

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

at the meeting of the

COUNCIL OF THE IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

The special meeting of the Council was held via Microsoft Teams at 5pm on Tuesday 9th February 2021, when there were present:

Mr J. Allan (Chair), Professor N. Brandon, Mr. C Brinsmead, Mr. T. Courtauld, Professor R. Craster, Mr J. Cullen, Mr. R. Kalifa, Sir Jonathan Michael, Ms. S. Murray, Dr. M. Safa, Professor J. Sanders, Mr. A. Sood, Professor T. Tetley, Professor F. Veloso, Professor I. Walmsley (Provost), Professor J. Weber and Mr. C. Williams.

Apologies

Professor A. Gast (President)
Mr. M. Sanderson

In attendance

Mr H. Brar (Director of HR)
Ms R. Knight (Assistant Clerk to the Court and Council).

WELCOME

1. The Chair welcomed members to the Special Council meeting and thanked them for attending at short notice. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the investigation into bullying that had followed a whistleblowing disclosure received in June 2020 and provided a brief summary of the investigation process.
2. The Office for Students had informed the College that they had opened an investigation.

DISCUSSION

3. The elected staff member of Council opened the discussion, followed by the President of the Students' Union and other members of Council. It was noted that the College community were concerned about the impact on College, particularly that the President and Chief Financial Officer had admitted they had bullied staff in emails to all staff and students. Staff and students had concerns that the senior leadership were not being held to account, that they were receiving favourable treatment and that the positions of the President and CFO were untenable. It was explained that the situation was having a

- detrimental impact in some areas of the College, including relations with stakeholders and partners, and distracting from core activities. Both the UCU and the ICU had passed votes of no confidence in the President and the CFO, and a student-led petition had been circulated over the weekend.
4. Council members received assurance that the investigation process had been conducted as set out in the relevant Ordinances, Regulations and Procedures, and that it had been well supported by external lawyers. It was noted that the allegations had been thoroughly investigated, and that a Disciplinary panel had considered the evidence and applied appropriate sanctions that were commensurate with the position and actions of the people concerned.
 5. Members understood the range of reactions from staff and students. It was recognised that previous efforts to address bullying and improve the culture had been undermined. Further mistakes, including the erroneous changes to the Harassment and Bullying policy were causing further disquiet amongst staff and trust in College leadership had lessened. The key issues were communications and governance.
 6. It was agreed that communications and an absence of information had been unhelpful, both within Council and more generally across the College community. Work was needed to better communicate expectations around the Harassment and Bullying policy, including zero tolerance.
 7. The Chair acknowledged that Council should have met sooner and apologised to members. Some members of Council observed that they were not briefed in advance of articles published by national newspapers.
 8. Council discussed the tenability of the positions of the President and CFO in light of the outcomes of the disciplinary action and noted that a formal decision needed to be made on the OfS test for fit and proper person.
 9. Council needed to be confident that the College could move on and that College leadership could be effective going forward. It was suggested that Council should publish a statement to improve communications and provide assurance to the College community. Members agreed to reflect on what they had heard and to consider potential steps forward.
 10. The Chair closed the meeting by thanking members for their contributions. The Council would meet again within 2 weeks to discuss ways forward.

The meeting closed at 6.02 pm.