

## **Sidney Sussex College**

### The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of **COLLEGE COUNCIL**

Held via Zoom on Wednesday 30 June 2021 at 10am

#### **In attendance:**

##### **Senior Members Present**

The Master, Vice-Master, Senior Tutor, Bursar, Dr Bordin, Dr Fruk, Dr Fulda, Dr Garcia-Mayoral, Professor Reynolds, Dr Roberts, Dr Seymour, Dr Stasch

##### **Also Present**

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary)

## **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

### **1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS**

The Master thanked the members who were stepping down from Council – Dr Fruk, Dr Roberts, Dr Seymour and MCR President, Mr Velazhahan.

#### **1.1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Dr Oner, Mr Lowry, Mr Mettry, Mr Velazhahan, Ms Kazani.

#### **1.2 Approval of Agenda**

The Master explained that there had been some late papers but these had been uploaded to Sidnet for download in advance of the meeting.

Item 2.2a would be a verbal report.

A COVID update was added to Any Other Business.

#### **1.3 Declaration of Interests**

It was noted that all Fellows had a general interest in 2.3b.

#### **1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 26 May 2021 (CC.210630.1.4)**

The minutes were confirmed.

##### **a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

##### **2.1e 425<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration/Audit Dinner**

The Master reminded Council that it had been suggested at the last meeting that the next Audit Dinner should be repurposed as a celebration of the 425th Anniversary Celebration. No further

suggestions / alternatives had been proposed for the 425<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, so the plans for this would go ahead.

### **2.1f Artwork in Old Kitchen**

The Bursar informed Council that the Domestic Bursar was leading on this project in consultation with student body. Following consultations, it was proposed that a photographic competition would take place with the winners having their photographs displayed in the Old Kitchen initially. The competition would be open to all members. The judging panel would consist of: Domestic Bursar, Professor McKitterick, Dr Fulda, Dr Fruk, and a JCR and MCR representative. The theme of the competition is yet to be finalised.

### **2.3c Whistleblowing policy**

The Master explained that the Whistleblowing policy had received some further feedback from members of the Audit Committee so would be brought back to a meeting of Council in Michaelmas term 2021.

## **2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

### **2.1 Master's Business**

#### **a) Inter-collegiate business**

The Master explained that there had been no Colleges Committee meeting since Council had last met but that there had been two Bursars and one Senior Tutors Committee meetings.

The following key topics had been discussed:

- The future of the asymptomatic testing programme: This would cease at the end of term but it was felt sensible to maintain the logistics infrastructure of the testing programmes so that it was possible to restart it in 2021-22.
- Financial support to PhD students experiencing hardship: The University was proposing an additional £1 million fund and was requesting contribution from the Colleges.
- USS developments: Further discussion on this but no definitive outcomes on negotiations as yet.
- Size and shape of the University: Further discussions were taking place regarding increases in postgraduate numbers for 2022 entry.
- Supervision contracts for student and casual staff: There had been discussion about this between representatives of the Bursar committee and UCU and SCSU. A proposal had been developed.
- Student mental health strategy review – an interim report had been produced.

**b) Prakash and Anjali Melwani Student Wellbeing Fund - Governance Board proposal (CC.210630.2.1b)**

The Council **approved** the proposed Governance Board.

A member asked whether from a procedural point of view the Fund's governance board should be included in the annual published list of Committee members. The Master noted that it was not a Committee that derived its existence from the College Statute and Ordinances. However the point would be taken away for consideration.

**Action – Registrar to review and discuss with Principal Officers.**

**c) Environmental Sustainability working group**

The proposed members of the working group were Professor Flewitt as Chair, together with Dr Ramage, Professor Blundell, Dr Fruk and student representatives from the JCR and MCR.

Council **approved** the working group membership.

**d) \*\*Steven Roy Fund regulations – 2021 amendment (CC.210630.2.1c)**

Council **approved** the amendment.

**2.2 Senior Tutor Business**

**a) Overview of College Education & Pastoral plans for 2021-22**

The Senior Tutor summarised the recent statement from the University. Michaelmas term will start normally with an expectation of residence. The current plan was a return to the blended model with the expectation that as much in person teaching as possible would take place, with ongoing assessment of the viability of large groups for teaching. Lectures would continue to be recorded for some subjects and there would be full access to facilities. There is strong encouragement for people to be vaccinated. Further guidance from DFE is expected in July which may change the above.

Online undergraduate admissions will take place in December – which gives time to look at the technology and address subject specific issues. The first cohort of students for the Foundation year will arrive in Michaelmas term 2022 and the programme details are being finalised.

The Head of Student Well-Being will arrive for the start of Michaelmas term 2021 and will be involved in the Freshers' induction. Some students may need more academic support over the summer, with some issues arising from automatic progression. There will also need to be extra pastoral support for current first years, who have not had the usual exam experience. The College will also be looking at IT support, in terms of developing digital learning.

**b) Report on operation of the Fellows' stipend process**

The Senior Tutor explained the operation and monitoring of the Fellows' stipend process. There was a short term metric which looked at the Fellow's progress across the year in meeting their advance commitment to a College contribution, and there was longer term metric which looked at their average commitment over the length of their tenure. The Senior Tutor noted that on average, commitments made are getting closer to the expected stints. Overall the stipend process seemed to be working well and delivering the anticipated outcomes.

**c) \*Postgraduate Admission Forecast (CC.210630.2.2c)**

Council **noted** the forecast.

**2.3 Bursarial Business****a) Template agreement for Research Fellowships (CC.210630.2.3a)**

The Bursar explained that the template agreement had been developed to ensure transparency and to fulfil statutory obligations in terms of the information provided to Research Fellows in relation to their agreement with the College. It was not intended for use with every Fellow in class 2, as it depended on the terms of their engagement. The Bursar sought endorsement from Council on use of the agreement. Council **approved**.

**b) Catering proposals****i) Summer vacation 2021**

The Bursar explained that a lot of conferencing business had been transferred to next year, rather than losing it altogether. Partly because of the lack of conferencing this summer, however, and to avoid unnecessary food waste, it is proposed that catering ceases on 19 July and reopens in September. There would be catering provision for some specific events and for staff/Fellow lunches, Jesus College had offered use of their dining facilities. Council approved this decision.

**ii) High table lunches in Michaelmas Term 2021**

The Bursar informed Council that the new kitchen would be operational from September and that it was proposed that high table be retained but that food be collected from the new servery instead of the bay window. The Bursar explained that she wanted a feel from the College trustees as to whether the environmental (reduction of food wastage) and egalitarian reasons underlying this proposal were sufficiently compelling before this proposal went out for wider consultation.

Concerns were expressed from some Council members about the proposal. Although the environmental reason could have merit (and more information was requested about that), it was felt that the egalitarian reason needed more discussion. It was felt that the high table arrangements as they had existed had a purpose in bringing the Fellowship and guests together and that since the stipend was not large, the community and dining privileges were an important part of the overall package. It was felt that it would be a threat to the community if the College started to chip away at it.

More information was requested about the proposed consultation process – how that would operate and be communicated. It should not be seen as a cost cutting exercise. It was felt that obtaining information from other Colleges about Fellows' catering arrangement might also be useful part of the consultation.

In conclusion, Council agreed that the proposal would not go straight to consultation but it would be referred to the Fellows' Amenities and Entertainments Committee in order for them to discuss and do some fact-finding in terms of the arrangements other Colleges had in place for Fellows' dining privileges, and the reasons for this.

**Action: Bursar / Registrar to notify FAEC**

**c) \*\*Annual Permission for any two of Master, Vice-Master, Bursar and Senior Tutor to use College seal**

Council **approved**

**d) \*\*Appointment of Messrs Peters, Elworthy and Moore (PEM) as Auditors for the Audit of the 2020-21 Accounts**

Council **approved** the reappointment.

**e) \*\*Appeals for Easter Term 2021 (CC.210630.2.3e)**

Council **approved** the proposed donations.

**i) 9 Sussex Street – Lease renewal**

Council **noted** the lease renewal.

## **2.4 Development Director**

**a) Development Director's Report (provisional 2020-21 donation income) (CC.210630.2.4a)**

The Development Director took the opportunity at her last Council meeting to explain the observable trends in the donation income report

and her experience of fundraising at Sidney. She emphasised how six figure gifts were important and account for a significant proportion of the total donation income. She said relationship care and clear personal and financial reporting was as important as other metrics sometimes used. She said that it was important to provide accurate accessible information about what the College was doing with the money, and it was important to know what other interactions donors might be having with the College. She emphasised the fundraising environment was likely to be difficult in the short-term. She hoped that her successor would be able to enjoy ongoing support from the College Community.

A question was asked about the difference in the degree of UG alumni giving and PG alumni giving, within the context of the University's strategic decision to admit more PG students. The Development Director explained that the UG/PG donation split was dramatic with the bulk of giving coming from UG alumni. She pointed out that the PG alumni's experience of College is limited and not as strong as the UG one, and the relationship cannot be created with them after they have left.

Council gave thanks to the Development Director and her team for all that they had done and achieved, recognising that it was a remarkable achievement to have raised £2 million in donations this year..

## **2.5 Steward's Business**

There was no business.

## **2.6 Student Business**

There was no business.

## **3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

### **3.1 Chapel Committee**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.1a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### **3.2 Student Awards Committee**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.2a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### **3.3 KPOC**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.3a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### 3.4 Communications Steering Group

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 20 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.4a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### 3.5 Buildings & Environment Committee

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 24 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.5a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### 3.6 Education Committee

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 31 May 2021  
(CC.210630.3.6a)

The minutes were **noted**.

- i)\*\*Safeguarding policy (CC.210630.3.6i)  
Council **approved** the policy.

### 3.7 Investment Committee

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.7a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### 3.8 IT Steering Group

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.8a)

The minutes were **noted**.

- i) \*\*IT and Communications Systems policy (CC.210630.3.8ai)  
Council **approved** the policy.

### 3.9 Finance & Needs Committee

- a) Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.9a)

The Bursar informed Council that the budget for next year is forecast to be £2.2 million in deficit. She said that the budget would not return to normal next year because conferencing (primarily taking place over the summer) and commercial property business was still down and would significantly affect College's unrestricted income. She explained that up to now the College had been able to offset some of this loss of income by making use of the Government's furlough scheme but this would not be available next year. Although retail businesses may continue to struggle, it was hoped that conferencing would recover next summer.

On the basis of this expectation, it had been agreed by Financial & Needs Committee to recommend to Council that the 2022-23 research fellowship competition should go ahead on the usual basis, that is the recruitment of two Fellows with stipends if they had no other source of funding.

College **approved** the recommendation.

### **3.10 Library Committee**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.10)

The minutes were **noted**.

### **3.11 Staff Liaison Committee**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2021  
(ACC.210630.3.11a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### **3.12 Development Committee**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.12a)

The minutes were **noted**.

### **3.13 Joint Music and Chapel**

- a) \*Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 17 June 2021  
(CC.210630.3.13a)

The minutes were **noted**.

## **4. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **4.1 Any other business**

The Senior Tutor gave an update on the current COVID situation in College, explaining that there had been a further five positive cases, which meant the College currently had ten COVID positive cases and a greater number of students in related self-isolation. He said the College was now experiencing the spike that other colleges had experienced, and there was only 48 hours to go before the planned graduation events.

A member felt that to effectively risk manage the events, certified lateral flow tests taken within 24 hours of the event should be a requirement. The Senior Tutor confirmed that lateral flow tests had been a requirement for an event earlier in the week so he would talk to the Domestic Bursar about making the tests a requirement for the graduation events. He mentioned that some of the positive cases related to an outbreak in a particular accommodation block so the local public health team may have an interest and want to talk to the College about the COVID secure measures in place for this block.

Another member questioned whether the events should even go ahead in the light of this, and asked what COVID security measures were in place for the events. The Senior Tutor outlined the measures. Effectively, the measures were to ensure stage three government compliance. A member of the local council health team had assessed the event and had been happy for it to go ahead with the proviso that guests were not allowed.

The Senior Tutor informed Council further that two email communications had been sent to students from College this week, highlighting the worsening situation, and emphasising the need to test and get vaccinated; he noted that only 31% students had put themselves forward for testing this week.

**Action:** Senior Tutor to discuss with the Domestic Bursar

#### **4.2 Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 13 October 2021