



Unreserved business minutes of College Council on Wednesday 19 March 2025

Present:

Ex officio members	Master, Vice-Master, Senior Tutor, Bursar
Elected members	Ms Baskerville, Professor Biagini, Dr Bordin, Professor Fruk, Dr Groom, Mr Ireland, Dr Ranasinghe, Dr Sumnall
Student members	Ms Harrison (Student Representative), Ms Woods (JCR Vice-President)
In attendance	College Registrar (Council Secretary)

Introductory business

At the start of the meeting Council rose for a minute's silence in memory of Mr Clive Wilmer, Emeritus Fellow, and Mr Andrzej 'Andy' Niedbalski, House Porter.

701 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Drs Eaton, Harasimov, Öner and Wilson-Lee, and from Ms Chen (MCR President) and Mr Johnson (JCR President). Mr Hammett (May Week Event Vice-President 2025), in attendance for item 722 only, was welcomed, and Ms Baskerville was welcomed back.

702 Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved subject to taking item 722 (May Week Event 2025: ticket sales) first.

703 Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

704 Unreserved business minutes of 26 February 2025

(CC.2425/704)

Confirmed by circulation.

705 Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

(CC.2425/705)

Noted.

Decision items

706 Updated scheme regarding alumni dining privileges (Development Director)

(CC.2425/706)

On the recommendation of the Development Committee, Council **approved** the proposals for a termly Alumni Formal Hall and removal of the MA requirement for dining at High Table, both to be trialled in 2025-26, with a review in Easter Term 2026.

707 Review of Dining Privileges Scheme (Vice-Master) (CC.2425/707)

On the recommendation of the Fellowship Committee, Council **approved** that:

- (a) a Uni card reader or equivalent be installed in Hall at the earliest opportunity to monitor the use of dining privileges, especially at lunch;
- (b) the new scheme be adopted with effect from 1 October 2025;
- (c) every supervisor who teaches Sidney students in the current academic year may dine once a term as a College guest when invited by the relevant Director of Studies;
- (d) breakfast be included as one of the eight meals per week for diners in Category A;
- (e) individuals appointed by College to dining rights in Categories B, C and D have an ‘expiration’ date attached to privileges, normally two years from the date of appointment;
- (f) the Fellows’ Steward be responsible to present an up-to-date list of privilege holders to the first College Council meeting of each new academic year for approval and to manage the communication of dining privileges to those concerned after the Council decision; and
- (g) dining privileges will expire at the end of Easter Term 2025 for those individuals currently in receipt of dining privileges but who are without a contractual relationship to the College (i.e., dining privileges will not be ‘grandfathered’ into the new scheme).

708 Education & Student Care Priorities 2024-25 (Senior Tutor) (CC.2425/708)

The Senior Tutor presented the priorities for academic and pastoral services, as recommended by the Audit Committee to enable Council to hold Principal Officers to account for their departments. Chapel and music priorities would be considered separately by the Chapel & Music Committee in the first instance. Council **endorsed** the priorities, and **noted** that it would receive six-monthly progress updates.

709 Donations Solicitation and Acceptance Policy update (Development Director) (CC.2425/709)

The amendments clarified the position on acceptance of donations from students, adopted the University’s definition of ‘student’, and aligned the College’s policy with changes adopted by the University in January 2025, specifically on raising from £1m to £4m the threshold for CBELA to undertake due diligence, and on establishing projects and initiatives requiring long-term funding. The Development Committee had also requested that future gift agreements include a statement that donors have read the policy.

On the recommendation of the Development Committee, Council **approved** the updated policy and proposed addition to gift agreements.

Discussion items

710 College Finances: Q2 update (Bursar) (CC.2425/710)

Council **noted** the Bursar's update that, as of the half-year mark on 31 December 2024:

- Total income including donations was £513k higher than at the same point in the previous financial year, primarily due to additional commercial property income in respect of 20-22 Sidney Street, and investment income;
- Total expenditure had, however, increased only by £341k, of which staff wages had increased only by 1% (£22k) from the same period in 2023-24;
- Increases in expenditure vs. H1 2023-24 had been seen in major works, where the budget had increased from £550k in 2023-24 to £980k in the current year, day to day maintenance and commercial property, including professional fees for 20-22 Sidney Street and renovations to existing properties prior to occupation by new tenants;
- Net assets had increased from £155m at the end of June to £159m by the end of December, entirely due to gains on investments as a result of improved financial markets.

711 Forecast outturn 2024-25 (Bursar) (CC.2425/711)

Council **noted** the Bursar's report that the forecast outturn for 2024-25 projected an overall favourable position against the original budget, which highlighted that:

- A £147k improvement in the underlying deficit (before donations and one-off exceptional items) was due to a £316k increase in forecast income (excluding donations), offset by an increase in forecast expenditure of £168k;
- Commercial property income was forecast to be more than £350k above the original budget due to the purchase of 20-22 Sidney Street in November 2024 and the receipt of rental income from the tenants, which was not expected at the time the budget was agreed;
- This was offset by a one-off impact of extra staff costs relating to maternity leave and sickness cover, and by the forecast that Conference income would come in £60k below budget. Plans were in progress to attempt to make up the shortfall in Conferences;
- Donations income was now forecast to be £999k, compared with the budget of £1.1m.

712 Five-year forecast (Bursar) (CC.2425/712)

The Bursar, noting the more detailed and granular assumptions now underpinning the longer-term forecast, reported that the underlying deficit was forecast to rise slowly from £0.96m this year to £1.33m by 2029-30; and cash movement was forecast to be broadly neutral over the period. However, the Bursar also noted the inherent uncertainties in any such long-range forecasting, and also how small changes to assumptions around, e.g., donations, conference income or tuition fees, could substantially change the cash movement forecast. Council **noted** the update.

713 Development & Alumni Relations Priorities 2024-25: 6- monthly progress update (Development Director) (CC.2425/713)

The Development Director presented the update, drawing attention to plans to reach the target donations income by working with donors who gave in the previous but not current year. Council **noted** the update.

714 Interim Undergraduate Admissions Report: 2025 Round (Interim Admissions Director) (CC.2425/714)

The Interim Admissions Director reported on the success of the admissions round, the first for nearly all members of the Admissions Team. As in recent years, offers made to direct applicants did not meet most widening participation targets, but the balance was redressed through the Pool. Sidney wanted to attract not only more direct applications but also more applicants from underrepresented backgrounds to meet its ambition to widen participation. Council **noted** the update.

715 Widening Participation: 2024-25 Report (Interim Admissions Director) (CC.2425/715)

The Interim Admissions Director presented the report, noting that there had been less activity during the summer of 2024 while recruitment of a new Schools Liaison Officer was underway. The Outreach Strategy would be updated soon in light of the University's new Access and Participation Plan 2025-29. Council **noted** the update.

716 Size and Shape of the Student Population: Survey (Senior Tutor) (CC.2425/716)

Council **noted** the Senior Tutor's presentation of the survey issued by the Office of Intercollegiate Services to obtain an aggregate College view of the ideal size and shape of the student population. An extension to the deadline had been sought to enable consideration during the Easter Vacation and allow Council to discuss a draft response at the start of Easter Term. **Action: Senior Tutor**

717 Risk Register 2025: first look (Registrar) (CC.2425/717)

The Registrar presented the draft 2025 risk registers for Governance, University and inter-collegiate relations, and Communications, and asked that comments be sent to her. The final version would be presented for adoption in Easter Term. Council **noted** the update.

Information items

718 Inter-collegiate business and other relevant issues (All) (CC.2425/718)
Heads of House

- Veterinary Medicine admissions for 2026 would continue
- The University was rolling out more entrepreneurship activities
- Work continued on the review of University investments, particularly investments in research which were funded by defence industry

- Steps were being taken on behalf of graduands to ensure that ceremonies would continue to take place at the Senate House

Bursars' Committee

- Costs of undergraduate admissions and outreach activities were discussed
- The cost of student mental health and wellbeing support was discussed, and associated adherence to the stepped model to avoid duplication
- Levy requests by the University to Colleges look set to rise

Senior Tutors' Committee

- Governance arrangements for undergraduate admissions had been agreed
- The final recommendations of teaching review had been received and comments were invited by 31 March; the Senior Tutor would circulate the document

Action: Senior Tutor

719 Preparation Week: 2024 report (Senior Tutor) (CC.2425/719)

Council **received** the report, noting that it had been considered at the joint meeting of Academic Committee and Student Wellbeing Committee.

720 Student Financial Support: 2023-24 annual report (Senior Tutor) (CC.2425/720)

Council **received** the report.

721 Safeguarding Officer's Annual Report 2024 (Senior Tutor) (CC.2425/721)

Council **received** the report.

722 May Week Event 2025: ticket sales update (Student Members) (CC.2425/722)

This item was taken first.

Council **received** an update from Mr Hammett (May Week Event Vice-President 2025), who reported that demand was lower than in previous years and spending had been frozen pending either selling enough tickets to break even or a decision being needed to cancel the event before any advance payments to suppliers were required. Other Colleges were cancelling their events for similar reasons and it was possible that Sidney could benefit; a communications strategy had been prepared to raise awareness of the risk of cancellation.

Policy review items

723 Annual Leave Policy: 3-yearly review (CC.2425/723)

On the recommendation of the HR Committee, Council **approved** the updated policy.

724 Probation Policy: 3-yearly review (CC.2425/724)

On the recommendation of the HR Committee, Council **approved** the updated policy.

Reports from committees

725 Chapel & Music Committee 21 February 2025 (unconfirmed) (CC.2425/725)

The minutes were received.

726 Academic Committee 24 February 2025 (unconfirmed) (CC.2425/726)

The minutes were received.

727 Student Wellbeing Committee 3 March 2025 (unconfirmed) (CC.2425/727)

The minutes were received.

728 HR Committee 4 March 2025 (unconfirmed) (CC.2425/728)

The minutes were received.

729 Finance & Needs Committee 10 March 2025 (unconfirmed) (CC.2425/729)

The minutes were received.

Other business

730 Any other business

Gratitude was expressed to Ms Woods for her service on Council.

731 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 2pm in the William Mong Hall.