

## COUNCIL

### Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023

Present: Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Professor Proochista Ariana, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Patricia Daley<sup>1</sup>, Sir Chris Deverell<sup>2</sup>, Professor Cécile Fabre, Mr Tom Fletcher<sup>3</sup>, Sir Charles Godfray, Professor Nandini Goptu, Mr Charles Harman, Mr Nicholas Kroll, Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Anne Trefethen, Head of Humanities Division (Professor Daniel Grimley)<sup>4</sup>, Head of the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (Professor Sam Howison), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Gavin Screatton), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Timothy Power)<sup>5</sup>, Chair of the Conference of Colleges (Baroness Jan Royall), Senior Proctor (Professor Jane Mellor), Junior Proctor (Dr Linda Flores), Assessor (Dr Richard Earl)<sup>6</sup>.

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Shreya Dua (VP Graduates), and Dr Hilary Wynne (Representative of the Early Career Research Staff)

Apologies: Ms Wendy Becker, Fra John Eidinow, Professor Richard Hobbs, Ms. Sharmila Nebhrajani, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Michael-Akolade Ayodeji (SU President), Jade Calder (VP Access and Academic Affairs the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs), the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, the Director of Public Affairs and Communications.

Officers in attendance: Registrar, (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Diversity Officer, Head of GLAM, Director of Planning and Council Secretariat, Executive Officer (Policy and Governance), the Head of Governance and the Senior Assistant Registrar (Governance).

#### Introductory matters:

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The main items on the agenda were: the annual equality report, the gender pay gap report, the review of pay and conditions, the first three-year settlement resulting from the implementation of the Finance White paper, proposed research collaboration values following the September 2022 Away Day. There were also a number of important items on the reserved agenda including an update from Conference of Colleges.

**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. 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. **Meeting held on 6 February 2023** (C(23)cxxvi-cxxxv)

(a) *Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were **approved**.

(b) *Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

<sup>1</sup> Out 16:32 back in 16:38 during item 6 discussion

<sup>2</sup> Left the meeting 17:28 Items 1-7b only

<sup>3</sup> Left the meeting 17:21 back in 17:24

<sup>4</sup> Arrived 15:03 during item 3(b)

<sup>5</sup> Out at 14:42 end of item 2(b) back in 14:43 during item 3

<sup>6</sup> Out 17:18 back in 17:21 during item 7

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

The Vice-Chancellor gave an oral report **noting** that:

- She had attended a Russell Group Away Day the previous week, where there had been much discussion around Horizon Europe and next steps. She had written to the Prime Minister the previous week, emphasising that Oxford and the other top research intensive universities in the UK considered that UK association to Horizon remained the best outcome for a number of reasons, the key ones being stability of funding and facilitating the flow of researchers and research. Oxford would continue to make the case for association, supported by a number of excellent research impact examples from each of the divisions. Council members were invited to send on any further suggestions for ways of strengthening the case.
- She had agreed to co-chair a review commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on University spin-outs, together with Andrew Williamson, managing partner of funding vehicle Cambridge Innovation Capital. This would provide a great opportunity for demonstrating the major role that universities had to play in driving innovation.
- The Russell Group Away Day had included a number of interesting hour-long sessions, generating broad discussion of the challenges facing the sector (e.g. trust, financial vulnerability, widening participation and increasing numbers of overseas graduates). An independent review of the sector as a whole would be timely.
- She was enjoying continuing to visit different parts of the University and had held an all staff 'Town Hall' meeting.
- This was the last Council meeting for the current Proctors and Assessor – she thanked them for their hard work over the last year. The University's senior officers had been on a royal visit the previous week which had been a very enjoyable way of celebrating the end of office for the Proctors and Assessor.

The Chief Diversity Officer, Professor Tim Soutphommasane, gave an oral report on his first ten weeks in post, having already presented to a number of key committees including Education, Personnel as well as the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. He noted that:

- An enormous impact could be made on EDI at Oxford through work with students and staff which could have impact locally, nationally and globally.
- At the present time making sense of the challenge at Oxford and calibrating his thoughts was important, whilst acknowledging that elaborating on the approach to be taken was also key.
- EDI involved three challenges:
  - improving diversity of representation
  - further improving staff diversity and equality
  - a more inclusive EDI culture
- Over the past two months video messages had been produced to coincide with Race Equality Week (6 February) and LGBT history month (February 2023).
- An EDI studentship would be created and the EDI staff networks funded.
- An EDI roundtable would be held on 27 April 2023 as a way of joining the dots across the collegiate university.
- An EDI joint committee would be established shortly.
- The approach being taken had three strands:

Our narrative as a successful university institution. EDI was absolutely integral to the institutions mission and research, it was at the heart of our strategic purpose, playing into local and global communities, and our people.

Partnership would be critical to success, with a need to pilot initiatives at all levels.

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Leadership of EDI needed to be owned as well as the institution recognising that leadership development was also required.

In discussion Council noted that:

- To attract the best students a diverse intake of student was required.
- The EDI research studentship was a good idea.
- Positive messages about curriculum change and the beneficial impact of EDI research were needed.
- Staff confidence in encouraging and dealing with EDI research needed to be addressed, as well as ensuring that appropriately qualified staff were employed to deliver teaching and conduct research. Examples were given from SSD on curriculum diversification, EDI network creation and mapping of activity, as well as the MPLS Divisional Board meeting.
- The central Equality and Diversity Unit was small however further recruitment was planned with a permanent head, a programme manager and a project officer. Secondment opportunities might also present a way of widening experience and knowledge across the institution.
- A knowledge and skills hub would be launched enabling everyone to be part of the EDI community.
- Oxford's research culture had benefitted from £1m of Research England money, with regular applications made to UKRI and Wellcome.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Professor Soutphommasane for his report and congratulated him on the impact that was already evident.

OPEN

### 3. **Report of the meeting of Personnel Committee held on 2 March 2023**

#### (a) *Annual Equality Report (C(23)15)*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) informed Council that:

- In February 2023, for the first time, the University had been awarded an institutional Silver Athena Swan award. Only 27 institutions held this award. The University would next be looking to achieve a Gold award. Huge strides had been made across the collegiate University, particularly in the MPLS division.
- During discussion of the report at Personnel Committee, it had been noted that:
  - There were currently no objectives relating to disability, neurodiversity or socio-economic background – the University might wish to consider this further.
  - There was a relatively high level of under-reporting of disability and ethnicity data. A census-style campaign was required to encourage staff to share identity data in order to improve available data.
  - On ethnicity, some of the targets had been based on older census data, as more recent data was available, it might be helpful to revisit the targets. The question was raised as to whether the University was attracting as many BME staff from the UK as from other countries.
  - On gender, progress had been made towards the target but it was slow. 39% of members of Council and its five main committees were women (compared with the target of between 40% and 60%). The point was made that, with only 33% of University staff being women, over-burdening individuals remained a potential risk.

During discussion, it was noted that:

- Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, which related to socio-economic factors, had yet to be implemented.
- Most of the recipients of rewards and bonuses in the Medical Sciences Division were male.
- There was an even greater risk of overburdening minority ethnic members of staff in terms of their representation on University committees. The University would need to think more

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creatively about how to increase diversity in its governance, e.g. by making provision for co-opting external members.

- On the student side, progress had been made in relation to socio-economic factors.
- The question was raised as to whether the targets were ambitious enough e.g. the 4.4% target for first-class undergraduate degree attainment gap for women – it was recognised that realism was required – the ultimate target was to eliminate the gap by 2030, and a gap of 4.4% represented good progress towards that target.
- It was suggested that the University might learn from some of its US peers, e.g. Harvard and Stanford. There were also excellent examples of good practice within the University and the recently established EDI Knowledge Hub would facilitate sharing of those examples.
- Before there could be true diversity within an organisation, the principles of equality needed to be embedded throughout.

Council congratulated the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) and her team on the achievement of the Athena Swan Silver Award and **endorsed** the draft Equality Report for publication on the University website by the statutory deadline of 30 March 2023.

*(b) Gender Pay Gap Report (C(23)16)\*\**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) highlighted the following points:

- The narrative was still in draft form – following any comments by Council, the final version would be published at the end of March.
- Last year, both the median and mean gender pay gaps had reduced, largely due to incremental movement within grades. This year, the median and mean gender pay gaps had increased for similar reasons i.e. partly attributable to an uneven distribution of men and women across grades, although overall the University was continuing to move in the right direction on gender pay gaps, but progress needed to be quicker.
- The analysis of pay gaps at divisional level, that had been carried out over the last two years, had been useful. The pattern of pay gaps differed greatly by Division and therefore the actions required to close the gaps and reduce the total pay gap needed to be understood and targeted.
- A task and finish working group would be established to conduct a full investigation into the pay gaps, with a view to implementing a gender pay gap action plan.
- At Personnel Committee, it had been noted that more NHS Clinical Excellence Awards (CEA) were awarded to male staff than female staff. The number of clinical staff in receipt of CEAs was reducing, therefore the gap would also reduce, but this did not represent a reduction in the pay gap in real terms.
- Ethnicity pay gap data was available this year for the first time – this would be analysed with the intention of publishing the following year.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- More monitoring at departmental level was essential.
- Issues relating to equal pay (which was not the same as a pay gap) were resolved by the Senior Appointments Panel – individuals did not need to go through the merit pay/reward processes.
- For APs, the joint University/college nature of the posts added another layer of complexity.
- The Review on Pay and Conditions (item (d) below) would enable more standardisation of data and help with benchmarking.
- Incentives could play a part in reducing the gender pay gap and should be considered.

Council **approved** the narrative on the University's gender pay gap report at Annexe A.

*(c) 2023/24 national pay negotiations for non-clinical staff*

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The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) provided an oral update noting that:

- Pay negotiations for 2023/24 had come to an end with institutions being given a directive to implement between a 5 and 8 per cent increase; with the 8 percent applied to lower salary scales.
- Partial payment of between 2-3 percent would be backdated to February 2023 with the rest in August 2023. The February payment would be £1,000 or 2% whichever was the higher across all grades. The first payment at Oxford would be made in April 2023 and the in-year cost would be £6m.
- Future national negotiations may permit different parts of the sector to do different things based upon affordability, however this had not yet been confirmed.

(d) *Review on Pay and Conditions*

The Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) provided oral updates.

The Vice-Chancellor detailed how on her visits around the institution she was setting expectations for the review so that staff understood that 'conditions' were as important as pay. She gave the example of 'merit' pay and how the gender pay gap might be redressed. The review committee would have four internal and six external members (drawn from a variety of sectors). The Vice-Chancellor would not be on the committee. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) would be on the committee and there would be college representation too. There was an ambitious timeline for reporting however she was aware that doing this 'right' was of paramount importance and this was a 'once in a tenure' activity. She had received positive feedback from other institutions and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) Chief Executive was keen to engage with the process.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) highlighted the good feedback that was being received and how staff were engaging with the idea of looking at 'conditions', for example volunteering. The HR Director was in discussion with the unions and thinking about their priorities.

#### 4. **USS Update**

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) provided an oral update informing Council that:

- The latest monitoring indicated that the scheme was in a significant surplus of £5bn however there was still a need to be cautious.
- USS had agreed to an accelerated valuation which it was hoped would be completed in time to implement by April 2024. The consultation period on the technical provisions was anticipated to be between July and September 2023. In October 2023 the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) would meet to determine the package. USS would have until December 2023 to respond and then implementation would be in April 2024.
- The rationale was threefold:
  - (i) recouping the benefits that were taken last time;
  - (ii) a reduction in contributions; and,
  - (iii) putting stability into the scheme so that in three years' time there wasn't the need to overhaul the scheme yet again.
- UCEA is consulting on possible alternatives to new JNCHES however there would not be any movement until the current situation was resolved.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) for the update and emphasised the need to reach a position of stability.

#### CONFIDENTIAL 5. **Annual Report of the Head of the Social Science Division \*\***

The Head of the Social Sciences Division gave a presentation highlighting the following:

- He thanked the members of the senior leadership team for their support, particularly Divisional Registrar, David White, for putting together the presentation.

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- Since 2015/16, income and expenditure had increased, with the introduction of the White Paper bringing the two closer together.
- On expenditure, academic costs were the largest by far.
- In terms of the Division's students, PGT numbers were the highest, and undergraduate numbers had remained largely the same for the last ten years. Following Brexit, EU student numbers had more or less returned to 2013 levels.
- Details were provided on research income and development fundraising.
- On the Finance White Paper:
  - The Division could see the benefits from improved financial transparency, longer-term planning, and departmental autonomy
  - SSD departments had agreed to establish a divisional 'risk reserve' funded by all departments
  - A new Finance Subcommittee would oversee the reserves and provide support with financial planning.
- There were some interesting and creative ideas for commercialisation within the Division – some examples of new spin-outs and projects were provided.
- A number of capital projects across the City were underway within the Division. The Divisional Office would be moving from its current space in Hayes House to Worcester Street.
- The Division was also engaging on a number of projects involving the local community.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Head of the Social Sciences Division for the presentation and for his successful leadership of the Division. The following themes were discussed:

- It would not be possible to keep increasing fees indefinitely. Fee increases had an impact on the quality of students applying for and accepting places. It was important also to consider those students who did not apply (on account of the fees).
- There should be more scope for increasing fundraising for the Division, particularly in relation to projects involving climate change and the environment. There were great opportunities to present schematically a suite of interdisciplinary, environment-related courses.
- The White Paper had been very challenging for the Division and thanks were due to the Head of Division for his leadership on this.
- The issue of what proportion of student fees should go to colleges, which largely shouldered the financial burden for student welfare and support, would also need to be addressed. .

Consistency of provision across departments and colleges was key. The Joint Student Mental Health Committee was currently considering this, which was particularly important for PGT students.

6. **Report of the PRAC meeting held on 14 February 2023 (C(23)17) \*\***

CONFIDENTIAL

*(a) Three-year Planning Settlement*

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Planning and Resources) reminded Council of the background to this item and the extensive discussions that had been undertaken. He highlighted the following:

- Council was being asked to agree the three-year settlement for the Services and GLAM.
- Two lenses had been used to compile the settlement: 1. was there enough money? and, 2. was it affordable for departments and divisions?
- Thanks were extended to the Chief Financial Officer and his team along with all those who had actively engaged with the new process.

The Chief Financial Officer drew the attention of Council to the following:

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- A pay increase of 4-5% had been factored in and the energy forecast had changed due to a decline in utility costs, although it was unlikely that these would go back to where they had previously been, pre the war in Ukraine.
- Inflation assumptions had been made and the settlement could be adjusted.

Council had a wide-ranging discussion on the paper and the implications for implementation.

- Income and expenditure would need to be balanced by all of the divisions and it would be harder for some of them to maintain 'steady state'.
- The transparency of the White Paper should be celebrated however work was now needed to start actively planning for the next 5-10 years.
- The collegiate university had immense variability in the resources available. The Chair of Conference noted that the principles relating to equality of provision and the staff/student experience including how parity could be achieved were being investigated.

The Registrar outlined how the services would be operating to a tight budget. There was a need to adopt some of the Finance White Paper transparency principles as some services were delivering a service but did not have a budget line against which to charge. The Services Green Paper would look at strengths and weaknesses within the central system and where there was unnecessary duplication between the centre and departments/divisions. Consultants had been appointed and were starting work.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked everyone for their engagement with the process and acknowledged the difficulties that particular divisions were having. In addition, she noted:

- Colleges had to use their endowments for a variety of purposes including: the maintenance of buildings, to create scholarships and pay staff costs. Colleges were independent and a strength of the institution.
- The wider estate required repair which meant decanting into other space whilst renovation and other work was carried out.

Council **agreed** that a discussion at the September 2023 Away Day around understanding the finances of the institution would be helpful. Linking that discussion with the review of pay and conditions would also be useful.

Council took the actions set out in the report.

## 7. **Report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 22 February 2023**

RESTRICTED

### (a) *Pandemic Sciences Building (C(23)18)\*\**

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

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) introduced this item, reminding Council that this project had been possible thanks to a substantial donation.

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

CONFIDENTIAL

### (b) *Performance of the Oxford Endowment Fund (C(23)19) and clip (1)\*\**

The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item.

Council **noted** the information.

One of the Congregation-elected Council members had been asked to raise a question about ethical investments. The University had placed a restriction on investments in tobacco companies on the basis that there was no safe amount that does not affect health. As a similar statement had now been made in relation to alcohol consumption, the University might want to reconsider its position on investments in alcohol companies. The Council member would provide background information on the statement so that this issue could be considered further.

## 8. **Report from Education Committee**

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RESTRICTED

- (a) *St Stephen's House change of status from Permanent Private Hall to collaborative partner (C(23)20)\*\**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced this item  
Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL

9. **Research and Innovation Committee(C(23)21)\***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) introduced this item, reminding Council that it had discussed international partnerships at its Away Day in 2022 and he had presented a draft set of collaboration values which Council had agreed would be helpful going forward. Consultation on the draft values had now been undertaken, with feedback received from divisions and various University committees and groups. There had been widespread support for the values and the positive and enabling tone was particularly welcomed, compared to versions published by other institutions. The consultative approach in developing the values was also welcomed as this provided an opportunity to discuss their meaning and to embed them in the research culture of the institution. Subject to approval by Council, the values would be placed on the public-facing Research section of the University's website, with an accompanying infographic. The values would then be cascaded within the University through usual channels, including via a blog by the PVC (Research) in a forthcoming edition of the University Bulletin.

Council **approved** the proposed research collaboration values for the University, on the recommendation of Research & innovation Committee.

OPEN

10. **Unreserved report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 February 2023 (C(23)22)**

- (a) *Student Life Sub Committee*

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced this item.

Council **approved** the establishment of a subcommittee of Education Committee, the Student Life Subcommittee, with the proposed terms of reference and membership as set out in Annex A of the paper.

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

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

Without discussion, Council **noted**:

- (i) that there were no new notices of appointment;
- (ii) the OfS publications; and
- (iii) the UUK Press Statements.

12. **Proposed Revisions to Council's Standing Orders 2022/23 (C(23)24)**

Without discussion, Council **approved** the revised Standing Orders for 2022/23.

13. **Unreserved report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 February 2023 (C(23)25)**

- (a) *Report of Chairs Action*

Council **noted** that the Chair took action on behalf of Council **to approve** amendments to the Proctors' Regulation 1 of 2003<sup>7</sup>, as set out in Annex A of the attached paper on 20 February 2023 following the decision made to recommend the revisions to Council.

RESTRICTED

14. **Report of the meeting of the Safety Executive Group 31 January 2023 (C(23)26)**

Without discussion Council **noted** the report.

15. **Any other unreserved business**

There was no other business.

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<sup>7</sup> Under text of regulations para 1 should read "powers under section 20" not 22. A Corrigendum has been issued using the Slip Rule.

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16. **Date of the next meeting**

CONFIDENTIAL

It was reported that the next short meeting of Council on 24 April 2023 would be replaced with a briefing meeting on Begboke prior to any planning application being made. Further details would be sent out as soon as they were available.

The next ordinary meeting of Council would be held on Monday 15 May at 2.00pm at OUP.

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