

## COUNCIL

### Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023

Present: Vice-Chancellor, Professor Proochista Ariana, Ms Wendy Becker, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Patricia Daley, Sir Chris Deverell, Professor Cécile Fabre, Mr Tom Fletcher, Sir Charles Godfray, Professor Nandini Goptu, Mr Charles Harman, Professor Richard Hobbs, Mr Nicholas Kroll, Ms Sharmila Nebhrajani, Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Professor Anne Trefethen, Head of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (Professor Sam Howison), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Gavin Screator), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Timothy Power), Chair of the Conference of Colleges (Baroness Jan Royall), Junior Proctor (Dr Linda Flores), Assessor (Dr Richard Earl).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Michael-Akolade Ayodeji, Shreya Dua (VP Graduates), Jade Calder (VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Dr Hilary Wynne<sup>1</sup> (Representative of the Early Career Research Staff)

Apologies: Fra John Eidinow, Head of the Humanities Division (Professor Daniel Grimley), Senior Proctor (Professor Jane Mellor), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation)

Officers in attendance: Registrar, (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), 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, Head of GLAM, Director of Planning and Council Secretariat, Executive Officer (Policy and Governance), the Head of Governance, the Senior Assistant Registrar (Governance) and the Senior Assistant Registrar (VC and Registrar's Office).

#### Introductory matters:

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. The newly appointed Chief Diversity Officer, Professor Tim Soutphommasane was welcomed as an observer to the meeting.

The main items of business were an update from the Vice-Chancellor and information from the Registrar on Professional Services. There was no reserved business.

Members of Council were asked to declare any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda at the beginning of the item in question. All interests so disclosed would be recorded in the minutes of Council. If the chair of the meeting deemed it appropriate, the member would absent themselves from all or part of Council's discussion of the matter.

### ORDINARY BUSINESS

#### (A) Unreserved

#### CONFIDENTIAL 1. Vice-Chancellor's update

##### (a) *Introductory Remarks from the Vice-Chancellor \**

The Vice-Chancellor set out her initial approach and priorities relating to Council, its meetings, strategic direction and decision-making powers.

She noted that:

- in the past, the short meetings of Council had been used only for urgent business and had been cancelled by default. Her intention, with the agreement of Council, would be to use them as a means of providing space for more discussion on specific topics. This could create space for debate and broader challenge, as well as more strategic items;
- agendas currently included items which did not require detailed discussion and it would be a good discipline if these could be sifted to being below the line, especially where the issues had already been thoroughly aired, discussed with agreement reached by committees reporting to Council;

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<sup>1</sup> Left during item 2 (14.50)

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

- her intention as Chair would be to ensure equivalence of voices, with an expectation that discourse was courteous and that everyone contributed from the perspective of their duties as trustees;
- excessive and repeated commentary can limit broader discussion and good governance, and so she will be an active Chair in ensuring equivalence of voices.
- she was open to feedback and would report any issues that required Council attention as soon as possible, in an effort to be as transparent as possible; and,
- she would welcome feedback but will spend HT23 to understand how Council worked, with a view to making any changes in TT23.

Council **agreed** to further consider the use of the timetabled short meeting slots at its next meeting on 6 February 2023.

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

The Vice-Chancellor gave an oral report on the following items:

- The UCU boycott on marking and assessment had been cancelled for now;
- As announced in her admission speech, she was commissioning an independent review of pay and conditions, an outline of which would be brought to Council on 6 February, following consideration by Personnel Committee;
- Local and global outreach was a priority – both coalescing existing activities undertaken by the collegiate University and looking to extend outreach;
- Internally, she was keen to increase the visibility of the senior team - she planned to join divisional board meetings and visit departments and colleges over the coming months and, had asked the Pro-Vice-Chancellors to do the same. She aimed to trial new methods of communication, the YouTube video launched on her admission being one example, and welcomed any suggestions and feedback on content and channels of communication.
- She was building on connections with the Russell Group and the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU). Within the UK and internationally, universities were all dealing with similar issues, for example, mental health and wellbeing, and challenges relating to net zero goals and freedom of expression.

CONFIDENTIAL 2. **Update on Professional Services\***

The Registrar provided an update on work (a Services Green Paper) to assess the need for reform to the structure, funding and organisation of professional services. She highlighted the following points:

- From the deep dives that had been undertaken as part of the new budgeting process under the Finance White Paper, it was clear that most of the services had functions that were struggling to deal with increases in demand.
- Since 2018, she had encouraged a move away from deficit budgets, aiming to achieve balanced budgets; increased discipline in planning and delivery is now apparent.

Increases in demand without commensurate investment over recent years meant that some services were slower than they should be or were not able to match demand.

- There had been a 13.7% increase in spending on services outside UAS this year, demonstrating the importance that the divisions placed on services to support the academic mission and indeed concern that UAS was not able to deliver on all that is needed.
- Professional Services Together, a transformative programme with three guiding principles – People, Collaboration and Quality is the strategy to address these issues and to improve effectiveness of services. The current environment (ie inflationary pressures, growth in demand and wider financial pressures) meant that Professional Services Together could only deliver incremental improvement and that a more radical piece of work was also needed. A number of service reviews had been undertaken as

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part of that programme and it was clear that it was now time to step back and reflect on how the University structured its support services. Work would begin this term on a Green Paper describing how support services (in UAS and across the University) were currently structured, funded and delivered, how they might be improved and the potential costs of alternative models.

- She would chair a Project Group and was currently scoping the remit of the work. The aim is to undertake work this term with the intention of presenting the Paper to Council by the end of Trinity Term, with further work being taken forward during Michaelmas term.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Registrar for the update on this important piece of work and invited questions and comments from members of Council. The following points were raised during discussion:

- The proposed review was welcomed. It was suggested that it might be helpful for Council to receive updates as the work progressed so it could provide input along the way, rather than waiting until the end of the process. It would also make sense to ensure that the areas under review aligned with the University's risk register.
- Given the University's support services were largely replicated across all the colleges, it was suggested that there might be considerable scope for sharing of staff and other resources.

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

**3. Any other unreserved business**

There was no other unreserved business

LM/SC