

**UNAPPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 31st MARCH 2023, 9.00am to 1.30pm
NORTHAMPTON SUITE**

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 Sir Anthony Finkelstein (President)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Kru Desai	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Adrienne Fresko	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	A	A	✓	✓		
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Thomas Lee-Warren	A	A	N/M	N/M	N/M	N/M
	Dr Andrew Mackintosh	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Catherine McGuinness	✓	✓	A	✓		
	Ms Ebele Okobi	✓	A	A	N/M	N/M	N/M
	Mr Anant Prakash	✓	A	✓	✓		
	Ms Jen Tippin	A	A	A	A		
Staff and Student	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Elisabeth Hill	N/M	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Debra Salmon	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Andre Spicer	N/M	✓	✓	✓		
	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
Mr Dominic Davis	Director of SPPU
Professor Juliet John	Vice-President, Education
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator
Professor Miguel Mera	Vice-President, Research
Ms Marion O'Hara	Chief Financial Officer
Mr Mark Pacey	Change Support Unit – for Item 9
Professor Susannah Quinsee	Vice-President, Digital and Student Experience
Ms Amy Ripley	Chief of Staff – for Item 9
Dr Sionade Robinson	Vice-President, Enterprise, Engagement & Employability

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 23rd February were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the actions arising from past meetings.

Matter Arising 1: Industrial Action

Pay Dispute: As part of the 2023/24 pay uplift, City had implemented the £1000/2% uplift to salaries. This was effective from 1st February and staff had received this in their salary payments today. A further 3% uplift would be payable from 1st August 2023.

UCU's current period of industrial action had concluded last week. The current mandate for action ran to 21st April.

The (re)ballot of UCU members to begin a fresh period of industrial action would close today. This was an aggregated ballot. In anticipation of a successful outcome and a continuing mandate for industrial action, the UCU Higher Education Committee had determined that members should be called upon to participate in a Marking & Assessment boycott, possibly from 17th April. UCU would be required to provide 14 days notice of this change to the form of Action Short of a Strike. City was preparing for the likelihood of a boycott but would wait until the outcome of the ballot was known and it had received notice from UCU of a proposed boycott before communicating more widely.

With a view to resolving the current pay dispute, four areas of work had been identified through the ACAS facilitated talks for joint national work. The four areas aligned with UCU's 'four fights' and were: pay spine reforms, workload, casualisation and pay gaps. The UCU Higher Education Committee had agreed that members should participate in an e-ballot to consider the Terms of Reference for each of the four areas and had recommended that members reject the ToR.

UNISON was conducting a re-ballot of 14 HEIs but City was not one of those 14 institutions.

USS: Today marked the USS valuation date. The position was markedly better than in recent valuations and it was likely that consideration would be given to improving benefits and/or reviewing contribution rates. Employers would be consulted on this over the summer. The Technical Valuation for the new valuation would take place over the summer and City's draft responses to this and other consultations would follow its usual approach of consulting with members of Council with a specific interest or expertise in pensions. Any revisions to contribution rates or to benefits would be effective from 1st April 2024 – subject to agreement through the USS Joint Negotiating Committee.

Work was also continuing on the development of lower-cost options to enable more lower paid and fixed-term contract staff working in Universities to remain in the Scheme.

The President noted that of the six days of industrial action in February City 186 members of staff had been on strike for at least 1 day but on those 6 days there were no more than 140 members taking action and City had a UCU membership in excess of 600. Many who had taken strike action had made provision for making up on their teaching.

Remuneration Committee Decision

Council noted a decision Remuneration Committee had taken relating to the severance arrangements for one member of staff.

4. Conflicts of Interest

In relation to Item 9, City and St George's Project, it was noted that:

- The Chair at St George's was a personal friend of Adrian Haxby.
- The interest of the independent members in terms of their future role post-merger should be recorded.
- The interests of staff members and staff attending Council in terms of their employment status post-merger should be recorded.
- Staff members and attendees at Council should at future meetings withdraw from discussion and voting on the terms of any staff restructuring that might directly affect them personally.

5. **Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair**

Ebele Okobi

Ebele had notified the Chair prior to this meeting that, owing to other commitments, she would have to step down as an Independent Council Member with immediate effect. The Chair noted her thanks to Ebele and wished her well.

Council Recruitment

The Chair noted that CGNC had agreed to the appointment of Minerva and that the first appointment would be for someone with skills and experience in HR and remuneration issues. The Chair also reminded those members who had not yet done so, to complete their skills matrix and return to the Governance Team.

Launch of City's Office for Equity and Inclusion

The Chair had very much enjoyed attending the launch of the Office for Equity and Inclusion which was led by Dr Jessica Jones-Nielsen, Assistant Vice-President, EDI.

Senate Attendance

Adrienne Fresko noted that her recent attendance at Senate had given her a better sense of its connection to Council. All independent members who had not attended a meeting of Senate in the previous 18 months were encouraged to arrange to attend a future meeting of Senate.

June Plenary Dinner

The Chair encouraged all Council Members to do their utmost to attend the dinner on Wednesday 28th June. This event would provide the opportunity for Council Members and City colleagues to get together socially and mark the end of the Academic Year.

6. **Calendar**

Council noted the calendar of business. There were currently several presentation options for the Council Plenary Dinner and one would need to be agreed.

7. **President's Report**

Council noted the update from the President on work and activities undertaken since the last meeting. The President added that he had attended a sequence of UUK events which had given him a new perspective on developments in the sector. It had become clear to him that the underpinning financial model for Universities was increasingly coming under scrutiny as a result of the uncertain financial horizon. It was unlikely that Government help would be forthcoming and Universities would have to "fend for themselves." The President suggested that this topic might be considered at a future dinner or meeting. **[Action]**

8. **SU Report**

Council received the update from the SU President and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Union continued to work with City to share student feedback on their experience of strikes. This included regular meetings with members of the Senior Leadership Team which the SU welcomed.
- The Union had carried out a short survey on strike action with students and in total, 246 City students had responded to the online survey during the strikes period.
- The Cost of Living remained a key issue for students, and the SU's recent strategy research had shown that most students (82%) were concerned to some extent about their ability to manage financially. The Union welcomed the initiatives introduced to date, including the £3 evening meals in the Courtyard Café, but continued to lobby for City to go further.
- The Union led on a number of initiatives to support City students affected by the devastating Syria/Turkey earthquakes. In February, the Union supported the Turkish

Society with an aid collection and held a commemoration attended by the President, Staff, Students and members of Council.

- City's Students' Union remained affiliated to the NUS as a referendum to disaffiliate had not reached the threshold for the referendum to be quorate.

9. City and St Georges Project Business Case and Associated Papers

Council considered the papers and the three options put forward to Council as set out in the Agenda Item as paper 9(iv).

This item is continued in the Closed section of the minutes.

10. Financial Performance Report Q2 2022/23

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

- The report presented the Mid-year Forecast (MYF) and compared actual records on SAP at end of period 06 to the profiled MYF. The MYF was prepared in December but included updated assumptions made in February.
- The forecast showed an operating deficit of £3.0M. When adjusting out the FRS102 pension movements, the operating deficit was £4.9M compared to the Budget of a £0.9M surplus. This level of deficit would mean that City does not breach the MetLife covenant (deficit of £6M).
- The Q2 report brought together all of the information reported to date in terms of the shortfall in income and additional costs and included a range of changes to reduce the potential shortfall.
- A cover note, entitled Deficit Reduction Activity, outlined the changes that had been made since the report provided to Strategy and Finance Committee in January to improve the forecast by £12M. £9.8M of the improvement was fully embedded into allocated budgets that make up the MYF. £2.2M was not yet specifically identified and was made up of forecasting adjustments for a further reduction of staff costs by £0.5M and of non-pay costs by £1.7M. There was also a note of the actions required to deliver the further savings and deliver the £5M deficit. This was work in progress.

11. Staff Survey 2022

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

- The report provided the headline results of the Staff Survey and an update on the development of priority actions to address the concerns reflected in the Survey responses, at institutional and School/Professional Service level.
- Priority actions identified by SLT in response to the Survey included addressing the results on: Senior Leadership effectiveness; cross-institutional communication and collaboration; and addressing bullying and harassment. In previous years the results had generated long action plans but the current approach was to focus on up to five actions in each area in discussion with staff.
- In December, when the survey was conducted, staff were experiencing a new strategy which focussed on students at the heart which led some staff to feel that they were now less valued. The survey had also coincided with staff being asked to be present at the office for 60% of their working time and this might have had an impact on morale.
- In relation to bullying and harassment, actions had been agreed by SLT which also considered how staff were defining bullying and harassment. City needed to address such a high proportion of staff reporting bullying and/or harassment and this matter would be addressed through local action planning and targeted interventions. Council urged management to continue to take this matter extremely seriously.
- The President noted that many issues arise from the lack of a "golden thread" connecting management from the top to the bottom. SLT relied on the next layer of management to convey messaging and this is not currently working as it should. It

was suggested that the training of managers in a cross-disciplinary way was often effective in addressing culture change.

- Negative responses to the survey might, in part, be attributed to the establishment of a new Senior Leadership Team which had introduced much change. In addition to this, the sector is in dispute which inevitably comes with an additional layer of distrust for legitimate reasons.
- Council was disappointed with the overall results and would use them as a baseline to track positive progression and improvement.

12. NSS Action Plan Update

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

- The paper provided an update on the progress against the action plan for improving City's National Student Survey (NSS) results and ensuring accountability across the university. It highlighted key risks and progress in particular Schools.
- Response rates up on last year but there were still challenges with regard to year 1 and 2 students and City would still like to see the rates increase moving forward.
- The OfS had recently communicated the long-awaited information on how they will be using and publishing the NSS results data. The consultation period on this closes at the end of May. In terms of the results for this year, it was hard to predict because of the changes made to the question set and to how the results would be used.
- City would commence work to ensure planning was in place for the NSS for next year, regardless of the possibility that this year's results would not be known until late summer. The aim was to ensure that NSS planning was core to academic planning across the institution to avoid it being viewed as "extra" work.
- The Chair of SaFCo had found the paper refreshing with clear plans in place for a concerted University-wide effort in its approach to the NSS.
- The VP, Digital and Student Experience would liaise with the Governance Team to determine when a further update would be provided to Council. **[Action]**

13. Employability Report

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

- The report summarised recent progress in the employability strategy, currently most developed in City's undergraduate population, outlining both embedded employability education and extra-curricular support provision, as well as recent progress made in strengthening governance and leadership of employability across City.
- Next steps planned to realise commitments in the Vision and Strategy 2030 were summarised along with current risks to the achievement of City's employability aspirations.
- Employability in the curriculum: City had been one of the first universities to embed employability into the curriculum, via the Employability Development Plan approved in 2019. In 2022 this was rebranded to communicate more clearly to students and applicants and was now known as the Career Activation Programme.
- City was engaged with Accenture in piloting 'Last mile modules.' This idea borrowed from the language of logistics to describe a module designed to bridge the gap between university education and the workplace, with the objective of accelerating the speed at which a graduate became truly effective and productive. A key element of achieving this was through the backing and involvement of a major employer in the delivery of the module. Discussions with Accenture were planned to consider extending the scheme beyond the School of Science & Technology to other Schools.
- Emerging relationships such as the one with Accenture were very welcome. It would be helpful to consider how the benefits of such initiatives might be accelerated for

every student and avoid the silo approach to this kind of activity. It would also be advantageous to think about how City could encourage employers to be proactive in outlining what type of employees they need and work backwards to ensure students have the necessary skills.

- The Careers Group which was provided by the University of London and provided core talent in career management allowed City to benchmark against it. Recently several University of London partners had withdrawn from that Group and moved away from the centrally provided service. In light of this, City needed to think more strategically and carefully about whether to “go it alone” or whether there was a case to be made for remaining affiliated to the group.
- Council welcomed the informative report and looked forward to a future update.

14. Enterprise Report

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

- The report outlined opportunities for City to progress its strategy as the University of business, practice, and the professions by becoming more enterprising in academic, student, civic and educational domains. It described progress in several areas.
- Student enterprise activity would be managed more actively to ensure that as many students as possible had exposure to student enterprise. Some impressive businesses had been started by students who had won a £5k City innovation prize. But there was a case for setting an intermediate business fund for such activity in order to be able to benefit by drawing back funding, as other institutions did.
- Discussions were underway with Islington about the possibility of City participating in some way in the proposed Moorfields life sciences hub. This could provide the potential to establish a City offering close to Bayes and close to St Georges by tube. This was a distant but interesting prospect.
- Council welcomed the encouraging report and looked forward to the next update.

15. CGNC Recommendations for the Award of Honorary Degrees

Council considered the two nominations as recommended by CGNC.

Decision

Council **approved** the two nominations.

This item is continued in the Closed section of the minutes.

16. 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:

- 16.1 RemCo, 8th November 2022
- 16.2 CGNC, 24th November 2022 and 14th February 2023
- 16.3 Development Committee, 20th February 2023
- 16.4 SaFCo, 9th March 2023

17. Strategic Estates Projects Update

Council noted the update and specifically the development of the Student Gateway Project.

18. TEF Submission to OfS

Council noted the submission.

19. Public Sector Equality Duty Report: Staff and Student Equality Monitoring Report 2021/22

Council noted the report which was published on City’s website on 30th March.

20. Policy Update

Council noted the update.

21. **Council and Council-related Committee Dates for 2023/24**
Council noted the forthcoming meeting dates.
22. **AOB**
No further business for discussion.
23. **FOI Review**
Council **agreed** that no changes were required.
24. **Date of Next Meeting**
Thursday 18th May, Chairs' Dinner on Wednesday 17th May.

Julia Palca,
Chair of Council
April 2023