HUGHES HALL
CAMBRIDGE

GOVERNING BODY

MINUTES

The one-hundredth and fifth meeting of Governing Body, 11 March 2026

Pavilion Room at 5.30pm

PRESENT: Sir Laurie Bristow (President, Chair), Prof Michael Barrett, Mr James Nicholson Bowers, Dr Jimmy Chan, Mr William Charnley (to item 105.8), Dr Bart de Nijs, Prof Gishan Dissanaike, Dr Joe Ellis, Ms Emily Farnworth, Prof Markus Gehring, Prof Emanuele Giovannetti, Prof Sara Hennessy, Dr Sarah Hoare, Prof Riikka Hofmann, Prof Sonia Ilie, Prof Bill Irish, Dr Aga Iwasiewicz-Wabnig, Dr Florian Jaeckle, Dr Lois Kim, Ms Mahnaz Malik, Ms Jane Mann, Dr Gosia Marschall, Dr Vasiliki Mavridou, Prof Neil Mercer (to 105.8), Prof William Nuttall, Prof Ajith Parlikad, Prof Jonathan Powell, Dr Perla Pucci, Dr Sally Raudon, Prof Ricardo Sabates, Prof Kishore Sengupta, Prof Nidhi Singal (Vice-President), Mr Laurie Smith, Dr Martin Steinfeld, Prof Andreas Stylianides (from 105.5.), Prof Caroline Trotter, Prof Suzanne Turner, Dr Zhiwu Wei, Dr Yi Wei, Dr Clive Wells, Dr Jessica White, Dr Alexis Willett, Mrs Kerry Wilson, Dr Matteo Zallio.

ON LEAVE: Dr Tori McKee, Prof Eugene Shwageraus and Prof Paul Tracey.

APOLOGIES: Dr Farah Ahmed, Dr Othman Cole, Prof John Doorbar, Prof Tamsin Ford, Dr Alicia Gonzalez-Diaz, Dr Spencer Johnston, Dr Kennedy Mbeva, Ms Amy Mollett, Dr Tabitha Mwangi, Dr Guillermo Serrano Nájera, Dr Corinne Roughley, Prof Harro van Asselt, Prof Lars Vinx, Prof Rupert Wegerif, Dr Emmanuela Wroth, Dr Nigel Yandell.

IN ATTENDANCE: Katherine Springthorpe (Secretary to Governing Body).

OPEN BUSINESS
Preliminary Business

105.1. Introduction

105.1.1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed those present and noted the apologies received.

105.1.2. Declarations of interests (Open Business)

Conflicts of interest were noted regarding the Council Composition (item 105.6.1) for the President, Vice-President, Acting Senior Tutor, and Bursar. It was agreed that the President would remain to Chair that item as he was required to Chair GB and Council and the conflict was therefore unavoidable, while the Vice-President, Bursar, and Senior Tutor would withdraw for the discussion and vote.

For the Scope of the Academic Staff Statute (item 105.6.2), it was noted that the Bursar and Development Director would withdraw as their offices were most directly impacted.

At the point of discussion of Council elections (105.6.3) it was agreed that existing Council members would withdraw for discussion and vote (Dr Bart de Nijs, Dr Joe Ellis, Prof Sonia Ilie, Dr Agnieszka Iwasiewicz-Wabnig, Prof Ajith Parlikad, Mr Laurie Smith, Dr Alexis Willett, Mrs Kerry Wilson).

105.2. Minutes and Matters arising from Open Business of Governing Body, of 4 February 2026

105.2.1. Approval of minutes (105GB 01)
The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

105.2.2. Governing Body Open Business action list (105GB 02)
Governing Body noted the progress on the outstanding action for the Fellowships Committee regarding cultural changes to enhance Governing Body contributions. Two working groups have been convened to report back at the next meeting

105.2.3. Starred items: Open Business:
Governing Body approved the starred item without discussion.

105.2.4. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda
There were none.

Standing Items

105.3. President's report

105.3.1. In Memoriam

In memoriam
Anne Horwood, Undergraduate Admissions Administrator died on Sunday 22 February 2026.

105.3.2. Strategic priorities update Feb 2026 (105GB 03)
Governing Body received an update on the strategic priorities which had been set out at the previous meeting. The President noted it was intended to be a living document to capture the moving parts associated with the College's strategic transformation agenda.
Among a number of points raised, the following themes arose during the course of discussion:

- Estates renewal project broadly going in the right direction with positive progress around planning but cost pressures and affordability presenting new challenges.
- The challenge of maintaining college operations and student experience during the capital building project.
- The transition plan following the upcoming departure of the Impact Director.
- The cultural and procedural implications of ongoing Statutes and Ordinances reform.

105.3.3. Officers' Report Feb 2026 (105GB 04)
Governing Body received and noted an Officers' Report on business-as-usual activity without discussion.

105.4. Bursarial:
104.4.1. Pavilion Project Update

104.4.2. Management accounts to 31 Jan 2026 (105GB 05)
Governing Body received and approved the Management Accounts to 31 January 2026.

104.4.3. Financial Year amendment (105GB 06)
Governing Body received a proposal to amend the financial year end to 30 June instead of 31 July to take effect from 30 June 2026. It was understood that 28 of the 31 Colleges had adopted this financial year model, with only three (including Hughes) running to 31 July. The Bursar reported:

- The benefits of amending the financial year end included:
    - Alignment with uniform practice of other colleges which would result in improved benchmarking reporting and comparability.
    - Additional time for audit preparation, reducing year-end pressure and audit risk.
    - Better planning and budget alignment to the academic year.
- The Audit Partner at PEM had agreed it was a sensible approach and felt it derisked rather than added risk. The Assistant Bursar was also supportive.
- There would be no change to in-year management accounting and reporting in 2025-26 – that would continue on a 12-month basis to 31 July; the impact would be that the 2026-27 budget would be brought to GB a month earlier.
- The statutory accounts would need to carefully reflect the 11-month 2025-26 financial year and disclose any material differences which resulted.

Governing Body approved the proposal to amend the financial year end to 30 June with effect from 2025-26.

Strategic and operational items

105.5. Development Update (104GB 07)
Governing Body received an update from Development. The President underlined that this would be an unprecedented and highly ambitious fundraising campaign aimed at the strategic transformation of Hughes Hall ahead of its 150th anniversary in 2035. Representing a major scale-up from previous fundraising efforts (such as the Gresham Building), the campaign would focus on three core pillars: education, estate, and impact and innovation.

Work was focused on clearly articulating the college's vision to supporters, defining the level of ambition, building a strong pipeline of prospects, and carefully timing the launch to align with the estates programme and to capitalise on the anticipated 2027 University campaign.

To ensure the campaign's success, Fellows were encouraged to actively participate by identifying potential donors, sharing intelligence on other institutional campaigns, leveraging their own events to showcase the college's vision, and suggesting well-connected, highly motivated candidates to form a new, action-oriented Advisory Board.

There was strong support for the Advisory Board and a suggestion that it ought to include a mix of people who could offer skills/experience, time and energy, potential to host events as well as those who might themselves be high net-worth individuals. A question arose about the potential to remunerate Advisory Board members, or to offer expenses to attract the best talent to the table. Whilst this was not universally felt to be necessary, it was agreed this would be considered and clarified in due course **[ACTION: Development Director].**

Fellows sought clarity on the level of ambition and pitch. Questions of whether further investment would be needed to support branding, a feasibility study and specialist external advice were raised.

Whilst there was broad support to seek the input necessary it was felt a clearer understanding of the numbers would be necessary to properly assess return on investment. The possibility of offering naming rights was also discussed, as well as the fundraising opportunities linked to cricket at Fenner's.

Further updates would come in due course.

105.6 Recommendations from Governance Committee

105.6.1. Council Composition (105GB 08)

Governing Body considered the Governance Committee's recommendation (Option 1) for the future composition of the College Council once it became the trustee body. The proposal outlined a structure comprising four executive officers (the President, Vice-President, Bursar, and Senior Tutor) serving ex officio balanced by eight non-executive elected Governing Body Fellows.

The following themes arose in the course of discussion:

- Balance of executive and non-executive members: extensive debate took place regarding the inclusion of college officers as voting trustees. While it was understood many alternative permutations had been considered—such as limiting voting executives to just the President, with the other officers in attendance—it was argued that the Vice President, Senior Tutor and Bursar must hold formal trustee responsibility and personal liability for their respective areas. The ratio of eight non-executives to four executives was deemed a necessary and sufficient counterbalance to prevent "executive capture."
- Status hierarchy: concerns were raised about the potential for a two-tier senior team to emerge as a result of including the Bursar and Senior Tutor as trustees whilst excluding the Impact Director and Development Director. It was felt that mitigation would be needed to ensure that this did not materialise. It was emphasised that sitting on Council was a matter of service and legal responsibility rather than a reflection of operational power or status. It was further noted that permutations where more officers had a seat ex officio had been considered but quickly discounted because it increased the numbers of elected trustees required to avoid executive capture to an unsustainable number.
- Line management: concerns were raised about the conflict of interest inherent in ex officio officers effectively being line-managed by the Council on which they sat as trustees. It was felt this needed further consideration.
- Mitigating worst-case scenarios: acknowledging governance crises at other institutions (such as Christ Church, Oxford), some Fellows expressed residual concerns regarding inherent conflicts of interest when executives acted as trustees. However, it was noted that while the Charity Commission often preferred boards with fewer executives, the proposed model remained the norm across Cambridge colleges.

There was consensus that the suggested controls set out in the paper to balance Option 1 ought to be operationalised.

Following the discussion, a formal vote was taken. With 44 members in attendance for the discussion and vote, Governing Body approved the proposed Council composition (Option 1) with 4 votes against, and 4 abstentions. The new composition of Council would take effect when revised Statutes and Ordinances came into force.

105.6.2. Scope of the Academic Staff Statute (105GB 09)

Governing Body considered the Governance Committee's recommendation for the scope of the Academic Staff Statute which would come into effect with revised Statutes and Ordinances.

Following a short discussion, a formal vote was taken. With 45 members in attendance for the discussion and vote, Governing Body approved in principle that the Offices, roles and Posts within the scope of the Academic Staff Statute should include: College Teaching Officers, the Senior Tutor, the Deputy Senior Tutors and College employed Research Fellows where these offices/posts/roles were held as their primary or substantive job. Two members abstained from the vote. There were no votes against.

Governing body noted that this decision would impact the terms and conditions of employment of the two officers who had withdrawn and that the implementation of this decision would therefore be subject to consultation with and the agreement of those officers. If that agreement was not forthcoming, the decision in principle would be applied only at such point as they had vacated their office and their successors were recruited.

105.6.3. Inception of S&Os and implications for Council membership: (105GB 10)
Governing Body considered a proposal for the current membership terms on Council to continue for their intended duration without the need for re-election at the point Council became the trustee body.

Subject to a number of controls being put in place over time (staggered terms, a skills matrix used to inform who should be encouraged to stand, broad representation of GB), Governing Body approved the proposal.

105.7. ***Consent for changes to University Statutes (105GB 11)
Noting that the changes proposed were procedural rather than anything of substance, Governing Body gave its consent for the University to proceed in making the proposed changes to its Statutes G II and G III as set out in its Report of Wednesday 17 December 2025.

105.8. Any other Open Business
There was none.

Dates of meetings in 2026: 13 May 2026, 17 June 2026. **All on Wednesdays at 5:30pm (in person in the Pavilion Room)**

End of Open Business. KS.