

**COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 15th MAY 2020**

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	✓	✓	N/M	N/M	N/M	
	Ms Kru Desai	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Dr Paula Franklin	✓	✓	A	A	✓	
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	✓	A	A	✓	✓	
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	
	Ms Philippa Hird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Professor Chris Jenks	✓	A	✓	A	✓	
	Ms Janet Legrand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Sir John Low	✓	✓	N/M	N/M	N/M	
	Ms Hunada Nouss	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Ms Jacky Wright	A	A	N/M	N/M	N/M	
	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	
Staff and Student Members	Ms Tuna Kunt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Ms Liz Rylatt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Professor Debra Salmon	A	✓	✓	P	✓	

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 and Facilities, present until after Item 9.2
Professor Andrew Jones	Vice-President, Research and Enterprise
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator
Mr Paul Marshall	Director of SPPU, present until after Item 8.2
Professor Zoe Radnor	Vice-President, Strategy and Planning
Mr Saqlain Riaz	VP Education and SU President Elect
Professor Paolo Volpin	Interim Dean of Cass Business School

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 20th March 2020 were approved.
- 3. Matters Arising**
Council noted the table of actions arising from past meetings.

USS update

The Director of HR gave a verbal update and noted that:

- USS was continuing with the March 2020 valuation; and City had responded to a USS discussion document on approaches to the March valuation. From the collated UUK response, it would appear City's responses were broadly in line with those of other employers.
- City's responses had reflected the pandemic and its impact on investments but these had been broadly supportive of the dual discount rate approach.

Collectively employers seemed to be willing to take a little more risk for longer in the interests of a more sustainable funding basis for the Scheme, in line with the recommendations of the JEP Phase 2 Report.

- Given the timing of the valuation employers had expressed concern that contribution rates (for employers and employees) were at the cusp of what was sustainable.
- There was more work to be done, including a separate consultation on debt monitoring and a subsequent formal consultation on the Technical Provisions for the 2020 valuation.

JNCHES Pay Negotiation Round 2020/21: update

The Director of HR gave a verbal update and noted that:

- Negotiations on the 2020/21 round had been delayed for the foreseeable future.
- HEIs were being consulted for indicative views on the preferred approach when the negotiations are renewed. This was likely to lead to a revised mandate for UCEA in representing employers, based on institutions' financial forecasting for 2020/21.
- Options for the revised mandate included a range of options, including for a 0% increase.

4. Conflicts of Interest

The Chair noted that Professor Andrew Jones and Professor Zoe Radnor would leave the meeting before Item 10 was discussed.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

SU President Elect

The Chair welcomed the SU President Elect, Mr Saqlain Riaz, to the meeting as an observer ahead of his first meeting as a member on 3rd July.

Enterprise – Spin Out Companies

City's Ordinances regarding the approval of Spin Out Companies were out of line with sectoral best practice in their current form and were unhelpful, from a process standpoint. The Ordinances delegated the power to approve Spin Out Companies to the Chair, but required the Chair to consult Council before taking decisions on these matters. The Ordinances reflected an era in which Spin Out Companies were potentially big businesses requiring internal funding (this was no longer the case). Now City received money from the government to assist with patents but did not provide any funding itself. ExCo had revised governance arrangements at the Executive level to reflect current sectoral best practice and set up an IP Commercialisation Board (of which Ron Zeghibe was a member) to consider proposals in detail.

It was now proposed that proposals approved by the IP Commercialisation Board should be put to the Chair of Council for approval (following ExCo endorsement) and that it should be for the Chair to decide whether wider consultation with Council would be helpful in any particular case (e.g., if a proposal raised reputational issues). Any significant investment of City funding would remain for Council decision.

Decision

Council agreed that City's Ordinances should be revised to make clear that when considering whether or not to approve proposals to create Spin Out Companies, the Chair determines whether wider consideration by Council would be helpful in any particular case. CGNC should agree appropriate revised wording. **[Action]**

6. Council Calendar

Council noted the calendar; and agreed that the July Council Plenary Dinner would be cancelled this year. Council would find another time to give a well-deserved farewell and thank you to Hunada, Janet and Tuna.

7. Students' Union Report

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

- The SU had moved to remote working on 16 March and has since been delivering a remote service for students.
- The SU had developed a risk register to manage its operations; completed a financial reforecast which has since been approved by its Board of Trustees; hosted the 'Student Feedback to Changes at City' survey on its website from 18 to 27 March and used the resultant data to inform SU support for students following the Covid-19 university closure. The SU expected to complete a full and bespoke website redesign by August.
- The annual elections resulted in the following appointments –
SU President: Saqlain Riaz, VP (Community and Wellbeing): Shaima Dallali and VP (Education): Ruqaiyah Javaid.
- As a result of Coronavirus, the SU had not, like other universities, been able to furlough any of its staff. This was because City did not meet the financial deficit requirements of the scheme.
- In cases where staff (whether SU staff or other staff at City) did not have meaningful work to undertake during lockdown there would be increased risks to their mental health and wellbeing. The HR Director noted recently issued guidance to all managers and directors which had suggested that, where this was the case, members of staff should be offered online development opportunities. HR was also working to identify staff who might be usefully deployed elsewhere in City.
- For students who had been furloughed or lost their jobs the key question was about their ability to pay their fees and their living expenses. City's student hardship fund was available to those students who needed assistance with, for example, IT or living costs. The Deputy President & Provost noted that there had been a lot of applications for this funding and it was agreed that it would be useful for Council to receive a more detailed report on this activity at a future meeting. **[Action]**
- The Chair thanked the SU President for her last report and for her huge contribution during her time in office.

Part Two – Major Items for Discussion or Decision

8.1 Coronavirus: Update

Council received a verbal update from the President and the following points were noted:

- UCAS figures released recently showed that fewer undergraduate students had deferred this year than at the same time last year.
- Challenges included: progressing and graduating students; uncertainty around international recruitment; and issues about staff returning to work, with the vast majority of City staff relying on public transport.
- The UUK bid for government support had been covered extensively in the media, and had represented the outcome of debate within the sector. The government's response to the UUK bid had not constituted the last word on support for the sector, but more a first step in supporting HE.
- In relation to research, the DfE were looking to create a funding framework to prevent the loss of talent and had announced the bringing forward of QR payments and the establishment of a Ministerial Research Taskforce.

- OfS was looking to establish a temporary 'condition of registration' which would enable OfS to intervene more in the sector to protect the interests of students.

The Deputy President & Provost noted that:

- In relation to education, a core group (which included the Deputy President, colleagues from SASS and LEaD, Deans, Associated Deans and the Students' Union) was developing the way forward for City, reflecting what was happening in the sector and within the S10 Group and the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority.
- The assessment framework and related policies had had to be redesigned and in a way which also reflected the expectations of City's regulatory bodies. Staff had redesigned exams so that they could be taken as 24-hour open book exams or by way of coursework.
- In terms of outcomes, the Cass taught postgraduates finished their exams in early May and there had been an extremely high attendance rate at over 90%. In addition, the assessment submissions for all City undergraduate students was also at approximately 90%. This was good news, as it had been anticipated that many students would delay submission of their assessments.
- City students who were care givers, estranged from their families, or who have disabilities had been identified in order that they were given as much support as possible.
- The School of Health Sciences had, and continued to have, a particular role to play in national actions against Coronavirus and the School remained in close contact with all students, especially 3rd year students now mostly working in the NHS. The School should be commended.
- City had been assisting students who had been impacted by accommodation and rent issues and fortunately, most providers had waived the 3rd Term fees.
- 60 Student compensation claims were currently in train, with 19 related to Coronavirus and 41 related to industrial action.
- In terms of student recruitment, all "keep warm" activity had moved online and attendance at online events had been very high. Students still wanted to come to City next year but also wanted to know how new arrangements will work. What City originally offered to potential students would no longer be on offer; and so those individuals would have to be made aware of the changes.
- Looking to the future, it was likely that at City, as at most institutions, a mix of online and face-to-face delivery of services would be offered next year. City would also have to decide how "welcome" and registration processes would work; and consultations on the way forward would be taking place with the SU and student representatives over the summer.
- Looking further ahead, a decision whether or not to appoint an Online Educational Director at a senior level would depend on the long-term strategic direction of City and perhaps should be a decision for the incoming President.
- All colleagues had worked extremely hard to support students during the crisis, but special mention should be made of Library colleagues.
- The performance of the current SU President, Tuna Kunt, over recent weeks had been phenomenal; and the Deputy President & Provost ended by extending to her his own personal thanks.

The Director of HR noted, regarding staff issues, that:

- In relation to working safely and securely at home, many liaison meetings had taken place with the Trade Unions to ensure that staff on site and at home were safe and the next stage of those meetings would involve what moving staff back to campus might look like.

- Two recent surveys, one run by the Trade Unions and one by Organisational Development, had brought forward many helpful recommendations. As home environments were so variable it was important to tailor the regular communications and advice to staff with a focus on health and safety. Tailored advice and guidance about domestic abuse, along with advice about debt had also been provided.
- The usual staff support was still available and included a crisis helpline and telephone conversations with two staff counsellors. The waiting list for the counselling service had reduced, which might indicate a reduction in work-related issues.
- There was apprehension from staff about returning to campus, as for most staff, public transport was essential but remained a concern for many.
- The quality of line management relationships was critical at the current time; and there might be a case for looking across the institution to identify where management was strong but also where there were weaknesses.

The CFO noted, as Chair of the Business Continuity (BCM) Group, that:

- The BCM Team was now meeting twice a week and a new Return to Campus Group was now meeting on the other three days of the week.
- The Return to Campus Group was considering the protocols and principles that would govern proposals for reopening City buildings and the approach being adopted was based on a risk assessment framework.
- A flow chart had been developed to help managers at City determine whether or not it was appropriate for teams or individual to return to City buildings. The first question was 'Can your staff continue to work from home?' If managers believed that there was an essential business need for some of their staff to return to campus, a staff risk assessment and building assessment would be undertaken, involving the Trade Unions.
- The current planning was based on a phased "baby steps" return to campus from 1st July.

The Vice-President, Research & Enterprise, noted that:

- The overall picture for grant activity reflected the substantial increases in grant funding by the Government and other organisations in relation to Coronavirus. Overall, engagement from industry and a greater atmosphere and appetite for collaboration among London institutions was encouraging.
- The Research & Enterprise Office had been far busier than anticipated and about 30 applications were in train for the new funding opportunities, including in Health Sciences.

8.2. Coronavirus: Scenarios for the 2020/21 Academic Year and Beyond

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

- A wide range of thinking was being undertaken on the possible scenarios for the impact of Coronavirus in the 2020/21 academic year and on the longer-term implications for City. Decisions would be required on financial, operating and estates issues but the paper solely focussed on the operating scenarios.
- The paper set out four high-level scenarios for the 2020/21 academic year based on the dimensions of UK restrictions to contact and travel in place as a result of Coronavirus and International (including EU) restrictions. The paper also set out parameters that would be used to develop framework plans for Schools and Professional Services to use to guide decisions for the next academic year.
- This work had fed into the work of the BCM Group and the Return to Work Group and now it would feed into work with Schools and Professional Services on their more specific scenario planning during July.

- In addition, the Change Support Unit (CSU) was working on a revised approach to developing options for a new operating model for City, considering the likely longer-term impact of the pandemic.
- Following the meeting the VP (S&P) would circulate to Council members, for information, the links to City's civic work in supporting the community and its students during the Coronavirus crisis. **[Action]**

9.1 Mid-Year Forecast

Council considered the Mid-Year Forecast and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The forecast was prepared at the beginning of April and reflected actions taken thus far in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These actions related to slowing down staff recruitment, deferring some capital and project expenditure, and placing greater controls around discretionary expenditure. Based on current assumptions, the forecast surplus had increased to £5M and the year-end cash balance was expected to have improved by £12M. The work undertaken to date had been to address this financial year, and much more work was needed to look at the impact for 2020/21 onwards.
- The biggest risk for the future was a shortfall in student recruitment in 2020/21 and, given the uncertainty at this stage, one scenario had been modelled, based on the UUK analysis used in the paper "Achieving stability in the Higher Education Sector following COVID-19". For City we assumed a 50% fall in fee income from international (Non-EU and EU) students and a 5% deferral of UK undergraduate students.
- The impact across Schools would be varied, but the effect on Cass would have the most impact on City as a whole.
- All City's covenants were safe in the current year, but the report showed modelling of the impact on the financial plan and in the following academic year the extent of the shortfall in income would mean that the MetLife covenant would be temporarily breached. The CFO would be speaking to MetLife to formally notify them and begin discussions; the discussions should include mention of City's plans regarding Finsbury Square.
- City's financial planning to date did not include any assumptions about possible Government financial assistance. Discussions with government included debate on (i) undergraduate number controls to stabilise recruitment, (ii) funding to support research and (iii) the nature of any 'quid pro quo' that the Treasury might seek in return for government support.
- Council agreed the proposal to defer the approval of a budget for 2020/21 until the Autumn (this would usually have been approved by Council in July).

9.2 Strategic Estates Projects – Cass Finsbury Square (FSQ) Acquisition

Council considered the paper.

This item is continued in the closed section.

10. President Recruitment Process Update

A meeting of the Recruitment Panel was being held following this meeting, to short list candidates for further consideration. Shortlisted candidates would be invited to attend further meetings with other City stakeholder groups including Deans and Trade Unions. Interviews would then take place virtually, from which the field would hopefully be reduced to just two or three candidates, who will meet the panel in person before a final decision is reached. Once the shortlist had been agreed it would be circulated to independent Council Members. **[Action]**

Part Three – Items for Information

- 11. Towards a Strategy Refresh**
Council received the paper.
- 12. Research and Enterprise Annual Report**
Council received the report.
- 13. IT Annual Report**
Council received the report.
- 14. Minutes for Note**
 - 14.1** Audit and Risk Committee, 9th March 2020
 - 14.2** SIPCo, 30th April 2020
- 15. Register of Collaborative Provision**
Council noted the register.
- 16. FOI Review** Council **agreed** that no changes were required.
- 17. Date of Next Meeting**
Friday 3rd July 2020, 9am.

Part Four – Meeting of Independent Members

The meeting of the independent members did not take place on this occasion.

Julia Palca
Chair of Council, May 2020