

# Nanny State

**A mind of meetings: this week bursar Andrew Powell talks college, committees and condoms.**

## **What does a typical day as bursar involve?**

As Bursar I am responsible for all of the non academic aspects of running the College; in that task I work closely with the Domestic Bursar who takes responsibility for all the day to day activities. I work closely with the Senior Tutor who looks after the academic side, the Master and the Development Director.

There is no such thing as a typical day in the life of the Bursar, although some aspects of the job work to an annual cycle. Michaelmas Term is dominated by preparation of the annual accounts which are presented to the Governing Body at the end of November, Lent term is student rent discussions, and the Easter term is when the annual budget is put together.

Much of my time during term time is spent in preparing for and attending key Committees. Meetings of the Governing Body happen twice a term (and a final meeting at the beginning of July), and I also attend and present at College Committee, Estates Committee, Tutorial Committee, Executive Trustees of the JMA, Communications Committee, Pension Fund Trustees, Investment Advisory Committee, Development Committee, Audit Committee, Wine Committee and doubtless something else I have forgotten. That adds up to some 50 meetings a year, on top of which I meet weekly with the Master and Senior Tutor and attend meetings of the Bursars Committee and a number of its sub committees. Committees are the way in which the work of the College is done so they are not a chore but they do dominate the term!

Quite a lot of time goes into estates planning - as you know we have two major refurbishment programmes under weigh and these involve regular project meetings with architects, engineers and building contractors as well as members of the Estates Committee. This week I have spent two whole mornings inspecting College rooms both on the College site and in the houses so that we can plan our continuing development and maintenance programme. I have also met a representative of the City Council to discuss cycleways, access and safety.

Once a fortnight the Domestic Bursar and I meet with the presidents of the JCR and MCR to exchange information and address the many practical issues that come up. Most things get resolved in this meeting - we see our jobs as being to create the conditions in which the academic and cultural life of the College can take place as effectively as possible, so we all have in interest in identifying and solving those things that don't quite work well enough. I am also Senior Treasurer of three student societies - Fitztheatre, Mens Rugby and Mens Cricket - all of which I try to support whenever I can.

I am ultimately responsible for over 100 staff who work for the College, and that takes a lot of time too. I spend time each week with each of the Heads of Department who are directly responsible to me and there are always a number of staff issues that need my direct involvement, with meetings etc. I am very well supported in this by the College HR officer.

Apart from that it depends what is happening - over the last week I have spent time meeting artists who may be selected to paint the Master's portrait!

## **What's the best thing about your job?**

- 1) The sheer unpredictability and variety of it; I always say that I never know when I come in to the College in the morning what is going to happen to me that day.
- 2) The sense of being closely involved in something as worthwhile as Fitzwilliam College.
- 3) The friendly and supportive communities in which I work.

## **What's the worst thing about your job?**

The enormous volume of emails and consequent lack of time to devote to some of the big and serious issues. Sometimes I have to make tough decisions which affect individuals..

## **Do you have any funny stories?**

Yes - but not many I can share! I quite often tell of my first term here (Michaelmas 2009) when I was new to the College facing the prospect in six weeks time of presenting to the Governing Body the biggest loss the College had ever made and the entire term was dominated instead by the matter of the condom machine....

## **Is there anything you wish the students knew?**

How hard everyone works behind the scenes to do the right things for our students.