



UNAPPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 6TH OCTOBER 2022, 9.00am to 12.00noon
MS Teams

| Members | | Meeting 1 06.10.22 | Meeting 2 25.11.22 | Meeting 3 23.02.23 | Meeting 4 31.03.23 | Meeting 5 18.05.23 | Meeting 6 29.06.23 |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Independent Members | Ms Julia Palca (Chair) | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Professor Anthony Finkelstein (President) | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Kru Desai | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Adrienne Fresko | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Mr Simon Harding-Roots | A | | | | | |
| | Mr Adrian Haxby | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Mr Thomas Lee-Warren | A | | | | | |
| | Dr Andrew Mackintosh | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Catherine McGuinness | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Ebele Okobi | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Mr Anant Prakash | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Jen Tippin | A | | | | | |
| | Mr Ron Zeghibe | ✓ | | | | | |
| Staff and Students | Ms Mary Luckiram | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Professor Debra Salmon | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Gesmina Tsourrai | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Ms Helen Watson | ✓ | | | | | |

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

| In Attendance | Reason and Meeting Section |
|----------------------------|--|
| Ms Kiren Chima | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Item 9) |
| Mr Dominic Davis | Director of SPPU |
| Professor Elisabeth Hill | Deputy President |
| Professor Juliet John | Vice-President, Education |
| Dr Jessica Jones-Nielsen | Assistant Vice-President, EDI (Item 9) |
| Dr William Jordan | College Secretary |
| Ms Sarah Lawton | Governance Administrator |
| Professor Miguel Mera | Vice-President, Research (Items 7.2 and 13) |
| Ms Marion O'Hara | Interim Chief Financial Officer |
| Mr Mark Pacey | Project Manager Change Support Unit (Item 7.2) |
| Professor Susannah Quinsee | Vice-President, Digital and Student Experience |
| Mr James Saward | Head of Student Health and Wellbeing (Item 10) |
| Professor Andre Spicer | Dean of Bayes Business School |
| Ms Sian Thurgood | Head of Education and Student Strategy (Item 10) |

MINUTES SECTION A – OPEN FOR PUBLICATION

Part One – Preliminary Items

- Highlighted Items**
Council **agreed** the highlighted items.
- Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 30th June were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the actions arising from past meetings.

USS

Recent USS statements and commentary confirmed that the key issues impacting on the outcome of the 2023 valuation of USS were likely to be the outlook for inflation and for investment returns.

A recent monitoring report and modelling indicated a range of possible outcomes and combined contributions for employees and employers between 27.4% to 35.9% of salary (current total contributions being 31.4% of salary).

Projections for the future path of inflation and interest rates could change materially between now and the date of the next valuation. Nevertheless, the current position was in marked contrast to the backdrop against which USS had embarked on all valuations since 2011.

The USS Trustee continued work on two key areas of reform of the Scheme: Lower cost options for employees (working with the USS JNC) and Conditional Indexation (working with UUK).

Industrial Action:

UCU

Current ballots for industrial action (strike and action short of a strike) were taking place on pensions issues and on the pay settlement for 2022. The ballot would close on 21st October. This was an aggregated ballot and the outcomes were not likely to be known until late October with the potential for industrial action from mid-November.

There had not been a UCU aggregated ballot in the sector for some years and it was hard to predict the outcome, which was likely to be determined by a group of very large institutions with high Trade Union density and activism.

UNISON

UNISON (which had around 150 members at City) had conducted a disaggregated ballot for strike action in relation to the 2022 pay settlement and had achieved a turnout above 50% on the ballot. The Union was calling on members to take one day of strike action on Thursday 13th October.

The City Business Continuity Management Group, led by the COO, had over recent weeks planned and put in place mitigations to lessen the impact of the strike action. In particular, arrangements had been made for the necessary Security Management provisions. Staff and students would be written to confirming that the campus would remain open.

Risk Assessments for operations and activities likely to be affected by strike action had been reviewed by the Head of Occupational Health & Safety and would be kept under review in the run up to the 13th.

In the event of strike action by UCU the standing group constituted to mitigate disruption to students would resume its work. The SU would have membership on this group.

4. Conflicts of Interest

Adrian Haxby noted that the Chair of SGUL was among his personal friends.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Adrienne Fresko, Professor Elisabeth Hill, Deputy President and Gesmina Tsourrai, SU President.

The Chair thanked independent members who had responded to requests to nominate Schools to which they would be interested in being appointed as School links. Further responses would be welcome as would any expressions of interest from independent members in becoming members of the SU Trustee Board.

New members were sought for SIPCo and Development Committee and expressions of interest should be sent to the College Secretary. **[Action]**

The Chair thanked independent members who had agreed dates for attending Senate. Any further expressions of interest should be sent to the College Secretary. **[Action]**

6. Calendar

Council noted the calendar which would be amended to include a future discussion of Employability. **[Action]**

The November Plenary Dinner topic would be academic quality and standards with a presentation from James Birkett. Suggestions for topics to be discussed at the March dinner would be welcome; and should be sent to the College Secretary. **[Action]**

7.1 President's Report

The President gave an update on his recent activities and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Student recruitment targets had been reached and exceeded in some areas.
- The School of Communication and Creativity and the School of Policy and Global Affairs were now up and running and both Deans had recently attended ARC to give updates. The process of establishing the new Schools had been a success and showed that City could make changes at pace in tandem with meaningful consultation.
- The Senior Leadership Team now included the two new Deans and Professor Richard Ashcroft who had been appointed Dean of the Law School on an interim basis. SLT had undertaken some development work focussing on ways of working together during a recent Away Day.
- A set of operating principles were driving considerations of what activity should take place in Schools and what should take place centrally. The COO was working with a wide range of colleagues to develop operating models in key areas.
- The VP, Digital & Student Experience was engaged in a review of the roles of Heads of Department. This work was essential to building stronger line management across the institution.
- Urdang had officially joined City and a new Head of the School of Performing Arts was now in post. The students were happy to be part of City's community.
- A Strategy Action Plan had been drawn up. Implementation of the action plans would be overseen by the Deputy President. The Portfolio Review process was already underway.
- Navigating the cost of living and its effects on students, staff and the broader community which City serves would be a big focus moving forward.
- City would not be immune from Freedom of Speech controversies and would need to be prepared and ready for the public debate that could potentially accompany, for example, City's work to decolonise the curriculum.

7.2 Blind Castle Project

Council considered an update on the Strategic Project Blind Castle.

This item is continued in Section B of the Minutes, Closed Business.

8. SU Report

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

- The new sabbatical officers had received induction sessions from all Union departments and met with key stakeholders in the University.
- Following continued feedback from staff about disparity in pay between Union staff and staff carrying out similar roles at City, a job evaluation process had been undertaken, resulting in the regrading of all the roles evaluated. The Union was grateful to City for supporting the process and committing to funding the additional costs to ensure fair pay for Union staff.
- This year, in relation to the NSS Question 26, the Union had unfortunately seen a decrease by 6.9%. This result has moved the Union from 4th in London to 8th and 44th nationally. Whilst the Union still performed favourably against similar Unions when considering its size and resource levels, the

decrease in satisfaction was disappointing. Work was underway to identify improvements over the coming year.

- Improving Personal Tutoring at City was a 'silver priority' for the Union. Personal Tutors were currently not sufficiently accessible and not sufficiently engaged with students. It was important for Personal Tutors to be trained and supported, as well as adequately resourced. The VP, Digital & Student Experience noted that the system was currently being reviewed.
- The Union had secured £50k of funding from City to deliver a range of community building events across term one which had been identified as quick wins to support the Student Experience workstream of City's new strategy.
- The SU believed there was a need for more transparency about City's finances and how the income from student fees was spent. The Chair of ARC offered to meet with the SU President to discuss further how this could be taken forward if she would find it helpful. **[Action]**
- The new elected Assembly Members were excited about this academic year's Assembly meetings. The first meeting would take place on Thursday 3rd November.

9. EDI Annual Report

Council considered the EDI Annual Report which detailed the progress made from June 2021 - May 2022 in increasing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at City. In discussion the following points were noted:

- Over the last year, key achievements included:
 - Submission of City's Athena Swan renewal in May 2022.
 - The Race Equality Charter application was submitted in July 2022.
 - Work had commenced on City's first entry into the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.
 - City had moved from a Level 1 to a Level 2 Disability Committed employer in November 2021.
- City's commitment to EDI had been demonstrated in the growth of the EDI team in the Office for Institutional Equity & Inclusion with 3 senior EDI officers' roles and the Assistant Vice President role being created in 2021.
- The Assistant VP, EDI, noted that her team were taking a student-centered approach to this work; and that being guided by what City students are asking for would ultimately be of most benefit to those students.
- Council's task was to hold the Executive accountable for progress in this area, with SIPCo acting as the place where "deeper dives" into this agenda could take place prior to Council meetings.
- The next iteration of the report should include a reference to Council's own diversity and a reference to Council's support for this work. **[Action]**
- It might also be useful for Council to hear at some point from some of the ambassadors listed in the report to gain an understanding of how their work was having a positive impact.
- The President noted that City continued to engage with Stonewall as a partner in delivering the LGBTQ+ agenda and he would work hard with the team to yield the greatest advantage from that relationship – whilst navigating the challenges of working with an organisation which had a known agenda on some issues.

10. Student Health and Wellbeing Annual Report

Council considered the Student Health and Mental Wellbeing Report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The report focussed on the year 22/23 and work that would form phase one of City's Strategic Action Plan – and the enhancement of the Student Health and Wellbeing Service to meet the anticipated increased demand from students.
- The report also looked back on the 2021/22 academic year and noted the recent sector case law *Abrahart vs Bristol University* and the university response.

- City had committed in the new strategy to putting students at the heart of all its activity. There remained significant work to do in the longer term to embed a whole university approach to wellbeing for staff and students. Work was planned to build students' sense of community and belonging in partnership with students. Sector research showed that a sense of community and belonging contributed to students' mental wellbeing and ability to thrive.
- Making timely offers of support to students was key and a diverse team of highly skilled quality staff had been recruited to ensure that support was in place.
- Students presented with a range of support needs so rebranding the service to remove the word "mental" from its title had had important symbolic significance.
- The Head of the Service noted that City was in the process of embedding programmes on wellbeing into the curriculum, to ensure that resilience-building became the norm.
- The recent launch of the e-referral system would be transformational. All services were now accessible by a single point of access model (sector best practice), previously there had been six entry points. Students who had registered were in receipt of their support plans by the next day.
- A recent UCAS report highlighted that there would be an increase in mental health disclosures and this was on the team's radar. There was a need to achieve a better disclosure rate by encouraging students to come forward early to seek support.
- The SU President welcomed the improvements thus far and looking forward would be keen to focus on the emotional intelligence of students and how best their emotions could be managed proactively during their studies.
- The Dean of SHPS noted that the new flexible approach had inspired confidence that the wait time for students to receive support would be driven down. City would move towards taking a more Public Health approach to student health and wellbeing and focus on prevention.
- The President noted the broader question of the resource challenges. City would never be able to act as a substitute for the shortcomings of the NHS, nor could it provide one-to-one emotional support for all those who study at City. This is why City needed to accelerate its work on taking a Public Health approach and take a collective view on where its responsibilities lay – and where its duty of care began and ended.
- Council strongly welcomed the report and the direction of travel.

11. Improving our Student Experience and the National Student Survey (NSS)

Council considered the papers and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The papers outlined City's approach to improving the student experience and NSS results. City's latest NSS results were unacceptable and the paper set out the changes needed.
- Overall, the poor results seemed to be rooted in structural and systemic failures and there was a need for cultural change to address those underlying issues. The goal was to embed a culture of continued improvement and of striving to better understand how contact with students could be improved.
- City must move away from a blame culture of Schools versus Professional Services which was unhelpful; and instead move to collective ownership of the issue, whilst improving its systems of performance management and accountability.
- The diversity of staff at City should also be considered as a factor with an impact on student experience. There was evidence to suggest that students benefited from having teachers who reflected their own backgrounds and this should be taken into consideration as part of the staff recruitment process. The VP, D&SE, in her role as Racial Equality Ambassador continued to work with the SU on decolonisation and the

- issue of staff diversity.
- A number of staff were frustrated because they were working very hard but not seeing the results at NSS level. Staff had bought into the “student being at the heart” of City’s strategy; but this needed to manifest itself in reality and staff need to consider what the learning experience looks like from the student perspective.
- A further factor was that staff at City did not always talk with pride about the institution. Improvements here were likely to lead to students also feeling more pride in their place of study.
- The Deputy President, COO, VP, Education and VP D&SE had formed a steering group to ensure that all the strands of work were brought together and monitored with action taken where necessary.
- The VP, D&SE was establishing a Student Experience Board which would report to SLT and keep this matter firmly on its agenda.
- The DP was developing further the Academic Planning process. This, along with the Portfolio Review (overseen by the VP Education) should improve the student experience by ensuring that students had a more consistent experience across the institution. Students should start to see the initial benefits of these changes over the course of the coming year.
- SLT had identified the need for better leadership and management at City but members were not themselves in the classroom – the role of Associate Deans therefore would be crucial.
- The VP, D&SE hoped that some positive changes would be achieved by the summer, e.g., improving placements for students in SHPS.
- Economics should be able to secure a quick win by addressing their assessment turnaround time given its current poor performance on this indicator - albeit the President noted that negative student responses to questions about assessment turnaround times in NSS could be indicative of their ability to master a subject, rather than of actual turnaround times.
- It would be important for Council to receive an update soon on progress in implementing the NSS plan. **[Action]**

12. Finance

12.1 Financial Performance Q4 Report

Council considered the Q4 report, and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The final outcome for 2021/22 was an operational surplus of £1M, compared to the Revised forecast (RFC) of a £4.4M deficit and a £1.4M deficit Budget.
- The full comprehensive results showed a surplus of £23.5M. During the year, Finance had been reporting that a large deficit due to the need to increase the USS provision was likely. This had in the event been offset by the inclusion of an actuarial gain on the LPFA pension scheme, a movement of £78M.
- The final results would be presented in the Financial Statements in November.

12.2 Student Recruitment

Council received a verbal update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Undergraduate recruitment had exceeded targets and a high number of students had already fully or partially enrolled.
- The Postgraduate Taught numbers were not yet fully known but Bayes was below target and the School of Communication & Creativity was slightly below. Law and Policy & Global Affairs had exceeded their targets, resulting in a good picture overall.
- Bayes had increased its UG target to make up for the shortfall in its Postgraduate applications and had met that increased target.
- City had entered Clearing this year in a better position than previously which resulted in recruiting less students via this route. It was now increasingly the case that students were using the opportunities presented by Clearing more proactively and purposively.

- City now needed to reflect on how the estate and infrastructure could be developed to accommodate the increasing numbers of students; and would also need to consider further its pedagogic model which could also potentially help address that issue.
- City was arguably underperforming with regard to PG recruitment and so was considering centralising the admissions process. Across Schools the turnaround time was frequently unacceptable.

13. **Research and Enterprise Annual Report**

Council considered the report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Research grant income had remained steady despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant income had fallen slightly from £11.4M in 2019/20 to £11.25M in 2020/21.
- City had performed well in the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF2021). The Times Higher Education identified City as one the “biggest movers;” and was ranked 39th out of 129 universities, an increase of 12 places since REF 2014. City would put more effort into improving “impact” scores for the next REF exercise but this would take time.
- The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) was a new measurement and City was still learning what it meant to the institution, but there had been an improvement on the previous year, possibly due to not reporting well enough initially. City’s strengths in the first had been:
 - IP and Commercialisation result placed City as a Top 20% performer across the sector.
 - Skills, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship placed City as a Top 50% performer across the sector.
- The VP, Research would be happy to present on the KEF at a future meeting if members would find it helpful.
- On research, the report might benefit from “a bit more colour” next year with regard to the types of research being undertaken and more of a sense of City’s areas of excellence.
- The College Secretary and the VP, Research would consider how best Council might receive presentations from City’s leading research academics. **[Action]**
- The Chair would find it useful in future to get a better understanding for how City was improving in relation to enterprise. The College Secretary would discuss with the VP (EEE) when an update could most helpfully be scheduled for Council. **[Action]**

14. **Freedom of Speech Code**

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

- In accordance with the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, City, University of London had a statutory duty to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its members (including all staff members and students) and visitors (including external speakers).
- Minor amendments to the Code were being proposed for 2022-3. In addition, more significant changes were being made to The External Speakers approval process, with devolution of low-risk cases to the Students’ Union to enable more straightforward decisions to be made proportionately and faster. High risk cases would still need University scrutiny prior to approval.
- The proposed process had been devised by the Students’ Union, with the support of external consultancy. Like any new process, it would be kept under review.
- More extensive changes to the Code itself might be needed once the current Freedom of Speech Bill passed into law. The OfS would also then need to set

out any new expectations about its conditions of registration, which would also need to be reflected in the Code.

Decision

Council approved the revised Code of Practice to Ensure Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression at City and the revised External Speakers process.

15. SIPCo Annual Report

Council received a verbal annual report from the Chair of SIPCo and noted the business covered by the Committee during the 2021/22 Academic Year. This would be the final such report in its current guise as the committee's terms of reference were under review and it would be renamed Strategy and Finance Committee.

16. Appraisal of the Chair of Council

The Chair absented herself for this item and the Deputy Chair sought the views of Council Members. It was noted that the Chair:

- Had grown in stature in each successive year of her tenure; and had led Council in achieving a great deal over the past year (including decisions on the acquisition of Urdang, and on Bayes estate investment).
- Had shown excellent leadership as Chair of Council, as reported in the findings of the Minerva review of Council effectiveness, manifesting strong emotional intelligence; and had an engaging personal style, while running Council meetings with great efficiency.
- Had established a strong working relationship with the President, in which he felt appropriately held to account for his performance. The President valued working with the Chair and believed that she lived and championed City's values and called City to account for those values.
- Was highly valued by both Council members and senior staff who all considered her to be a great asset to City. She had in particular provided significant support to the new Dean of Bayes.
- Continued to invest a great deal of time on City business, over and above the call of duty, and outside the formal calendar of business. This greatly improved the quality of debate and discussion at formal meetings; and her commitment to City and was greatly appreciated.

Looking ahead, it was noted that:

- Council would be facing a significant challenge in the coming year with the Blind Castle project; and the Chair would inevitably be the lynch pin for Council's engagement with all parties involved in this project.
- In the coming year it would be important for the Chair to continue to reflect City's interests in her UCEA work.
- Council members were mindful of the challenges to be faced and would like the Chair to articulate how they might support her more.
- The Deputy Chair noted that it would assist the Chair if members put life back into the School Links Scheme.

In addition, it was noted that Chair's term of office would come to an end in 15 months' time; and that

- The Chair and College Secretary proposed to set the ball rolling on the process of appointing a new Chair in the New Year.
- The first step would be to seek expressions of interest from independent members.
- CGNC would oversee the process of appointing a new Chair on behalf of Council, moving forward.

17. Minutes for Note

Council received the minutes of the following meetings, noting that they may have been approved by the Chair but not the entire Committee:

17.1 RemCo, 22nd March 2022

17.2 Senate, 23rd March 2022

17.3 CGNC, 12th May 2022

17.4 Audit and Risk Committee, 15th March 2022 and 13th June 2022

18. Strategic Estates Project Update

Council noted the update report.

19. Policy Update

Council noted the update.

20. The Times and the Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023

Council noted the report.

21. Register of Collaborative Provision

Council noted the register.

22. Graduate Outcomes

Council noted the report.

24. FOI Review

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

25. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 25th November 2022, plenary dinner to be held on 24th November at Bayes.

Julia Palca,
Chair of Council
October 2022