

Sidney Sussex College

The Minutes of
COLLEGE COUNCIL
Held via Zoom
on Wednesday 26 January 2022

In attendance:

Senior Members Present

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

Student Members Present

Mr Lu, Ms Dadiya, Ms Kazani, Ms Mahmood

Also Present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary)

AGENDA

NOTE: ITEMS MARKED WITH A SINGLE STAR (*) ARE FOR REPORT WITHOUT DISCUSSION; ITEMS DOUBLE-STARRED () ARE FOR DECISION WITHOUT DISCUSSION**

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies for absence

Dr Bordin gave his apologies.

The Master welcomed Mr Lu to Council as the new JCR President.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved subject to the amendment of item 2.3a to remove the Lent term reference, and the addition of an AOB item regarding Alumni dining arrangements.

1.3 Declaration of Interests

The Master noted that the student representatives have an interest in item 2.3a.

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 1 December 2021 (CC.220126.1.4)

The minutes were confirmed

a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

2.2d Mid-term break consultation

The Senior Tutor informed Council members that, following a survey of Sidney students and the Fellowship, the College had submitted its response to the University's consultation.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master's Business

a) Intercollegiate business

The Master informed Council that there had been two intercollegiate meetings since Council had last met. The following topics had been discussed:

Colleges Committee

- Suicide prevention agreement: The then version had been ahead of its approval by University Council to meet an OfS deadline, subject to a revision being brought back for final approval. The latest version will be discussed at the February meeting of Education & Pastoral Committee before coming back to Council
- Size and shape of the University: The first phase of the plans was to agree a small increase in UG numbers and a slightly larger increase in taught PG as an interim agreement before the next Memorandum of Understanding was signed. A financial backstop was agreed for take all colleges if the projected student numbers were not forthcoming.
- Access and Participation Plans: These would need to be renegotiated following the government announcement.

Bursars Committee

- Asymptomatic testing: There was to be a move from PCR testing to lateral flow testing for students from week commencing 31 January 2022.
- Strategic review of mental health provision: This was being moved forward. There had been discussion about how much the colleges would have to contribute to mental health provision and initiatives centrally and what each would have to have in place at individual college level.

b) COVID update

i. Operational

The Master informed Council that there were currently very high numbers of COVID infections in the city and region relative to the numbers nationally. However, these infections were mainly with the omicron variant and hospital numbers had not been rising significantly. Across the University, only 1% of students were reported to have the virus, although the participation rate in testing had been low, approximately only 20% engagement. Teaching was

mainly taking place in person in most departments without too many problems as far the Master was aware.

The Bursar updated Council with the situation in Sidney. Currently there were 11 students with COVID and self-isolating. Three of the 11 positive cases were members of the choir, with a further four members from other colleges positive. Following discussion with the COVID Incident Management Team (CIMT) Choir activities had been suspended for a week as a circuit breaker.

There would be a move to asymptomatic lateral flow testing next week, with students encouraged to take the test on a Monday and Thursday. Symptomatic PCR testing would continue to be provided by the University for students, staff and their households. The working at home directive had been lifted by the Government, and the Operations working group had been reviewing the College Covid policies to ensure they continued to align with government guidance. Use of face coverings continues to be strongly encouraged in shared communal areas, unless otherwise agreed by all participants in shared offices, supervisions and meetings. The College was still not open to the general public but in most other respects the Visitor policy had reverted to normal protocol. Although three members of the catering staff were away from work due to COVID, the catering team were in a better position in terms of resourcing than they had been last term. It was noted that this could change if there were to be an outbreak amongst the team.

ii. Teaching and pastoral plans

Pastoral update: The Senior Tutor informed Council that both the College Nurse and the Head of Student Wellbeing were currently on medical leave but hoping to return at some point this term. In the interim, the College had been able to appoint a full-time acting college nurse, who would be in post until the end of June. The role had been expanded to take on some of the wellbeing clinical work, as the person in post was a qualified mental health nurse.

Academic arrangements: The Senior Tutor explained that the College wanted to stay in line with the University and PHE advice but would respect the outcomes of risk assessments carried out by individual supervisors and the decisions they made in respect of COVID precautions within their supervisions.

The Senior Tutor also commented that the College was aware of the nervousness in the student body about the nature of the assessments they would be facing this year. He said that most students should have been informed of the format by now, and that

College was supporting students to prepare by signposting them to exam preparation resources, and progress testing.

iii. Committee meeting format

Council agreed that future meetings should be in person this term, as per the arrangements last term when the Mong Hall was used which had effective ventilation and enabled members to be effectively distanced from each other.

It was agreed that Governing Body would continue to be held online this term with a review of format for next term. The ViceMaster flagged that there may be some Mastership election discussions which might need to be in person but that he would consult with the Fellowship.

Where Committee meetings were concerned, it was agreed that Committee members would decide on their committee's format for this term (including the hybrid option) with the anticipation of moving to 'in person' next term.

c) Audio-visual equipment for Chapel (CC.220126.2.1c)

The Master spoke to the paper. He noted that Finance & Needs Committee had approved the proposal on the basis that the donation is received, and that the equipment is used for wider range of events than just services.

Council approved the proposal.

2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

a) Pastoral report (2020-21) (CC.220126.2.2a)

The Senior Tutor spoke to his paper, explaining that it aimed to bring all relevant pastoral information into one report at the end of the year. It includes information on pastoral and well-being activity expenditure (Appendix 3). The Senior Tutor said that he wanted to analyse the results of the student questionnaire for added qualitative narrative about support provision in College, and he also wanted to develop some student engagement metrics. He said he welcomed any suggestions from Council as to how to enhance the report.

In discussion, the following comments were made:

- The burden of increased pastoral support requirements arising from the impact of COVID may not be short-term
- Some expressed a view that the burden of delivery is not reflected in the report, and it was suggested that it would be useful to look at how the demand is being met – workload of tutors and how tutorial support is being delivered.

- Consideration should be given to the number of intermitting students who are returning and what this means for workload and the support required
- The College should ensure that the pastoral needs of post graduate students are considered as well as undergraduates.
- It would be useful to look at what other colleges are doing in this area to identify good practice for implementation in Sidney
- It was suggested that a draft of the report should be circulated to tutors and Education & Pastoral Committee each Michaelmas term, with scrutiny by Council the following Lent term.
- It was noted that a student wellbeing strategy was to be developed, learning from the initiatives introduced by the Head of Student Wellbeing.

b) Student Support Report (2020-21) (CC.220126.2.2b)

The Senior Tutor explained that the Student Support Report was also a new report and that its importance was in evidencing the College's commitment to widening participation. He explained that the Student Awards committee oversees all the categories of financial support for students. He noted that the increase in Cambridge bursary holders at Sidney reflected our widening participation admission results. The report was welcomed by Council and it was agreed that it was best timed for Lent term each year.

2.3 Bursar's Business

a) Student charges 2022-23 (CC.220126.2.3a)

The Bursar spoke to the paper, explaining that it had been formerly agreed by Council that a 3% increase would be applied to accommodation charges for the new cohort in 2022-23 providing that Sidney had remained in the lower quartile of Cambridge College accommodation charges.

Council approved the accommodation and catering charges for 2022-23

It was queried why the College was applying the kitchen fixed charge to 2nd and 3rd year postgraduates not living in College but was only charging minimum meal charge to those 1st year undergraduates who were living in College, and not 2nd and 3rd years. The Bursar said that she would check the rationale and report back and noted that these charges were the same as last year which was a structure agreed with students.

b) Freedom of Information (FOI) report 2021 (CC.220126.2.3b)

The Bursar spoke to the paper explaining that it aimed to provide assurance to Council members that the College was meeting its FOI compliance responsibilities. She explained that the burden of work in

responding to FOI requests is spread across departments but falls disproportionately on Tutorial and Admissions. There were however a few actions that could be taken to reduce this burden, including reviewing the College's publication scheme and enhancing its records management practice.

Council noted the report.

In discussion, it was suggested that we should incorporate some of the data we provide in response to common FOI requests into our standard annual reports (including new reports). It was also queried where responsibility for data management lay within the College and what strategy or plan existed for developing it. The Vice Master flagged, as an example, the importance of access to relevant data to inform the College's equality, diversity and inclusion work. The Bursar confirmed that data management was an area that needed reviewing and developing, and that plans would be developed though it would be impossible to predict what topics would prompt FOI requests.

c) *College Seal

- i. Deed of Variation – 15-16 Sussex Street
Use of the College Seal was **noted**.

2.4 Development Director's Business

There was no business.

2.5 Steward's Business

There was no business

2.6 Student Business

a) *JCR report and plan – Lent term 2022 (CC.220126.2.6a)

The report and plan were noted.

b) *MCR report and plan – Lent term 2022 (CC.220126.2.6b)

The report and plans were noted.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 Chapel Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2021
(CC.220126.3.1a)

The minutes were noted.

- b) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2021

(CC.220126.3.1a)

The minutes were noted.

3.2 Finance and Needs Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2022
(CC.220126.3.2a)

The minutes were noted.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any other business

Alumni dining: The Bursar explained that alumni have not been allowed to use their dining rights throughout most of the COVID pandemic. The proposal was that these restrictions should now be lifted for alumni, and others with dining rights, so that they could dine in college but on the proviso that they should only be allowed one guest each. This proposal was supported by the Steward, Domestic Bursar and the Development Director.

Council agreed the proposal.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23 February 2022 following the meeting of Governing Body.