

Sidney Sussex College

Minutes of the
MEETING OF COLLEGE COUNCIL
Held via Zoom on
Wednesday 11 November 2020 following Governing Body

Senior Members Present

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

Student Members Present

Mr Bryan, Mr Karsberg, Mr Mettry

Also Present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary);
Mr Mill (Director of Admissions) for agenda item 2.2a

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr Sharma.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved subject to the unstarring of 2.1e, the double starring of 3a(i) and (ii), and the starring of 3.5a(i). Attention was also drawn to the fact that agenda item 2.2a consisted of two papers –the admissions plan and the outreach strategy.

1.3 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 14 October 2020, and the Extraordinary Meetings of the Council on 22 October (as amended) and 29 October 2020 (CC.201111.1.3)

The three sets of minutes were confirmed.

a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

(i) *2.1d College Outline Plan for Short to Medium Term – extract from Annual Report and Accounts (CC.201111.1.3a.i)

The amendments to the College outline plan were **noted**.

(ii) *2.1e Annual Work Plan for Council Business 2020-21 (CC.201111.1.3a.ii)

The amendments to the Council annual plan were **noted**.

(iii) 2.1f Charity Trustees Declarations of Interests

The Master noted that all Declarations of Interests for those not on leave had now been received from Council Members.

(iv) 2.3b Promoting sense of fellowship within constraints of COVID

The Master had not received any suggestions from Council members. He reminded members of the virtual Fellows talk being arranged by the Vice-Master for 13 November, as well as the ongoing occasional zoom nights, and the possibility of meeting in the gardens on a 1-1 basis. The Master indicated that he hoped it will be possible to arrange something more formal in due course, depending on the government rules and regulations in place post-lockdown.

(v) Matter arising from the Government body meeting held prior to this meeting – COVID outbreak within College

The Master explained that the mini COVID outbreaks being experienced by the College, most recently in Cromwell Court, often arose because people were not abiding by the rules. The Cambridge Incident Management Team (CIMT) were satisfied with how the College was managing the Cromwell Court situation but wanted to ensure that clear communication was given to College households about the importance of not mixing households.

A question was asked about the disciplinary process in place for those students breaking the COVID protocols and rules. The Dean outlined how first and repeat offenders were being dealt with. The JCR President thanked the Dean on behalf of students for his work to date in dealing with the various COVID related breaches.

Action: The Senior Tutor to send an email to Council Members explaining the discipline process for those students breaking the COVID related rules and protocols by 20 November 2020.

1.4 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master's Business

a) Recovery Task Force and Operations Working Group - arrangements going forward (CC.201111.2.1a)

The Master outlined the proposed arrangements going forward, as set out in the paper, noting it was proposed that the Recover Task be stood down and tactical academic and operational matters be agreed by the Operations and Student Services working group, reporting to Council. It was noted that the missing reference for the delegated authority mentioned in bullet point (d) was CC.201029.3.1

Council **approved** the proposed arrangements going forward.

b) COVID policies and protocols – revisions

- (i) *Visitor policy (CC.201111.2.1bi)
- (ii) *Self-Isolation policy (enclosed)(CC.201111.2.1bii)
- (iii) *College Risk Assessment (enclosed)(CC.201111.2.1biii)

Council **noted** the revisions to the three policies approved by the Operations and Students Services working group, using their delegated authority for rapid operational decisions related to the COVID pandemic.

c) Colleges Response Framework (CC.201111.2.1c)

The Master explained the purpose of the Response Framework paper and said that the University would advise the Colleges when it changed its COVID response status so that the Colleges could align their status with the University's where it was felt appropriate to do so. Council **noted** the paper with no comments which had already been approved by Colleges' Committee.

d) Inter Collegiate Committee Feedback

The Master summarised the latest inter-collegiate topics of discussion at Colleges' Committee, and Bursars' and Senior Tutors' committees. These had included the testing programme and financing arrangements, as well as the proposal for a foundation year, and training for online admissions interviewing.

e) Permission request by publisher BELIN to reproduce picture from College collection within publication (CC201111.2.1e)

Council **agreed** to the request subject to a copy of the publication being donated to College.

2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

a) Undergraduate Admissions plan (2021 entry) (CC.201111.2.2a)

The Director of Admissions updated Council on the current status of applications for 2021 entry. He explained that a change proposed this year was to reduce the number of offers made by about 5-10% following advice from the Admissions Forum. The rationale was to ensure that if centre assessed grades were used again, as for 2020 entry, the reduced number of offers would mitigate against a surplus of students that the College might not have space for. Any shortfall could be made up through use of the summer pool. Council **agreed** to this proposal.

A question was asked as to whether the training being provided for those conducting online admissions interviews was mandatory. The Director of Admissions said that the College would need to take a view on this but it would be important to ensure that, reputation wise, the interviews conducted by College academics were safe and secure. It was further noted that the training was needed to ensure the interview process fair and transparent to our applicants. Further details about the training should be coming out this week.

In relation to the outreach plan, the Director of Admissions explained that it initially just covered Michaelmas term but would be extended and adapted as the situation developed. Council **noted** the plan.

b) *Postgraduate Admissions report (2020 entry)(CC.201111.2.2b)

The report was **noted** by Council. The Master explained that the College had slightly under recruited for 2020 entry with some spare rooms at the minute. Post graduate numbers were difficult to predict, however, and the Master thanked the Graduate Tutors for the recruitment work they had carried out this year in difficult circumstances.

c) Postgraduate Admissions plan (2021 entry)(CC.201111.2.2c)

Dr Fruk spoke to the paper, explaining that an increase in offers had been made for 2021 entry and that the Graduate Tutors team had taken part in several open days for graduate students. They would be doing some further work on developing the future outreach strategy.

d) Foundation Year proposal (CC.201111.2.2d)

The Senior Tutor outlined the background and history to the Foundation year which is being proposed by the University, including a reminder the issues identified by Council with the proposal at the consultation stage. He explained that the proposal was now at the stage where the College needed to make a decision as to whether to participate in the first year of recruitment. This would be 2021-22, with Michaelmas term 2022 the entry point for the first cohort.

The Senior Tutor, Director of Admissions and JCR President expressed their support for the programme as they perceived it to be low risk but with the potential for high reward, particularly in respect of the College's reputation and its outreach strategy. It would mean the College taking on approximately five Foundation year students in the first cohort, with the undergraduate student numbers being reduced accordingly.

It was noted that the initiative could have implications for supervisory and tutorial workload. For this reason, one Council member felt that more information would be useful before making a decision. The Master explained that a decision needed to be made by the end of the term, before this information was likely to be available, as details needed to go into the prospectus. He said, however, that the teaching for the course would be done by the University and not at College, and that costs associated with the small numbers should be met by the fee and make the proposition manageable.

Council **approved** the proposal but noted that one member dissented. The Master said that he would request regular updates from the University on the development of the programme to ensure that the College maintained sight of the detail.

Action: The Master to communicate to the University that Sidney Sussex College would be willing to participate in the Foundation Year pilot.

2.3 Bursar's Business**a) **Approval of 2019-20 Annual Reports and Financial Statements (GB.201111.2.3c)**

Council **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2019-20 for signature by the Master and Bursar.

b) *Report of Auditors - Audit Matters (CC.201111.2.3b)

The auditors' report was **noted**.

c) **Letter of Representation (for signature) (CC.201111.2.3c)

The letter of representation was **approved** for signature by the Bursar.

d) *College Risk Register 2020 (CC.201111.2.3d)

The College Risk Register for 2020 was **noted**.

e) **Overview of College Governance (CC.201111.2.3e)

The overview of College Governance was **approved** for publication on the College website.

f) Student Accommodation and Catering Charges (COVID policies) (CC.201111.2.3f)

The Bursar outlined the recommendations from Finance & Needs Committee in respect of proposed 2020-21 student accommodation and catering charges under particular COVID related scenarios.

Where catering charges were concerned, it was explained that the JCR and MCR would like to consult with the student body as to whether they preferred 50% of the Kitchen Fixed Charge (KFC) to be converted to the Minimum Meal Charge (MMC) for Michaelmas term, or a 10% absolute reduction to the KFC charge for Michaelmas term with no change to MMC.

Council confirmed that they were happy for the consultation to take place.

Action: Bursar to conduct consultation with the student body in concert with JCR and MCR Presidents by 27 November.

g) College events Michaelmas term

The Bursar explained that under the current COVID restrictions, it was not feasible for the Fellows Christmas Dinner, the Staff Christmas lunch, and the Family Carol Service and Party to proceed. She proposed as an alternative that staff be provided with a Christmas hamper as a thank you from the College. She also suggested that the Fellowship and students be offered the opportunity to make a donation towards the costs as a signal of support for the staff and appreciation for what they do.

Council **agreed** to the proposals.

Action: Bursar, in consultation with the Development Office, to set up a mechanism for donation to the proposed staff hamper. The Master to communicate this to the Fellows, and the JCR President to the student body by 27 November 2020.

h) **Delegated Authority wording – Barclays (CC.201111.2.3h)

The wording was approved by Council.

2.4 Development Director

a) Quarterly report from July to September 2020 (CC.201111.2.4a)

Council received the report and no questions were raised. The Master thanked the Development Office for all their hard work fundraising this year.

b) **Donations Acceptance Policy (CC.201111.2.4b)

Council noted and **approved** the policy.

c) **Criteria for 1596 Foundation membership (CC.201111.2.4c)

The Development Director explained that an amendment had been made to the criteria, allowing for gifts in kind to be recognised in exceptional circumstances, as sufficient to warrant extension of the offer of membership of the 1596 Foundation. She noted that if approved by Council, two people who had contributed in this way would be offered membership, with their nominations being submitted to Council.

Council **approved** the amended criteria.

2.5 Steward's Business

There was no Steward's business.

2.6 Student Business

a) *Sidney Bar 2019-20 accounts (CC.201111.2.6a)

The accounts were **noted**.

b) Sidney Bar Finance Report and 2020-21 proposed budget (CC.201111.2.6b)

The report and budget were **noted**.

c) *JCR and Joint 2019-20 accounts (CC.201111.2.6c)

The accounts were **noted**.

d) *MCR 2019-20 accounts (CC.201111.2.6d)

The accounts were **noted**.

e) SSCSU budget policy (CC.201111.2.6e)

The JCR President explained that the policy had been developed to make the budget more flexible so that the process for using the money for relevant purposes in year was made easier. The revised policy was **noted**.

f) SSCSU 2020-21 budgets (CC.201111.2.6f)

It was asked whether consideration had been given to students taking a reduced SSCSU subscription in 2020-21 given the financial position of the College and the level of reserves that they hold. The JCR President confirmed that the SSCSU executive position was not to propose a cut to the 2020-21 subscription on the assumption that most of the funded activities would be able to take place this year.

With regards to the high level of reserves, the JCR President explained that this was due to persistent underspending on budgeted activity. The budget policy presented in 2.6e above was intended to help manage this, as well as the spend down reserve policy which was currently being developed and would be submitted to Finance & Needs Committee in due course.

The 2020-21 expenditure budgets were **approved**, but the level of subscription for 2020-21 was **referred** to the next Finance & Needs Committee for consideration.

g) *June Event 2019-20 accounts (CC.201111.2.6g)

The accounts and the loss made on the event when it had to be cancelled were **noted**.

h) June Event 2020-21 proposal and budget (CC.201111.2.6h)

Council **approved** the proposal and budget for a June Event in 2021, subject to the ticket swap provision being removed, and the event to be planned so as to minimise any losses if it has to be cancelled.

i) ***MCR Report and Plan (CC.201111.2.6i)**

The report and plan was **noted**.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 Communications Steering Committee

a) ***Minutes of the Meeting of 15 October 2020 (CC.201111.3.1a)**

i) ****Editorial Policy (CC.201111.3.1ai)**

ii) ****Website Management Policy (CC.201111.3.1aii)**

The minutes were **noted** and the policies **approved**.

3.2 Development Committee

a) ***Minutes of the Meeting of 9 October 2020 (CC.201111.3.2a)**

The minutes were **noted**.

3.3 Education and Pastoral Care Committee

a) ***Minutes of the Meeting of 26 October 2020 (CC.201111.3.3a)**

The minutes were **noted**.

3.4 Kitchen Project Oversight Committee

a) ***Minutes of the Meeting of 21 October 2020 (CC.201111.3.4a)**

The minutes were **noted**.

3.5 Statutes and Ordinances

a) ***Minutes of the Meeting of 27 October 2020 (GB.20111.3.3a)**

(i) ***Status of COVID-related Protocols and Policies developed by the College (CC.201111.3.5ai)**

The minutes and item 3.5a (i) were **noted**.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any Other Business

The Dean raised the problem of unreliability of Wi-Fi throughout the College which had meant some students had been unable to login to remote teaching.

The Master confirmed that the matter had been discussed at Education and Pastoral Committee. The IT team were currently conducting a survey to see where the issues are and the topic is being discussed at IT steering committee this Friday. In the meantime, the more reliable wired connection was being advised and students had been provided with free Ethernet cables.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 2.00pm.