

Summary of Business for  
**Council Effectiveness and Statutes Review**  
**Project Board**



Title	<b>Communication with Council members</b>
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Date	27 September reissue of paper drafted 15 July 2013
Status	For information
Document type	Options paper
Summary	This paper gives various options as to how College members could communicate with Council members
Previous consultation	Paper tabled at Project Board meeting of 24 July 2013; discussion postponed to subsequent meeting of Project Board
Resource implications	None
Risk analysis	None
Effective date of introduction	Immediate
Recommendation	<b>The Project Board is asked to DISCUSS the various options proposed and, if appropriate, CHOOSE an option</b>

## **Communication between members of College and Council**

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Currently, the College's webpages for Council do not explicitly state how members of the College should communicate with members of Council. The email addresses of Simon Higman, Rachel Knight and Hilary Baker are listed on the Staff & Student members tab but it is not specific as to which person ought to be contacted for what reasons.

The College Secretary's Office currently communicates with members by post and by email although the College is currently exploring other options for paper distribution as Audit and Compliance Committee finds it preferable to operate without paper copies of their documents.

In order to gain an understanding of how other universities enable contact regarding their governing bodies, a quick survey of the websites of the comparator institutions with which we conducted the benchmarking exercise was done. It was found that they all provide an email address either on the Council webpage or on a personal webpage for the Secretary of the Council. Three institutions provide a holding inbox, like our Secretariat mailbox, to which queries can be directed and one provides an institutional email address for the Chair of Council.

Should members of the College currently wish to communicate with Council members, they would contact a member of the Secretariat directly or send letters to the office which are passed on to the appropriate member of Council.

1) Option 1 is to direct all email traffic to the Secretariat mailbox where the team can act appropriately.

- This benefit of this option is that the respondent is offered the option of anonymity in replying should it be required and also that queries can be seen and picked up by multiple individuals with the authority to reply.
- The risk of this option is that an individual might not wish to contact a nameless address box and may seek out a personal mailbox regardless. To mitigate this risk, individuals would need to be advised to forward any such emails to the Secretariat mailbox from where an appropriate reply could be sent.
- For postal items, the method of communication could be kept the same by which items are sent to the College Secretary's Office and acted upon accordingly.

2) Option 2 is to publish all the College email addresses of all Council members and should a member of the College have a question for a Council member, they could be contacted directly.

- The benefit of this option is that members of the College would feel that they had a direct route to the Council members. This would require members to regularly check their College email addresses which they do not do at present and they may not feel comfortable or equipped to answer questions posed to them.
- The risk of this option is that obtaining answers from individual members of Council could compromise the collective responsibility which Council currently has for its decisions.
- Items of post would still need to be passed through the College Secretary's Office although a procedure could be established which means that mail is passed on unopened.

3) Option 3 is to ask Council members to be available to members of the College for a certain amount of time prior to a Council meeting where questions could be asked.

- The benefit of this option is that members of the College would have direct access to Council members and a dialogue can be opened between individuals.
- The risk of this option is again that the collective responsibility of Council could be compromised and members may be unable to offer this extra time. It is also possible that, given recent events, they may not wish to make themselves available in such a manner.

4) Option 4 is that Council members who specialise in certain areas such as Equality and Diversity or Audit and Compliance could hold the equivalent of office hours either before or after their committee meetings.

- The benefit of this option is again that members of the College would have a direct route of communication with Council members and could ask questions about specific areas of concern.
- The risk of this option is that this could compromise the collective responsibility of Council on certain issues. It is also possible that members may be unable to offer extra time commitment on these days or that they may not wish to put themselves in the position of accounting for College matters.

The Board is invited to discuss these options and provide guidance as to how they feel communication between members of College and Council could be best facilitated.