

UNAPPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 2nd JULY 2021, 11.30am – 2.30pm
at Better Space, Farringdon Road

Members		Meeting 1 09.10.20	Meeting 2 27.11.20	Meeting 3 12.02.21	Meeting 4 26.03.21	Meeting 5 14.05.21	Meeting 6 02.07.21
Independent Members	Ms Julia Palca (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professor Sir Paul Curran (President)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/M
	Professor Anthony Finkelstein (President)	N/M	N/M	N/M	N/M	N/M	✓
	Ms Kru Desai	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Dr Paula Franklin	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	N/M
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
	Ms Philippa Hird	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/M	N/M
	Professor Chris Jenks	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A
	Mr Thomas Lee-Warren	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A
	Dr Andrew Mackintosh	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
	Ms Ebele Okobi	N/M	N/M	✓	✓	A	✓
	Mr Anant Prakash	N/M	N/M	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Jen Tippin	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
Staff and Student Members	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
	Ms Shaima Dallali	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ms Liz Rylatt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professor Debra Salmon	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓

Key: ✓ In Attendance A Apologies P Part Attendance N/M Not a Member S Sabbatical

In Attendance	Reason and Meeting Section
Professor David Bolton	Deputy President & Provost (DP&P)
Ms Selina Hannaford	Chief of Staff, President's Office
Professor Andrew Jones	Interim Deputy President (IDP)
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary (CS)
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator

MINUTES SECTION A – OPEN FOR PUBLICATION

Part One – Preliminary Items

1. Highlighted Items

Council **agreed** the highlighted items.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2021 were approved. Item 5.4 would be amended to make clear that the issue raised referred to counsellors 'with whom students could identify' and 'with a wider range of cultural competences'.

3. Matters Arising

Council noted the table of actions arising from past meetings. The Chair and President would agree a way forward on the items which had been put on hold pending Professor Finkelstein's arrival.

USS Update

City had been asked to provide a response to the most recent consultation exercise organised by UUK by Monday 5th July. The HR Director had circulated to the Council Pensions Group the supporting material provided by UUK together with a copy of the consultation questionnaire.

UUK and employers had welcomed the flexibility shown by USS in developing their counter-proposals for the way forward, albeit that these gave rise to an overall contribution rate of 31.2%, which was 0.5% higher than the current total contributions (of 30.7%).

It was anticipated that most universities would support Option A – *to proceed with the potential modifications to support the covenant and continue discussions on addressing the 0.5% difference.*

The increases due from 1st October had already been built into City's Budget 2021/22.

The Chair noted that it was City's responsibility to ensure that its staff had the best pensions possible.

4. Conflicts of Interest

None.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

The Chair welcomed Shaima Dallali to her first meeting as SU President and member of Council.

The annual appraisal of Council had been deferred until the autumn to enable the exercise to include the reflections of the incoming President.

Recruitment was underway, with Russell Reynolds, to appoint two new independent members of Council.

Professor Chris Jenks would step down as a member in December 2021, and this would create a vacancy for Chair of CGNC. Any member who wished to express an interest in taking on this role should notify the College Secretary. **[Action]**

6. Calendar

Council noted the calendar which would be amended to include a return to campus update in October 2021. **[Action]**

7. President's Report

The President provided Council with an update on his first week at City noting that he had:

- Sent his first communications to staff and students.
- Held initial discussions with the owners of Risks in City's Risk Register;
- Met with the Trade Union Representatives.; and attended the Unison demonstration in Northampton Square.
- Officially opened "Better Space", today's venue.
- Toured City's campus which was very impressive and was more than a match for its competitors. It sent a positive message about City and where it was.
- Received an introduction to the Financial Regulations in his role as Accountable Officer.
- Initiated discussions on how best to engage with external stakeholders about City's new Strategy and about how this work would be funded.

Key priorities for his 'to do' list included:

- His series of planned meetings, in person and online, to listen to and engage with staff from all departments across the University.
- Reviewing and refreshing City's executive governance arrangements. His Chief of Staff, Selina Hannaford, would develop proposals for the way forward.
- Making appointments to further key leadership roles, including the appointments of a new Dean of SASS and for a new Dean for the Business School.

- Revisiting and refreshing City's Major Incident Plan; and addressing City's current 'red' rated risk relating to Health and Safety.

8. SU Report

Council considered the SU Report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Union had recently recruited to the new post of Employability & Micro Placement Programme Coordinator to work closely with City colleagues in the Careers Team to deliver 20 in-curriculum placements in year one, and 40 year two, enabling students to work within the Union.
- The final version of the Union's Student Voice Report for Term 3 had now been shared with colleagues in Student & Academic Services. When a response had been developed, this would be considered both by Senate and Council.
- The Union was working with City to identify an appropriate tool for delivering real-time student feedback and reporting. The Union hoped that a new platform would be implemented in at least two schools by September 2021.
- The three key priorities for the SU were at present:
 - Building Back City: The sabbatical officers next year would be working to ensure that 'lost' student experience is made up for, that feedback on fees and accommodation concerning VFM is heard, and that right lessons were learned from the pandemic experience, for example through building on the changes in assessment practice which had narrowed the attainment gap for BAME students.
 - Improving Student Mental Health: The pandemic had exacerbated the pre-existing student mental health crisis. The sabbatical officers would work with City to ensure that a strong, clear, and institutional-wide strategy for student mental health was designed and implemented; and that student wellbeing services were accessible and easy to navigate.
 - Decolonising City: the sabbatical officers would work to identify longer term measures to improve BAME student experiences and would lobby City and the Union for small changes that could have an immediate impact, from getting the right support for reporting racism and hate, to getting more marginalised authors in libraries.
- The President noted that decolonising City would be a priority for City over the coming year. A first step would be to audit the curriculum and set up an informed debate over its shape so that cultural issues were brought into focus and students could relate better to what they were studying.

9. Coronavirus: Campus Update

The CFO provided a verbal update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- City's dedicated Campus Covid-19 Management Group (CCMG) continued to meet fortnightly.
- Since 17th May, City's campus and buildings had been fully open but with limited teaching and practical activities for a small number of defined students and with a continued requirement for students to making bookings to access to study space and libraries Staff must also complete a risk assessment and seek authorisation to come onto campus from their line manager: But these requirements might be removed from 19th July.
- The number of City students and staff on campus remained at circa 900 each day, i.e., around 4% of the City population.
- Students and staff attending campus continued to be encouraged to take a Covid test twice a week. Many choose to do so by taking tests locally, collecting free tests from pharmacies or ordering free tests for home delivery. The University of London testing facility had closed permanently on Thursday 24th June.

- Confirmation of the next stage of the government's roadmap out of lockdown (Step 4) from 19th July was expected, following the decision to delay the next step from 21st June. The decision, together with any related guidance for universities, would determine the next set of advice for City students and staff.
- The DP&P noted that operational planning for a mix of in-person and online teaching for next term were progressing well. It would be important, in so far as was possible, to ensure that the student experience was of the same quality regardless of the medium. The communications roll-out to students would commence in the coming days.
- The CFO noted that a hybrid-working pilot was now in progress, which would see Gloucester Building reconfigured to allow agile staff working, e.g., 'hot desking' and using space more imaginatively and efficiently.
- The needs of the business would always be the priority in developing new working arrangements, however, and this might mean that it would in future be more important for academic staff to be present on campus than for professional services staff, as in-person teaching resumed across Schools.
- The Dean of Health noted that there has been a great loss of student learning as a result of the pandemic and it was not yet known how far that might have impacted on student mental health. City needed to look at what that lost experience looked like and how it could be made good. It was also important to remember that sometimes getting a good quality degree was not the main student goal – the overall University experience was often what mattered most to students and what would need to be made good, so far as possible, next year.
- City would be looking closely at practice across the sector on 'return to campus' issues across the board and would be looking to follow sectoral best practice as this developed.
- The CFO noted that staff working abroad had tax implications for City. 66 City staff were known to be working abroad at present; and all were being strongly encouraged to return to the UK by 1st September.
- Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted that the interests of students should be at the heart of the decision-making regarding staff presence on campus moving forward.

10.1 Updated Budget 2021/22 and Financial Plans

Council considered the updated Budget and Financial Plans and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Draft Budget forecast a surplus of £1.9M compared to a deficit of £1.6M in the OfS plan. This translated to an underlying deficit of £1.4M after the FRS102 adjustments.
- The Budget and updated Plan used student number planning assumptions agreed with the Schools. At this stage, the School projections could be optimistic, particularly in relation to the recruitment of overseas students and for some Postgraduate courses, due to the continuing uncertainties regarding travel restrictions and the change in visa regulations.
- Currently, the international student numbers for the Business School looked good but the eventual number recruited would depend on whether those applicants would be permitted to travel to the UK and would choose to do so.
- Recurrent reductions in staff costs, combined with a further review of non-staff budgets by Schools, had reduced planned expenditure, compared to the December plan, by £4.0M.
- SIPCo had agreed to recommend the draft Budget for 2021/22 to Council in July for approval, noting the risks around the student income projections and the impact of this Budget on the updated Financial Plan.

- The Chair would further discuss the plan for fundraising and enterprise opportunities (along with other matters arising noted at Item 3) with the President outside of the meeting. **[Action]**

Decision

Council **approved** the draft Budget for 2021/22, noting the risks around the student income projections and the impact of this Budget on the updated Financial Plan.

10.2 Q3 Financial Report

Council noted the Q3 report noting that:

- The paper provided the Revised Forecast (RF) and compared actual records on SAP at end of period 09 to the profiled RF. There was also commentary on the variances compared to the Mid-Year Forecast (MYF) that was prepared in November.
- The SOCIE showed a deficit of £4.2M (bottom line £4.4M). When adjusting out the FRS102 pension movements, the operating deficit was £2.9M compared to the MYF deficit of £10.2M and Budget deficit approved by Council of £10.9M.
- The most significant factor contributing to this improvement was that City had retained much more income than was anticipated in November. The student drop-out after the Christmas break that was allowed for by increased attrition percentages did not materialise and neither had City been required to refund fees to the level that had been provided for.
- Although a deficit was still being reported, City was in a much better place financially than had been anticipated this time last year.
- Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted the “good news” contained in the report and extended Council’s thanks to the CFO, Finance Team and all staff in the institution for the positive outcome.

11. Employability Development Plan: Update

Council noted the update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Previous Council papers had detailed the history of City’s employability performance and the rationale for investment in a focussed Employability Development Plan based on research into graduate employability. in November 2020 City’s Executive Team agreed to invest in a Plan based on two commitments:
 1. *Every undergraduate programme will contain core professionally relevant experience which means City will aim to help students develop graduate level skills during their degree*
 2. *Every undergraduate programme will include career focus education as part of the core curriculum which means that City will aim to help students develop career readiness.*
- The report provided an update on work undertaken with Schools to develop implementation plans for each programme. A contextual note on Employability (‘Graduate Outcomes’) and rankings was also provided.
- The President had appointed a new member to the Senior Leadership Team with a focus on employability, engagement and enterprise. This demonstrated how seriously City took this element of the student experience.
- The diversity of City’s student population should enable strong and successful engagement with major employers in business and the professions.
- Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted that Council welcomed the plan which was a positive step in the right direction.

12. Access and Participation Action Plan: Update

Council noted the update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- In 2019 Council, and then OfS, had approved City's Access and Participation (A&PP) Plan 2020-25. An approved AP&P was now a condition of OfS registration for providers wishing to charge higher fees of £9250 to UK undergraduates.
- The A&PP set out how City would improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education, and included targets for improvement.
- The paper provided an update on City's Plan and performance against targets in its first academic year, and an update on the major projects being undertaken to meet the targets defined in the Plan.

13.1 Risk Register Biannual Review

Council reviewed the Risk Register which had been considered by ARC in June and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Key current risks were the return to campus, student experience, staff workloads, potential Industrial Action and Health and Safety.
- The Professional Service Risk Registers were not yet fully established but it was anticipated that this strand of work would be carried forward by City's new Chief Operating Officer under the direction of the President.
- The months ahead would be uncertain and City would be transitioning to a new management structure, with new colleagues with less expert knowledge of the institution and this potential risk was reflected in the register.
- The President would give further consideration to risk management at City and to how well the Register reflected the issues of most concern.
- The President had also held discussions with current risk owners to better understand why, if the correct mitigations are in place, risks are still being held at "amber" or "red". The calibration was not quite right as things stood and the President would provide a revised Risk Register to ARC and Council by early 2022. **[Action]**

13.2 Health and Safety Mid-year Report

Council received the Health and Safety report, which had been considered by ARC at its meeting in June. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The report provided a mid-year review of the current effectiveness of the systems in place for managing and reporting on Health and Safety, since the last report to Council in October 2020.
- During the pandemic City had launched its new E-Learning provider Awaken, that aimed to deliver in a staged way a portfolio of training for all staff, to improve awareness and understanding of the health and safety topic thereby reducing the organisational risk.
- General health and safety workshops continued to be delivered through a combination of onsite delivery and online learning. Partnering with City's Occupational Health providers, new courses around understanding Mental Health and Stress had been launched, to link related managerial courses made available by Organisational Development.
- ARC had been impressed with what had been achieved but felt that more work was needed to improve staff compliance generally with Health and Safety requirements at City.

14.1 Honorary Rector Appointments and Reappointments

Council **approved** for a period of three years, effective from 1st July 2021, the appointment of Hunada Nouss as Honorary Rector; and the reappointments of Professor Sir Drummond Bone, the Right Hon Apurv Bagri and Rob Woodward as Honorary Rectors.

14.2 Appraisal of the Chair

The Chair absented herself for this item and the Deputy Chair sought the views of Council Members and the following points were made:

- The Chair's authority, knowledge and stature as Chair, and her personal time commitment to the role had been exemplary.
- The Chair had continually demonstrated an inclusive and empathetic leadership style – in chairing Council meetings; in maintaining an open dialogue with the Executive, students' representatives and academic staff. She had encouraged and nurtured a positive spirit of collaboration and challenge among Council members.
- The Chair's personal style of engagement - getting the right balance between being diplomatic, inclusive, firm, and approachable as each situation demands - was warmly welcomed. Specifically, this had been evident in the way the Chair had helped the university navigate and conclude the change of name for the Business School and the recruitment of new Council members who bring broader diversity in experience and skills to the University.
- The Chair's work to guide City through the dual challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and a transition to a new executive leadership of the university had also been exemplary. Her consultative approach and accessibility to discuss issues and assist in pursuing priorities had been recognised and welcomed.
- The Chair's personal advocacy for student and staff welfare, prior to, and during the pandemic, had been welcomed and applauded.
- Looking to the year ahead and with a new President now in place, there would be a need for Council and for the Chair to take a more strategic role and move away from such a close engagement in operational issues.
- The Deputy Chair would extend Council's thanks to the Chair for all that she had done last year, and would continue to do, for Council and for City.

The Chair re-joined the meeting.

15. Minutes for Note

Council received the minutes of the following meetings, noting that some had been approved by the Chair but not the entire Committee:

- 15.1 Remuneration Committee, 3rd March 2021
- 15.2 Senate, 17th March 2021
- 15.3 CGNC, 13th May 2021
- 15.4 SIPCo, 10th June 2021

16. Strategic Estates Projects

Council received the update and noted that 20 Myddelton Square was on the market.

17. Registers of Interests

The registers would be circulated by email and Council members **agreed** to notify the Governance Team of any changes, as and when they occur.

18. Council and its Committees' Meeting Dates 2021/22

Council members noted the future meeting dates.

19. AOB

The Chair extended Council's thanks and best wishes for the future to Professor David Bolton who was attending Council for the last time; and Council's gratitude for all the knowledge and insights he had provided to Council over many years.

20. FOI Review

Council **agreed** that no changes were required.

21. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 7st October (Chairs' dinner Wednesday 6th October)

Julia Palca, Chair of Council, July 2021