

Council

22/30 An exceptional meeting of the Council was held via Teams on Friday 1 April 2022 at 4.00 pm.

The Vice-President	(Mrs K. Owen, in the Chair)
The Vice-Chancellor	
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor	
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor	(Professor D. Zaum)

Professor J. Board	Miss G. Loweth
Mrs S. Butler	Mr J. Magee
Professor R. Frazier	Mr P. Milhofer
Professor J. Gibbins	Ms S Maple
Professor U. Kambhampati	Ms L Moses
Mr B. Knowles	Dr C Shaw

In attendance:

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary
The Chief Financial Officer

Apologies were received from the President, Mr T Beardmore-Gray, Mr K. Corrigan, Ms P Egan, Professor M. Fellowes, Professor McCrum, Ms S Plank, Mr S.C.C. Pryce, and Mr N Richards.

22/31 Mrs Owen welcomed members to this exceptional meeting of the Council, which had been called to consider a single agenda item, namely the appointment of its next President. She reminded the Council that Paul Preston came to the end of his term of office as President of Council on 31 July this year. Council had agreed a process for the appointment of his successor, and the associated job description and person specification. It had also agreed an interview panel comprising Kate Owen (in the Chair), Tom Beardmore-Gray, Kevin Corrigan, Penny Egan, Richard Frazier, Ben Knowles and Parveen Yaqoob. Unfortunately, Kevin Corrigan [redacted, section 40] was unable to join the panel and Ben Knowles was also unavailable just before the interview, but was replaced by Grace Loweth. Mrs Owen had consulted with Mr Corrigan after the interviews, and he endorsed the decision that had been taken.

Eight expressions of interest and CVs had been received by the deadline. The interview panel had noted that all the candidates had a significant mix of relevant experience. [redacted, section 40].

The shortlisting panel selected four candidates for the interview, which took place on 22 March. Candidates gave a short presentation on what positive difference they expected to make if appointed, followed by 40 minutes of questions and answers. The panel had selected the following key areas from the JD and person spec to probe in particular:

- Opportunities and threats from the external environment
- Working with the executive, focusing on governance
- How the university should improve its financial position
- How Council should best guide the use of the University's investment portfolio
- The main challenges facing students and how the role of the President might help
- How the Council should be open and transparent with academic and professional services staff.

These was overlaid with the following:

- The candidate's motivation, understanding and passion for Reading and promoting it outside
- Their ability to complement and provide constructive challenge to the VC
- Their ability to take tough decisions and ensure implementation of key issues
- Their support for the current strategy or inclination to challenge and change it
- Their understanding and experience of a change agenda of this size and complexity
- Their interest in further developing and using the skills of all Council members

The panel had assessed the candidates against the above, gave their individual rankings and then discussed the findings and decided who they would recommend for appointment.

They had determined that all candidates were appointable, but that two candidates stood out from what was a strong field. Both had demonstrated convincing motivation, a clear understanding of the line between governance and management, a sound appreciation of finance and risk, a good balance between critical support and critical challenge, a track record of and commitment to openness and transparency, experience of taking into account the student voice, quick and incisive thinking, strong interpersonal skills and an ability to represent the University well externally. However, one candidate had stood out in terms of their understanding of cultural change in especially challenging circumstances, and of how the University of Reading might best navigate its way through such change and of their commitment and passion for Reading.

As a consequence, the interview panel recommended to the Appointments and Governance Committee that Helen Gordon be appointed to the role of President of Council with effect from 1 August 2022, for a period of three years in the first instance (which is the normal arrangement). The Appointments and Governance Committee was supportive for its part and had agreed to recommend the appointment to the Council.

Council was wholly supportive of the recommendation, and noted that members who were absent from the meeting had written to the secretary in support of the recommendation.

Mrs Owen closed the meeting by thanking all those involved in arranging and participating in the recruitment process.