

Sidney Sussex College

The Minutes of

GOVERNING BODY (AUDIT MEETING)

Held via Zoom on
Wednesday 10 November 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Senior Members Present

Master; Vice-Master; Senior Tutor; Bursar; Dr Bordin; Dr Crossan;
Professor Dawson; Dr Doran; Professor Eilstrup Sangiovanni; Professor Flewitt;
Dr Flynn; Dr Fulda; Professor Gerstle; Dr Gray; Dr Garcia-Mayoral; Dr Groom; Dr
Lambert; Dr Oner; Professor Pollitt; Dr Ranasinghe; Professor Reynolds; Dr
Roddie; Dr Scalliet; Professor Sepulchre; Dr Skinner; Dr Strelchuk; Dr Sumnall;
Dr Theil; Dr Wilson-Lee.

Student Members Present

Mr Lowry; Ms Dadiya; Ms Kazani; Ms Mahmood.

Also present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar, as Council Secretary).

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Professor Neely; Dr Noriega-Sanchez; Dr Stasch; Dr Roberts; Dr Duschinsky; Dr Groisman; Dr Aubry, and Dr Carter.

The Master welcomed the Emeriti Fellows attending the Audit meeting.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

1.3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Annual Meeting of the Governing Body on 30 June 2021

(GB.211110.1.4)

The minutes were confirmed.

Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

2.2a Final Tripos report

The Senior Tutor updated Governing Body on the tripos results and said that the Education & Pastoral Care Committee would be discussing the full report at its meeting on the 17 November 2021.

He explained that the assessment process had returned to summative assessments in 2020-21, though in a mixed format. It was still an extraordinary year, however, in terms of the pressures on students and he noted that the significant challenge students had faced had been reflected in the rise in the number of Exam Access Arrangements (up to 60 individual arrangements, a nearly 50% rise from the average; with anxiety and stress reasons up to 20, nearly double the average).

In terms of actual results, the Senior Tutor noted that:

- A significant gap had re-opened in the percentage of Sidney students achieving firsts compared to the University (30% c.f. 36%): this had been a long-standing issue but one where gradual improvement had occurred leading up to 2019, when our percentage of Firsts matched the University's,
- The percentage of Sidney students and the overall University achieving good honours – 2.1 and above (88%) were comparable.

He explained that Education & Pastoral Care Committee would be looking further into:

- Individual subjects' performance,
- The statistical significance of the lower average mark achieved by Sidney undergraduates,
- The relative distribution of subject across Colleges, given the highly different experiences of grade and class inflation across Triposes, which is now a matter of concern for the University,
- Attainment gaps in terms of both Widening Participation and Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master's Business

There was no Master's business.

2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

a) Review of teaching and pastoral arrangements for Michaelmas term

The Senior Tutor outlined the teaching and pastoral arrangements for Michaelmas term.

On the academic side, there is very wide range of departmental arrangements, with some Triposes having gone much further than others in re-instating in-person lectures. The recording of lectures is remaining as a universal feature. The examination arrangements for individual Triposes were released to the colleges last week. In terms of college planning, the use of teaching rooms has confirmed the general impression that most supervisors have resumed in-person teaching.

On the pastoral side, the major change has been the arrival of Dr Allan, our new Head of Student Wellbeing; her work will have three dimensions:

- A programme of wellbeing activities
- Expert clinical oversight and support of individual cases of students with complex needs
- Support and skill development for members of the pastoral team

The Senior Tutor also noted that the College is fortunate to have a fourth Undergraduate Tutor for this year. At the same time, while we have hour-for-hour replacement for the college Nurse currently on medical leave, there is unavoidably less long-term integration than is desirable between the Nurse, Chaplain and Head of Student Wellbeing.

2.3 Bursar's Business

a) COVID/Operational update

The Bursar explained that participation rates in College are lower than they have been for the asymptomatic testing programme; for example, this week the participation level dropped to 24%. She said that she would like endorsement from Governing Body on the proposal that the College introduce a requirement for a negative lateral flow test if attending an event in College.

Governing Body agreed that any requirement should apply to staff, students and Fellows but there was a discussion as to how such a requirement could be effectively implemented.

The Bursar also provided an update on the Catering situation. She explained that low levels of catering staffing, particularly in front of house, have led to having to make some tough decisions on service provision. Students' lunches and dinners were being prioritised, as was high table lunch for Fellows but Formal Hall frequency had been reduced. A question was raised as to whether bookings were being accepted for commercial dinners. The Bursar explained that bookings had been honoured for reputation reasons where there would have been short notice of a cancellation but some of the bookings further ahead had been cancelled.

b) Financial Results**(i) Presentation – financial results and kitchen project completion (GB.211110.2.3bi)**

The Bursar spoke to her presentation on the financial results for 2020-21. Her key messages included:

- The impact of the USS valuation means free reserves will become negative so the College needs to focus on improving this (she explained that the leg 1 valuation would stand if approved by the end of February, but if not then it would be the leg 2 valuation figures).
- Operating surplus was £1 million less in 2020-21 because of the reduction in conferencing and property income, as well as lower accommodation/catering income because of the lower levels of residence.
- F&N will look at the financial forecast for 2021-22 based on the quarter one results. Income is expected to be relatively flat with small growth. Commercial rents have been dropping but some recovery is expected this year. Income from accommodation is expected to return due to relatively high occupancy levels. Conferencing income had a stronger Q1 performance but is very unlikely to return to the previous levels this year.
- There are some future risks ahead: A particular one is that the Auger review may result in reduced fees payable by students

The Bursar informed Governing Body that the College had achieved an unqualified audit for 2020-21 and a commendation on the quality of its report. She acknowledged the hard work of the College Office.

Finally, the Bursar updated Governing Body on the Kitchen project. She said that all the project objectives had been achieved and had been delivered more or less on budget.

A member of Governing body asked why the deficit was worsening this year and the observation was made that there seemed to be a lot of increase in costs. The Bursar explained that the forecast would be adjusted but the College is back to full operation, so the costs of heating and lighting were back to their normal level, even though it had not returned to the normal level of income from conferencing and commercial activity yet. There would also be greatly reduced furlough income.

Another question was asked about whether the College had a strategy for endowment drawdown. The Bursar explained that

the College intended to implement Total Return, possibly from 1 July 2022.

A final question was asked about the forecast for rental income. The Bursar explained that some tenants were in financial difficulty and there was one property that was void. She said that where there was a change of tenant, rent levels were coming down. She said that all of these issues were contributing to a structural reduction in the medium term of £440k.

- (ii) ***Financial summary report 2020-21 (GB.211110.2.3bii)**
Governing Body **noted** the report.
- (iii) ***2020-21 Annual Report & Financial Statements (GB.211110.2.3biii)**
Governing Body **noted** the report.

2.4 Steward's Business

There was no business.

2.5 Student Business

There was no business.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 College Council

- a) **Unreserved Minutes of the meeting 30 June 2021 (GB.211110.3.1a)**
Governing Body **noted** the minutes.
- b) **Unreserved Minutes of the meeting 13 October 2021 (unconfirmed) (GB.211110.3.1b)**
Governing Body **noted** the minutes.

3.2 Audit Committee

- a) ***Minutes of the meeting of 19 October 2021 (GB.211110.3.2a)**
Governing Body **noted** the minutes.

3.3 Statutes & Ordinances

a) *Minutes of the meeting of 26 October 2021

(GB.211110.3.3a)

Governing Body **noted** the minutes.

- (i) ** Ordinance amendments: Membership of Education & Pastoral Committee – proposed amendment to Ordinance A, VII, 2c; and Timing of the election’s procedure for the Master – proposed amendment to Ordinance B, I,3a)**
(GB.211110.3.3ai)

Governing Body **approved** the amendments to the ordinances.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any other business

There was no other business.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23 February 2021 at 14.00 (Main meeting)