

C O U N C I L

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11 May 2020

Present: Vice-Chancellor, Warden of New College, Principal of Somerville, Ms Boyt, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Coulson, Sir Chris Deverell, Fra' John Eidinow, Professor Essler, Professor Hamerow, Mr Harman, Professor Hobbs, Professor Johnson, Mr Kroll, Professor Lahiri, Professor Nobre, Mr Ovenden, Professor Trefethen, Head of the Humanities Division (Professor O'Brien), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Sreaton), Head of the MPLS Division (Professor Howison), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Dame Sarah Whatmore), Senior Proctor (Professor Horobin), Junior Proctor (Professor Johnston), Assessor (Dr Swift).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Anisha Faruk (President of Oxford SU) and Neil Misra (Oxford SU VP Graduates); Dr Gwilym Rowlands (Chair, Oxford Research Staff Society).

Apologies: Ray Williams (Oxford SU VP Access and Academic Affairs).

Officers in attendance: the Registrar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), the Director of Finance, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, the Director of Public Affairs, the Executive Officer (Policy and Governance) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Senior Assistant Registrar (Governance), the Assistant Registrar (Governance).

In attendance: Stephen Purbrick, Head of Financial Planning and Analysis (for item 6(ii)).

Order of business: the order of business was as set out in the minutes.

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 explained that, following the request at the last meeting for more frequent but shorter meetings, she had called an additional meeting of Council to be held on 1 June. Where possible items were being moved to that meeting, and it was intended that this meeting would last no more than two hours.

I. ORDINARY BUSINESS

(A) Unreserved

1. **Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 (C(20)xix-xxxii)**

The minutes were approved.

2. **Unreserved matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 not otherwise on the agenda**

There were none.

3. **Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2020 (C(20)xxxvii-xliv)**

The minutes were approved.

4. **Unreserved matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2020 not otherwise on the agenda**

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There were none.

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

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following matters.

- The Prime Minister's announcement the previous evening on the next phase of the Covid-19 restrictions and the expected publication that afternoon of detailed guidance, including sector specific material. The University would digest and respond to that guidance once it was available.
- The commencement of a pilot exercise involving several academic departments and the Ashmolean for a small scale return to on-site working for specific research programmes. The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the work needed to re-open buildings that have been closed up and to work through how they would operate under the social distancing guidelines. Subject to further national guidance the intention was to continue with the process started by the pilot.
- Two University hardship funds had been established, one for staff and one for students, who faced financial difficulties arising from Covid-19. Donations were being sought, both externally and from members of the University community.
- It was intended that the initial plans for Michaelmas term 2020 would be provided for Council on 1 June.

6. **Covid-19**

(i) *Update**

The Vice-Chancellor reported on this in item 5 above.

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(ii) *Progress report from Covid-19 Financial Recovery PRAC sub-committee (C(20)44)***

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

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(iii) *Coronavirus – Financial contingency planning. Report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21 April 2020 (C(20)45) ***

Council **noted** the report.

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(iv) *Capital projects update (C(20)46)***

Council **noted** the report.

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(v) *Osney Power Station: report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21 April 2020 (C(20)47)***

Council **noted** the report.

(vi) *Elections by Congregation: proposed postponement (C(20)48)*

The Registrar explained that there were currently around 150 places elected by Congregation to University committees and other bodies, with the bulk of elections taking place during Trinity term. This term there would be around 15 elected vacancies on Council and its committees and around 20-40 elected vacancies on divisional and faculty boards. As the whole process was currently a paper process, and most staff were working remotely, it would not be possible to proceed as normal and run the elections manually during Trinity term.

Consideration had been given to the possibility of running all the elections electronically. However, having not dealt with any aspect of the elections process in this way before, the risk of difficulties in trialling it for all elections this term was thought to be too high. It was clearly important to maintain the University's democratic traditions and to refresh membership of the relevant bodies, and whilst it might be possible to run the three Council elections electronically, running more than that this term was not feasible. Aside from the practical difficulties, there were concerns about engagement, for example, potential candidates might be unwilling/unable to stand due to

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illness/caring responsibilities, members of Congregation might have difficulties gathering nominations or voting. These difficulties might potentially call into question the democratic nature of the process.

Two possible options were put forward - postponing all elections until Michaelmas term 2020 so that new members could take up their places at the beginning of Hilary term 2021, or postponing all but the three elections to Council and running those electronically so that the new Council members could take up their places at the beginning of Michaelmas term 2020. If all elections were postponed, the three elected members of Council due to step down at the beginning of Michaelmas term 2020 had indicated their willingness to serve for one additional academic term, if asked to do so.

The following points were among those raised in discussion:

- One view expressed was that all elected vacancies should be treated in the same way – if it was not possible to run them all, they should all be postponed.
- Another view was that, if possible, those elections that could be conducted should be conducted - all the vacancies might be advertised this term and then decisions taken as to how to handle any that were contested.
- There was concern about the suggestion that it was not possible to run the elections electronically, given the IT expertise available within the University. However, it was more the case that the time and resource required to develop a reliable system were not currently available within the short timeframe of Trinity term, than that such a system might not be possible at all.
- As with all other areas of the University, there were considerable pressures on the team responsible for running the elections and this needed to be taken into account.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that a vote should be taken on the two options presented in the paper and the result reported to Council later that day.

Post meeting note:

The outcome of the vote was as follows:

- Postpone all elections: 12
- Run Council elections only and postpone the rest: 9
- Not voted: 1
- Conflicted and therefore no vote: 3

Council therefore **agreed** to postpone all the Congregation elections due to take place in Trinity term 2020 until Michaelmas term 2020, so that new members might take up their places at the beginning of Hilary term 2021.

Council also **agreed** to:

- (i) submit to Congregation the proposed suspension of section 8(1) of Statute VI and regulation 6.2 of Congregation Regulations 3 of 2002, as set out in Annex A, to allow three elected members of Council and two elected members of the Committee for the Nomination of Select Preachers to serve for one additional academic term; and
- (ii) approve the proposed suspension of the relevant Council Regulations, as set out in Annex B, to allow members of other committees and divisional and faculty boards to serve for one additional academic term.

7. Further reports from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21 April 2020

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(a) *Wellington Square Initial Brief (C(20)49)*

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

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(b) *Development Office Funding for two capital projects (C(20)50)***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) briefly introduced this item.

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In discussion, the view was expressed that providing the requested fundraising resource represented a good investment.

Council therefore **approved** the proposed allocation of funds from Strategic Capital subject to the conditions set out in the report.

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(c) *Old Road Campus Plot B1 (Global Health) (C(20)51)***

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

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8. **Report of the meeting of the OSPS Working Group held on 30 March 2020 (C(20)52)***

(a) *University of Oxford Staff Pension Scheme (OSPS): actuarial valuation at 31 March 2019*

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (People and GLAM) reported that the OSPS Working Group had met a number of times, including three meetings with union representatives, and was now in a position to reach agreement with the trustee on the valuation.

Council **approved** the proposed outcome of the valuation, and **delegated** authority to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (People and GLAM) to conclude discussions with the OSPS trustee.

9. **Annual report of the Head of the Social Sciences Division***

The Head of the Social Sciences Division provided an oral report covering the following:

- research income within the division;
- some of the research successes within the division were highlighted, including work on prosecuting war crimes at the International Criminal Court and work on changing how poverty is measured and tackled, the latter of which had recently been awarded The Queen's Anniversary Prize;
- the SSD research strategy was being refreshed to become a research and innovation strategy, taking advice from BEIS and others with relevant industry expertise;
- the division was also focussing on increasing access, with a number of departments taking part in UNIQ+ 2020 and Opportunity Oxford;
- the division played an important role in generating operating cash surpluses which were often relied upon to subsidise operating cash in other divisions and central administration. This was largely due to its income streams from executive education, online and distance-learning courses. Given this, the financial implications of the coronavirus on the division were likely to be considerable. All departments within the division were working hard to mitigate the impacts, taking steps to retain existing offer-holders and grow additional offer holders.

Council **noted** the report.

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

10. **Unreserved matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 not otherwise on the agenda**

(a) *Minute 10(a): Congregation Resolutions – Phasing-Out of the Graduate Application Fee*

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

(b) *Minute 10(b): Congregation Resolutions – fossil fuel divestment and net zero investment (C(20)53)*

Without discussion, Council **noted** the update provided.

(c) *Minute 13: Intelligent Client Function*

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

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11. **Decisions by circulation**

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(a) *Covid-19 update*

Without discussion, Council **noted** the update provided by circulation on 3 April 2020.

(b) *Response to the second UUK consultation on the USS pension scheme*

Without discussion, Council **noted** that, following the circulation on 6 April 2020, no amendments to the draft response were proposed by members of Council, and the response has therefore been submitted without change.

12. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line) (C(20)54)**

Without discussion, Council **noted**:

- (i) the appointments to statutory posts;
- (ii) the OfS publications; and
- (ii) the UUK press statements.

13. **The Common Award***

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

14. **Report of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 March 2020 (C(20)55)***

Without discussion, Council **noted** the unreserved report on the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2020.

15. **Report of the meetings of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 24 March and 7 April 2020 (C(20)56)**

(a) *JRAM Allocations 2019/20*

Without discussion, Council **noted** the revised JRAM Allocations.

(b) *Space Allocation: Robert Hooke Building**

Without discussion, Council **agreed to make the following resolution**, for onward referral to Congregation:

"That approximately 1,048 sqm net usable area (NUA) within the Robert Hooke Building (building number 160) be allocated to the Department of Computer Science for a further period of approximately five years from 17 June 2020 until 16 June 2025, or until alternative space can be provided, if sooner."

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16. **Annual report 2018/19 of the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding (C(20)57)****

Without discussion, Council

- (i) **received** the annual report of the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding for 2018/19 (annexed at A in the report); and
- (ii) **noted** that the committee intends to publish on its website the report on the work of the committee for the wider University provided at Appendix V of Annex A of the report.

17. **Request from the Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (formerly the Department of Communications and the Arts) for the repatriation of human remains and associated material (C(20)58)***

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Without discussion, Council, on the recommendation of the Visitors of the Pitt Rivers Museum, **approved** the request from Australian Government for the repatriation of the 18 human remains and one associated stick specified in the report without prejudice to any future claims the University may receive.

Without discussion, Council, on the recommendation of the Visitors of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, included in Appendix B in the paper, **approved** the request from Australian Government for the repatriation of the 12 human remains specified in the report without prejudice to any future claims the University may receive.

18. Report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 23 March 2020 (C(20)59)

*(a) Report of the Health and Safety Management Subcommittee meeting held on 27 February 2020 **

Without discussion, Council **approved**:

- (i) the amendments to the terms of reference for the Health and Safety Management Subcommittee, set out at Annex A.
- (ii) the updated Fire Safety Management Policy, set out at Annex B.

(b) Approvals process for expenditure from the IT Development Fund

Without discussion, Council:

- (i) **approved** the proposed approvals process for expenditure from the IT Development Plan, as set out in sections (d)2 and 3 below and attached at Annex D, noting that ITC will delegate authority to the Project Scrutiny Group and IT Boards to approve up to £1.0m per project from the IT Development Fund within the guidelines set out in section (d)2 of the report; and
- (ii) **approved** changes to the Financial Regulations and the regulations for PRAC to reflect the change in accounting basis for the IT Development Fund, as set out in section (d)5 and in Annex E of the report.

(c) Proposed amendments to legislation

Without discussion, Council **approved** the following proposals: *(i) Amendment to the distribution of revenues arising from the University's founder equity in spinout companies: change to the Regulations for the Administration of the University's Intellectual Property Policy (GPC(20)23);*

(ii) Amendment to regulations governing membership of the Board of the Faculty of English Language and Literature (GPC(20)24); and

(iii) Proposed change to the membership of the Curators of the University Parks (GPC(20)25).

19. Report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 4 May 2020 (C(20)60)

(a) Proposed changes to Statute XI

Without discussion, Council **approved for submission to Congregation** the proposed amendment to Statute XI (as set out in Annex A of the report), subject to all colleges' agreement to participate in the scheme.

20. Any other unreserved business

There was none.

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