

Sidney Sussex College

The Minutes of **COLLEGE COUNCIL**

Held in William Mong Hall following Governing Body Audit Meeting
on Wednesday 10 November 2021

In attendance:

Senior Members Present

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

Student Members Present

Mr Lowry, Ms Dadiya, Ms Kazani, Ms Mahmood

Also Present

Ms Harkin (College Registrar/Council Secretary)
Dr Groisman for item 2.2b, Ms Baskerville for item 2.4a
Ms Matthews and Ms Georgiades for item 2.6g.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Stasch and Dr Doran.

The Master welcomed Ms Mahmood as the new student representative on Council.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved subject to the addition of:

- 2.1c Intercollegiate business
- 4.1 AOB: Discussion of proposal that a negative lateral flow test be required when attending a college event

1.3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the unreserved business of the Meeting of Council on 13 October 2021 (CC.211110.1.4)

The minutes were confirmed.

a) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

(i) **2.1f CTO Review terms of reference and review group membership (211110.1.4ai)

Council **approved** the CTO terms of reference and review group membership.

(ii) **3.1a (iii) (iv) and (v) Amendments to Severe Weather, TOIL and Annual Leave policies (211110.1.4aii)

Council **approved** the amendments to the stated policies.

2. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

2.1 Master's Business

a) Research Competition: Approval of interview panels

Council **approved** the Research Competition interview panels which will consist of:

- For STEM: The Master as Chair, Dr Doran, Professor Dame Ann Dowling, Dr Groom, Dr Roberts and Professor Sir John Walker. Dr Robert would also act as Secretary.
- For the Arts: Professor Wallace-Hadrill as Chair, Dr Demetriou, Dr Gray, and Dr Skinner, with Dr Roberts as Secretary. One further member is being sought and Council **delegated** this task to the Master and Dr Roberts.

b) **Reading Event – guest speaker Tsitsi Dangarembga (CC.211110.2.1b)

Council **approved** the Reading Event proposal.

c) Intercollegiate business

The Master reported on the business conducted at the recent Bursars and Senior Tutors' Committees, the key points of which were an approval of the recommendations coming out of the Admissions and Outreach review and a discussion as to how these should be implemented, as well as an agreement about which admissions tests should take place in 2022.

2.2 Senior Tutor's Business

a) Undergraduate Admissions plan (2021-22) (CC.211110.2.2a)

Dr Sumnall spoke to her paper explaining that she was slightly concerned about the drop in overall direct UG applications to Sidney this year, as well as Sidney's low performance in terms of applications to study law, which could be attributed to being more explicit about the standard offer which was higher than for some other Colleges. She also stressed the need to improve Sidney's performance in respect of the proportion of offers to those in state schools, as well as continuing to meet the other widening participation targets agreed by the University in its APP.

In discussion, the Student representatives asked about the rationale behind changing the Law offer and how we set entry requirements. The Director of Admissions explained that the change had been done in the interests of transparency but that she would review with the Director of Studies for the next Admissions round. She explained that Sidney had traditionally outperformed the University average in Law.

b) Postgraduate Admissions report 2021-22 entry and Admission Strategy for 2022-23 (CC.211110.2.2b)

The Graduate Tutor spoke to his paper. He explained that overall full time postgraduate numbers had achieved the target for 2021-22 entry, but the number of PhD students was less than planned. The gender balance achieved had been good but was disproportionate between STEM and non-STEM subjects, with fewer applications to study STEM subject from females. He went on to outline the Admissions strategy for 2022-23, as set out in the paper, but emphasised that the potential for a growth in numbers was constrained by the amount of accommodation available.

Council discussed the reasons for a drop in PhD numbers and it was noted that the numbers may have been affected by COVID, and in particular there had been a reduction in the number of conversions of offers to acceptances, particularly from the Far East. The Master flagged that the University had agreed to cover the difference between the Overseas and Home fee for 50 students as a partial mitigation.

c) UCU Strike Ballot

The Senior Tutor reported that there had been a vote in favour of the UCU strike action, with a 51% turnout, of whom 70% were in favour of a strike, and 86% in favour of action short of strike. A local branch meeting had been held yesterday but with no news of the outcome. Nationally, the Union's Higher Education Committee is set to meet on 14 November to decide next steps. Any picketing of faculties would increase demand for college spaces to supervise in, and the Senior Tutor confirmed that it had been agreed with Conferencing that supervisions for Sidney students should be prioritised for College room bookings for teaching.

2.3 Bursar's Business

a) **Approval of 2020-21 Annual Report and Financial Statements (CC.211110.2.3a)

College **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

- b) *Report of Auditors - Audit Matters (CC.211110.2.3b)**
College **noted** the Auditors' report
- c) **Letter of Representation (for signature) (CC.211110.2.3c)**
College **approved** the Letter of Representation for signature.
- d) **Whistleblowing policy (CC.211110.2.3d)**
Council **approved** the policy.
- e) Risk Review 2021 (CC.211110.2.3e)**
The Bursar spoke to the paper, explaining that most of the risks had had their overall rating managed down from last year, as the College and Government made progress in managing the pandemic. However, she wanted to make Council aware that the assistant staff risk was set to increase in terms of likelihood and impact due to several staff in key roles or functions leaving and the current labour market shortages in respect of those roles. Steps were being taken by the College to manage the situation.
- f) **College Seal**
 - a. 14 Sussex Street – Renewal Lease
 - b. 5-7 Sussex Street – New LeaseCouncil **approved** the use of the College Seal.

2.4 Development Director's Business

a) Development Director's report (2021-22 Q1) (CC.211110.2.4)

The new Development Director was welcomed to the meeting and spoke to her paper. She explained that in terms of fundraising income it had been a slow quarter but outlined the reasons for this: the transition to a new Development Director; the consequent reduction in fundraising activity over this period, including the cancellation of the telephone campaign; and the continuing impact of COVID.

She outlined her plans going forward, explaining that she wanted to review what the Development Office was doing and how, so that she could identify ways in which the College could improve on what was already a successful model. In particular, she wanted to invest in a programme of regular giving by Alumni, and she was interested in the development of a College Communications strategy with key messages that all departments, including the Development team could convey externally. She said that she would be asking the College Fellows for their time both in terms of contributing content to communications but also to attend alumni events and webinars.

Council members emphasised the need for distinctive Sidney branding which would help to distinguish a Sidney event/webinar from a University one; as well as the importance of highlighting the different mission the College had to research organisations.

2.5 Steward's Business

There was no business.

2.6 Student Business

a) *SSCSU accounts 2020-21 (CC.211110.2.6a)

Council **noted** SSCSU's accounts.

b) SSCSU budget 2021-22 (CC.211110.2.6b)

Both the JCR and MCR Presidents spoke to their budget, explaining that both budgets were running a deficit, but were drawing on their reserves as it had been agreed in the last academic year that the level of their reserves should be reduced. The Bursar confirmed that she supported the budget and would welcome further conversation to see if the reserves could be spent down further.

c) *Student bar report 2020-21 (CC.211110.2.6c)

Council **noted** the Student bar report

d) *Student bar accounts 2020-21 (CC.211110.2.6d)

Council **noted** the Student bar accounts.

e) Student bar budget 2021-22 (CC.211110.2.6e)

The JCR President explained that the student bar budget was returning to the level it had been in previous years and was currently a couple of hundred pounds in deficit. Council **noted** the budget.

f) *June event accounts 2020-21 (CC.211110.2.6f)

Council noted the June event accounts.

Council **noted** the accounts.

g) May Ball proposal and draft budget 2021-22 (CC.211110.2.6g)

Student representatives, Ms Matthews and Ms Georgihiades, from the May Ball/June event Committee spoke to their paper, emphasising that the last May Ball was held in 2016 and that it was felt that it was only fair to the students that one was held in 2021-22. They had planned for a capacity of 1000 people and wanted to ask if the Master's terrace could be used as part of the space available, noting the Master's gardens would be unavailable.

SSCSU endorsed the plan and confirmed that there was pent up student demand for the event.

Council confirmed their support for the May Ball in principle but asked for some further consideration to be given to elements of the proposal; these included: potentially reducing the number being planned for, given the reduced space available across the College, the fact that only one stage would be possible (in the Fellows garden) and space needed for housing some of event logistics and the requirement for a contingency/financial loss reduction plan to be drawn up should the event have to be cancelled.

Council **agreed in principle** to the proposal for a May Ball subject to further review and refinement of the plan in light of the practicalities discussed. The Bursar added that she would welcome further discussion in respect of the budget for the event.

Action: May Ball Committee representatives to revisit the proposal and discuss with the Master and the Bursar.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

3.1 Music Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 8 October 2021 (CC.211110.3.1a)
Council **noted** the minutes.

3.2 Muniment Room

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2021 (CC.211110.3.2a)
Council **noted** the minutes.

- b) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 11 October 2021 (CC.211110.3.2b)
Council **noted** the minutes.

3.3 Environmental Sustainability Working Group

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 18 October 2021 (CC.211110.3.3a)
Council **noted** the minutes.
 - (i) ****Terms of Reference (revised) (CC.211110.3.3ai)**
Council **approved** the revised Terms of Reference.

3.4 Student Awards Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 19 October 2021 (CC.211110.3.4a)
Council **noted** the minutes.

3.5 Statutes & Ordinances Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 26 October 2021
(CC.211110.3.5a)
Council **noted** the minutes.

3.6 Prevent Committee

- a) *Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 28 October 2021
(CC.211110.3.6a)
Council **noted** the minutes.

(i) **Annual Prevent Accountability & Data return
(CC.211110.3.6ai)**

The Dean, as the College's Prevent Lead, spoke to this year's Prevent Accountability and Data return, reminding Council members of their duty to ensure they were kept informed of the College's discharge of its statutory responsibilities with regards to Prevent.

Council **agreed** the Prevent Accountability and Data return.

3.7 Fellowship Entertainment and Amenities Committee

- a) Unreserved minutes of the meeting of 3 November 2021
(CC.211110.3.7a)

The Vice Master spoke to the minutes explaining that FEAC wanted to make two proposals to Council, following on from the letter received by the Secretary of FEAC which is attached to the minutes:

- to bring back/renew newspaper subscriptions for the New Parlour in time for the start of Lent term. The Vice Master noted that the Bursar had said that this was possible from a budgetary perspective.
- FEAC be entrusted with a small budget to implement its decisions relating to what the Fellowship wanted in terms of amenities and entertainment.

Council members made the following points in discussion:

- FEAC should make links with the work of the Environmental Sustainability working group and the Education, Inclusion and Diversity working group.
- FEAC should be asked to present a plan to Council in respect of activity and amenities for the Fellowship, which could then be considered for in next budget round.
- FEAC should review their membership as it was felt that there was a potential generational and gender divide across the Fellowship in terms of what might be wanted by way of amenities and entertainment

- A range of potential activity would not cost anything; some amenity costs could be reduced – e.g. removing takeaway cups from the coffee machine which would also have benefit of potentially encouraging people to socialise and drink their coffee in the New Parlour

Council **approved** the proposal to renew the newspaper subscriptions from the start of the Lent term (with the caveat that the Vice Master should consider the issue raised in respect of the Financial Times). Council **agreed** that FEAC should look to make its membership more diverse and obtain input into its decisions from the Environmental and EDI working groups. It was also agreed that that a budget would provide FEAC with more purpose and influence.

Action: Bursar to arrange for the renewal certain newspaper subscriptions for Lent Term and to discuss the question of a budget for FEAC with the Chair of the Committee. FEAC to review its membership.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Any other business

Following on from the Governing Body discussion, the Bursar expressed the view that it would be sensible to ask for attendees of large events to do a lateral flow test, but it should be a requirement that applied to the whole College community, not just students. She explained that the proposal had arisen following on from low student participation in the asymptomatic testing programme and its imminent reduction in frequency. The implementation detail had not yet been fully worked up but that the Operations working group was meeting next week and could discuss this in detail. The JCR President confirmed that students were happy to support the proposal.

Council **approved** the proposal subject to the Operations working group developing a workable implementation plan.

Action: Operations working group to discuss at its meeting on 17 November 2021.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 1 December 2021