

**COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 4th OCTOBER 2019**

Members		Meeting 1 04.10.19	Meeting 2 22.11.19	Meeting 3 07.02.20	Meeting 4 20.03.20	Meeting 5 15.05.20	Meeting 6 03.07.20
	Ms Julia Palca (Chair)	✓					
	Professor Sir Paul Curran (President)	A					
	Dame Lynne Brindley	✓					
	Ms Kru Desai	✓					
	Dr Paula Franklin	✓					
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	✓					
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓					
	Ms Philippa Hird	✓					
	Professor Chris Jenks	✓					
	Ms Janet Legrand	✓					
	Sir John Low	✓					
	Ms Hunada Nouss	✓					
	Ms Jacky Wright	A					
	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓					
Staff and Student Members	Ms Tuna Kunt	✓					
	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓					
	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)
Mr Kevin Gibbons	Director of Property & Facilities, Items 10 and 17
Professor Andrew Jones	Vice-President, Research & Enterprise
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator
Professor Stan Newman	Vice-President, International
Professor Paolo Volpin	Interim Dean of Cass Business School

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 5th July 2019 were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the table of actions arising from past meetings.

Matter Arising 1 USS Update

The Director of HR provided a verbal update on USS latest developments and the following points were noted:

- As reported at July Council meeting, UUK had put forward a revised proposal, known as Option 3 as a means of concluding the 2018 valuation, which relied upon employers agreeing to a greater element of risk, and which was supported by City, as this would mean lower contribution rates for employers and employees from October 2019 than would have been required under the conclusion to the October 2017 valuation. It also offered period of stability

pending the recommendations of the Joint Expert Panel (JEP). It was opposed by the UCU JNC members, who opposed any detriment to benefits or contributions, but had been agreed through the use of the Chair's casting vote. Option 3 was understood to be at the outer limit of what was acceptable to the Pensions Regulator.

- The Director of HR would circulate an update note on potential Industrial Action following the meeting. **[Action]**

Matter Arising 9: DPO Update

The new Head of Information Assurance would take up post in November and would then take over, from the College Secretary, the role of DPO.

Matter Arising 12.1 Research & Enterprise Annual Report

At the recent meeting of CGNC it was agreed that the VP (R&E) would consider a suggestion that Council could invite research staff to present short talks during the refreshment break at meetings. The preparation of one-page summaries of City's most impactful research might also be of interest to Council. The VP (R&E) could consider developing the ten 'best' studies to provide context to REF reports to SIPC and Council.

4. Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

Plenary Dinner

The Chair thanked Tim Longden and Raffi Cuccia for the previous night's presentation on Student Recruitment. The Chair had noted the relationship between City's rankings and recruitment, particularly at international level. This emphasised the need for City to improve its place in league table rankings. Members had also been interested to learn just how many of City's students lived at home and were commuter students. This was a distinctive characteristic of City's students to which City should tailor its provision.

Membership of Council and its Committees (Item 18)

Following endorsement by CGNC at its meeting on 3rd October Council **approved**:

- The re-appointment of Mr Ron Zeghibe as an independent member of Council for a period of 3 years from 1st September 2019.
- The re-appointment of Professor Chris Jenks as an independent member of Council for a period of 3 years from 1st January 2020.
- The appointment of Ms Philippa Hird as Chair of Remuneration Committee from 31st January 2020 until the completion of her term of office as a Council Member in March 2021.
- A further term of office for Dr Rachel Cohen as Senior Elected Senator.

Opportunities for further Engagement

The Chair noted that the calendar of events was excellent and offered Independent Council members many opportunities to engage with academic life at City.

6. Council Calendar

Council noted the calendar. The Chair and College Secretary would give consideration to when employability should be more fully discussed. **[Action]**

Part Two – Reports from the President and SU President

7.1 Students' Union Report

The Students' Union (SU) President highlighted items from her report. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The Union's new Strategic Plan focussed on 4 priorities: Employability, Value for Money, Continuous Improvement and Community. The Plan was based on the outcomes of wide-ranging research student surveys and focus groups.

- A highlight of Welcome Week had been the Freshers' Fair which had a record attendance of 5103 students over two days.
- City and the SU had identified "Value for Money" as a key strand of work for 2019 and beyond.
- A Students' Union campaign for Term 1 was Black History Month with many activities planned for October in collaboration with City.

SU Research Report

Council noted the report from Social Engine commissioned by the SU in early 2019 to support the development of its new Strategic Plan. In discussion, the following points were made;

- This was a very insightful report. Much of the work to be taken forward was work that only the SU could successfully undertake. City should recognise this and work closely with the SU in areas where the SU had more influence with students, as the priorities of the SU were closely aligned with those of City.
- Student priorities were focussed on Value for Money, their personal finances and getting jobs. With the majority of City's students being commuter students, their priorities differed from the traditional values expected of campus-based students. The Board of Trustees was committed to focussing on the findings and had established targeted focus groups covering issues such as Value for Money.
- It was important for City to understand fully the needs of commuter students in order to support them fully. City needed to ensure that students had activities to engage in while they were on site and to also provide both social and quiet space for students.
- The SU had made a bid for currently underutilised staff space in Tait Building in order to provide more social space for students, to go some way to improving their experience while on campus. This would be further discussed with the Trade Unions and at Space Management Committee. (Study space was only an issue during exam periods when its usage was at full capacity).
- Student expectations would also need to be addressed by City. The research showed that many students referred to the prestige of coming to City with its strapline of "for business and the professions" but found that the reality was disappointing.
- The SU President noted that International Students engaged well with the SU and although they might have many different expectations to commuter students, they were also concerned with VfM.
- Council should consider further whether any changes were required to the *Vision & Strategy 2026* to enable the SU strategy to be taken forward successfully. The SU President should be invited to introduce a discussion of any issues that concerned her at a future meeting of SIPCo or Council. **[Action]**

7.2 Students' Union Strategic Plan 2019-2022

Council received the SU's Strategic Plan for information.

Part Three – Major Items for Discussion or Decision

8. Finance

8.1 Financial Performance Report Year End 31 July 2019

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

- The underlying position was good and City would be reporting a total income of £244M and an operating surplus of £10.9M. There had been a positive benefit from an adjustment to holiday accrual.
- FRS102 and the adjustment required for USS pension provision remained unclear; and could result in a £52M negative or a £12M negative adjustment.

PwC were leaning towards the lower number but the debate among accountancy firms was ongoing.

- The financial performance for 2018/19 was on target.
- The full set of accounts would be considered at the November meeting of Council. **[Action]**

8.2 Finance and Student Number Update 2018/19

Council received a verbal report from the DP & P and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The proportion of students recruited through clearing was similar to that of two years ago but the actual number was greater this year. Undergraduate recruitment was pretty much on target, with an over-target in relation to international students.
- Postgraduate recruitment had fallen short in some schools and the shortfall equated to a 'small number of hundreds' across City as a whole.

8.3 Investment Policy Annual Review

The Investment Policy was required to be reviewed on an annual basis and this had been done in partnership with City's Investment Managers at UBS. At its meeting in September SIPCo noted that no major changes were proposed to either the Investment Policy or the "Addendum regarding the management of the Private Placement Funds" and agreed to recommend them to Council.

Decision

Council **approved** the Investment Policy.

9. NSS 2019 Report

Council received a report on the outcome of the NSS 2019 and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The NSS results in 2019 had been very disappointing; and were surprising, given City's past excellence in the NSS. The SU President highlighted in particular her disappointment at the results in relation to the questions relating to the quality of teaching at City.
- It would have been helpful for the paper analysing the results to have contained more detail about the factors that had influenced the NSS outcome in 2019; actions being taken to address them (including any plans to close down persistently poorly performing courses); and the identity of the team responsible for delivering improvements.
- It was unclear to what extent the disappointing results reflected (i) decisions to increase the intake of undergraduate students in some academic disciplines without putting in place sufficient resourcing to support growth; (ii) possible trade-offs between TEF and REF performance; and (iii) a failure to engage effectively with the results of NSS 2018.
- Other HEIs were succeeding in performing very strongly on both REF and TEF; and it was important that City too should excel at both REF and TEF. There was in fact no evidence at the moment of REF preparations distracting from the NSS: while research intensity varied very significantly at City from School to School, this was not correlated with strong or poor performance in NSS 2019.
- The way forward on NSS might need to focus on embedding the concept of 'teaching excellence' more firmly across all disciplines at City; and on better understanding and responsiveness to City's undergraduate students. This would require strong leadership from the Executive.

Kevin Gibbons joined the meeting.

10. Cass Estate

Council noted the progress to date and considered the proposed timeline and process. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The outline case for investing in the consolidation of Cass PG at Bunhill Row and at an identified location in the City of London had been put to Council in July 2019 with the potential for an approval in principle in early September based on a timescale driven by the current tenant.
- Commercial discussions about the possible lease of new premises were progressing well, but had not yet been finalised. A business case for the proposed development of the new premises and the refurbishment of Bunhill Row had now been developed. The impacts on City's Five-Year Financial Plan had also been modelled and the implications for the overall estates plan had been articulated; and involved some postponement of the development of the Centenary building.
- The opportunity offered by the new proposal was exceptional; and could not and should not be passed up. The new premises together with the refurbishment of Bunhill Row were required for Cass to thrive. But the financial risks associated with the proposals were significant. The level of cash investment envisaged was high. The option also required Cass to raise additional revenue to enable City to meet the additional lease costs.
- The recent "Review of the Operational Relationship between Cass and the Wider University", which had been circulated to all Council members with a covering paper from the President, also raised issues that needed to be addressed in the context of a decision on the Cass estate. Council would consider the strategy issues raised by the report at a future meeting. Council's role in relation to the operational issues identified for further work was one of assurance. On these issues, Council should receive regular progress reports.
[Action]
- Agreement in principle to the Cass estate proposals would be required before Council next meet on 23rd November. A special meeting of SIPCo would be convened on 14th October, with an extended invitation to all Council members to attend, to discuss the proposals further. All Council members would also be given the opportunity to comment on and agree the proposals by email circulation **[Action]**

Kevin Gibbons left the meeting.

11. REF Update

Council noted the preparations in train for the REF and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The full guidance for REF 2021 had now been made available and the submission deadline was November 2020.
- City had completed and was analysing a 'mock REF' which covered what would be submitted in each of the 13 Units of Assessment where City would make a return (out of a possible 34 Units of Assessment), including 'impact case studies' and 'research environment statements' for each Unit of Assessment.
- Institutions were required to submit all academic staff who had a significant remit for research, and, as such, much work had been underway to ensure that all City academic staff had the correct academic profile assigned to them. Discussion about this issue with the UCU were still ongoing.
- The VP (R&E), along with the Director of R&E and Director of Strategy & Planning would prepare regular dashboard reports on REF preparations for the Executive. The reports would be based on the outcomes of the Mock REF (which focussed on individuals units of assessment) held during the summer and would assist with the targeting of resources. The reports would also be made available to SIPCo to provide assurance that deadlines were being met.

12. **Staff Mental Health Update**

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

- The Thriving at Work Committee at City continued its work of supporting staff at work. A current focus concerned development of a “mental health first aid” initiative.
- Across the sector, Trade Unions were campaigning for strike ballots in part for reasons of ‘excessive workloads’ giving rise to stress. This message seemed likely to resonate for some at City but not all – initial findings of the Workload Allocation project now underway indicated disparity of workloads within and between Schools.
- A full Staff Mental Health Annual Report would be provided to Council in March 2020, when the initiative on Workload Allocation would have come to fruition and more information would be available about workload levels and the impact on academic staff. **[Action]**

Part Four – Information

13. **Minutes for Note**

13.1 Audit and Risk Committee, 17th June 2019

13.2 Senate, 10th July 2019

14. **Modernising Administration for Students Annual Report to SIPCo**

Council noted the report.

15. **Strategic Guidance to the Office for Students – Ministerial Priorities**

Council noted that, moving forward, the key issues for City were the use of unconditional offers, subject-level TEF 2021, and the approach to international students following Brexit.

16. **Student Appeals/Cases Annual Report**

Council noted the report.

17. **Strategic Estates Projects Progress Report**

Council noted the progress report.

18. **Opportunities for Further Engagement with City for Independent Members**

Council noted the calendar of forthcoming meetings and events.

19. **FOI Review**

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

20. **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 22nd November 2019.

Part Five – Meeting of Independent Members

There was a meeting of the Independent Members, which was not minuted.

Julia Palca

Chair of Council, October 2019