



## COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 March 2021

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**Present:** Sir Keith O’Nions (Chair), Vicky Bailey, Professor Dame Jessica Corner, Rebecca Craven (until minute 3802), Lynette Eastman, Madeleine Fox, Professor Rachel Gomes, Ian Kenyon, Professor Kevin Lee, Sonya Leydecker, Professor Andy Long, Professor Jo Lymn, Sherry Madera (save for minute 3796), Dr Gabriele Neher, Richard Newsome, Professor Clive Roberts, Nora Senior, Professor Sarah Speight, David Tilly, Professor Shearer West

**Apologies:** None

**In attendance:** Dr Paul Greatrix, Rowena Hall, Margaret Monckton, Tim Watkinson, Jason Carter (for minute 3793), David Hill (for minute 3797), Neil Hawthorne (for minute 3793), Professor Sam Kingman (for minute 3798), Pip Peakman (for minute 3796), Professor Sarah Sharples (for minute 3793)

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## STANDING ITEMS

### 3786 Welcome and Quoracy

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, and Lymn for Minute 3799, and Professors Corner and Speight for Minute 3802.

### 3787 Declarations of Interest

- .1 In connection with Minute 3795, it was NOTED that all University staff members of Council were members of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).
- .2 No further interests were declared.

### 3788 Minutes

Council AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 as a true and accurate record of the meeting and NOTED the Action Log (C/21/20).

### 3789 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- .1 Council NOTED:
  - .1 Circulation Outcome – Biocity Sale Update (eCirculation C/21/17).
  - .2 Circulation Outcome – Freedom of Speech (eCirculation C/21/16)
  - .3 Circulation Outcome – Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference (eCirculation C/21/19)

- .2 Reserved Item

### **3790 Chair's Business**

Congratulations were offered by the Chair to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, EDI and People, Professor Sharples, on her appointment as Chief Scientific Advisor at the Department for Transport.

### **3791 Vice-Chancellor's Report**

- .1 Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor's Report (paper C/21/21) which included updates on the development of Strategic Delivery Plans to support the delivery of the University's strategy, information on education policy initiatives, and the return of more staff to campus.
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the national funding pressures on research.
- .3 Council was reminded that liaison with UCU continued following the publication of its so-called "alternative financial plan". The Chair affirmed Council's support for the Executive Board's continued transparent and open engagement with the Trade Unions.

### **3792 COVID-19 Impact Update**

- .1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the University's continued response to the pandemic:
  - .1 The University's planning covered all eventualities as it awaited the Government's announcement on whether any further students would be permitted to return to campus.
  - .2 The testing framework continued to operate well and would be extended over the summer and into the autumn term, subject to the approval of a business case.
  - .3 A greater number of staff would begin to return to campus from 21 June assuming the Government implemented its roadmap as planned.
- .2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience explained the development of plans to support the start of session 21/22:
  - .1 Six themes had been identified to support preparation activity: (1) To ensure that students understood the University's approach to blended teaching and its decision to continue the approach in 21/22, (2) To ensure that agency returned to Schools following a centralised approach during 20/21, (3) To ensure that staff were supported to reuse teaching material where appropriate to manage workload challenges, (4) To ensure that returning students were appropriately supported, (5) To ensure the continued delivery of a majority of online assessment save where professional body required otherwise, and (6) To understand and support the differential needs of students.
  - .2 Social distancing would be factored into planning and timetabling for the autumn term.

- .3 Work was underway to formulate the characteristics of the University's future model for blended learning. Initial discussion had taken place at the most recent UEB Away Day. The model would have implications for staff and students and for the University's physical and virtual estate. A Green Paper would be submitted to Senate for discussion in June followed by a further round of consultation. Students would be included at all stages of consultation and the Students' Union Officers would be closely involved in the development activity.
- .4 It was intended that the Nottingham model would reflect the international footprint of the University and support the campuses working closer together. Tri-campus learning opportunities would be built in from the programme development stage. It would also reflect the University's relationships with partners, its civic agenda and its commitment to the sustainable development goals. Alignment with the University's strategy and the strategic delivery plans would be clear.
- .5 In response to a question from a member of Council, the PVC ESE confirmed that there was strong understanding of how the strategic delivery plan for education and student experience intersected with the research plan.

### **3793 Update on Health and Safety**

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/24 from Professor Sarah Sharples, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for EDI and People and Chair of the Health and Safety Committee.
- .2 Council NOTED details of the one RIDDOR (Reports of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) reported since the last meeting.
- .3 Professor Sharples highlighted the key progress and activities since the last meeting of Council as set out in the paper, with particular focus on the completion of the fire risk assessment programme.
- .4 Council also NOTED paper C/21/35, including minutes of the meeting of Health and Safety Committee held on 2 March 2021.
- .5 Sonya Leydecker expressed thanks on behalf of Council to Professor Sharples for her work as Chair of the Health and Safety Committee.

## **FINANCE MATTERS**

### **3794 Financial Overview - Latest Revised Forecast 2 for 2020/21 Financial Year**

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/22.
- .2 The Chief Financial Officer reported that the second latest revised forecast had supported UEB to consider and agree the reintroduction and payment of staff increments for the current financial year.
- .3 The revised Medium Term Financial Plan would be presented to Council at its next meeting. The University was on track to recover well from the financial impacts of COVID-19.

**3795 USS Update**

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/23 which provided an update on the ongoing USS consultation.
- .2 Council NOTED that a planned USS consultation would be opened later in the month. The consultation would seek the views of employers on options to address the scheme's high opt-out rate, and the sizeable deficit including covenant support measures, affordable benefit structures and contribution levels. In line with the UUK position, the University would seek the views of all staff eligible for USS.
- .3 The Chief Financial Officer reported that the delay to the March 2020 valuation was likely to result in the contribution rate increases planned for October 2021 coming into force.
- .4 A second round of USS roadshows had been scheduled to support staff to understand the current position and to begin the process of consultation.
- .5 Council reiterated its support for the University's Executive Board as it navigated a complex position in connection with USS.

**SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS****3796 Annual Research Performance Report to Council**

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/27 which comprised a SWOT analysis of the University's research activity supported by a data pack. An overview of the analysis was provided by the PVC RKE.
- .2 Council NOTED that the launch of the consultation on the research strategy was imminent. It was further NOTED that the Director of Research and Innovation had initiated a Research Planning Working Group to consider some of the underlying issues affecting research performance in connection with processes, financial management and quality. Targets to improve financial metrics connection to research had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- .3 Council members made a number of observations and comments in connection with the paper and its presentation.
  - .1 The University's strong business and industrial research performance should see it well placed for future success given the government's plans to support pandemic recovery through business and innovation. The University should be ready to take advantage of those opportunities.
  - .2 The University should ensure that its successes and strengths were properly communicated both internally and externally. This might also support the building of appetite and ambition across the University.
  - .3 There would be value in ensuring that the University had access to good competitive intelligence.
  - .4 Research quality issues might relate to a dilution of effort. Consideration should be given to areas in which the University might choose to reduce its focus in the future.

- .4 Council was keen to understand more about the University's priorities for research with a particular focus on where the University wanted to make most impact and what it considered should be done to ensure necessary cultural changes were effected.
- .5 A Council member asked if there were any barriers to research improvement. The PVC RKE considered that the wide-ranging consultations taking place as part of the development of the research strategy would surface any particular concerns.
- .6 The importance of addressing research culture at the University was highlighted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The introduction of Level 7 pay banding which would see staff move between bands in either direction dependent on performance should help raise ambition levels.
- .7 The Vice-Chancellor provided a broad summary of the University's current performance highlighting particular strength in its impact commercialisation, its work with industry and in securing Innovate funding. There was important work to be done to change the research culture, to heighten the sense of ambition and to place more emphasis on quality.
- .8 The Chair thanked the PVC RKE for the presentation and confirmed that similar papers on research performance should be submitted to Council regularly.

ACTION		Owner	Due
.9	To provide regular updates to Council on research performance and the development of the research strategy.	PVC RKE	Ongoing

### 3797 Digital Response to Covid-19 and General Update

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/29 RECEIVED from David Hill, Chief Digital Officer
- .2 The Chief Digital Officer outlined the digital support provided to the University throughout the pandemic, which saw preparations for remote learning and working take place in the weeks leading up to national lockdown and increased monitoring of systems and scaling up of VPN services in the first week of lockdown. Over the following months, amongst a number of adaptive changes, a virtual desktop service and click and collect services were developed and required changes to Campus Solutions implemented.
- .3 Details of the corporate digital risk were provided and it was NOTED that it remained one of the highest corporate risks. The risk trajectory was reducing as a result of strategic investments and a range of tactical controls in place.
- .4 A number of key investments for the future had been restarted following temporary pauses during the pandemic and further detail would be presented to Council in the coming months. The Digital Core project would deliver a new solution for Procurement, Human Resources and Finance and the Digital Engagement project would provide the University with a new range of recruitment, marketing and student engagement capabilities. The Foundational IT Services programme had been refreshed with a new approach to procuring an IT foundation partner under development. The IT security remediation plan was due to enter its third phase.

**3798 UNM Report**

- .1 Council NOTED paper C/21/34 introduced by Professor Sam Kingman, Interim UNM Provost, which comprised an update on operational developments and details of the progress of strategic planning and a review of governance at UNM.
- .2 The Interim Provost set out the Planning Framework and timeline for the development of the UNM Strategy Delivery Plan, Campus Strategy and KPIs.
- .3 Clear themes were beginning to crystallise and included: identifying the central purpose of UNM in order to establish clear goals, financial sustainability and identifying investment requirements. A leading theme would be a strong focus on People: developing capability and maturity of the leadership team, providing support and opportunities for staff to achieve their potential and expanding relevant teams within professional services;
- .4 COUNCIL NOTED the draft summary findings of the first phase of a governance review at UNM which had been delivered to the UNM Management Board. The draft findings included key recommendations which covered areas such as reporting, committee terms of reference review, committee membership and training and support.
- .5 COUNCIL further NOTED that interventions were already underway in a number of areas whilst further consultation was underway. The final report and recommendations were due in May 2021.

**3799 Review of Terms of Reference**

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/3 which contained the outputs of a review of the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee and Finance Committee, as recommended by the Council Effectiveness Review.
- .2 Council APPROVED the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee and Finance Committee.

**COMMITTEE AND OTHER REPORTS****3800 Faculty of Arts Update**

- .1 Council RECEIVED a presentation from Professor Jeremy Gregory, Faculty Pro--Vice-Chancellor for Arts (paper C/21/26).
- .2 Professor Gregory outlined some of the highlights for the Faculty in the last year which included a £1.6m ERDF award, £70k of gifts to be used for scholarships and the strong and coordinated response of Faculty's senior leadership and ESE team to the pandemic.
- .3 The Faculty faced the continued national decline in students studying arts and humanities subjects at GCSE and A-Level. More immediate challenges included language study abroad, international staff recruitment caused by the transition from ERASMUS+ to the Turing scheme, visa issues following Brexit and the travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic.
- .4 RESERVED
- .5 RESERVED

**3801 Finance Committee**

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes and report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 24 February 2021, as set out in paper C/21/25.

**3802 Council Member Appointment**

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/36 which proposed the appointment of two Council members.
- .2 A member of the interview panel REPORTED that there had been a strong field of applicants and the individuals recommended for appointment would bring exceptional experience to the governing body.
- .3 Council APPROVED the appointment of Stephen Odell and Piyali Mitra as Council members for a four-year term from 1 August 2020. The appointment of Stephen Odell would remain subject to the approval of a former employer.
- .4 An induction programme was under development which would include inviting the new members to the University as soon as was possible for an in-person visit and to observe online Council meetings during the remainder of the current session.
- .5 The Chair reminded members that Council had approved participation in a Board apprenticeship programme. It was expected that two apprentices would join Council meetings from September.

*Post meeting note: Approval from Stephen Odell's former employer to his appointment as a Council member was received.*

**3803 Senate Report**

Council received and NOTED the report from the meeting of Senate held on 9 March 2021, as set out in paper C/21/33.

**3804 Council Agenda – Forward Plan**

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/31. Council members were invited to provide feedback on the plan and the papers received at the meeting. Comments included:
  - .1 An item on the progress of the development of the research strategy should be considered in the autumn.
  - .2 The quality of Faculty Reports received in the last few meeting had been high.
  - .3 Reports on estates-related activities should be split into two separate items, one the Estates Development Framework and another on specific activities related to students, teaching and research.
  - .4 Ensure that future online sessions were utilised as far as possible to ensure appropriate items were brought to in-person meetings.
  - .5 Evening sessions, prior to in-person Council meetings, should be used for external speakers and opportunities to meet with staff from, or visit, different parts of the University.

- .2 The Registrar reminded members that the size of Council’s internal membership would reduce at the end of the session in accordance with the recommendations of the Council Effectiveness Review. The number of University Executive Board members on Council would reduce from four to two and the number of Senate Council members from five to four. It would be appropriate, and support the business of Council, if observers were invited for relevant sections of meetings.
- .3 The Forward Plan was hosted on the Teams site. Council members were invited to provide any further feedback or to make any further suggestions for additional items directly on the document or provide them to the Registrar.

ACTION	Owner	Due
.4	To circulate the link to the forthcoming lecture from Professor Jonathan Van-Tam	Secretary 31 March 2021

### 3805 Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Compliance

Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/26.

### 3806 Suspensions/Discipline Cases

The Registrar REPORTED that since the last meeting 11 students had been excluded from University of halls of residence due to breaches of COVID-19 regulations. Two students had been excluded from all University accommodation as a result of drug use or possession, one due to actual bodily harm, five due to harassing and bullying behaviours and one as a result of drugs use and violent disturbance.

Date of Next Meeting: 18 May 2021, 11.30-12.30 (Extraordinary Meeting)

*Post meeting note: The Extraordinary Meeting of Council has been rescheduled to 8 June 2021, 14.00-15.00*