

Sidney Sussex College

The Minutes of
COLLEGE COUNCIL
Held via Zoom on Wednesday 17 March 2021

Senior Members Present

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

Student Members Present

Mr Lowry, Mr Karsberg, Mr Mettry, Mr Velazhahan

Also Present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary)
Ms Kazani (newly elected JCR Vice-President as an observer)

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

The Master welcomed Ms Kazani, the JCR Vice-President elect, as an observer to the meeting.

1.1 Apologies for absence

Dr Stasch

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The Master noted that the Education and Pastoral Committee minutes had not been ready in time and would be presented to the next meeting. The agenda was otherwise approved

1.3 Declaration of Interests

None

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 24 February 2021 (enclosed)

The minutes were confirmed.

a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**2.2a Admissions report 2021**

The Master confirmed that following a request by a Council member at the last meeting, data showing the gender breakdown of applicants and offer holders had been added to the report and the report re-uploaded to the 24 February 2021 Council meeting folder.

He noted that for 2021 entry, there were 57 (46%) male compared to 67 (54%) female offer holders. He explained that the gender ratio is monitored each year to check that there is an appropriate balance over time.

2.2d Discipline for COVID rule breaches

The Senior Tutor reminded Council members of the discussion at the last meeting about COVID rules within College and the possibility of using fines as penalty for their breach. He explained that, since the last meeting, further discussion had concluded that whilst the current national restrictions were in place it would be difficult for students in breach of the rules to be given community service and it had been not proved possible to find an appropriate alternative other than fines.

However, he noted the sensitivity around the topic of enforcing COVID restrictions. It was recognised that on the whole, student behaviour had been good during Lent Term and there had been no recent COVID cases in College. The topic will be kept under review. Once the national rules were relaxed, it should be possible to reinstate community service again as an alternative to fines.

The Dean, whilst acknowledging the Senior Tutor's decision, reminded Council that although he preferred to use community service, rather than fines, the College's Student Regulations (specifically P9, para 15 and 16) allow fines to be imposed for breaches of discipline. He emphasised that it was important for the student body to know that if appropriate in a particular disciplinary situation, fines could be imposed.

A Council member requested that consideration be given to the timing of exams and that if community service was to be imposed, it be pushed back to until these had been completed.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master's Business

a) Inter-collegiate business

The Master reported on the business discussed at the most recent Senior Tutor's committee.

This had included an update on testing where it was confirmed that this would continue over the vacation, with the asymptomatic testing programme continuing until at least part way through the Easter term, when the Lighthouse laboratory is due to close. There was confidence that despite this closure, another route would be found to continue testing.

The Master also mentioned that a Wellbeing questionnaire was being sent out by the University to students and that Sidney students should be encouraged to participate.

b) Draft College Calendar (CC.210317.2.1b)

The Master asked Council members, and in particular the Chairs and Secretaries of Committees, to check the dates in the draft calendar for 2021-22 and to let the Master's PA know if the scheduling of any of the meetings or events needed to be changed.

c) Head of Student Wellbeing appointment panel

The Vice-Master confirmed that the appointment panel members had been confirmed as himself as the Chair, the Senior Tutor, Dr Cheke, Dr Duschinsky, and Ms Natalie Acton, the Head of Student Wellbeing in Cambridge University. **Council approved** the panel.

2.2 Senior Tutor Business

a) Easter vacation arrangements (CC.210317.2.2a)

The Senior Tutor outlined the pastoral cover which would be in place over the Easter vacation to support students whether in residence or at home. UG tutors will continue to be available to students and the Nurse would be available at the beginning and end of vacation. The UG tutors and that the Chaplain and the Senior Tutor would share out-of-hours support over the break. The Senior Tutor confirmed that he would write to the student body this week detailing the arrangements and how students can get in touch.

The Senior Tutor also noted the relaxation of restrictions nationally from the 29 March which will allow six people to meet outdoors. He confirmed that there would be a communication out to the student body about students being able to meet in the College gardens from this date in groups of six.

Finally the Senior Tutor referred to the recent change in government guidance which now permitted students one return trip between the University and home before 29 April, but with a strong encouragement from the Government for students to remain where they were. He confirmed that the College processes for exeat had been amended to take this new guidance into account. He also referred to the recent communication from the Bursar re rent charges over the Easter vacation. In the light of the amended Government guidance it is proposed that the 50% rent rebates remain available to those students who remain in residence over the Easter Vacation, following the Government advice, and who would experience financial hardship as a result. **Council approved** this proposal.

2.3 Bursarial Business

a) Cambridge Bursary Scheme (CBS2) (CC.210317.2.3a)

The Master outlined the background to the scheme and explained that CBS2 aimed to broaden the parental income band which qualified students for hardship funding and to provide additional money for this. The proposal had been paused during the financial uncertainty caused by the COVID pandemic but the Office for Inter-Collegiate Services (OIS) would now like Colleges to confirm whether they support the proposal to implement the scheme from October 2021.

The Bursar informed Council members that the Finance and Needs committee had looked at the proposal and encouraged Council to support it. Although there would be a cost to the College, this was offset by funding from the Harding fund which would completely cover the costs of the first cohort, and thereafter 50% of the costs over a ten year period. It was also noted that the Development Office have been very successful in raising funds for student support.

Council approved participation in the scheme and authorised the Master to confirm to OIS that the College was willing to participate.

b) USS update

The Bursar provided an update on the USS triennial valuation. The USS Trustees had published their report on the triennial valuation. A summary of this had been circulated separately to Council members

but not for wider circulation. The USS Trustees had set out three scenarios under which the range of additional costs to the College would be in the order of £220-500k per annum if implemented without any benefit change.

The next step in the process was that USS would consult with employers. The Bursar reminded Council that they had previously agreed not to respond formally to consultation on this topic because of a conflict of interest, given that most, if not all, of senior Council members are members of the scheme.

The Master commented that the proposal would likely be unaffordable for Universities generally. It was therefore likely that the benefits under the scheme would need to be reduced unless the pension regulator could be persuaded that its evaluation had been too severe.

c) **Private undergraduate fees (CC.210317.2.3c)

Council agreed the fees proposed.

d) **Appeals for Lent term 2021 (CC.210317.2.3d)

Council agreed the donations proposed.

2.4 Development Director

There was no business.

2.5 Steward's Business

There was no business.

2.6 Student Business

There was no business.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 Education Committee

It was noted that the minutes would be ready for the next Council meeting.

3.2 KPOC

a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 17 February 2021 (CC.210317.3.2a)

The minutes were noted

3.3 IT Steering Committee

a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 19 February 2021 (CC.210317.3.3a)

The minutes were noted

3.4 Chapel Committee

a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 01 March 2021 (CC.210317.3.4a)

The minutes were noted

3.5 Finance & Needs Committee

a) Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 02 March 2021 (CC.210317.3.5a)

The minutes were noted

The Bursar spoke to item 12 in the minutes, raising Council's awareness of the possibility of a further private placement which would provide the College with additional long term debt at a low interest rate. This was being offered by the Pensions Insurance Corporation which had provided College with the previous private placement. £10+million was being offered for 35-45 years at a fixed rate of about 2% (subject to rates at the time the placement was agreed). Finance and Needs Committee had supported further analysis being conducted and a proposal put forward for onward recommendation to Council.

i. **Shared Parental Leave policy (CC.210317.3.5ai)

Council approved the shared parental leave policy.

3.6 Staff Liaison Committee

a) *Minutes of the meeting of 5 March 2021 (CC.210317.3.6a)

The minutes were noted

i. ****Terms of Reference (CC.210317.3.6ai)**

Council approved the terms of reference.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any other business

The Master thanked Mr Ben Karsberg, who was standing down as JCR Vice-President at the end of Lent Term, for all his contributions to Council.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 5 May 2021