution.

Joseph O’Gorman lead the committee in a round of thanks to Brian McGing for his Chairmanship.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at approx. 1.00pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Addendum 1: Student Levy Referendum Wording

I assent, subject always to the following provisions and conditions, to the implementation of a levy upon each student of the College for the purposes of the provision and maintenance of a Student Centre as a locus of student-led activity, for the enhancement of currently available space, and for the development of further spaces within current College space, for the use of the students of the College. The provisions and conditions shall be:

That the funds collected through the implementation of the Levy Fee be ring-fenced for the purposes of the provision and maintenance of a Student Centre as a locus of student-led activity, for the enhancement of currently available space, and for the development of further spaces within current College space, for the use of the students of the College;

That the Levy Fee shall be collected in twenty-two annual payments of €30.00 per student from the date of its first collection;

That the funds collected in the first two years of the implementation of the Levy Fee shall be used for the enhancement of currently available space, and for the development of further spaces within current College space, for the use of the students of the College;

That the funds collected in the remaining lifetime of the implementation of the Levy shall be the purposes of the provision and maintenance of a Student Centre as a locus of student-led activity;

That the Levy Fee shall first be applied only to those students commencing their first or second year of studies at the beginning of the academic year 2017/18, with the exception of those students commencing one-year postgraduate studies to whom it shall apply for those commencing from the beginning of the academic year 2019/2020 onwards;

That all Students deemed to be in financial hardship, as moderated by the Senior Tutor's Office, shall be exempt from payment of the Levy Fee;

That the Levy Fee shall be overseen by Capitation Committee, or a duly appointed sub-committee thereof, and the appropriate personnel of the Financial Services Division;

That in the initial two year period of the implementation of the levy the prioritisation of the use of the monies for the enhancement of currently available space, and for the development of further spaces within current College space, for the use of the students of the College, shall be jointly developed by the Executives of the TCDSU and DUCSC, and presented to the Capitation Committee for its assent;

That the final configuration of the Student Centre as a locus of student-led activity will be agreed by TCDSU and DUCSC and presented to Capitation Committee for its assent;

That the future provision of the said Student Centre shall not in itself constitute the diminution of the status of House 6 as a locus of student-led activity, or in itself justify a reduction of the total space available for such student-led activities within House 6, or in any way or manner justify a reduction of the total space available for such student-led activities as is available to the Capitated Bodies at the time of the putting of this referendum to the Student body of the College.