

**Sidney Sussex College**

The Minutes of  
**COLLEGE COUNCIL**  
Held in William Mong Hall  
on Wednesday 12 October 2022 at 2pm

**In attendance:**

**Senior members:**

The Master, Senior Tutor, Bursar  
Ms Baskerville, Dr Doran, Professor Eilstrup Sangiovanni, Dr Fulda, Professor  
Garcia-Mayoral, Dr Groom, Dr Lambert,  
Dr Oner, Dr Stasch

**Student representatives:**

Mr Lu (JCR President), Ms Horvat Menih (MCR President)

**Also present:**

Ms Adams (College Registrar / Council Secretary)

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

**1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS**

**1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence**

Ms Baskerville and Dr Lambert were welcomed or welcomed back to the Council, and Ms Adams was introduced as Council Secretary. The MCR President, Ms Horvat Menih was welcomed to the first meeting she was able to attend since her election.

Apologies were received from the Vice-Master, Dr Bordin, Dr Ranasinghe and Professor Reynolds.

**1.2 Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved.

**1.3 Declarations of Interests**

Directly employed Fellows, and potentially residential Fellows, had an interest in item 3.2a(i), but as it was a procedural update for information only, there was no need to withdraw from the meeting.

**1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 29 June 2022 (CC.221012.1.4)**

The minutes were **confirmed**.

- a)** Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda  
There were no matters arising.

## 2. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

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

#### a) **Charity Trustees: Responsibilities and Register of Interests**

The Master drew attention to the hyperlink on the agenda to the Charity Commission's publication, 'The Essential Trustee', which all Council members should read. He reminded the Council members that, as Trustees, they had a responsibility to act in the College's best interests and to ensure that the Council's decisions were in furtherance of the College's objectives.

Not all Council members had returned their annual confirmation of (continuing) eligibility and registration of interests, and the Master asked that those still outstanding be completed and submitted. A revised process for updating interests would be implemented for the next academic year.

**Action: Registrar**

#### b) **Inter-collegiate business**

The Master outlined the following inter-collegiate business which had taken place since the last Council meeting:

##### Colleges' Committee

- The Committee had held a long discussion on a reading week for students following the General Board's endorsement of the proposal. Although mixed views had been expressed in earlier consultation, not all of the Colleges' concerns had been reflected in the report which went to the General Board. The Vice-Chancellor and the then Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education agreed to raise these issues directly with the Working Group. The Working Group would report on the reading week proposal later in Michaelmas Term. This could lead to a vote in the Regent House.
- Degree ceremonies had returned to the pre-pandemic in-person format over the summer and the backlog had been substantially reduced.
- There had been number of student deaths in the current calendar year. The University had pro-actively requested investigation from health authorities to see if there were any clustering of the cases, but no connection between the individual students had been identified. It was imperative to strengthen and to continue building on the Suicide Safer Strategy.
- The strategic review of mental health provision was being implemented, with the University now making available professional mental health advisors as well as counsellors. A commitment had been given to see within a week anyone who contacted the service needing support.

Appointment of Vice-Chancellor, 2023-2030

- Professor Deborah Prentice, Provost of Princeton University, had been nominated as Vice-Chancellor for approval by the Regent House for seven years from 1 July 2023.

**c) Council Work Plan 2022-23 (CC.221012.2.1c)**

An annual College planning cycle had been introduced last year (CC220525.2.1d), setting out when business was expected to come to each Council meeting. The Finance and Needs, Education and Pastoral Care and Statutes and Ordinances Committees had begun developing their own annual plans to feed into the Council work plan. All Council members were invited to submit comments to the Registrar, who would bring an updated version to Council in Easter Term to support planning for the 2023-24 academic year.

The plan was **noted**.

**Action: Registrar**

**d) College Outline Plans for Short to Medium Term (Future Plans) (CC.221012.2.1d)**

The outline plans would form part of the College's annual accounts and financial statements, and would be further developed during discussions about strategic priorities in Easter Term.

In discussion it was noted that although teaching had mostly returned to pre-pandemic arrangements, post-pandemic support for students continued as a priority.

The Council **approved** the outline plans, subject to swapping the order of the two priorities in the first bullet point, so that ongoing post-pandemic support came ahead of the need to embed the current return to in-person teaching as the normal mode of delivery.

**Action: Bursar**

**e) Research Fellowship Competitions: Approval of Interview Panels**

Council **confirmed** the appointments of Professor Biagini (Arts and Humanities) and the Master (STEM) as chairs of the respective panels, and **agreed** to delegate authority to the Master and Dr Roberts to fill the remaining places and to report the appointments to Council.

**Action: Master, Dr Roberts**

f) **Festival of Ideals Initiative** (CC.221012.2.1f)

Dr Fulda, one of three sponsors of the initiative, thanked Council for the constructive feedback, which had been incorporated into the proposal. He emphasised that the purpose of the initiative was for community engagement and the generation of ideas, rather than for immediate consideration by Council and implementation.

The envisaged shared repository for proposals would be launched after the Mastership election, with a College-wide poll in Lent Term to identify the 'best' proposal. To mitigate the risk of misuse, the sponsors committed to moderating submissions before they became visible in the shared document.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- Expectation management by the sponsors was key to a successful initiative, and if properly communicated would minimise the risk of the initiative being treated as a complaints box;
- The principal officers and College staff had already been asked by Council to progress a significant number of major initiatives, while also having to mitigate the impact of significant financial pressures and staff vacancies on the delivery of key services;
- Specifically, the Bursar was concerned that the Domestic Bursar, while supportive of the need to elicit ideas from staff, should not be diverted from work essential to keep the College running;
- The College's existing governance structure could appear opaque to students, but the ease with which ideas could be submitted to the initiative could encourage more engagement;
- At the same time, it was essential that before coming back to Council for consideration, any ideas arising from this exercise should then be routed and developed into a full proposal via the existing governance structure of the college;
- The sponsors would undertake the work required to organise and promote the initiative, without any expectation that the 'best' idea could be brought back to Council to provide resources to implement it.

Council **approved** the proposal to introduce a 'Festival of Ideas' in the second half of Michaelmas Term, subject to:

- clear expectation management about the limited resources available and hence the likelihood of the implementation of any suggestions;
- moderation of submissions before publication; and
- removing the requirement that "A summary report of the survey results will be submitted to Council at its second or third meeting of Lent term...".

## 2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

- a) \*\*Director of Studies List (2022-23 Final) (CC.221012.2.2a)  
The report was **noted**.

## 2.3 Bursar's Business

a) **Draft Financial Results (CC.221012.2.3a)**

The Bursar explained that the financial results for 2021-22 would be presented in full at the Governing Body's Audit meeting on 9 November. She drew Council's attention to the following key points:

- The College's balance sheet saw a small decrease compared to the previous year;
- Equities had decreased by about £3.5 million, reflecting market performance;
- The target for available free reserves target was £5 million, of which the College had just under £1 million at the end of June 2022. This was due in part to the impact of the pandemic, and from using reserves for the kitchen project. The focus remains on rebuilding the reserves;
- The College aimed to break even between its operational income and expenditure. In 2021-22 the College posted a deficit of £1.35 million, primarily due to the cost of running the College at full capacity but without the usual income streams from commercial property, reflecting a continuing downturn in local market rents, and a significantly lower conference trade;
- The College had budgeted for a £1.4 million deficit for 2022-23. Although savings had been realised in the staffing budget, these were due to unfilled vacancies and had an operational impact;
- Schedule 4 set out broad assumptions for a five year forecast to the end of 2026-27, noting that the projections could change considerably in response to revised assumptions, e.g. the rate of inflation and volume of conference trade. The College would continue to show a deficit for some years, and Council was advised to be mindful of the financial position when taking decisions regarding increased expenditure;
- The cash balance was currently higher than needed for operational purposes, and the Investment Committee would be invited to consider whether and how to invest.

The Bursar recognised that the JCR and MCR had both requested support explaining the College's financial position to students, and drew attention to the effective presentation style used by the Development Team to demonstrate it to potential donors. Student Town Halls, if re-established, could prove a useful forum for communicating how College finance worked and how decisions around spending were made.

Council thanked the Bursar and the College Office and **noted** the draft financial results.

**b) Charity Governance Code Review: Chair of Audit Committee's Recommendations (CC.221012.2.3b)**

The Bursar explained that some of the recommendations were already being implemented, some would be linked to the review of the annual work plan, and others relating to development of a strategic plan and set of values would not start until the new Master was in post.

The Master noted that it would be more appropriate for some of the actions, particularly those requiring additional time commitment from Council members, to take place biennially or every three years rather than annually.

Council members were encouraged to raise any questions or concerns with the Registrar, who would update the recommendations in conjunction with the Council's 2023-24 annual work plan.

The Council thanked Mr Young for his review and **noted** that an updated report would be presented in Easter Term.

**Action: Registrar**

**c) \*\*Pension Directors 2022-2026**

Council **approved** the appointment of Mr Nick Allen and Professor Michael Pollitt as Council-nominated Directors of the Sidney Sussex Pension Scheme from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2026.

**d) \*\*Use of College Seal**

- i. Darwin Green: Phase 8 Transfer, Phase 9 Transfer and Bond Release Phase 8
- ii. 3-4 Sussex Street – Licence to Assign and Rent Deposit Deed
- iii. Darwin Green: Deed of Variation

Council **noted** the use of the College seal.

## **2.4 Student Business**

**a) JCR Report and plans for MT (CC.221012.2.4a)**

The JCR President reported that the JCR had worked through the summer with the Admissions Director, Dr Groom and the Tutorial Office to deliver the College's first Preparation Week. Feedback from this year's freshers about Preparation Week had been uniformly positive, with freshers welcoming the additional time to settle in and become familiar with Cambridge. He thanked the Freshers' Representatives and the Ents team for putting together an ambitious

and well-received programme, and the 20 student helpers who supported freshers moving in.

The JCR had withdrawn from the University's shadowing scheme. The proposed replacement would consist of two in-house access initiatives, one BME Access Day organised by the JCR BME and Access Officers, and another proposed hybrid access program which included a day visit and online engagements, both in conjunction with the Admissions Office.

The Bursar noted that the JCR reserves had accumulated over time, particularly during the pandemic.

The JCR President reported that Reegan Robertson had been elected the new JCR Council Representative.

Council **noted** the report.

### **3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

#### **3.1 Chapel Committee**

- a) **\*Minutes of the meeting of 13 February 2022 (CC.221012.3.1a)**  
Council **noted** the minutes.

#### **3.2 Finance and Needs Committee**

- a) **Minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2022 (CC.2210123.2a.i)**  
The Bursar drew attention to the CTO Review Recommendations (minute 9) and that the Finance and Needs Committee had:
- concluded that, despite the significant forecast deficit, the College could absorb the annual cost of automatic biennial incremental progression if approved, and referred the salary progression proposals to the Remuneration and Benefits Committee (for Fellows) and HR Committee (for staff) to make recommendations to Council;
  - noted that questions of stipend ranges were a matter for the Remuneration and Benefits Committee; and
  - asked the Bursar to produce a detailed proposal on Fellows' accommodation and ancillary benefits for further consideration and for broader discussion within the context of Fellowship engagement, noting that the potential costs of this were substantial and would require mitigation.

Council **noted** the minutes and **approved** the Fellows' Expenses Policy (CC.2210123.2a.ii).

#### **3.3 Student Wellbeing Initiative Governance Board**

CC-2022-10-12 Unreserved Minutes

- a) \*Minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2022 (CC.221012.3.3a)  
Council **noted** the minutes.
- b) \*Minutes of the meeting of 8 September 2022 (CC.221012.3.3b)  
Council **noted** the minutes.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

**4.1 Any other business**

There was no further business.

**4.2 Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 9 November 2022 at 2pm in the William Mong Hall.