

# Ustinov College GCR General Meeting Minutes



---

**7:00 p.m., 11/08/2016**

Time markers [hh:mm:ss] refer to recording of meeting available at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27y8pocqJLA&feature=youtu.be>

**Panel Members present from Durham University Executive Committee (UEC):**

Trevor Armour (TA), Director of Estates and Buildings;

Sally McGill (SM), Chief Financial Officer;

David Cowling (DC), Acting Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Arts and Humanities);

Tim Clark (TC), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Social Sciences and Health);

Sian Broadhurst (SB), Senior Executive Officer in the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

**Panel Apologies:** Stuart Corbridge, Vice Chancellor.

**1. Motion to call for Referendum regarding the GCR's stance on the proposed relocation of Ustinov College.**

**The question proposed to be asked in the referendum is:**

*"Should the GCR Campaign to stay at Howland's Farm" Yes/No*

**a. Presentation by DUEC on proposed relocation of Ustinov College.**

**i. Opening Statement - [00:16:00]**

DC: I am currently deputising for Stuart Corbridge whilst he is on leave, and am representing him at this event. Appropriate to extend an apology for no consultation until now. Negotiations with the developer [of Sheraton Park] have been commercially confidential, to negotiate rents and changes to the current development to change it into a proper college experience.

No final decision has been taken yet. Outline proposal presented to University council on 29<sup>th</sup> July. Permission given to develop business case and consult with student body and other interested parties. Final report to council on 20<sup>th</sup> September.

Today we wish to outline our preferred option. We want to know your opinion and how we can make this work for Ustinov, Josephine Butler, John Snow and Stephenson.

**ii. Sheraton Park Site and Location - [00:19:16]**

DC: Original planning permission at Sheraton Park (SP) for purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). We are proposing full college experience. Developer, Alumno, very responsive to potential changes from original design. University has been considering how to use SP for some time.

University will grow significantly in coming years. Need to develop relationship with some commercial developers. SP set apart due to

proximity to University, high quality accommodation, and ability to reconfigure it.

Heritage building and new purpose-built building separated by grounds. Wasn't originally designed as a college. Developer has committed to making investments required to making it college hub. 25 year partnership with developer.

Location close to business school. 0.75 miles west of Bill Bryson compared to 0.65 miles away for Howland's Farm.

iii. **Academic Strategy - [00:24:20]**

SM: Council approved QC relocation. UEC and departments have approved move schedule. 500 QC students move in 2017/18. 1200 QC students moved in 2018/19.

UEC/Council approved student population growth of +3100 by 2018/19. 1000+ college beds needed. Endorsed need to work with PBSAs to deliver growth.

Mt. Oswald scheduled to open summer 2019. Will need beds before Mt. Oswald opens.

iv. **Alternative Options Considered - [00:26:10]**

SM: First option to disperse students from QC colleges amongst existing colleges during transition. Would reduce number of returners in existing college and cause QC colleges to disappear in interim years. Deemed unsatisfactory.

Second option to use SP for John Snow or Stephenson. Not possible as 55% of residents must be postgraduate according to planning permission. To maintain numbers, Ustinov would have to become a mixed undergraduate/postgraduate college. Deemed inappropriate as Ustinov established as an exclusively postgraduate college and would be undesirable with student body.

Preferred option for Ustinov to relocate to SP. Ustinov college would remain as a postgraduate only college.

Even without QC move, wanted to bring SP into portfolio of colleges due to high quality of development. Been working with developers to change design to include features that would be expected in a college.

v. **Proposal and Facilities - [00:28:45]**

SM: SP will be new home of Ustinov. PG-only college for 25 year deal. 418 new high-quality study bedrooms in cluster flats with some studio accommodation.

Reduction in size of community of livers in at SP - want student feedback. Accommodation available from Summer 2017.

High quality accommodation in plan from start. Original plan for student common area not large enough. Developer looking at applying for planning permission to extend this considerably and include café. Fitness suite, GCR and SCR offices, 2 visitor rooms, 2 fellow rooms, college staff offices and seminar room also identified as expected facilities. All

pastoral support from college staff and existence of GCR will remain the same. Want feedback on facilities and any omissions.

vi. **Student Consultation - [00:33:50]**

SB: Decision at council was to proceed with consultation. Final decision not until mid/end September. Will set up another Town-Hall event in the next few weeks. Questionnaire live on Monday with to collate all views. Balance of views from consultation period considered and used to form plan to respond to issues raised.

b. Questions

- i. **[00:36:40] GCR: According to a recent Ustinov GCR Survey, 86% of participants either disagree or strongly disagree with the proposed move of Ustinov College. How do you plan to take this into account when planning the move, and what decisions can student consultation impact at this stage?**

DC: Consultation the GCR has organised to date has not been able to take into account details of the proposal. It is regrettable that we have not been able to share this earlier, but it has been necessary for reasons of commercial sensitivity. Students encouraged to participate in future consultation steps and to keep an open mind.

- ii. **[00:38:55] Floor: Prof. Antony Long sent out an email that QC move was done with extensive consultation with students. Last year DSU president said that it was impossible to draw clear links between student opinion and final decision in QC move. To my knowledge, zero consultation thus far with students, staff and residents on move of 3000 students to Durham. I take objection that we are having a discussion on how to make the move to SP successful – the discussion is whether to move in the first place. Therefore, what basis can you say this is done with consultation? Furthermore, how long, specifically, has Sheraton Park been on the University's radar?**

SB: Surprised to learn consultation viewed as insufficient. We held a number of Town Hall meetings, there was a full questionnaire open for all students and we received several hundred responses. We included these in the Senate and Council discussions, where both JCR presidents were present.

We will be working with the city in managing the QC move. For University to reach aims of being top 8 in country for research, for education and for wider student experience we need more student numbers. This will secure University's future and maintain value of Durham degrees. There will always be trade-offs to achieve this which students and residents may find difficult.

TC: On School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health consultation – 11 Town Hall meetings, questionnaires, meetings with JCR presidents, MedSoc, PharmSoc and the DSU president. Consequently, majority of PharmSoc members voted to move to Newcastle – evidence we listen to student opinion.

TA: Informal contact with developers before first planning application, around 2013 or earlier. Supported planning application, but not contingent on any deal. Formal negotiations more recent - have been ongoing for some months.

PBSA developments, particularly when adjacent to residential areas will generate resistance from residents. Were also some residents in support of regeneration of derelict area.

Initially private development – residential concerns about behaviour which led to Noise/Site management plan requirement in planning consent.

*Floor: It's not just the existence of consultation - it's the link between the consultation and the outcomes. I asked the second question as SP has double the number of places than any other private development in Durham and an agreement a certain quota be postgraduates, which is unrealistic for any other private site.*

- iii. **[00:49:55] GCP: To what extent will students be able to determine – not just consulted – the facilities given at the new site? Which members of college staff will be moved over to the new site? How do you plan to replicate the benefits of the landscape of Howland's Farm at the new site?**

DC: Students encouraged to keep an open mind about the proposal and be imaginative about use of new site. Important any new site provide collegiate experience. Want to listen to student opinion about what is needed to provide this. More information on facilities with release of questionnaire on Monday.

SB: Still some scope with developers to change current design. Students will have ability to shape use of facilities over the site lifetime.

DC: We cannot address the issue of staff this evening. We shall meet with staff before the end of this month. We are hearing the value placed on college staff.

TA: Developers responsive to involving students, particularly in design of social spaces that are not finalised. We have tested viability of some features already, but detail waiting on input of college.

- iv. **[00:59:00] Online: Given SP will be reducing the numbers of livers in from ~600 to ~400, and that there will be some loss of facilities. How can this move possibly produce a better value proposition for future postgraduate students?**

SM: Can you give any examples of things that won't be like-for-like facilities?

*Chair: No room for place such as Howland's building and allotment.*

*Floor: Also no bar, indoor/outdoor sports facilities, space for annual barbecue, music room, formal space and PR2 service.*

DC: We are starting the consultation process now.

*Floor: But structurally, there will be no space for these facilities.*

DC: OK – to refer to Stuart Corbridge's email, we are committed to maximising the student experience for all students. For formal dining there is the option of providing this in Mill Hill Lane area, near SP.

- v. **[01:02:00] GCR: How does the University respond to claims that this is a last-minute attempt to keep to an unrealistic timescale, given the QC move has already been passed, without considering the long-term viability of the Sheraton Park Site as a college and not just accommodation?**

DC: It is in everyone's interest for PBSA to be under the University's control to reassure residents on the proper management of the site.

TA: I believe a lot of fears of residents noted on the current planning consent will be alleviated due to University involvement on-site.

- vi. **[01:04:35] Floor: The SP site is a 30% decrease in live-in accommodation, and there are no plans for a bar, outdoor sports, a music room and many other current facilities. What, realistically, can you change or add to the site that is not an empty promise to those sitting in this room?**

DC: I am optimistic about the ability of Ustinovians to maximise the space available. Keep an open mind.

*Floor: We are losing many facilities that many other colleges have.*

TA: No deal has yet been made with developer. Opportunity to inform design of social space. True that no bar is in the current design, due to management plan of planning permission. University much more likely to be successful in applying for a club licence for a bar than the developers were originally. We are looking at taking over nearby playing field for the college.

SB: We are not going to make any empty promises today. We will take away comments on required facilities today. Useful to have list of facilities in the questionnaire sent out on Monday.

*Liz Brown, trustee of Neville's Cross Resident's Association: There is no way, unfortunately, you will get a bar on that site.*

- vii. **[01:12:13] GCP: Due to this proposed move, we have concerns for the University's strategy. Moving the college closer to the business school may primarily attract business students and students from one part of the world. Ustinov and Durham University flourish due to interdisciplinarity and interculturality. Will this move allow Ustinov to stay true to its motto "Strength through Diversity"**

TC: Why would anything change? Business school over 40% of postgraduate taught students and is the most international part of the University. No implicit strategy to increase the number of postgraduate taught students. Some current discussions as to whether Ustinov is too large and whether postgraduates should be dispersed amongst other colleges.

*GCP: The new site is not appealing to students in other departments. You will lose entire faculties of academic diversity. Why change things?*

TC: I thought I said that the diversity of the college will remain the same?

*GCP: It won't. I would not have applied to come to Ustinov if it were that far away from my department.*

TC: We are looking at potentially changing the location of some departments, including the business school. No guarantee the business school will remain at that location for the foreseeable future.

- viii. **[01:19:50] Online: Quote from Ustinov college council minutes**  
***"Perhaps the key factor turning home students in particular away from Ustinov is the lack of facilities compared to other colleges..." It seems that these problems are being compounded at the new site.***

DC: I would like you to engage imaginatively on what is on offer at the new site, bearing in mind the current design is not set in stone.

- ix. **[01:22:36] Floor: How much do you envisage the accommodation costing – will this push more international students out into the city? Why is so much student growth needed in such space of time? I do not see the connection between more students in Durham and the University's standing. Finally, is staying put, realistically, even an option? If, after all consultation, we do not want to move, will we be forced to anyway?**

SM: Cannot say what rents will be, but they will be linked to University rates. Will be cheaper than if students individually went to PBSA. There are some premium rooms that will not be at the same price as other rooms.

*Floor: Is it true that all rooms are ensuite at SP?*

SM: Yes, all rooms are ensuite.

*Floor: That would price me out of SP accommodation already – I currently live in shared bathroom accommodation.*

DC: Moving onto second part of the question. Universities across UK are growing. In order to be financially sustainable, we need to become larger. We need a critical mass of researchers to compete with leading institutions.

*Floor: But why are you so short of time?*

DC: It is important we look at phasing of growth. We have a ten year plan for growth, and we are actively discussing how we meet our growth target. The provision of accommodation is a live discussion. Not made any final decisions about the rate at which we grow – need growth to be responsible and sustainable. We can't increase undergraduate numbers without increasing staff to teach them and offices to house staff.

DC: On the final point - no decision has yet been made.

*Floor: Are you currently considering any proposals that do not involve Ustinov moving?*

DC: University Council made the decision on 29<sup>th</sup> July to permit UEC to work up business case. Business case will include the response of students as part of the consultation. This is our preferred option. In order to consult on a proposal, we need to have a proposal.

SM: The business case is not one option. There are options within the business case, as presented earlier. Includes dispersing QC students across all colleges and moving Stephenson or Snow to Ustinov.

*Floor: Why is this the preferred option?*

SM: 200 students moving from QC in 2017 and another 400 in 2018. Students moved by programme based on consultation. Do not want to use existing colleges due to reduction in numbers of returners. Second option to use SP for John Snow or Stephenson, but planning permission would require 55% of postgraduates. This could be an option, but would require rebalancing of numbers of postgraduates between Ustinov and John Snow/Stephenson.

- x. **[01:37:00] GCR: One of the main drivers for this decision appears to be this figure that at least 55% of students must be postgraduates in the planning permission. However, most recent planning permission in 2015 says only 40% of students at SP must be postgraduate – I am not sure where this discrepancy comes from. You appear to be willing to try to renegotiate the planning permission to allow the provision of alcohol – why not this figure, to allow an undergraduate college there?**

DC: I do not believe that local residents will be keen on any proposal that increases the number of postgraduate students.

TC: No other college has 40% postgraduates. Certain proportion of undergraduates to postgraduates required; unlikely to be sustainable for over 20% postgraduates. There has been a debate about the size of the postgraduate population at Ustinov for a number of years.

*Floor: So you want to make Ustinov a mixed undergraduate/postgraduate college?*

TC: No. I mean that the current view is that the optimum balance in mixed colleges is around 20% postgraduates.

*Floor: I feel we are being punished for being a well-behaved college.*

DC: You are more like residents than your undergraduate counterparts,

and are likely to fit in better in a residential community.

*Floor: This is not the point – we are being downgraded. We will have fewer rooms. Are we going to have a bar?*

DC: We are hearing this loud and clear.

- xi. **[01:44:15] *Floor: Has the decision to move Ustinov been made? It sounds today that you aren't asking us whether we want to move. It seems as if you're asking us our opinion on the colour of the carpets.***

DC: No. We need a tangible proposal in order for consultation. We've heard opinion about the bar and other facilities.

- xii. **[01:46:10] *Megan Croll, JCR President of St. Cuthbert's Society: There are seven JCR presidents here tonight, as this is a University-wide issue. We want to hear the explanation for the lack of consultation - QC JCR presidents were not consulted about the Ustinov move, despite them being directly affected. What will be the effect of the cost of this move on other colleges? Has the anger of students on this issue changed what you will do in future? How can you say this is the preferred option, when you have not consulted students on their opinion? How do you address concerns that you will price people out at this new site? Is there any other scenario, other than the relocation of Ustinov, that could happen with your foresight, yes or no?***

SM: We have had a history of underinvestment in colleges. This development will not cost the University any money – it is entirely funded by the developer. Only cost will be for furniture, gym and loose equipment – college will not be asked to pay for these. This means University capital can be used in other colleges. Looking at similar arrangement with developer at Mt. Oswald.

*Floor: You mean funded by the students?*

SM: It will be funded by the rent, but it means that the University will not need to borrow money.

*Floor: So we need to borrow the money instead?*

SM: We are in a regime of fees and grants that is not of our making. We can't change that, but can ensure the University does not borrow money unnecessarily.

On ensuite rooms – I don't have an answer at the moment as to how we can deal with this. We need to discuss this in detail.

TC: We have had two major consultations recently, one on the QC move and one on the transfer of the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health to Newcastle. These were intensive and extensive. As a consequence of this, we had a department transfer to Newcastle University. On the QC move, we had student representatives who understood the broad strategic position of the university and supported that move to Durham. We promised they would be involved in consultation, that has not been

possible to date due to commercial confidentiality. This consultation process will unfold over the next few weeks.

*Floor: The previous president of Durham Students' Union, Millie Tanner, told Assembly that the QC JCR presidents were not at all happy with the move.*

TC: The QC presidents expressed the view, like you have, that they cared about their location. Whilst they themselves did not want the colleges to move, they supported the broad position of the University.

*Megan Croll: Sad that this is your example of good consultation. Do you admit that this was not the correct way to proceed with student consultation?*

TC: There was a large student backlash when we announced consultation on the move of the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health as it was done the weekend before the start of exams. There are certain issues that force the timing of the consultation. Now it has started, there will be consultation with QC colleges.

DC: Consultation starting now will involve all those affected. Ideally, we would have shared plans at an earlier stage, but in order to obtain the best possible proposal, it was necessary to make commercially confidential arrangements with the developer.

*Megan Croll: If I were a JCR president at Queen's, I would be furious to find out second-hand the possible location we would move to.*

DC: On third point, on whether there are other scenarios – yes, there are other options present in the business case. The response to the consultation informs the decision of which option will be taken. The consultation process will begin on Monday. Remain open minded and imaginative about proposal.

xiii. **[02:01:30] Floor: Have there been any promises made to QC regarding the facilities of the college?**

TC: We have only promised that we would involve them in the development of facilities where they would be located. There have been no promises regarding a particular location.

*Floor: There were no complaints on the student side?*

TC: Of course. In all consultations I have known, the immediate reaction is to repel the proposal. There was a tension between the college feelings and their disciplinary feelings.

xiv. **[02:04:25] Floor: Coming from overseas, we pay a lot to come here. When you make the decision to move from Howland's Farm, it does not feel you care about the students at all. I feel like we have been deceived and we do not have a voice in this whatsoever. This is not caring at all.**

DC: I don't think that is true. There is a consultation process and we do care.

**c. Vote on motion for GCR members - [02:05:50]**

- i. *Floor: Does the vote to fight the move completely prevent the GCR from fighting to obtain the best possible facilities in the event of a move?*

Chair: No, we will do both, but in that case the energy will be distributed between the two options.

- ii. **Motion passes unanimously.**

---

Alexander Blair

GCR Secretary

11/08/2016