



Wellbeing Committee Meeting
Monday, 4 May 2020, 3.45 p.m.
Meeting held remotely (via Teams Chat)

Minutes

Present:

Dr Andy Rice (Chair)
Celia Burns (Secretary)
Jo de Bono
Caroline Stewart

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2020 were approved for publication on the Committee website.

3. Situation Update

Committee members each gave an update on how they were doing with regard to the Coronavirus situation. The issue of health and safety in connection with working from home (e.g., RSI) came up, and the Committee agreed to add this issue to the bucket list of future discussion items.

Action: CB

4. Update on Action Items

i) *Webpages:*

CB had created a list of contacts relevant to the department, which can evolve / be updated as required.

ii) *Graduate Union Initiative on Departmental and Faculty Welfare:*

CB had updated the website to show Lise Gough's role as graduate student support. CS to respond to the author of the paper, advising them that we already have a member of staff undertaking the welfare role and that we have signposted this on the website.

Action: CS

iii) Other Departments' wellbeing initiatives

JD had contacted other Departments to find out about their wellbeing initiatives. She had received some responses, but none of the other departments had mentioned initiatives that we were not already aware of.

JD noted that Physics provides Botanic Garden passes to staff. Committee members agreed to add Botanic Garden passes to our list of future discussion items.

Action: CB

Physics is also very interested in a counselling service. Although they have discussed the idea within the department, they have not taken the idea forward, and they would be interested in collaborating with CST if we go ahead. Daniela Manca, Senior Project Manager for the Strategic Partnerships Office, who is working on communications for West Cambridge, was also interested in the idea of a counselling service.

It was agreed that JD would gather some information before the Committee presents the West Cambridge counsellor idea to the HoD Team. Models she might look into included (i) several departments (e.g., CST, Whittle Lab, Vet School, Hauser Forum) sharing the cost of hiring a counsellor, perhaps with five departments each contributing to a full-time counsellor and in return receiving one day per week of counselling services; and (ii) buying counselling time from the University Counselling Service or one of the Colleges.

Action: JD

Committee members also briefly discussed the pros and cons of the counsellor holding sessions in the William Gates Building versus elsewhere on the West Cambridge site (e.g., convenience vs. discretion).

JD agreed to produce an anonymised summary of what she had learned from the other departments, and circulate it to the departments as a useful resource for the whole group.

Action: JD

iv) Staff Review and Development (SRD) Process:

CS and JD had agreed to take the online trainings for both SRD Reviewers and Reviewees with a view to recommending the trainings to staff. CS reported that she had recently taken the online trainings for both SRD Reviewers and Reviewees. She noted that the courses were quite boring and seemed to be the same as when she took them several years ago. CS felt that in-person training sessions are better but numbers for these training sessions are limited.

It was agreed that JD would take and review the online courses as she had not taken them before, and the issue would be addressed again later.

Action: JD

ACR noted that if we are to provide something on the SRD process ourselves in future, then the Research Staff Forum might be a pool of willing subjects to try it out (for example, carrying out a staff review of a PhD student).

v) *Wellbeing Advisory Lunch*

The Wellbeing Advisory Lunch had been moved to an online event, but JD had not attended. She had received the write-up of the lunch, which she would circulate to Committee members. ACR suggested that he and JD attend a future lunch.

Action: JD and ACR

vi) *ICE Wellbeing at Work course:*

JD reported that the 20 April 2020 course had been cancelled. She would look out for the next time the course is offered.

vii) *Keeping in Touch While Working Remotely*

The Committee had produced a document for the HoD team, outlining various recommendations for keeping open the lines of communication with the various categories of students and staff. Included in the document had been the proposal for a 'virtual corridor,' which had been set up (see item 10 below).

5. Future Discussion Items

Committee members agreed to review the list at the next meeting. CB agreed to add Botanic Garden passes and health and safety issues related to working remotely to the list.

Action: CB

6. Graduate Student Forum (GSF) Wellbeing Report

There was nothing to report. The next GSF is due to be held in May.

7. Research Staff Forum (RSF) Wellbeing Report

There was nothing to report. The next RSF is due to be held in May.

8. Student Wellbeing Internal Audit—Executive Summary

Committee members agreed to discuss the Executive Summary at a subsequent meeting.

9. Discussion Item: Wellbeing Clinic

At the last meeting, it had been agreed that a structured wellbeing clinic with bookable appointment slots would be more effective than an open drop-in event. Committee members agreed to discuss this item together with item 10, Virtual Corridor Initiative, below.

10. Virtual Tea/Coffee Breaks and Virtual Corridor

Virtual Tea/Coffee Breaks: CS reported that the first event had been held on Microsoft Teams, but as the Teams format shows only four images on screen—those of the four people to have last spoken—it was felt that people who did not speak as much might feel a little excluded. In addition, the conversation had become a bit technical. The second event had been held on Zoom, where the images of all the participants (approximately 15) could be seen at one time on the screen. The duration of the event was reduced from 45 to 30 minutes, which was considered long enough. JD had hosted this second event, welcoming arrivals to the meeting and encouraging them to talk. It was felt that this format was more successful, and the Committee agreed to continue with the trial.

Virtual Corridor: No-one had contacted CS or JD for a meeting slot, so uptake was not looking likely. ACR suggested that we keep holding the slots and advise people that requesting a meeting slot is equitable to knocking on the office door and saying 'Hi' and that, despite the slight formality of making the booking, it is not a formal arrangement. It was noted that, since JD or CS would be hosting the tea break, only one of them would be available for the meeting slots. CS said that she preferred one-to-one slots and would be happy to do the Virtual Corridor, but it was agreed that we should keep both initiatives flexible.

11. Next Discussion Item

Committee members agreed that topics for discussion at the next meeting would be the Virtual Corridor Review, the Wellbeing Clinic, and the follow up from JD's counsellor research.

12. Any Other Business

ACR suggested setting up a private Teams Channel, where the Committee could meet more privately in future and share documents instead of on the more public Teams Chat group. Committee members agreed with this and ACR agreed to set up the channel.

Action: ACR

13. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, 26 May 2020 via video on the new Wellbeing Committee Teams Channel. ACR would designate that date as one of his Keeping in Touch days from paternity leave.