

Sidney Sussex College

Minutes of the

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COLLEGE COUNCIL

Held via Zoom on Thursday 22 October 2020 at 5.00pm

Senior Members Present

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

Student Members Present:

Mr Bryan, Mr Karsberg, Mr Mettry

Also Present:

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary); Mr Ray (Domestic Bursar) for part of the meeting

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the Vice-Master and Dr Stasch.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved

1.3 Declaration of Interests

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 14 October 2020

The minutes of the Meeting of Council on 14 October 2020 will be considered and approved at the next scheduled Council meeting on Wednesday 11 November 2020.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Visitors' Protocol – Proposed Amendment

(CC.201022)

Council was asked to consider a proposed amendment to the Protocol for Visitors and Guests – specifically to amend the restriction of 'no visitors from outside the student household' to allow 'one guest per room in specific circumstances'.

Council heard from both the Bursar and Senior Tutor who had co-authored the paper setting out the proposal, as well as the JCR President, and the Domestic Bursar who attended the meeting to represent College staff (the Domestic Bursar left the meeting following questions to him). The meeting was then opened up to general debate.

Arguments for the change included: highlighting that current College policy is stricter than national guidelines; there was strong support (2:1) in the student body respondents to the consultation; there are student welfare and mental health concerns and a need to alleviate the experience of isolation; there has generally been good support from the student body to date in respect of COVID-19 College rules, and participation in the asymptomatic screening programme; allowing the change would demonstrate trust in the student body and potentially reinforce motivation to comply with the rules.

Arguments against the change included: nationally, within Cambridge city, and within the University, infection rates were rising; for every two undergraduate students who wanted the change, there was one who did not and those postgraduates responding supported retaining the current measures; support staff had concerns about the increased risk that might arise within their work environment, particularly as many are in higher risk groups; some staff had expressed concerns that they had, on occasion, witnessed some students not adhering to the COVID-19 rules; people can still meet others outside and College should be encouraging that.

A significant concern shared by several Council members was that there had been a significant COVID 19 outbreak in at least one other College, and rising infection numbers locally and nationally. It was felt that this was not the right time to relax restrictions.

In concluding the discussion, the Master proposed a vote on two options:

- (i) To agree the proposed amendment or
- (ii) To maintain the restrictions as currently set out in the Protocol for Visitors and Guest but to review this again in one weeks' time at another extraordinary Council meeting on 29 October 2020, following the weekly update in the College infection rate data.

Decision: The majority of Council Members agreed with option (ii) above. In principle, Council was supportive of relaxing the restrictions when the trend was not showing rising infections. Council's decision would be reported in the COVID bulletin from NotifyHealth to be sent on Friday 23 October.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

3.1 Any Other Business

None

3.2 Date of Next Meeting

Extraordinary Council meeting on 29 October 2020.