

## C O U N C I L

### Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2022

**Present:** Vice-Chancellor, Ms Wendy Becker (via Teams), Mr John Bowers, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Patricia Daley, Sir Chris Deverell, Fra' John Eidinow, Professor Fabian Essler, Professor Cécile Fabre, Mr Charles Harman, Professor Richard Hobbs, Mr Nicholas Kroll, Professor Aditi Lahiri, Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Professor Anne Trefethen, Chair of Conference of Colleges (Baroness Jan Royall), Head of the Humanities Division (Professor Daniel Grimley)(via Teams), Head of the MPLS Division (Professor Sam Howison), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Screator)(via Teams), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Timothy Power), Senior Proctor (Ms Lucinda Rumsey), Junior Proctor (Dr David Johnson).

**Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff:** Devika Devika (SU Graduates), Safa Sadozai (VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Dr Hilary Wynne (Representative of the Early Career Research Staff)

**Apologies:** Assessor (Dr Bettina Lange), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), Anvee Bhutani (SU President)

**Officers in attendance:** Registrar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Public Affairs and Communications, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, the Executive Officer (Policy and Governance) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Head of Governance Secretariat, the Assistant Registrar (Governance).

#### **In attendance:**

The Chief Executive of the Press and the Secretary to the Delegates, Nigel Portwood (Item 4)

The Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Press, Professor Ewan McKendrick (Item 4)

The Group Finance Director, Giles Spackman (Item 4)

**Introductory matters:** the Vice Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main themes were: the annual OUP strategy report; the annual report of the chair of PRAC and a number of financial items and updates on USS. There were also a number of important items on the reserved agenda.

**Declarations of interest:** Council members were reminded to declare any interest that could give rise to a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. These would be noted in the footnotes of the minutes of the meeting.

### I. ORDINARY BUSINESS

#### (A) Unreserved

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#### 1. Meeting held on 29 November 2021 (C(21)cxix-cxxix)

(a) *Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved.

(b) *Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

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CONFIDENTIAL 2. **Meeting held on 17 January 2022 (C(22)i-iii)***(a) Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved.

*(b) Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

CONFIDENTIAL 3. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (above the line)\*\***

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following items of business:

- Oral update on Covid.
- The situation at Christ Church had been resolved, as reported in the media.
- Of the two recent UCU re-ballots, neither had passed the threshold for strike action or action short of a strike, with participation levels of 46.5%.
- Consideration of the Freedom of Speech Bill had been delayed until the summer. The University continued to lobby against the amendment brought forward by Jesse Norman MP. The amendment had been prompted by concerns about links between HE and China. There had been some coverage in the media and the University had received a number of related FOI requests.
- The University had been awarded five ERC starting grants (compared to 8-9 in previous years).
- A Chief Executive of the UK's new Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) had been appointed.
- A visit from the new Chair of UKRI, Sir Andrew Mackenzie, would take place next week.
- UCAS data showed a further increase in admissions from state schools, now almost 70%. The number of British 18 year olds from the lowest participation regions was now at an all-time high. The Opportunity Oxford programme had expanded by almost 40%.
- The gift agreement between Linacre College and the Sovico Group had been signed that morning.
- There remained some concern about the impact of the Levelling Up White Paper on research and development funding in the South East. The University would continue to lobby in favour of its ability to provide and contribute to partnerships and collaborations around the country.

In discussion, it was noted that association with Horizon Europe remained the preferred option, although some alternative options were being considered. The University and the Russell Group would continue to provide guidance and await the outcome.

CONFIDENTIAL 4. **Oxford University Press (OUP) Report to Council: strategy update (C(22)03)\*\***

The Chief Executive of the Press gave a presentation. The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chief Executive of the Press for his report.

CONFIDENTIAL 5. **Annual report from the Chair of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee\*\***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) gave a presentation on the work of PRAC, highlighting various aspects.

6. **Report from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 19 January 2022**

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*(a) Office for Students (OfS) Annual Financial Return 2021 (C(22)04)\*\**

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The Chief Financial Officer highlighted a number of points.

Council **approved** the Annual Financial Return for onward submission to the Office for Students.

Council also **approved the delegation** of any changes to the Vice Chancellor, the Chief Financial Officer and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Planning & Resources).

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(b) *RSL/ICTL Redevelopment (Reuben College) Project (C(22)05)\*\**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) provided background information before a discussion was held.

Council **took the action** set out in the report.:

7. **Report from the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 14 December 2021**

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(a) *Q1 2021/22 forecast (C(22)06)\*\**

The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item, highlighting various points.

Council **took the action** set out in the report.

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(b) *Space Allocation: Rodney Porter Building (C(22)07)\**

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Planning and Resource Allocation) introduced this item, explaining that it involved a straightforward space allocation which would enable a series of consequential moves.

Council:

- (i) **approved** the following resolution for submission to Congregation: "That: approximately 1,541 sqm net usable area (NUA) within the Rodney Porter Building (building number 281), be allocated to the Department of Chemistry, for a period of five years, from 1 December 2021, until 30 November 2026, or until the completion of a proposed new chemistry research building, if sooner";
- (ii) **noted** the intention to bring the end date of the Department of Physical and Theoretical Chemistry's existing allocation of approximately 256 sqm NUA within the Rodney Porter Building in line with the end date of the proposed allocation to the Department of Chemistry;
- (iii) **noted** the release of approximately 314 sqm NUA within the Manor Road Building by the Department of Chemistry, from 1 August 2022.

8. **Report of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 2 December 2021**

(a) *Proposal to establish a Joint Student Mental Health Committee (C(22)08)*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced this item informing Council that the Education Committee and Conference had developed a Joint Task Force during the pandemic which had worked well. The new Joint Student Mental Health Committee was a product of this closer working. The new Committee would report to both Education Committee and Conference as it had members drawn from both the University and colleges.

Professor Sánchez-Ancochea asked for the Council minutes to record the importance of the establishment of the Committee and its significance, with thanks being extended to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) for his work and that of Conference in enabling this development.

Council **approved** the establishment of the Joint Student Mental Health Committee, with the proposed terms of reference and membership as set out in Annex A of the paper; noting that Conference colleagues would be 'nominated' rather than 'elected'.

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9. **Chair's Action (C(22)09)\***

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The Registrar introduced the paper which set out both a description of Chair's action and how it had been applied over the past two academic years.

Council **considered** and **noted** the information at Annex Part 1 and Part 2.

## 10. Reports from Personnel Committee

### (a) *Equality targets for staff in post (C(22)10)*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item, explaining that the Staff Targets Working Group (STWG), chaired by the then Advocate for Equality and Diversity, Dr Rebecca Surender, had worked on developing the targets over the course of the last academic year. The proposals had been discussed extensively at the divisional level, with Personnel Committee agreeing them in October 2021. The Senior Tutors' Committee of Conference had considered the targets and there would be further discussion at Conference in week 5. Pending any comments from Conference, Council was being asked to approve the targets.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- In response to a question about whether the indicative appointment rates were realistic in view of application rates, it was acknowledged that both the rates and targets were challenging and it would be necessary to increase the recruitment pool in order to achieve the targets. Providing the data and associated targets was intended to change behaviour.
- It was not entirely clear from the paper how 'under-representation' was being defined. It was noted that the Working Group had reviewed a range of benchmarking data (including UK and global comparators) to assess the University's current position. However, it was pointed out that, if certain groups were under-represented at other institutions, these comparators would not necessarily be helpful to the University in setting targets for appropriate representation.
- It was agreed that increased representation in terms of ethnicity and gender were clearly required and that the work of the Working Group in developing the proposed targets was much appreciated. Further data on the underlying assumptions used to define under-representation would enable Council to better understand the targets and how they had been determined.
- The important issue at this stage was not necessarily the targets themselves, rather the discourse and changes in behaviour needed to achieve them, and the process for monitoring progress towards them were key.
- Council was being asked to approve the targets at this meeting as they would inform the University's 2022-27 Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter (REC) action plans.

Council **approved** the gender and ethnicity targets for staff in post, as summarised in section (d) in the paper, subject to discussion by the Conference of Colleges at its meeting in Week 5, where endorsement would be sought.

Further data on the underlying assumptions used to define under-representation would be brought back to Council at a future meeting.

### (b) *Code of Conduct for members of electoral boards (C(22)11)\**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item, explaining that the proposed revisions were straightforward. One drafting point was raised – in paragraph 5 of the Code (Diversity and Equality of Opportunity) the first bullet-point currently read:

'respect diversity and not unfairly discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristics (see the Equality Policy for details)'

It was agreed that, in line with the wording of the Equality Policy, this bullet-point should read:

'respect diversity and not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristics (see the Equality Policy for details)'

Subject to this amendment, Council **approved** the revised Code of Conduct for members of Electoral Boards as an official University Code of Conduct, subject to a further formal review after

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three years and the facility for Personnel Committee to make any minor amendments it judged appropriate in the intervening period.

(c) *Retirement: report on action taken by the Personnel Committee with respect to extension of retirement dates, and review of the operation of the EJRA policy and procedure (C(22)12)\*\**

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The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item, explaining that the data would feed into the ongoing EJRA Review.

Council **noted** the report.

#### 11. **Report from General Purposes Committee (13 December 2021) (C(22)13)\***

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(a) *Report of the Safety, Health and Environment Management Subcommittee (SHEMS) meeting held on 18 November 2021*

Council **noted** the issues discussed by SHEMS.

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(b) *Revisions to Statute XI (University Discipline)*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) informed Council that the OfS had made a number of revisions to policies relating to student discipline which had been incorporated into University Statute. A set of disciplinary procedures sat underneath these changes and it was now possible for those dealing with student disciplinary cases, including the Proctors, to select from a variety of sanctions or measures, applying a number of them as required, rather than being restricted to just one course of action.

Council **approved** for submission to Congregation the legislative changes to Statute XI (University Discipline) summarised in paragraph 4 and attached as Annex A.

#### 12. **Annual report of the Head of the Humanities Division**

This item was deferred to 14 March 2022.

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#### 13. **USS pensions: update\***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced these two items, highlighting the following points:

- In the recent employee consultation, the proposal that had drawn the greatest comment and concern was the 2.5% cap on inflationary increases for entitlements which build up from April 2022.
- As a result, UUK was now consulting on a proposal to defer the application of that cap to 2025. In effect, this would allow further work on conditional indexation and the potential move to a new model to take place during the intervening three years. In effect, this agreement would therefore be in place for two years before the new valuation.
- The proposal would require a 0.3% increase in the contribution rate, 0.1% to be absorbed by USS (through a modest extension to the recovery plan) and 0.2% to be funded by employers. As the employee contribution remained the same, an employee consultation would not be required.
- The USS Pensions Working Group had been consulted and fully supported the proposal. If approved, the proposal represented a very positive step for the University and its employees.
- The University had stepped up its engagement with USS and was taking a more pro-active approach. Following concerns about the proposed USS investment strategy, namely around the increase in the amount of hedging and the increase in gearing to borrowing, a joint letter from Oxford and Cambridge (and potentially Imperial College) had been drafted outlining a number of issues to be addressed in the formal consultation.

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During discussion, the impact of inflation on staff was raised. It was noted that, at its next meeting, PRAC would consider the University's response to the national pay award, and discuss the impact of inflation.

(a) *UUK consultation (C(22)14)*

Council strongly supported the proposal and **approved** the response to the 1 February UUK consultation.

(b) *Letter to USS Trustees (C(22)15) to follow*

Council **approved** the joint letter to the USS Trustees.

*Items for approval or report without discussion ('below the line').*

14. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line) (C(22)16)**

Without discussion Council **noted**:

- (i) the New Year's Honours List;
- (ii) the appointment to a statutory post;
- (iii) the OfS publications; and
- (iv) the UUK Press Statements.

15. **Report from the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 14 December 2021**

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(a) *Minor Capital Plan 2021-24 (C(22)17)\**

Without discussion Council:

- (i) **approved** the Minor Capital Plan (Version 10.6 – Annex A);
- (ii) **noted** Divisional comments detailed under (d)3; and
- (iii) **noted** that the Chair of PRAC, consulting with Capital Steering Group, would agree any subsequent changes arising as required prior to the annual re-prioritization exercise in the summer of 2022

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(b) *Report from the Strategic Plan Programme Board (MT 2021) (C(22)18)\**

Without discussion Council **noted** the report.

16. **Unreserved report of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on 13 December 2021 and 24 January 2022 (C(22)19)**

(a) *New Degree of Master in Science in Experimental Psychology, and New Degree of Master in Science in Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics*

Council **noted** Education Committee's approval of the proposed new Degree of Master in Science in Experimental Psychology and proposed new Degree of Master in Science in Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics. A query was raised on the drafting of the associated changes to legislation (at Annex A) which would require further consideration before approval.

(b) *Proposed changes to the Shamma Lecturer and Assistant Keeper in Islamic Numismatics*

Without discussion Council **approved** for submission to Congregation the legislative proposal attached at Annex B.

(c) *Proposed amendments to legislation*

Without discussion, Council **approved** the following proposals:

- (i) *Changes in regulations for the Curators of the Parks and of the Sheldonian (GPC(21)142)*

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- (ii) *Proposed amendment to the regulations governing the membership of the Social Sciences Divisional Board (GPC(21)143)*
- (iii) *Proposed amendments to regulations for committees to reflect the change from Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Gardens, Libraries and Museums) to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) (GPC(21)147)*
- (iv) *Update to the Financial Regulations (GPC(22)03)*

17. **KPMG Resignation Letter** (C(22)20)

Without discussion, Council **noted** the KPMG resignation letter dated 24 January 2022.

18. **Any other unreserved business**

There was no other unreserved business.

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