

## C O U N C I L

### Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8 February 2021

**Present:** Vice-Chancellor<sup>1</sup>, Principal of Brasenose, Warden of New College<sup>2</sup>, Ms Becker, Ms Boyt<sup>3</sup>, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Coulson, Sir Chris Deverell, Fra' John Eidinow<sup>4</sup>, Professor Essler, Professor Hamerow, Mr Harman, Professor Hobbs, Professor Johnson, Mr Kroll, Professor Lahiri, Professor Nobre, Mr Ovenden<sup>5</sup>, Professor Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Trefethen, Head of the Humanities Division (Professor O'Brien), Head of the MPLS Division (Professor Howison)<sup>6</sup>, Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Screamon), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Dame Sarah Whatmore)<sup>7</sup>, Senior Proctor (Professor Horobin), Junior Proctor (Professor Johnston), Assessor (Professor Swift).

**Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff:** Nikita Ma (President of Oxford SU), Tucker Drew (Oxford SU VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Lauren Bolz (Oxford SU VP Graduates); Dr Gwilym Rowlands (Chair, Oxford Research Staff Society).

**Apologies:** there were no apologies.

**Officers in attendance:** the Registrar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Director of Finance, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, the Director of Public Affairs, the interim Head of Governance and Covid Planning<sup>8</sup>, the Executive Officer (Policy and Governance) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Assistant Registrar (Governance), Dr Berry.

**In attendance:** the Chief Executive of the Press and Secretary to the Delegates, Nigel Portwood; the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Press, Professor Ewan McKendrick; and the Group Finance Director, Giles Spackman (for item 5).

**Order of business:** item 14 was taken after item 8; item 28 was taken after item 29.

**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.

**Introductory matters:** the Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting. She commented on the improved attendance since meetings had moved online, presumably because of the absence of academic travel.

### I. ORDINARY BUSINESS

#### (A) Unreserved

#### 1. Meeting held on 30 November 2020 (C(20)cxxxv-cxlv)

##### (a) Unreserved minutes

---

<sup>1</sup> For items 1-27 and 29.

<sup>2</sup> For items 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> For items 1-14.

<sup>4</sup> For items 1-28.

<sup>5</sup> For items 1-14.

<sup>6</sup> For items 1-8 and 14.

<sup>7</sup> For items 1-26 and 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> For items 1-8 and 14.

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.

The minutes were approved.

*(b) Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

2. **Meeting held on 18 January 2021 (C(21)i-vi)**

*(a) Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved.

*(b) Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

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

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following matters:

- Three recruitment exercises for senior appointments were currently, or were about to be, underway: the Dean of the Saïd Business School; the Chief Finance Officer; and the Head of the Social Sciences Division.
- Overall, media coverage of the Oxford vaccine had been extremely positive, although perhaps less so in recent days. Professor Gilbert, Professor Pollard and their colleagues were exemplary spokespeople for the science and their achievements were a source of enormous pride.
- The Registrar was working with HR colleagues on developing new ways of working (post-pandemic) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) was considering lessons learnt for future teaching methods.
- The outcome of several government reviews, including the Augar review, post-qualifications admissions consultation and TEF, were awaited.
- A government announcement was expected soon (22 February) on whether students might be allowed to return from 8 March.
- The USS pensions consultation.

CONFIDENTIAL 4. **Covid-19\*\***

Council received the following oral updates:

- i. Teaching (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education))
- ii. Research (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research))
- iii. Testing (Head of the Medical Sciences Division)

CONFIDENTIAL 5. **OUP Report to Council: strategy update (C(21)1)\*\***

Council **commented** on the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 6. **Annual report from the Chair of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee\*\***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) provided an oral report.

CONFIDENTIAL 7. **Quarter 1 financial forecast: report of the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 15 December 2020 (C(21)2) \*\***

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.

The Director of Finance explained that the Q1 forecast was showing a deficit although the operating cash position had improved. Key risks to the Q2 position were restrictions continuing beyond Hilary term and the ongoing costs of responding to the pandemic.

Council **noted** the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 8. **Office for Students Annual Financial Return: report from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 January 2021 (C(21)3)\***

The Director of Finance highlighted the following points:

- The OfS annual financial return was a 'going concern' test, using indicators of financial non-viability. Given the annual surplus, substantial cash reserves, and growing assets, the University passed this test.
- However, it was important to note that the forecast did not include some uncertainties on income and expenditure.
- It was possible that OfS might request some minor changes to the presentation of the return before the final deadline for submission. Council was therefore being asked to delegate approval of any minor changes to the Vice Chancellor, the Director of Finance and the PVC for Planning and Resources. The overall message would not be changed.

In discussion, the following were among the points raised.

- It would be helpful to have an understanding of how the University compared within the sector and, as the financial recovery following the pandemic was likely to take longer than originally envisaged, a forward look of perhaps 3-5 years might be more important.
- From a divisional perspective, the forecasting was based on distanced teaching during Hilary and Trinity terms. The costs associated with online teaching might therefore soften during Q2.

Council **approved** the submission of the Annual Financial Return to the Office for Students, noting that options to incentivise and improve recurrent operating cash margins were being pursued through the White Paper.

Council also **approved** the delegation of approval of any changes to the submission requested by the OfS following the meeting of Council to the Vice Chancellor, the Director of Finance and the PVC for Planning and Resources.

9. **Report from the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 15 December 2020**

(a) *Setting 2021/22 Budget Targets for the Academic Divisions (C(21)4)\**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) introduced this item, explaining that given the disruption to the normal planning process in 2020 and the absence of an updated set of divisional plans, the budget targets agreed in December 2019 were being used as a baseline for 2021/22.

Council **noted** the approach to setting 2021/22 budget targets for the academic divisions.

RESTRICTED (b) *Report from the Joint Student Number Planning Sub-Committee (MT 2020) (C(21)5)\*\**

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

CONFIDENTIAL (c) *Report from the Strategic Plan Programme Board (MT 2020) (C(21)6)\*\**

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

CONFIDENTIAL 10. **Report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 20 January 2021 and of Strategic Capital Steering Group held on 1 February (C(21)7)**

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.

(a) *Life and Mind Building*\*\*

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

CONFIDENTIAL 11. **Report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 January 2021 and of PRAC held on 19 January 2021 (C(21)8)**

(a) *Graduate Accommodation*\*\*

Council **agreed** the proposals in principle and **delegated** to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) and the Vice-Chancellor the approval of the necessary adjustments to one or both of the resolutions and their submission to Congregation.

CONFIDENTIAL 12. **USS pensions: update (C(21)9)\*\***

Council **noted** the report.

13. **Brexit and the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (C(21)10)\*\***

The Registrar highlighted the following points, drawing attention to the further detail provided in the papers.

- Students from the EEA and Switzerland starting courses at the University from 1 October 2021 would cease to be eligible for home fee status, with certain exceptions, such as students from the Republic of Ireland.
- There had been a reduced number of applications from EU nationals for undergraduate study at the University, but an increased number for postgraduate study.
- The Turing Scheme was provided with £100m to help disadvantaged students travel abroad world-wide, but the details were not yet published. The University would seek to rebuild its bilateral relationship with partners following the ending of UK participation in the Erasmus Scheme.
- The Immigration Team continued to provide advice and support to the 18% of the University's staff who are EU nationals.
- The EU would need to decide within six months on the adequacy of the UK's arrangements for data security in relation to the flow of personal data from the EU to the UK.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) added a number of points on research funding.

Discussion took place on the continued role of Oxford in Berlin (OiB).

Council **noted** the main points of the paper.

14. **Annual report of the Head of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division\***

The Head of the MPLS Division highlighted the following aspects of the division's work.

- The Division was beginning to make a real difference in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It had appointed ten EDI fellows, one in each department, each of whom had a budget of £1k to develop projects; from Michaelmas term 2021, 4 of the 11 heads of departments and units would be women, compared with one at present; and 31% of AP appointments in 2019/20 had been female compared with the Division's 16% overall.
- The Division was undertaking a concerted, multi-year, project to change the public perception that Cambridge was the principal focus for UK mathematics. Its communications on this had a wide reach: the Oxford Mathematics You Tube channel had 15.7m views (more than the University's own channel with 11.2m); 'Dr Becky' in Physics had 11.2m views and 'Tom Rocks Maths' 1.5m. A You Tube search for 'Cambridge Mathematics Channel' brought up in fourth place the Oxford Mathematics 1st Year Student Lecture by Vicky Neale, with 1.9m views.
- The Division had engaged enthusiastically with the access and outreach programmes: 39 of the 100 Opportunity Oxford students were on MPLS courses and nine of its 10 departments were participating. This was on top of the Division's own Bridging Course, with

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.

43 participants, who met certain criteria and would benefit from additional support. The Division also engaged in the postgraduate UNIQ+.

- In research, the Division was actively coordinating initiatives between research groups in key interdisciplinary areas, particularly the Oxford Network for the Environment, concentrating on energy and net zero carbon; through the Division's links with the health and life sciences; the Kavli Institute for NanoScience Discovery; the interdisciplinary work in the LaMB and Rosalind Franklin Institute; and Covid-19 testing equipment.
- Other research in progress involved space, AI, net zero plastic, quantum technology (building on the network of laboratories in Oxfordshire) and developing and supporting colleagues in leadership roles in science policy and security support.

Council enthusiastically welcomed the report, commenting in particular on the leadership demonstrated in EDI and the social media communications, with the student representatives drawing attention to the latter's importance for outreach.

15. **Oxford University Student Union's Annual Impact Report, 2019/20** (C(21)11)

The President of Oxford SU explained that the Annual Impact Report was that of last year's sabbatical team, which had been delayed by the pandemic, The President drew attention to the statistics in that report, updated for the present year to show trends:

- the high level of participation at Freshers Fair and in student Council, climate and wellbeing activities, and elections;
- Oxford SU's work with the University on the Teaching Assessment consultation and lobbying for the University-wide divestment policy;
- following the pandemic, the increase in Oxford SU's activities in a number of areas: attendance at Student Council; casework by the Student Advice Service; Common Room elections run on Oxford SU's platform; candidates for representational roles with a consequential increase in feedback and the communication of that feedback to University committees; and
- the role of the Oxford SU Trustee Board to decide the strategic direction of the Union in a number of key areas such as racial equality, mental health, access and sustainability.

Council greatly welcomed the report and presentation and thanked Oxford SU for its work, noting in particular that on sustainability.

---

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

16. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line)** (C(21)12)

Without discussion, Council **noted**:

- (i) the New Year's Honours List and Awards;
- (ii) the OfS publications; and
- (iii) the UUK Press Statements.

17. **Request for delegation to the College Contributions Committee to make Urgent Maintenance Grants: communication on behalf of the College Contributions Committee** (C(21)13)

Without discussion, Council **delegated** to the College Contributions Committee the power to make grants from the College Contributions Scheme's funds under the terms of the committee's Urgent Maintenance Grants scheme.

CONFIDENTIAL 18. **Report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 26 November 2020** (C(21)14)\*\*

*(a) Annual report on retirement*

Without discussion, Council **noted** the report.

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.

19. **Report of the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committees held on 15 December 2020** (C(21)15)

CONFIDENTIAL

(a) *Space allocation to IT Services within Dartington House (building number 101)\*\**

Without discussion, Council **approved** the resolution for submission to Congregation and **noted** the associated space charges.

20. **Unreserved report of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on 15 December 2020 and 25 January 2021** (C(21)16)

(a) *Report of the Safety, Health and Environment Management Subcommittee (SHEMS) meeting held on 19 November 2020\**

Without discussion, Council **noted** the issues discussed by SHEMS.

(b) *Proposed re-naming of the Rhodes Professor of Race Relations*

Without discussion, Council **approved** and **agreed to submit to Congregation** and thereafter to Her Majesty in Council, the legislative proposal at Annex A to change the name of the Rhodes Professor of Race Relations to the Professor of African Studies and to change the object of the Professorship from giving instruction in interracial relations to giving instruction in African Studies.

(c) *Proposed amendments to legislation*

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

(i) *Proposed changes to Proctors' Regulations 1 of 2003: Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations and 1 of 2005: Proctors' Administrative Regulations for Candidates in Examinations* (GPC(20)109)

(ii) *Amendment to the remit of the Committee to Review the Salaries of Senior University Officers (CRSSUO)* (GPC(21)03)\*

21. **Suspension of Part 6 of Congregation Regulations 3 of 2002: Religious Services and Sermons** (C(21)17)

Without discussion, Council **approved** for submission to Congregation the suspension of Part 6 of Congregation Regulations 3 of 2002: Religious Services and Sermons, as set out in Annex A of the paper.

22. **Any other unreserved business**

There was none.

SC/NPB

G:\GOVERNANCE\Council\Meetings\2020-21\HT 2021\8 February 2021\Minutes\08.02.2021 Council web minutes.docx

\* The confidential or restricted designation is removed from this version of the minutes.

\*\*A brief note of the action taken by Council is included instead of a version of the minutes.