

Sidney Sussex College

The Minutes of
COLLEGE COUNCIL
Held in William Mong Hall
on Wednesday 13 October 2021 at 2pm

In attendance:

Senior Members Present

The Master, Vice-Master, Senior Tutor, Bursar, Dr Bordin, Dr Doran, Dr Fulda, Dr Garcia-Mayoral, Dr Groom, Dr Oner, Dr Ranasinghe, Professor Reynolds, Professor Sangiovanni, Dr Stasch, Dr Sumnall

Student Members Present

Mr Lowry, Ms Dadiya, Mr Mettry, Ms Kazani

Also Present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary)

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

The Master asked Council members to wear masks when they were not speaking as part of the mitigating action in relation to the risk assessment of the Mong Hall.

He explained that the Governing Body meeting in November would be held on zoom, with Council members then subsequently gathering in the Mong Hall for the Council meeting.

He welcomed the new Council members: Dr Groom, Dr Ranasinghe, Professor Sangiovanni, Dr Sumnall, and Ms Dadiya, as well as Professor Sepulchre who was not present.

1.1 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

Item 2.2d was unstarred as the paper was tabled. A request was made to unstar item 3.1a.

1.3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 30 June 2021

The minutes were confirmed.

- a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda
The Bursar gave an update on the Photography competition. The judges had reviewed the entries received, and a long list of 15 photographs had been agreed. These will be displayed on a screen in the Old Kitchen for for College members to be able to vote for a “People’s Choice”. The final three (or four if the people’s choice differs from the judge’s awards) will be framed and exhibited in the Old Kitchen.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master’s Business

a) Charity Trustees: [Responsibilities](#) and Register of Interests

The Master explained that the hyperlink in the agenda item was to the Charity Commission’s ‘the Essential Trustee’ publication which Council members should read. He stressed the need for the College trustees to act in the best interest of the College and to ensure that Council’s decisions were in furtherance of the College’s objectives.

He noted that five Council members had not yet returned their annual of (continuing) eligibility and declaration of interest forms and asked for these to be completed.

b) COVID 19 update

The Master explained that the College was moving towards a return to normality, along with Government and the University. Hence Council meetings were being held in person, as had many Freshers’ events, and small group teaching would also be happening in person within the context of social distancing, facemasks and ensuring that other attendees views about precautions should be taken into account. So far, this move seemed to have gone well, and with students appreciating it. There had been no COVID College cases reported to date and only a few cases across the University. However, there was an issue with testing participation rates which were low – approx. 30% to data in College. The Master stressed that if testing participation rates

continued to be low, then it would be difficult to know the prevalence of COVID and in the absence of this data the College may need to be more careful and restrictive in its COVID policies. The JCR president said that SCSU would help encourage students to participate.

The Bursar stated, it was also important that Fellows and Staff should carry out bi-weekly lateral flow tests.

A Council member raised the point that students from abroad may be discouraged from testing because, unlike those who have been double vaccinated in the UK, they were not exempt from self-isolation even if double vaccinated. The Master said that the University and Heads of House had been in touch with the Minister of Higher Education to raise awareness of the issue but had not had a positive response.

c) Inter-collegiate business

Colleges' Committee had met in July and discussed the following:

- The planning for congregations – these were to be in person but without guests at least for the remainder of this term;
- The strategic review of admissions and outreach – the Colleges' Committee had for its part agreed the recommendations;
- The progress of the strategic review of mental health provision across the University and Colleges – given the generous donation in this area and subsequent investment in College wellbeing services, it is likely that Sidney's provision would be compliant with the review's eventual recommendations.

In addition, it was noted that the Vice-Chancellor had announced his resignation at the end of the academic year. The Council had started a process to find a replacement; it was noted that there may be the need for an interim Vice-Chancellor.

d) Annual Report Future plans (CC.211013.2.1d)

The Bursar explained that the current draft of the College's Future Plan was to be approved at Governing Body as part of the wider operational report for 2020-21 as part of the Annual Report and Accounts. Council **agreed** that the Future Plans as drafted was an accurate reflection.

e) Council Work Plan 2021-22 (CC.211013.2.1e)

A Council member noted that the Council's work plan was still disproportionately heavy in the Michaelmas term. The Master agreed that this could be looked at again.

ACTION: The Registrar will talk to the individual owners of agenda items this term to see what might be able to be rescheduled to a lighter period of the academic year.

f) CTO review – approval terms of reference (CC.211013.2.1f)

The Master explained that the draft terms of reference specify a suggested set of roles from which members should be selected to be part of the CTO review working group. Council members were encouraged to email the Chair, Professor Hill, with suggested names from within these groups so that the working group members could be confirmed by circulation before the next Council meeting and the work of the group could commence.

A Council member expressed some concern over the use of the phrase 'cost neutral'. He felt that this should be an aim of the review but that it should not close down the opportunity to improve CTO conditions. The Bursar explained that the 'cost neutral' criterion was part of the UTO review as well and noted that it did not mean individual CTO conditions could not be proposed to change. However it was agreed that the precise wording would be reviewed.

The point was also made that an external review member is envisaged by the terms of reference but it was desirable that whoever it is have insight into the CTO experience. The Master confirmed that this point had been recognised.

ACTION: The Master concluded by saying that it seemed that Council generally agreed with the draft TOR's but that some phrasing would be reviewed. Both the working group's membership and the final wording in the terms of reference would be agreed by circulation

g) Student Wellbeing Project Governance Board membership

It was proposed that the governance board shall consist of the Master as Chair, Professor Gerstle, Dr Groom and Professor Greer. In attendance would also be the Bursar, Senior Tutor, Sidney's Head of Student Wellbeing, as well as the University Head of Student Wellbeing. Council **agreed** the proposed membership.

2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

a) Foundation year – 2023 entry

The Senior Tutor explained that the College had been asked to express interest in participating in the second cohort – i.e. 2023 entry - for the Foundation Year. Sidney's Admissions Committee had met and had

taken the view that since they had already put in preparation for the 2022 year entry, the College would want to continue to participate in the initiative. The JCR President said that he supported the College's decision. Council **agreed** that the College should express its interest in being involved in the second cohort.

b) Freshers' week 2021 report

The Senior Tutor reported that the series of Freshers' events seemed to have gone well. The presence of the Head of Student Wellbeing had been a positive change, along with the bringing in of some external providers for particular session topics. It was noted that there had been some disparity between the UG and PG cohorts and across subjects in terms of access to Fresher events, including library inductions, and it was suggested that the plan for the Freshers' week in future should be distributed to Directors of Studies so that they can ensure their Freshers' can attend events.

c) Annual Library Report (2020-21)(CC.211013.2.2c)

The Annual Library Report was noted by Council. It was commented that the report did not contain any details about future strategy, in particular the strategy for digital provision versus physical. It was felt that it would be useful to have a section on where the College was going in terms of library provision and what money was to be spent where, particularly within the context of the Colleges recently having to contribute financially to the University digital library provision during the COVID period.

It was also noted that study space was an important consideration that the Library controlled and there was nothing in the report about that. The Master agreed that any review of the library and its strategy for the future should include a consideration of this. The Senior Tutor reported that the library committee had been meaning to visit other Colleges to see their provision.

ACTION: The Senior Tutor confirmed that Education and Pastoral Committee would discuss these issues.

d) Tripos annual Report (2021 final) (tabled)

The Senior Tutor tabled and spoke to the paper setting out the Tripos results for 2021. He emphasised that it was important to congratulate students and the Directors of Studies on their performance in another difficult year. He said that he had observed three messages from the Tripos results:

- (i) A significant gap in the percentage of Sidney students achieving firsts compared to the University (30% c.f. 36%)
- (ii) A comparable percentage of Sidney and the overall University achieving good honours – 2.1 and above (88%)
- (iii) The largest gap experienced to date re Sidney's average mark compared to the University's (65.9% c.f. 66.4%)

The Senior Tutor felt that the results in 2020-21 were in alignment with a longer term trend – i.e. that the percentage of good honours achieved by Sidney students was fairly similar to the University but that Sidney students were not matching the overall University's average mark. There was query as to the statistical significance of the average mark variation, and a question as to the relative distribution of Colleges across the subjects and whether there might be outliers distorting results. The Senior Tutor confirmed that Education and Pastoral Care Committee would be analysing the results in more detail. The Admissions Director added that it would also be important to carry out an analysis of achievement in relation to the widening participation characteristics.

e) *2021 Admissions UG Final Report (CC.211013.2.2e)

The report was **noted**.

f) *Director of Studies list (2021-22 final) (CC.211013.2.2f)

The report was **noted**.

2.3 Bursarial Business

a) Draft financial report (CC.211013.2.3a)

The Bursar explained that a full presentation of the financial results for 2020-21 will be presented at the Governing Body's Audit meeting in November. In the meantime she drew Council's attention to a few key points:

- Operational income was down by approximately £2 million in 2020-21, mainly due to the COVID pandemic resulting in a loss of conferencing (£1.2 million) and commercial property income (£0.6 million). This had been partly offset by the donations income received in 2020-21.
- Operational expenditure income is down by approximately £1 million versus the prior year reflecting the relatively low level of activities in College due to the COVID pandemic.
- The balance sheet at 30 June 2021 has improved by £10.3 million from the prior year. This is due to a significant increase in

the capital value of equities (£9.7 million), strong levels of donations (£2.4 million) and a reduction in the pension provision for the Sidney Sussex scheme of £1.8 million. These positive movements were offset by a deterioration in the valuation of the College's commercial property (£2.4 million) and other operational expenditure (£1.1 million).

- It was noted that given the conclusion of the USS 2020 valuation there may need to be a post balance sheet event added.
- It was also noted that within the balance sheet the long term creditors had increased by £10 million to £24.9 million due to the debt issue.

b) Kitchen Project report (CC.211013.2.3b)

The Bursar presented a report on the completion of the kitchen project. She noted that the main objectives (reducing the fire risk and food contamination risks; increasing the capacity of the College's catering facilities; enabling greater energy efficiency; and, enhancing the event spaces available within College) had been achieved. Tours of the new kitchen facilities would be arranged for early November to enable College members to see the extent of the improvements.

The project had originally been due to complete July 2020. There had been delays due to the COVID pandemic, and also due to some additional underpinning works being required. As a result the project completed a year late in July 2021.

The final estimated costs of the project were £12.3 million. Increases in construction costs were by reductions in the effective VAT rate.

Council agreed that the successful delivery of the project had been a great achievement, and recorded its appreciation to all those who had been involved in initiation and delivering the project.

c) Environmental sustainability working group terms of reference (CC.211013.2.3c)

The Bursar explained that the key objective of the working group was to develop an environmental sustainability plan which could then be implemented and progress against targets measured. Council **approved** the terms of reference.

d) USS update

The Bursar reported the following headline points: The 2020 USS valuation had concluded and from 1 October 2021 the contribution rates had increased by 0.5% to a total of 31.2% (split 9.8% for

employees and 21.4% for employers). This is lower than the backstop of 34.7% which had been agreed at the 2018 valuation. The next step is an employer led consultation on the proposed benefit changes. The consultation on these is taking place during the period November 2021 to January 2022. The University and College Union (UCU) does not support the 2020 valuation outcome and are proposing strike action and members will be balloted. Although the strike action would be against the University and not the Colleges, the College's students would be affected and mitigating this impact would be important.

e) **Remote Working Policy (CC.211013.2.3e)

Council **approved** the policy.

f) **Use of College Seal

- a. Darwin Green – Transfer
- b. Darwin Green – Deed of Release – Collaboration Agreement
- c. Darwin Green – Deed of Release – Promotion Agreement
- d. 26/27 Sidney Street – Licence to Alter
- e. 93 King Street – Lease Renewal
- f. James Sharp & Co – Sale of Adnams B Shares

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

2.4 Development Director

a) Development Director's Report (CC.211013.2.4a)

Council received the report with the Master stating that it had been a very good year for donation and legacy income. The Development office was thanked for all its efforts. It was noted that the new Development Director had started on 8 October.

2.5 Steward's Business

a) Class 7 Dining Privileges – Proposed amendment (CC.211013.2.5a)

The Master explained the reason for the proposed change. Class 7 dining privileges were granted to members of the University who contribute to or have a useful association with the College. There are not many people with class 7 rights but it is felt that the rights are too restricted and the proposal is to make them slightly more generous. Council **approved** the proposed amendment.

b) Audit Dinner/425th Anniversary celebration

The Master reported that the steward had noted that the Audit dinner is not usually attended at full capacity, unlike the Foundation feast which usually is. The proposal is to invite some donors to the 2021-22 Audit Dinner as a way of celebrating the 425th Anniversary. The options were either to use the Hall and Old Parlour, or to use the Hall, Old Parlour and Old Kitchen. Council were asked for their views and specifically whether it would be acceptable for fewer places to be available for Fellows if ten additional invites were extended to donors. The Master confirmed that scholars would be invited to either the Audit Dinner or the Foundation Feast.

Council approved the proposal to use the Hall and Old Parlour.

2.6 Student Business

a) JCR Report and Plans MT (CC.211013.2.6a)

The JCR president outlined the work that the JCR had carried out over the Easter term/summer, including their input into the College COVID policy decisions and implementation of testing arrangements at the College end. He outlined the work priorities for this term which included building relationships with the new Head Porter and the new Head of Student Wellbeing, as well as resolving the SCSU reserves issue.

b) MCR Report and Plans MT (CC.211013.2.6b)

The MCR President outlined the Covid work that the MCR had been involved with, as well as some of the events over the Easter term/summer, the planning for Freshers' week, and how they had been employing the use of social media to help with their work.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 Finance and Needs Committee

a) Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 04 October 2021 (CC.211013.3.1a)

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| i) **Code of Conduct | (CC.211013.3.1ai) |
| ii) **Leaver administration | (CC.211013.3.1a ii) |
| iii) **Severe weather | (CC.211013.3.1a iii) |
| iv) **Time off in Lieu (TOIL) | (CC.211013.3.1a iv) |
| v) **Annual leave | (CC.211013.3.1a v) |

A Council member had asked for this agenda item to be unstarred to raise a question on the process for agreeing policies relating to directly employed academics rather than the specifics of any particular policy. He suggested that policies affecting Fellows should be reviewed in a

committee with Fellow representation. He also noted that the Statutes and Ordinances Committee had previously considered whether policies should be formally adopted as regulations. In particular he questioned whether the Annual Leave and TOIL policies applied to Fellows. The Bursar noted that the policies only applied to employed staff and Fellows and that they were mainly in place to implement employment law, which in many instances was conferring benefits and protection on employees. She also explained that all the policies listed state that where there is a conflict with the College's statutes and ordinances, the statutes and ordinances should prevail. The policies were approved subject to amending the TOIL and Annual Leave policies to clarify that they do not apply to Fellows.

ACTION: HR Manager to amend the TOIL and Annual Leave policies. Statutes and Ordinances Committee to discuss the application of HR policies to Fellows.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any other business

The Master noted that it was Mr Mettry's last Council meeting and he thanked him for his contribution.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 10 November 2021