MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

at the

Twelfth Meeting of the

COUNCIL

of the

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

The Twelfth Meeting of the Council was held in the Council Room, 170 Queen’s Gate, South Kensington Campus, at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, 9 November 2009, when there were present:

The Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (Chairman), Professor D.K.H. Begg, Sir David Cooksey, Professor M.J. Dallman, Sir Peter Gershon, Ms. C. Griffiths, Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Dr. M.P. Knight, Professor Sir Peter Knight, Ms. J.R. Lomax, Baroness Manningham-Buller, Mr. J. Newsum, Mr. S. Newton, Ms. K. Owen, Professor S.M. Richardson, Professor S.K. Smith, the Lord Tugendhat, the Baroness Wilcox and the Rector together with the Clerk to the Court and Council.

Apologies: Mrs. P. Couttie, Professor and J. Kramer. As the business of the Meeting constituted a reserved area of business under the Statutes, the President of the Imperial College Union was not allowed to attend.

In attendance: The Assistant Clerk to the Court and Council.

THE RECTOR

1. The Chairman thanked members for attending this special Meeting of the Council. He then advised them that, on 2 November 2009, he had received a letter of resignation from the Rector, which he then read to the Council. He then asked the Rector if he wished to add anything to his letter.

2. The Rector said that it was with a great deal of sadness that he had decided to tender his resignation. However, his priority was, as it had always been, to do what was best for the College. He was, he said, immensely proud of Imperial College, having joined it as an undergraduate in 1965, and having been closely associated with it ever since. Imperial was a world class University and its ethos had been impressed upon him since his first days at the College. The Rector said he intended now to return to his academic chair in infectious diseases in the Faculty of Medicine to concentrate on his research; in this way he hoped to continue to contribute to the College’s success. The Rector ended by offering his full support to whoever was appointed as his successor as Rector of Imperial College.

3. Thanking the Rector for his comments, the Chairman said that his resignation was accepted with deep regret. It was good that the Rector had agreed to stay on until 31 December; and that he would thereafter remain in College, returning to his old Chair: ensuring the College came through the forthcoming transition period with as little difficulty as possible was extremely important.
4. There were, the Chairman said, two actions that now needed to be agreed by the Council, the first being the appointment of a Deputy Rector. Although the Rector would continue in his current position until the end of the calendar year, it was clear that the College needed a Deputy Rector who would be responsible for the internal academic and operational management of the College. He proposed that Professor Stephen Richardson should be appointed to this post with immediate effect.

Resolved: That the appointment of Professor Stephen Richardson as Deputy Rector in accordance with Statute 8(2) be approved with immediate effect.

5. Looking forward, the Chairman said that, as the Rector would be standing down with effect from 31 December, the Council would also need to appoint an Acting Rector for the period from 1 January 2010 until such time as the next Rector was appointed and able to take up office. Council members had been made aware of the name of a candidate who, in the Nominations Committee’s view, might be ideal; anyone concerned about that suggestion was asked to alert the Chairman within 48 hours. If the suggestion found favour, discussion with the candidate could probably be concluded before the next scheduled Council meeting on 20 November. It was currently planned that a public announcement of the Rector’s resignation, and the consequential actions being taken by the College, would then be made on 23 November.

6. The Chairman then reminded all Council members that it was in the College’s best interests to control the flow of information on this delicate issue and he therefore asked everyone to respect the confidentiality of the Rector’s resignation and the Council discussion until this was made public by the College. He acknowledged that there was a risk that news could leak out in the period before the next Meeting and that it might be necessary to move to a public announcement earlier than intended. If that were to be the case, he would seek Council’s approval for the appointment of the Acting Rector by e-mail; it would be good to ensure that the public announcement included news of the appointment.

7. Mr. Newsum also acknowledged the risk that the news of the Rector’s resignation might leak out and he suggested that, if it did, it would be helpful for the external members of the Council to be kept up to date with any developments. Mr. Newton agreed, but said that the longer the College delayed an announcement, the greater the risk that this would become public knowledge. He suggested that the College should at least have an alternative plan for dealing with this situation. Ms. Lomax agreed that the longer the delay, the greater the risk of a leak. The Chairman said he fully understood their concerns. However, he thought it would be preferable to make a single announcement once all matters relating to his resignation had been fully resolved with the Rector and the Acting Rector had been appointed.

8. Closing the meeting, the Chairman reminded members again of the need for confidentiality until the public announcement was made.