

COUNCIL

Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2023

Present: Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Professor Proochista Ariana, Ms Wendy Becker (Teams)¹, Professor Sir Rory Collins², Professor Patricia Daley, Sir Chris Deverell, Fra John Eidinow³, Professor Cécile Fabre, Mr Tom Fletcher, Sir Charles Godfray, Professor Nandini Gooptu, Mr Charles Harman, Professor Richard Hobbs, Mr Nicholas Kroll, Ms. Sharmila Nebhrajani, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Professor Anne Trefethen⁴, Head of Humanities Division (Professor Daniel Grimley), Head of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (Professor Sam Howison), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Gavin Screaton), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Timothy Power)⁵, Chair of the Conference of Colleges (Baroness Jan Royall), Senior Proctor (Dr Kathryn Murphy)⁶, Junior Proctor (Professor David Kirk), Assessor (Professor Joseph Conlon).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Michael-Akolade Ayodeji (SU President), Shreya Dua (VP Graduates)⁷, and Dr Hilary Wynne (Representative of the Early Career Research Staff)⁸

Apologies: Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Jade Calder (VP Access and Academic Affairs),

Officers in attendance: Registrar, (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Diversity Officer⁹, the Local and Global Engagement Officer, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel¹⁰, the Director of Public Affairs and Communications, the Director of HR¹¹, the Head of GLAM, Director of Planning and Council Secretariat, Executive Officer (Policy and Governance)¹², the Head of Governance, and the Senior Assistant Registrar (Governance).

Quorum for the meeting is set out in Council Regulations 13 of 2002 'Regulations for Council' "A quorum is one third plus one of those members eligible to vote upon Council business (rounded to the nearest integer)". There are currently 27 voting members of Council so quorum is 10.

Introductory matters:

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked colleagues for being able to start the meeting at an earlier time and hoped that the extra time would facilitate 'lots of voices', as well as being family friendly with an end point of 17:30. If this meeting and the one in July worked using the amended timings then a permanent change would be made.

She noted that this was the first meeting for Professor Alex Betts, the Local and Global Engagement Officer.

It would be the last in-person meeting for James Marsden (Executive Officer in the Vice-Chancellor's Office). The Vice-Chancellor thanked him for his time in office, his knowledge of the University and his understanding of regulatory issues. He would be missed.

This would be the final meeting for the Oxford SU student member representatives:

- Michael-Akolade Ayodeji (President); Jade Calder (VP Access and Academic Affairs); and Shreya Dua (VP Graduates).

¹ Left meeting 14:45 (Present for items 1,2 and 6)

² Joined meeting during Item 1 13:28

³ Joined meeting during item 1 13:46

⁴ Joined meeting during Item 1 13:28

⁵ Left meeting 14:59, back in 15:00 during Item 6

⁶ Left meeting 16:19 back in 16:21 during item 9

⁷ Joined meeting 13:21 end of introductions

⁸ Joined meeting during Item 2 13:54

⁹ Joined meeting during item 1 13:46

¹⁰ Joined meeting during Item 1 13:48

¹¹ Joined meeting during Item 1 13:43

¹² Left meeting 13:53 back in 13:54

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In accordance with usual practice, the incoming Oxford SU representatives were invited to attend this meeting as observers (their first formal meeting would be 10 July 2023).

- Danial Hussain (President-elect);
- Nicholas Harris (Vice President-elect PG Education & Access Candidates) (not in attendance); and
- Jennifer Lynam (Vice President-elect UG Education & Access Candidates)

The Vice Chancellor also noted the outcome of this term's elections to Council. Council would be joined in Michaelmas Term by two new members elected by Congregation:

- Professor Sam Wolfe, St Catherine's (Humanities/Social Sciences)
- Professor Krina Zondervan, St Edmund Hall (MPLS/Medical Sciences)

The main items on the agenda were: the demitting address from the outgoing Proctors and Assessor, the annual report of the Investment Committee, the accounts of the Press, the annual report of the Chair of the Education Committee, and an update on the Oxford Staff Pension Scheme. There was also one important item on the reserved agenda.

Items were taken in the following order due to presenter and Council member availability:

Unreserved agenda: Items 1,2,6,3,4,5,7,8,9

Reserved agenda: 17, 18 and 19 (brought above the line at the meeting)

Declarations of interest: 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. These were noted in the footnotes of the minutes. If the chair of the meeting deemed it appropriate, the member absented themselves from all or part of Council's discussion of the matter.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

(A) Unreserved

CONFIDENTIAL 1. Meeting held on 15 May 2023 (C(23)cliii-clxiii)

(a) Unreserved minutes

The unreserved minutes were approved.

(b) *Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2023 not otherwise on the agenda**

(i) Kellogg transfer of property previously circulated paper (C(23)35)

It was **noted** that this item would be carried forward to the July 2023 meeting of Council as further encouraging discussions had been held at the most recent Education Committee.

(ii) Proctors and Assessor Demitting Address 2023. Clip (1) (previously circulated paper C(23)38) (minute 8 from the 15 May 2023 meeting refers to previously held discussion)

The Registrar noted that as **agreed** at the 15 May 2023 Council meeting further **consideration** of the Proctors and Assessor Demitting Address 2023 would be undertaken at this meeting. She noted that:

- The 2022/23 proctorial team had been invited to attend the May Council meeting but had felt that discussions would be more productive if they were not present and that the new team might wish to comment. The previous team were fulsome in their praise of colleagues and the recognition that University staff were professional and striving to achieve the best in all areas including education, research and student welfare. The Assessor had focussed on the theme of Welfare and Access, the Junior Proctor on equality and diversity and the Senior Proctor on Research.
- The common themes that they had posed related particularly to representation in decision making and whether the right people were always included in the right place and had enough time and space to debate issues, make decisions and then carry them out. The feasibility of implementation of proposals was not given sufficient attention.

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- Changes addressing issues raised in the demitting address were in several respects underway e.g. the new joint student life committee. Similarly, the Professional Services Together Programme was aiming to make improvements in service delivery.
- The appointment of the first Chief Diversity Officer and the first Local and Global Engagement Officer would enable further opportunities to be identified.

During discussion the following points were raised:

That 'joining up' the decision making of the institution was vital; a 'line of sight' was needed in order for committee members to understand how their decision making impacted upon the institution.

Training of committee members was important in both committee processes and various complex subject areas. To this end at the September Away Day the Chief Financial Officer would provide further information about the University finances.

It was important to recognise that both compliance and value for money were important, and that common frameworks/approaches could provide assurance and save both time and money.

There was a continued need to make time to discuss strategic items whilst also ensuring transparency of decision making.

From a student perspective the hybrid working environment was working. Investing in welfare and continued communication with students was important. Equality, diversity and inclusion matter to staff and students.

The Senior Proctor (2022/23) had focused on people as part of her demitting address. It was important that the current pay and condition group were cognisant of the issues and that expectation management across the wider University would be needed.

The Vice-Chancellor indicated that the Chief Financial Officer was considering how funding could be made available for any recommendations from the pay and conditions group. She also considered that the Professional Services review might help with a number of issues around process duplication and enable a reduction in costs. There was a need to appreciate that recovery from the pandemic was on-going in a number of spheres.

Council **agreed** to:

Send comments / thoughts to the Registrar about committee structures and ways of working including paper templates and useful agenda formats, over the Long Vacation in order to inform the Governance Review of Council committees.

CONFIDENTIAL 2.

The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business and selected highlights (above the line)**

The Vice-Chancellor gave an oral report noting that:

- The Chancellor was at Windsor Castle today being appointed Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.
- The Chancellor had hosted an evening for outgoing Ukrainian students and the University was looking forward to welcoming the next cohort. Thanks were due to all Heads of Colleges and Departments and all staff who had contributed to supporting students from Ukraine. Special thanks were due to the President of Reuben College for his tireless efforts and support in this area.
- A number of University members had been recognised and celebrated in the 2023 King's Birthday Honours list, including Professor Sir John Bell (Companion of Honour) and Professor E.J. Milner-Gulland (DBE).
- Eight honorands would be welcomed and celebrated at Encaenia on Wednesday.
- On Horizon Europe, it remained clear that the preference of universities and research institutions was for continued association. Oxford would continue to lobby for this, pushing for clarity as soon as possible.
- The Government's Innovation Review, which the Vice-Chancellor is co-chairing, would set out how the innovation sector might benefit the HE sector financially and in other ways.

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The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) updated Council on research news as follows:

Research income

- Following REF 21, the University could now benchmark its research income against other UK institutions – Oxford's was the highest at £711m, £159 higher than its closest competitor . Once QR funding had been added, Oxford's research income totalled £856m, £177m higher than the closest competitor. EU income was higher than for other institutions but was gradually declining. Importantly research income from industry had increased significantly.

REF 28

- Broad parameters for the REF 28 had been announced. The next submission would be due in November 2027.
- For the REF 28, the volume of research outputs would be calculated by reference to HESA data for 2025/26/27.
- As in REF 21 each unit would need to submit an average 2.5 research outputs for every full-time equivalent researcher, but unlike in previous exercises, there was no minimum or maximum number of outputs for each researcher.
- Unlike in previous years, outputs could be submitted by any member of staff, even those without research in their contracts. 95% of research outputs would need to be open access (excluding monographs).
- The 'environment' element had been renamed "people, culture and environment" and would make up 25% of the overall score, up from 15% in 2021. Unlike REF 21, in REF 2028, these statements would be more data/questionnaire-based, which might be challenging at Oxford due to its devolved nature.
- The impact weighting would remain the same at 25% and fewer impact case studies would be required.
- The REF 28 project board had begun its work and would meet on 3 July.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was difficult to predict the overall administrative load for REF 28 at this stage, although it might be slightly lighter in some areas. The REF 21 lessons learned exercise had highlighted some areas in which further resource would be required.
- Basing the volume on HESA data would present some significant challenges as this would need to be verified at departmental level. It might be helpful to work on this this year, as it needed to be correct for 2024.
- The fact that the University's research income was so much higher than its nearest competitor was a very positive story and should be celebrated as widely as possible.
- It was important to acknowledge the resilience and motivation of individual academics. It was also recognised that the increase in grant applications (now around £2bn) and the complexity had put pressure on teams in research support and legal services and there had been some unhappiness about processing times. Nine new staff were being recruited to try to address the issues and the backlog was now being reduced.

It would be helpful for departments to be informed as early as possible about data requirements so they could start to prepare.

CONFIDENTIAL 3.

Annual Report of the Investment Committee (C23)46)**

The Chair of the Investment Committee, Sir Paul Ruddock introduced the annual report and drew attention to a number of points.

Council:

- (i) **noted** the reports set out in sections (c) (d) (e) and (f) of the paper;
- (ii) **noted** Appendix I: Report from OUem to Council on performance, asset allocation and activity of the Capital Account as at 30 April 2023; and Appendix II: Presentation from OUem on performance, asset allocation and activity of the Oxford Endowment Fund as at 31 March 2023;

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- (iii) **approved** Appendix III: the Oxford University Investment Policy Statement (IPS), which had been revised to reflect the updated Investment Objective of the Capital Account. This revision of the Investment objective was agreed by Council on 15 May 2023;
- (iv) **noted** Appendix IV: (a) Investment Committee's Report on ESG and Sustainability and (b) The OEF Report 2022.

CONFIDENTIAL 4. **Report of the Chief Executive of the Press and the Chair of the Finance Committee of the Press (C(23)47) clip (2)****

The Chief Executive of the Press drew attention to a number of key points.

Council **considered** the report and the presentation from the Chief Executive. Council noted that this was the last Council meeting for the Press' Group Finance Director. Council thanked him for all his work for the Press over the years and wished him well for his retirement.

CONFIDENTIAL 5. **Report on the University's Finance Committee: review of the financial statements of Oxford University Press for the year ending 31 March 2023 (C(23)48)****

The discussion took place under item 4.

Council **noted** the financial statements of the Press for the year ending 31 March 2023 together with the report from the University's Finance Committee.

CONFIDENTIAL 6. **Annual Report of Education Committee**

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) gave a presentation. Nine area specific topics were presented for information:

- Regulation update. The Office for Students (OfS) visited last week and met with the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) as well as college and student representatives. The Teaching Excellence Submission was made in January 2023, with 'results' expected in July. For the first time in a number of years Oxford will have an NSS output as the 50% participation threshold was met. OfS would be taking regulatory powers over universities' handling of sexual misconduct and there would be a new OFS regulation under the Freedom of Speech Act.
- Access and diversity – Undergraduate. Opportunity Oxford had grown to c.200 places. Astrophoria Foundation Year had made 35 offers; with the aim of having up to 50 people on the course. The ongoing impact of the pandemic had differentially affected disadvantaged students.
- Access and Diversity - PG access – UNIQ+ research internships were heavily oversubscribed. Ukraine Refugee Scholarships (XTX Markets) had been enabled. Planning was underway to expand Academic Futures scholarships and to implement the findings of the 'Close the Gap' project. There was still a need to provide flexibility on scholarship funding.
- Academic support and equity of student outcomes. There was mixed progress on UG outcomes.
- Digital education – The Digital Education Strategy has been approved strategy this year with four areas of focus: Foundations, Inclusive Digital Environment, Supporting innovation and, Global Reach. The digital transformation programme would help with the complexities of change management. The governance for digital services would be changing and the 'Education Portfolio' would be piloting the new arrangements. Addressing the impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on education would be a topic for continued discussion.
- Rethinking assessment. There had effectively been an uncontrolled experiment during the pandemic in relation to on-line assessment. 70% of examinations have reverted to a traditional format, whilst at the same time the Examination Schools had used laptops rather than writing for a number of examinations. The University purchased Chrome books that could be 'secured' for use in examination conditions.
- Student experience and support. There was now a common approach to student mental health and a new joint committee chaired by Sir Tim Hitchens. The new approach sets out sources of help, making it clear how students can navigate through the system. Department

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were expected to provide signposting as a minimum. Sexual consent training has been scaled up. Financial support for students is being upgraded. There will also be a new Student Life Committee. The growth in demand for student disability services has grown by 70%.

- Size and shape. In the past a gathered field exercise had been used however this was no longer appropriate as it did not facilitate long term planning. Future planning would aim to achieve a longer-term alignment between divisional and college plans.
- The final slide outline an academic skills enhancement pilot based on climate change.

Council discussed the current Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) and, in particular, the implications for the graduating cohort. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) assured members that most subjects would be able to provide final classifications and students would graduate.

Council also discussed a number of other related topics including support for students from Sudan, the financial challenges for university sport, how central services might be enabled to do more with less by re-configuring services.

Council **agreed** that:

The Local and Global Engagement Officer should be invited to present to Council on both short and longer term plans for University sport.

7. **Report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 7 June 2023**

CONFIDENTIAL

*North Oxford Golf Club (C(23)49)***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) provided information on work currently in progress.

Council **approved** the actions set out in the paper.

OPEN

8. **Report of the meeting of the IT Committee: Strategic Implementation Plan C(23)50 and clip(3)**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item noting that:

- The IT Committee reported on an annual basis on progress on the IT Strategic Plan. This would be the last year of reporting on this plan as it was due to come to an end. A number of items were being transferred to the Digital Transformation Programme.
- The IT Committee was about to be dis-established and replaced with a new structure and operating delivery model for IT and digital governance.
- An item on funding for the Digital Transformation Programme would be submitted to Council for consideration in July.

During discussion the question was raised as to what lessons had been learnt from the introduction of the Teaching Management System (TMS). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) explained that difficulties with University IT systems often arose from trying to tailor them to meet all requirements. For a system to be successful, a level of compromise was necessary to avoid overcomplicating them in such a way as to not meet anyone's requirements.

Council **noted** the report, in particular the relationship between the implementation of the IT Strategy and the digital transformation programme.

One of the student representatives asked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) for an update on the career progression scheme. She explained that a number of activities were underway including:

- looking at reward and promotion;
- the pay and conditions review committee had held its first meeting; and
- considering models elsewhere and what policies might need to be reviewed.

Council **noted** the report, in particular the relationship between the implementation of the IT Strategy and the digital transformation programme.

CONFIDENTIAL

9. **Oxford Staff Pension Scheme Update (C23)51) and clip (4)****

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The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item after he had summarised the position with USS. He noted that at the close of the 2020 USS Valuation, Council had supported the creation of a workstream between UUK and USS to explore Conditional Indexation as an option for future scheme design to provide greater stability and resilience in the scheme. UUK and USS have reported some positive outcomes from their initial exploration of this option and have asked whether employers support further work on this. In line with Council's views, and in light of a positive first step in this workstream, the USS Working Group have confirmed University support for this work.

On the Oxford Staff Pension Scheme (OSPS), the Chief Financial Officer explained that this was a University and college scheme largely for support staff (grades 1-5). It currently had around 5800 members (around half University, half college staff). The scheme had two sections, one on a defined benefit basis (DB) and the other a defined contribution scheme (DC). The DB section of the scheme closed to new members on 1 October 2017. The OSPS Working Group (a joint University/college group) had worked on the 2022 OSPS valuation and there were some very positive outcomes.

The Director of HR explained that the consultation process with the unions (Unite and Unison) had been a very constructive and positive experience.

During discussion, Council expressed support for the proposed outcome and thanked all those involved for such a positive result, both for employers and employees. Restoring benefits in this way was a good news story and should be noted as such.

Following the three yearly review Council **approved** the proposed outcome of the valuation, and to delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer to conclude discussions with the OSPS trustee.

Items approved or reported without discussion ('below the line') are listed below.

10. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line)** (C(23)52)

Council **noted**:

- (i) notice of appointments
- (ii) the OfS publications; and
- (iii) the UUK Press Statements.

11. **Reports from the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee on 23 May 2023**

RESTRICTED

(a) *Joint Resource Allocation Advisory Board report* (C(23)53)

Without discussion, Council **approved** the initial JRAM allocations for 2023/24.

RESTRICTED

(b) *Space Allocations* (C(23)54)

Council **approved** (for onward referral to Congregation for approval):

- (i) the allocation of approximately 763 sqm net usable area (NUA) within the Le Gros Clark Building (building 166) to the School of Geography and the Environment, for occupation by the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (SSEE);
- (ii) the site allocation of approximately 4,726 sqm gross external area (GEA) on the Swindon Book Storage Facility site, to the Gardens, Libraries and Museums Division, for the construction of the Chamber 5 extension to the Swindon Book Storage Facility (building 383) and the Spirit Collections Store (building 383A);
- (iii) the allocation of approximately 3,600 sqm net usable area (NUA) within the Swindon Book Storage Facility (building 383) (comprising the Chamber 5 extension), to the Gardens, Libraries and Museums Division, from completion of the project/extension (estimated January 2025).

RESTRICTED

12. **Safety Executive Group Trinity Term Report** C(23)55

Council **noted** the report of the meeting of the Safety Executive Group on 9 May 2023.

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13. **Unreserved report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 30 May 2023** (C(23)56) and clip (6)

Council **approved** the following proposals:

1. *Proposed changes to the Sackler Keeper of Antiquities Endowment Fund*

The legislative proposal attached at Annex A of the paper be submitted to Congregation and thereafter to His Majesty in Council.

2. *Changes to dis-establish Information Technology Committee and replace with Information and Digital Committee*

The changes to IT and digital governance set out in the paper and the changes in regulations as included in Annex B.

3. *Amendments to regulations relating to incorporation of degrees*

The proposed amendments to Council Regulations 22 of 2002.

14. **Oxford University Student Union's Annual Impact Report, 2022/23** clip (7) to follow

This item was **deferred** as the clip was not available.

15. **Any other unreserved business**

There was no other business

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was **noted** that the next ordinary meeting of Council would be held on 10 July 2023 at 1.15pm in the Main Committee Room of the Oxford University Press.

Items already on the agenda were:

Begbroke Planning Application

The Q3 Financial Forecast

Strategic Funding Allocations

Strategic Plan Annual Report

University Risk Register

The Annual Report of the Security Sub-Committee

The Head of Medical Sciences Division Annual Report

The Head of GLAM Annual Report

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