



COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 February 2021

Present: Sir Keith O’Nions (Chair), Vicky Bailey, Professor Dame Jessica Corner, Rebecca Craven (until minute 3785), Lynette Eastman (from minute 3772 until minute 3775), Madeleine Fox, Professor Rachel Gomes, Ian Kenyon, Professor Kevin Lee (until minute 3779) , Sonya Leydecker, Professor Andy Long, Professor Jo Lymn, Sherry Madera (until minute 3779), Dr Gabriele Neher , Richard Newsome, Professor Clive Roberts, Nora Senior, Professor Sarah Speight (until minute 3785), David Tilly (save for minutes 3776 and 3777), Professor Shearer West

Apologies: None

In attendance: Dr Paul Greatrix, Rowena Hall, Margaret Monckton, Tim Watkinson, Beena Adatia (for minute .3744), Sally Blackamore (for minute 3773), Lisa Carroll (for minute 3774), Jason Carter (for minute 3772 and 3779), Ian Connerton (for minute 3778), Mike Early (for minute 3778), Neil Hawthorne (for minute 3722), Helen Lawrenson (for minute 3744), Professor Sam Kingman (for minute 3781), Professor Sarah Sharples (for minute 3722 and 3777), Michael Skinner (for minute 3799)

STANDING ITEMS

3765 Welcome and Quoracy

- .1 The Chair reported that the number of external members in attendance at the meeting did not exceed the number of internal members. In order to achieve quoracy on items where Council approval was required, a number of the internal members present at the meeting would formally withdraw, acting only as observers and would not contribute to or vote on the relevant items. This corresponded to Professors Corner, Speight, Lee and Long for Minute 3767 and Professors Corner, Speight and Lee for Minute 3774.

3766 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

3767 Minutes

Council AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 as a true and accurate record of the meeting and NOTED the Action Log.

3768 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute 3760: Amendment to Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference approved by Chair on 14 January 2021.

- .1 The Chair reported that a small modification had been approved by Chair’s action to the Terms of Reference of the Remuneration Committee, which had been approved

by Council at its last meeting under Minute 3760. The amendment specified that the Registrar be permitted to attend meetings of the Remuneration Committee.

ACTION:		Action Owner	Due Date
.2	To circulate the revised amended Terms of Reference of the Remuneration Committee to Council and refer to the alignment with the Committee of University Chairs Higher Education Code of Governance	Secretary	8 March

3769 Chair's Business

- .1 The Chair offered Council's congratulations to the Vice-Chancellor on her award of a CBE in recognition of her services to education in the New Year's Honours list. Congratulations were also offered to Kelly Vere, Director of Technical Skills and Strategy on her award of an MBE for services to championing the role of technicians in higher education and research institutions, and to Kate Robertson, a retired Assistant Professor in the School of Medicine, who had been awarded an MBE for her service to occupational therapy.
- .2 The Chair reminded Council members that whilst a number of changes to the machinery of Council had and were being made as a result of the recommendations arising from the Council Effectiveness Review, it would be important for Council to be clear on its expectations for the future agenda of meetings and the content of papers for presentation. Council's expectations should be cohesive and clear for University staff. There would be an opportunity to discuss the matter towards the end of the meeting.

3770 Vice-Chancellor's Report

- .1 Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor's Report (paper C/21/14).
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on developments since the report had been prepared, which included details of a number of government policy announcements: the Skills for Jobs White Paper, changes to the distribution of the teaching grant for 2020/21, and consultations on student finance, minimum entry requirements, foundation degrees and the Teaching Excellence Framework.
- .3 It had been confirmed by government that the UK would associate with Horizon Europe, although the source of the required funding had not yet been confirmed. Participation in Erasmus+ would come to an end and would be replaced by the Turing Scheme of which there were currently few details.
- .5 Universities received a strongly worded reminder from the Office for Students of their duties under the Competition and Markets Act, requiring them to undertake an exercise in addition to their normal processes to ensure that they were meeting promises made to their students. There were concerns in the Higher Education community that the letter would raise student expectations on redress, cause alarm for governing bodies and place an increased bureaucratic burden on university staff.
- .6 UEB members had participated in an Away Day with sessions focussed on Performance and Ambition, Research Strategy and Size and Shape. Further information would be shared with Council on the topics in due course.

- .7 The Chair indicated that Council members were keen to receive information on government and sector announcements perhaps through the weekly email received from the Director of Communications and Advocacy.

ACTION:		Action Owner	Due Date
.8	To review the weekly communications provided to Council members to include provision of government and sector announcements and briefings.	Director of Communications and Advocacy.	8 March 2021

3771 COVID-19 Impact Update

- .1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an update which covered the University's response to the third national lockdown. Approaches to student return and working arrangements for staff had been communicated promptly. The University's position on accommodation refunds had been published.
- .2 Active COVID-19 cases over the previous ten days stood at 17 student cases and 15 staff cases. The University's asymptomatic testing regime continued at all campuses. Accreditation was being sought to remove the requirement for a follow-up pillar two test in the event of the positive result. Students were being asked to take tests twice a week and were expected to be tested on their return before their keys could be provided.
- .3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted the understandable student anxiety about issues such as assessments, safety nets and accommodation charges. It was anticipated that good and prompt communications would help alleviate anxiety, although it could not remove it all.

3772 Update on Health and Safety

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/13 from Professor Sarah Sharples, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and People and Chair of the Health and Safety Committee.
- .2 Council NOTED the reportable incidents which the Chair was pleased to see were set out in the appendix to the paper. The Health and Safety Committee had given its support to the re-baselined remediation plan and there had been good progress related to fire safety.
- .3 A Council member raised a query on potential supply issues of some health and safety equipment. The Director of Health and Safety would answer specific questions outside the meeting, but it was indicated that there were a small number of shortages of PPE gloves as a result of both Brexit supply chain issues and NHS requirements. These were being managed by the procurement team, who in order to reduce import charges, would be placing larger bulk orders in future.
- .4 Council members were keen to understand whether health and safety initiatives were receiving the right level of support across the organisation given references in the paper to the low take up of training and appointment to safety critical roles. The Director of Health and Safety affirmed that there had been a significant change in the approach to health and safety in the last three years. The PVC EDI and People advised the low level training indicators were as a result of the right information not being captured, which affected the accuracy of figures. It was believed the actual position for training was more positive. The Director of

Governance and Assurance pointed out that activity under the remediation plan would provide the information required to be able to present the metrics correctly.

- .5 Audit and Risk Committee provided detailed oversight of health and safety and was focussed on ensuring that a framework was created to understand and document the strategic approach to the prioritisation of the risks and activity in the future.
- .6 A Council member warned of the risk of diluting scrutiny through the establishment of too many oversight groups. The structure should facilitate scrutiny not support its avoidance.
- .7 Council also NOTED paper C/21/15, including minutes of the meeting of Health and Safety Committee held on 12 January 2021.

FINANCE MATTERS

3773 Latest Revised Forecast 1 for 2020/21 Financial Year

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/02.
- .2 The Chief Financial Officer reported that the first Latest Revised Forecast forecasted that the cost of COVID in 2020/21 would be in line with the original estimate of £150m, but the source of the reduced income and increased expenditure differed, for example, commercial income had reduced more significantly. It was not expected to realise any gains from the ongoing work to improve research margin in the current financial year.
- .3 Overall, the first Latest Revised Forecast predicted a £3m favourable position to budget, however a new set of increased pressures were being experienced that had not yet been built into the forecast. Therefore, decisions about pay and reinstatement of increments would have to be postponed until the second Latest Revised Forecast later in the year.
- .4 The Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed that the University was in a better cash position than it had hoped due to the work done in the previous financial year to monitor and control cash. The Emergency Finance Group would continue to monitor the cash position and its impact on the University's compliance with its financial covenants. Council NOTED the level of headroom available between the predicted debt position and the available facilities.
- .5 The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that additional funds were provided to Faculties where over recruitment had been experienced following the announcement of A-level results. The Medium Term Financial Plan was the mechanism which would ensure the correct level of funding was provided to Faculties as the 20/21 year group entered subsequent years of study.
- .6 Council were reminded that the COVID related budget reduction plans would not be delivered in their entirety as the use of compulsory redundancies had been ruled out in the 20/21 financial year as part of an agreement reached with most of the Trade Unions.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3774 RESERVED

3775 Students' Union – Forward Plan

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/10 introduced by the Students' Union Development Officer and Education Officer.
- .2 Council was pleased to NOTE the progress of activities aligned to the Students' Union strategy, which had been approved by the Trustee Board in January 2020 and included a staff restructure and changes to the process for appointing, training and supporting course representatives. Students' Union activities during the course of the pandemic were highlighted; mental health initiatives and community campaigns.
- .3 Challenges for the future had been identified in the paper and included financial sustainability, staff capacity and managing the, all too frequent, lack of civility towards the Students' Union and its officers. Officers were currently receiving bi-weekly group counselling sessions.
- .4 Detailed work was underway to ensure that materials were in place to support the handover to the new Students' Union Officers in July and continued with the University as the development of blended learning progressed.
- .3 The Students' Union Officers were thanked for their hard work and commitment during a challenging period.
- .4 It was reported that Wonkhe had published an article and report on free speech at universities. The Registrar confirmed that a University group including the Students' Union Development Officer had been established to develop a framework for supporting and promoting free speech. Further information would be provided as work progressed.

ACTION		Owner	Due
.5	To review the Wonkhe report and circulate a perspective on its content to Council members.	Students' Union Development Officer, Secretary	22 February

3776 The Impact of Covid-19 on Education and Student Experience

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/03 introduced by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience which provided details of the approach to planning for ,and the delivery of, teaching for the last six months of the 19/20 session, the 21/22 session and for the future. The paper also set out information relating to the adaptations made by Professional Services in support of the student experience.
- .2 The contribution of the Students' Union Education Officer to the development of plans was NOTED.
- .3 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor explained some of the challenges presented by blended learning. For students, these included struggling to self-pace learning with the perception of more work to do and learning how to learn in the blended environment, and for staff included designing quality teaching which met the different needs of students whilst learning online.

- .4 Council NOTED that the University's experience was that blended learning was more intensive both financially and in terms of staff time required to deliver it.

3777 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/11 introduced by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and People which detailed the progress on the implementation of the EDI Strategic Delivery Plan.
- .2 Council NOTED the establishment of a team of EDI Coordinators across Schools and Professional Services and challenging KPIs for University's staff and student population and the implementation of an EDI Engagement campaign, amongst other initiatives. The SWOT analysis was considered to be extremely useful providing clear oversight to Council of progress.

3778 Risk Management

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/04 introduced by the Senior Risk Advisor which set out developments during 2020 following the launch of the revised Risk Management Policy and Framework in December 2019.
- .2 Council NOTED that whilst all risks had been reviewed in light of the impact of the pandemic with the residual risk being raised in connection with a number of the risks, a specific new risk of 'Impact of COVID-19' had been included on the Risk Register. The details of the Risk Development Plan were NOTED.
- .3 The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee considered that the Risk Register had developed significantly in the 18 months to two years and hoped that it added benefit to University business. The Audit and Risk Committee had reviewed a number of the risks in order to understand them better.
- .4 The Vice-Chancellor expressed concern that risk was not seen as a tool to be used in decision-making but rather as a bureaucratic exercise. There was also concern that the appetite for risk across the University had reduced, a topic which would need to be revisited in due course by the Audit and Risk and Committee and Council.
- .5 Council members were invited to comment on the presentation of the material in the paper and whether it was a useful aide to understanding the risks and their mitigation. It was NOTED that the paper presented outlined a number of the changes which related to the COVID impact. Future reports would include much of the information included in the appendices.

3779 Information Security Risk Review

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/05 introduced by the Chief Information Security Officer.
- .2 The progress made in the implementation of the IT Security Remediation Plan was highlighted and included vulnerability management, security monitoring and improved malware controls. Council NOTED the details of the third phase of the plan which began in November 2020.
- .3 RESERVED

- .4 Meetings had been scheduled with Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors to discuss Information Security assurance measures designed to support the reduction of risks around autonomy in the shared IT environment.

3780 Annual Quality and Standards Report

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/06 which set out the University's approach to ensuring that it delivered well designed courses providing a high quality academic experience for students and that its qualifications held their value over time and met the standards as described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualification.
- .2 The report outlined where and how the University complied with its Office for Students conditions of registration including processes for monitoring and review of programmes, engagement with statutory and regulatory bodies and student involvement in quality assurance processes.

COMMITTEE AND OTHER REPORTS

3781 Faculty of Engineering Update

- .1 Council RECEIVED a presentation (paper C/21/07) from Professor Sam Kingman, Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Engineering which set out details of the Faculty's activity in the last year.
- .2 A focus for the Faculty had been its People in the broadest sense, a key area being how it recruited, recognised and supported its people. It was hoped to create a greater sense of common purpose within the Faculty.
- .3 Council NOTED that the Faculty had recently been awarded Athena Swan Gold. It was both the first gold award received at the University and in the UK for an engineering faculty.
- .4 During the pandemic, the Faculty had responded to support civic requirements for PPE and had conducted airflow modelling work which informed SAGE advice. As a result of the centre assessed A-levels grades, the Faculty would experience higher student numbers than planned in certain areas.
- .5 The calibre of many of the Faculty's 40,000 engineering alumni presented the potential to differentiate the Faculty's offer both through changing student lives and advancing knowledge. Therefore, focus had been paid to developing a range of opportunities for alumni to engage with the Faculty and to volunteer their time.
- .6 A Council member requested further information on the quality of research within the Faculty. The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Faculty ranked 5th in the last REF. The most recent REF submission would show improvement in most key metrics including the impact of the Faculty's research.
- .7 The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor was thanked for his time and the quality of the information provided in his presentation.

3782 Audit and Risk Committee

Council received and NOTED the minutes and report from the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 January 2021, as set out in paper C/21/16

3783 Nominations Committee

- .1 The Chair reported on the progress of Council member recruitment. A high quality and diverse short list of candidates had been identified who it was hoped to interview in March.
- .2 The Registrar advised members that there was a vacancy for an external Council member on the Gift Acceptance Committee; the body that undertook scrutiny of proposed gifts and donations to the University. Further details of the opportunity would be circulated to members.
- .3 Further information was still awaited on the commencement of the board apprenticeship scheme.

3784 Senate Report

- .1 Council received and NOTED the report and minutes from the meeting of Senate held on 19 November 2020, as set out in paper C/21/12.

3785 Council Agenda – Forward Plan

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/12.
- .2 The Chair reminded members that 'Forward Plan' item was the formal opportunity for Council members to express their views on the content of the information provided to the Council meeting and to make recommendations for future meetings.
- .3 A Council member suggested that a good check and balance would be to review the time devoted by Council to the highest priority areas of the strategy, tracking of KPIs and risks.
- .4 A further suggestion was to ensure the purpose and reasoning for presenting papers to Council was clear, if they did not require Council approval. Suggestions for the main focus of Council's discussion in connection with a paper would be welcome.
- .5 A number of suggestions for additional items were made and included international and commercial strategy, Students' Union accountability.
- .6 The Forward Plan was hosted on the Teams site. Council members were requested to make suggestions for additional items directly on the document or provide them to the Registrar.
- .7 Council were asked if they would like to see information on the plans for the research strategy in the forthcoming research performance paper. The Chair advised that further discussion should be had with the Registrar, but that the focus of the paper should remain on performance; future plans should only be referenced where time permitted. It was expected that the paper would include details of how areas of under performance would be managed and areas of exceptional performance rewarded.

CONFIRMED UNRESERVED MINUTES

ACTION		Owner	Due
.2	To send any further comments on the Forward Plan and the content of papers to the Registrar or add them directly to the Forward Plan on the Teams site.	Council Members	Ongoing

Date of Next Meeting: 30 March 2021, 10.30-16.30