

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

MINUTES

An Adjourned General Meeting of **GOVERNING BODY** was held on 16 October 2013 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senior Common Room.

Present: The President, Professor K. P. Tod, Professor C. J. K. Batty, , Dr. I. J. Sobey, Professor S. J. Whittaker, Professor A. J. Parker, Professor S.J. Elston, Professor P.P. Craig, Dr. M. Cannon, Professor J. Ouaknine, Professor P. K. Maini, Dr. C. A. Larrington, The Revd. Dr. W. Whyte, Dr. D. Martin, Dr. A. Hills, Dr. R.M. Harding, Dr. A. Wright, Dr. A. Starinets, Professor C. Jeffrey, Dr. J.G.C. Snicker, Ms. S. Layburn, Dr. M-S. Omri, Dr. H. Skoda, Dr. N. Lübecker, Dr. P. Hayes, Professor C. Newton, Professor G. Gottlob, Dr. R. Ekins, Dr. J. Obloj, Dr. G. Kantor, Dr. B. Murnane, Dr. J. Stanyek, Professor J. Bray, Dr. K. Southwood, Dr. P. Fifield, Dr. J. Wolfe, Mr. A. Hibbs (MCR President), Mr. S. Pishbin (JCR President), Mr. W. Todman (JCR Vice-President), Mr. A. Riddles (JCR Secretary), Ms. A. White.

Apologies: Professor R. G. Compton, Professor F.A. Armstrong, Dr. C. Whistler, Professor Z. Molnár, Professor K. Nation, Professor L. M. McDowell, Dr. H. Bouman, Professor N. P. Harberd, Dr. T. Burt de Perera, Dr. A. Russell, Dr. K. Doornik, Mr. R. Haines (MCR Vice-President).

Clare Wright (Wright & Wright Architects) attended for agenda item 2.

ACTION

AGENDA 'A'

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of Governing Body held on 18th June 2013 were approved

2. St John's College Library and Study Centre

The Principal Bursar introduced this item by summarizing the problems with the present library since its last major renovation in the 1970s, including issues concerning disabled access, fire escapes, the substantial increase in holdings, and significant growth in student numbers.

Clare Wright (Wright & Wright Architects) then gave a presentation. She first went into more detail on the big issues that faced the library. At the moment, over half the undergraduate textbooks are stored elsewhere, as are many of the special collections, and it was important to bring these under one roof. The library needed reinvigoration, taking into account new modes of working. For example, the Kendrew café has proved very successful as an informal study area for students, and also for group working. There needs to be flexibility so as to accommodate future changes in modes of study. The library at the moment has rather unsatisfactory staff facilities

Ms Wright set out her solution to these problems and provided detailed plans. The architects have devised a carbon neutral solution with a quality of building similar to Kendrew quadrangle.

English Heritage has been very supportive of the proposal and it was noted that, while some trees would be destroyed, they were not of historical significance, but those in the Grove will be kept as they are important. Insulation would be added as, at the moment, a lot of heat energy is lost. Heating and lighting would be made more efficient and lighting would be improved. Five teaching rooms, in the form of the Paddy Room, would be released to College. Informal study areas would be more pleasant. There would be separate seminar facilities and staff accommodation would be significantly improved. Crucially, a great deal of attention was paid to making sure that future flexibility was possible. She did note that on the other side of these plus points, was the minus point that building would take place in the President's Garden and trees would be lost, but pointed out that some of these are damaging stonework – English Heritage wants them taken down.

Dr Wright was invited to comment and he reminded Governing Body that the proposal to redevelop the library was driven by the strategic aims and objectives it had outlined previously. He reiterated that this proposal would lead to better work spaces for students and staff; toilets, printers and scanners would be added; storage would be increased and collections brought together. He reminded Governing Body that at the moment some rare books and manuscripts are stored in the damp Holmes Building basement. This redevelopment would not only release teaching space to College in the form of the Paddy Room, it would also release the old Law Library and the room which presently houses the Graves collection. He concluded by saying that the Library Working Group strongly supports the proposal.

The Junior Members were then invited to comment. The JCR representative reported that the JCR was very positive on the whole. In particular, they very much appreciated that the comments that they had made to College had been taken into account. The 24 hr access, group space, and access from other parts of College were very well received. The MCR representative reported that the proposal had been presented at a MCR general meeting and had been well received. He intended to take it to the next general meeting for more feedback.

Discussion was then opened to Governing Body and a number of points put to the architects, who responded to each one in turn. These included:

- (i) what was the rationale for retaining a second entrance in Otranto passage? The reason given was to maintain an entrance at the heart of the old College and to ensure the Old Library did not become a museum.
- (ii) the form and structure of the main north entrance: It was thought by some that these were rather understated at the moment and that we might be passing up the opportunity of doing something really special with the proposal entrance from North quadrangle. An astronomical clock was suggested as one possible feature. It was agreed that this issue needed further exploration if the plans went forward.
- (iii) Where would cleaning materials be kept? It was pointed out that provision was made for these on each floor but that this was not so clear on the plans.
- (iv) Access to the seminar room for non-college members. There would indeed be separate entrances to the seminar room so that it could accommodate visitors from outside college.
- (v) The plans propose only one lift so there would be a problem for disabled access to parts of the building. There were possible fixes to this but these would have to be discussed with College and English Heritage, should the College agree to go ahead.
- (vi) The impact of the junction of the buildings from the East elevation. Clare Wright said that English Heritage did not agree amongst themselves and that this is quite contentious. It will certainly need more discussion if the plans go forward.

- (vii) What is the net gain in shelving? While the focus of the presentation had been on shelf space gained, shelf space lost had been left out. No detailed answer was available in the meeting, but would be provided later.
- (viii) New, environmentally friendly buildings can be noisy, for example, with ventilation and heat pump systems. The architects said that every step would be taken to minimize this.
- (ix) There would be a visual impact from the gardens looking back into College. At the moment the trees provide a unity that binds together the different types of architecture in this part of College and this is a valuable college asset that would be lost. The architects accepted that there would be a loss but that they would try to minimize this. In the end it was a question of priority on which College needed to decide.
- (x) Is there provision of harvesting of water from the roof? This was investigated during the stages of drawing up the plans but was decided not to be of significant benefit when compared to cost.
- (xi) Might the proposed pond cause problems? The pond was proposed as a gentle partition between guests in the President's Garden and the building, ensuring that they do not walk into that space and obscure the light going into the building while, at the same time, surrendering their privacy to those persons in the library. The proposed depth was 8 inches of water and several measures would be put in place to ensure that there would be no major problems but, of course, checks (perhaps every 50 years) would have to be carried out for minor problems.
- (xii) The rather unusual and enchanting optical effect in the beams of the Laudian library might be lost by the proposed spotlighting. The architects were open to varying the intensity of lighting.

The President summarized the discussion by saying that the issues above would have to be discussed in more detail if College decided to go on to the next stage. Professor Batty asked about costs and the Principal Bursar answered that to obtain a truly accurate cost estimate we would be required to go from stage C (concept design) to stage D (planning) and the cost of fees incurred would be 250k. Dr Obloy raised the issue of potential benefactors wanting a say in the plans. Clare Wright said that there would be a certain flexibility but modifications would have to be cleared with the planners. The Finance Bursar pointed out that there would be ample opportunity for such changes to be discussed and implemented during the prolonged planning procedure.

The architects then left and Governing Body agreed that the next step (going from stage C to D) should be taken. It was also agreed that there needed to be an open-ended meeting to discuss the cost of the project in the context of the current state of endowment and that they may take place sometime after Professor Kay's presentation of the state of the endowment which was scheduled for 28th November 2013.

3. Any other business

There was no other business.