

C O U N C I L

Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023

Present: Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Professor Proochista Ariana, Ms Wendy Becker, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Patricia Daley, Fra John Eidinow, Professor Cécile Fabre, Mr Tom Fletcher¹, Sir Charles Godfray, Professor Nandini Goptu, Mr Charles Harman, Mr Nicholas Kroll, Ms Sharmila Nebhrajani, Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Professor Anne Trefethen, 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), Senior Proctor (Professor Jane Mellor), Junior Proctor (Dr Linda Flores), Assessor (Dr Richard Earl).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Michael-Akolade Ayodeji,² Shreya Dua (VP Graduates)³, Jade Calder (VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Dr Hilary Wynne (Representative of the Early Career Research Staff)

Apologies: Sir Chris Deverell, Professor Richard Hobbs, Chair of Conference (Baroness Jan Royall) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs)

Officers in attendance: Registrar, (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation)⁴, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Public Affairs and Communications, Chief Diversity Officer, HR Director, 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 and the Senior 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 first full face to face meeting of Council of Hilary Term. Her hope was to facilitate an open and discursive meeting.

The new Chief Diversity Officer, Professor Tim Soutphommasane and new HR Director, Dr Markos Koumaditis were welcomed as senior officers observing.

The main items on the agenda were: the annual OUP strategy report; the annual report of the chair of Planning and Resource Allocation Committee and a number of financial items; the annual report of the Head of the Humanities Division. 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.

¹ Items 1 – 10 only (left 17:07)

² Items 8 – 16 only

³ Items 1 – 9 only (left 17:03)

⁴ Items 1-7 only

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(A) Unreserved

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1. Meeting held on 28 November 2022 (C(22)cxi- cxxi)*(a) Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved.

*(b) Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 not otherwise on the agenda ***

(i) Further consideration of request from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments of Nigeria for the return of all materials taken as part of the actions in Benin City 1897. Previously circulated paper has been withdrawn, new paper attached (C(23)1)

The Registrar explained to Council that this item had been deferred following consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and the Legal Services Office (LSO).

An update would be provided to the March meeting of Council.

2. Meeting held on 16 January 2023 (C(23)i-iii)*(a) Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved.

(b) Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 not otherwise on the agenda

There were none.

CONFIDENTIAL

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

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the following items:

- The first of 18 days of strike action had taken place last week. There had been a relatively large rally outside the Clarendon Building, with significant student representation, and smaller scale disruption across the University. A further 2-3 days of strike action per week would take place from now until 23 March. Accurate figures for last week's strike action were not yet available. As no agreement had yet been reached, the industrial action was set to continue. The Industrial Action Working Group convened by the Registrar, was meeting regularly to look at ways to ensure that any impact on students was kept to a minimum. Council would be kept informed.
- The Lords amendments to the Freedom of Speech Bill would be considered by the Commons this Tuesday. The Lords had removed the right for individuals to bring civil claims against HE providers or students' unions for a breach of duty, although this provision might yet be re-introduced by the Commons. Whilst the Bill had yet to be finalised, new legal duties on HE providers were likely to be introduced. Under the new Bill, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) would be unlawful. Although the University used NDAs very rarely (and never in student cases) the University and colleges would need to consider the impact of this change. It would not be retrospective and would apply both ways i.e. the University would not be able to impose NDAs nor have them imposed upon it.
- A further 3-month extension to support for Horizon Europe had recently been announced, together with additional QR funding to stabilise the sector. The majority of Russell Group universities considered that UK association to Horizon remained the best outcome.
- Appointments were currently being made to the board of the Advanced Research + Invention Agency (ARIA) including Stephen Cohen, Professor Sir David MacMillan, Sarah Hunter, Dame Kate Bingham (DBE) and Antonia Jenkinson.
- In her first month in the role, the Vice-Chancellor had been visiting different parts of the University and meeting people, including:

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- holding a staff event at Wellington Square, where she would be largely based (with a few hours per day at the Clarendon Building);
- attending several evensongs and one sermon;
- attending a number of city and community events, including giving a keynote speech at the Oxford Inclusive Economic Forum, an event which included a presentation by the Timpson Foundation on their work with ex-offenders;
- a deep-dive into the Philosophy faculty;
- induction meetings for new Heads of Department and new Heads of House;
- meetings with other groups within the sector and with government.

She was keen to continue to maintain the University's influence with stakeholders in the local and national political landscape.

CONFIDENTIAL 4. **Oxford University Press (OUP) Report to Council: strategy update (C(23)2)****

The Chief Executive of the Press recapped on the current position of OUP, updated on how the business had transformed over the last 12 months and highlighted a number of points during his presentation.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chief Executive of the Press for his report and the continuing work of his team.

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.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) and his team for the presentation.

6. **Report from the meeting of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee held on 13 December 2022**

CONFIDENTIAL (a) *Q1 2022/23 forecast (C(23)3) ***

The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item. .

Council discussed the forecast.

(b) *Strategic Plan Programme Board (C(23)4)**

Council **noted** the report.

RESTRICTED 7. **Report from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 18 January 2023 (atl)****

Reuben College Bar and Music Room Extension (C(23)5)

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

8. **Education Update***

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) provided an oral update on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and preparations for the next Access and Participation Plan.

TEF submission

- Preparations had been undertaken during the past term and the submission was made in the first week of February;
- the Office for Students operated the teaching rating scheme which had no monetary value attached to the rating achieved (either Gold, Silver or Bronze). The last time the TEF was completed in 2017 Oxford received a Gold rating;
- an assessment is made of the student experience, using National Student Survey (NSS) data and student outcomes plus an institutionally provided narrative. Progression to employment is also considered again with an accompanying institutional narrative. A benchmarking exercise is completed to determine the rating;

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- the SU completes an independent submission;
- results will be sent to institutions in July and representations may be made at that point.

Access and Participation Plan

- it had been expected that a submission would be required in May however it is now more likely that only 25% of HEIs will be required to submit;
- a decision will need to be made as to whether we want to be in this first round.

CONFIDENTIAL 9. **Annual Report of the Head of the Humanities Division****

The Head of the Humanities Division gave an oral report. He began by noting key staff who had left the division, thanking them for their contributions. He followed this by introducing staff who had joined the division and was looking forward to their input going forwards.

- EDI had been a focus for the division over the past year and the arrival of Professor Tim Soutphommasane had encouraged them to 'Think about things differently and do things differently'. Training had been provided on inclusive chairing and active bystander training. The EDI agenda had been hugely supported by the student representatives last year.
- 'Progress doesn't come from always being comfortable' (Professor Soutphommasane) and there continued to be areas that required development. Academic work load and staff well-being remain a priority, with a wish to continue to build on best practice.
- . A new four-year Humanities degree was in development as well as new Master's degrees in key strategic areas.
- He provided a set of staff numbers broken down into academic, research and professional services staff. Consideration of language lecturers and their precarious contracts was planned.
- Research priorities for 2023 had been set in the light of REF 2022 and the detailed analysis that had followed the results.
- An ambitious Comms campaign: innovation in humanities had begun in collaboration with the PAD team, with the aim of managing heritage through digital means including 3D modelling and virtually.
- There continued to be public engagement in a number of spheres including TORCH.
- The Schwarzman Centre had now received a further gift from Mr Schwarzman. 'Ground breaking' would be happening later this month and the intention was to make global community that could engage with everything provided within the new building.

Initiatives such as the introduction of a welcome pack and induction for fixed term staff was welcomed. The SU representatives thought that the 4-year humanities degrees was an exciting prospect and the Head of Division explained that it was intended to appeal to a constituency of potential students who wanted more than the 'usual' joint honours course. The continual renewal of curricula in the light of EDI was an integral part of the current action plan and had not been forgotten.

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated the division on the work that it was doing on a number of fronts.

CONFIDENTIAL 10. **Report from Personnel Committee 25 January 2023****

(a) Vice-Chancellor's Review on pay and conditions (C(23)6)

The Vice-Chancellor set out her thinking noting that she was still seeking suggestions for individuals (internal and external) that could join the Review and the associated group that would brain storm funding need and opportunities. It would be important to consider inclusivity of both pay and conditions alongside the sharing of good practice. She would welcome suggestions via e-mail. The plan would be to get the Review working in Trinity Term, reporting to Council in Michaelmas Term 2023. Council would be kept informed.

Council welcomed the Review, discussed the draft approach and considered the scope and process as drafted, particularly with respect to the conditions element.

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In discussion it was considered that:

- the approach was hugely positive however, there would need to be 'expectation management', as well as alignment with the collegiate university.
- external calibration was important not just against other HEIs but also against other sectors. External consultants would be asked to calibrate our data against a range of other sectors.
- tracking staff progression was important along with how they felt about working for Oxford and how valued they felt. Recognition of valued work via monetary reward would need to be considered.
- the provision of a competitive overall package would provide talented individuals to work with other staff at Oxford. It was recognised that whilst it would be impossible to compete with salaries within certain organisations (medicine, regulatory governance, IT) providing a 'complete' package of wrap around conditions would be advantageous.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that members of Council needed to be realistic about the affordability of any pay uplift or increase in recognition, reward and other conditions. . She did not want to constrain the Review by imposing too many parameters and some related projects (for example on workload and professional progression) which were already being investigated would continue in parallel and inform the discussions.

(b) *UCEA consultation response (C(23)7)* **

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item informing Council that it was the start of a longer piece of work. The HR Director added that this consultation was not connected to the current strike action and was seeking to make future improvements. The University did not want to break away from national negotiations as that would be divisive for the sector.

Council commented upon the proposed response Council **agreed** the response in order for submission to occur.

11. **Update on the OSPS and USS Pensions Valuations (C(23)8)***

Council **noted** the valuations plans for OSPS and USS.

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

12. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line) (C(23)9)**

Without discussion Council **noted** the:

- (i) New Year's Honours List;
- (ii) notice of appointments
- (iii) OfS news and publications; and
- (iv) the UUK Press Statements.

RESTRICTED 13. **Report from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 18 January 2023 (btl)****

Le Gros Clark Refurbishment (C(23)10)

Without discussion Council **noted** the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 14. **Unreserved report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 25 January 2023 (C(23)11)****

(a) *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*

Without discussion Council **noted** the report.

15. **Unreserved report of the meetings of the General Purposes Committee held on 12 December 2022 (C(23)12)**

(a) *Changes to regulations of the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC)*

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Without discussion Council **approved** the amendments proposed to Part 13 of Council Regulations 15 of 2002 (Annex A).

16. **Any other unreserved business**

There was no other business.

LM/SC

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