Minutes of the Michaelmas 2019 TGM

Figure 1: CompSoc Vice-President Ben Slater turns to dark forces to secure more funding for pizza.

1 Members present

In person:

- Șerban Șlincu (President)
- Ben Slater (Vice-President)
- Katherine Benjamin (Secretary)
- Alexandra Manciu (Social secretary)
- Samuel Boyer (Treasurer)
- Alisdair Kergon

- Hristo Venev
- Joe Farebrother
- Mihail Denkovski
- Bozhidar Vasilev (Late)
- Ilia Manolov (Late)
- Miloš Golub (Late)

By proxy:

- Joshua Smailes (Katherine Benjamin)

2 Committee reports

2.1 President

Serban: I haven't got much to say. Everything is going nicely. We got lots of sponsors. We got lots of members. Freshers fair was as good as last year, I think our strategy worked. Our strategy is to not be too aggressive and to let people come to us. We haven't forced anyone to become members, but I think next term we'll start doing that because it's useful to be able to say that to the sponsors. It's a bit weird because membership isn't providing us with too much.

Alasdair: It used to be that there were no sponsors, and it was entirely funded by members.

Hristo: But there was no pizza.

Alasdair: But there was no pizza. But it was realised that there was money just sitting in the bank, so it was decided to essentially make it free to join with a token contribution. Could consider making it free. But having the threshold means people need to make a positive decision.

Serban: Palantir. We got them as a sponsor over the summer.

Alasdair: You've had them for several years, it wasn't an active decision.

Serban: Yeah. We got pressure from different sources. There was an article in Cherwell. Various people contacted us. A guy from the Career Service. Concern that the relationship was unhealthy. Supporting them, influencing their image in general. There was a big scandal involving Palantir.

Alasdair: They'd been caught up in the Cambridge Analytica stuff.

Ben: That wasn't the motivating factor for this.

Serban: You can read about that in the EGM minutes.

Serban: We had an EGM to let the members decide. They decided to drop them. Some people may be unhappy, but it was a general decision. There are some reasons against, if we drop them what do other sponsors think, will we have enough money for pizza (we do). In perspective, the best thing to do was to drop them.

Serban: Next point follows. The perspective of the society is skewed. People think we are here to feed them. We have a solid group of people coming for pizza. Not necessarily bad, they come and tend to socialise. Pizza is incentive to come, so they're here for pizza but also for the people. Some have taken this to the extreme. Over summer we thought of strategies to change this. It's not necessarily bad for our accounts, we have the money to support it, but that's not the point. The point is that if people are coming solely for pizza then we might get a destructive environment.

Ben: What is a destructive environment?

Serban: Some people come just for pizza, come 5 minutes before pizza arrives, leave 5 minutes after.

Alisdair: You can fix that with unpredictability.

Ben: One issue is that if we vary times it's difficult to predict how many people will be there.

Serban: One strategy is to order sushi. It's more shareable, people need to sit around a table and have a discussion. You can't just take a box to a corner. Well, you can, but for some reason people didn't.

2.2 Vice-President

Ben: Obviously a very big thing this term was dropping a sponsor. It's the first time in CompSoc's history. That was covered by Serban.

Ben: Between now and the last meeting we've gone through the sponsor acquisition process. It went more smoothly than last year's. Bigger committee enabled us to distribute work in better way. There still seems to be a lot of demand for sponsoring societies, and we had to turn some people away.

Ben: Sponsors seemed satisfied with attendance. A couple of times in the past sponsors haven't been happy with how many people have come. We haven't experienced anything like that this term. Even at the less attended events, recruiters still seemed happy. There is an issue with sponsors taking too much control of events.

Jane Street took control of theirs, and I heard bad things. Google were advised that the lecture theatre was too small, but went with it anyway and allowed the room to be overfull. This kind of thing reflects badly on the society.

Hristo: Have you contacted sponsors between dropping Palantir and now?

Ben: No, the way we do it is we have them from the beginning of the year to the end.

Hristo: So, we don't know if sponsors will care about us breaking a contract.

Serban: Caprinos or Domino's?

Everyone: Caprinos!

Serban: Caprinos it is.

Ben: We've had a lot of issues with Facebook. It's unavoidable because a lot of companies have onboarding processes, and they vary from company to company.

Alasdair: This is why you need a big committee able to put the work in. It does take effort.

Ben: Not sure where we're at. The general feeling in the committee is that we're not going to keep them.

Sam: I'll send one more email, maybe on Christmas eve.

Ben: What's the Dickens book with the three ghosts? We can get Thomas Denney as the ghost of CompSoc past.

Ben: It's unlikely we'll end up doing an event with Facebook, but it's good we're on their radar. Maybe a future committee will be able to sort it out.

Sam: They want a charity number. CompSoc is registered under the university, and the university doesn't have one because universities are charities by default.

Ben: I would encourage future committees to be discriminating of which sponsors we have and which we don't. A talk from Facebook will always be successful, and we do struggle a lot sometimes. For example Ocado.

Ben: Reflecting on which talks were successful, beginning of Michaelmas is always good because of freshers. We should reflect on whether a company like Stripe is going to get attendees.

Kate: It's worth mentioning for Stripe that this is the first year they're recruiting in the UK. They're trying to build recognition, so they were maybe not expecting too many attendees.

Ben: It's worth considering f turning away Bloomberg because we've already got a smaller company is a good idea. It's something a future committee might want to think about. Maybe do a first round and a second round, to make sure the calibre of sponsors is as high as it can be.

Ben: Last point about sponsors, we've been talking about the overuse of the facility we give sponsors to promote things. This year we've had one sponsors in particular which has given us a big calendar of what they want us to promote and when. It's something we should think about mentioning to a future committee.

Mihail: What if we have a very general template of what could be promoted? Within that they'll have their freedom to do what they want.

Ben: The nature of their promotions has been alright, its just the volume.

Alex: You can say no.

Serban: We can't. We discussed last summer about whether we wanted to change what we offer and after a lot of consideration we decided we didn't.

Serban: If we're charging £150 per social media post, maybe we should consider changing the whole way we think about sponsorships.

Alasdair: We could put a limit, or could do something like the first 5 are free.

Serban: We do have three distinct tiers.

Kate: It's not obvious that there's a difference between the tiers in what they can promote.

Sam: Is there one?

Kate: No, not really.

Serban: This is something we haven't considered before, because it hasn't happened before.

Kate: Ben, you liaised with this sponsor. Did you OK their brief before they produced it?

Ben: I haven't explicitly told them I'm OK with it, because I don't really understand what it entails. I've looked at it and there isn't anything super controversial. I didn't explicitly accept because of the precedent. They gave us a brief and also a calendar of what they want to send out. It's useful on the one hand, since it's good to know what we're doing, and saves us sending emails. The downside is the sheer volume.

Serban: We can remove the posts after a certain number of days.

Ben: But if people see spam, they might get annoyed. The next committee will want to add some kind of limit.

Ben: I think it was a shame we didn't get to have a relationship with Semmle/Github. A future committee would want to explore that.

Serban: One more thing about sponsors, it really helped that at the end of each event we gave the representative a bottle of wine. It leaves them with a good memory, so they're more likely to come back.

2.3 Secretary

Kate: One big change this term, as I'm sure you all noticed, is that we've started sending out the newsletter on Mondays. This isn't because of any good reason, I just forgot to send it out one weekend and decided to keep doing it on Mondays to save face.

Kate: There was a complete lack of academic talks this term. It's expected, since all the sponsors want their talks early. But we should try to get some in the future.

Kate: One thing we'd like to do next term is flash talks. We'd invite members to come and give short talks about anything they like.

Alasdair: The Physics society has late afternoon academic talks.

Kate: Late afternoon has issues with attendance.

Serban: We don't care about attendance so much for that.

Ben: I'm going to send an email to Tim Berners-Lee. I'll get blanked.

Alasdair: It's about time. I can't recall a single undergrad society that's had him as a speaker.

Kate: Ports and Policies was beautiful.

Hristo: We should consider making it a termly thing.

Sam: Yearly.

2.4 Social Secretary

Alex: We had a quiz night. I'm amazed we managed to come up with questions. I called it a termly quiz night, but it's getting too hard. It's quite fun, but I'm not sure we're that creative. We'll try.

Sam: Will we?

Alex: I'll try.

Alex: Attendance was good for all the events. We had the LAN night with the esports society. It was cool having an event with another society, we should do it more often.

Alex: I was surprised about how successful the Mini Hackathon was. There were some really cool projects.

Alasdair: Who won?

Serban: A Google that never searched for what you wanted. If you wanted to actually search for something you had to use Morse code.

Ben: Something that should be mentioned. CompSoc also got involved with OxfordHack.

Current balance	£20 004
Balance this time last year	£15 840
Difference of	£4 164
Balance at start of term	£22 057
Expenditure	£2 147

Table 1: Accounts

Hristo: So one of the Geek Nights didn't happen.

Sam: The Geek Night did happen: it was called Oxford Hack.

Ben: The best attended.

Ilia: The highest budget.

Ben: It was good to have our faces out there. Lots of people signed up for the prize.

2.5 Treasurer

Sam: We still have money. At the start of the term we had £22,057 and our current balance is £20,004. Our expenditure has been about £700 than this time last term, but that's because we didn't have a stash order or any first aid courses.

Sam: I'm a bit concerned that we're becoming PizzaSoc.

Phone rings for pizza

Sam: We've spoken about investing in other things. Equipment for LAN nights, stash, meals.

Sam: In conclusion: we have more money, we're buying more pizza, but that's not necessarily a problem.

3 Motions

- Adopt the minutes for the Trinity 2019 TGM.

  ACCLAIMED

- Adopt the minutes for the EGM of 22nd October 2019.

  ACCLAIMED