



COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 October 2021

Present: Sir Keith O'Nions (Chair), Dr Pearl Agyakwa, Vicky Bailey, Rachel Gomes, Ian Kenyon, Sonya Leydecker, Professor Andy Long, Sherry Madera, Piyali Mitra, Professor Roshan das Nair, Richard Newsome, Stephen Odell, Nora Senior, George Sullivan, Chris Taylor, David Tilly, Professor Shearer West

Apologies: Lynette Eastman, Professor Jo Lymn

In attendance: Ravi Bhalla, Professor Jessica Corner (for minute 3858), Professor Neil Crout (for minute 3858), Linda Goodacre (for minute 3869), Dr Paul Greatrix, Professor Jeremy Gregory (for minute 3861), Rowena Hall, Margaret Monckton (for minutes 3859-3860), Keji Mustapha, Pip Peakman (for minute 3858), Tim Watkinson

STANDING ITEMS

3851 Welcome and Quoracy

- .1 The Chair welcomed members and guests to the meeting.
- .2 Apologies were received from Lynette Eastman and Professor Jo Lymn.
- .3 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- .4 The Chair confirmed that Council's governance apprentices, Ravi Bhalla and Keji Mustapha were in attendance at their first meeting.

3852 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

3853 Minutes

Council AGREED the Unreserved and Reserved minutes of the meetings held on 29 June 2021, 13 July 2021, 12 August 2021 and 7 September 2021 as a true and accurate record of the meetings and NOTED the Action Log (C/21/71).

3854 Chair's Business

- .1 The Chair NOTED that the meeting had been extended to allow for full discussion of two important items. This had also led to a small number of items being starred. These would return to their normal status on future agenda.

- .2 The Chair referred to email correspondence with Sir Colin Campbell circulated to Council members before the meeting, in which concern was expressed about recent performance of the University. The Chair highlighted the significant growth and achievements of the University during Sir Colin's tenure as Vice-Chancellor of the University and subsequently confirmed that he had responded with focus on viable plans for the future.

3855 Vice-Chancellor's Report

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that recruitment for the 2021/22 session had met home student undergraduate and postgraduate targets overall. There had been over-recruitment and under-recruitment in some areas. The final numbers on international recruitment were awaited.
- .2 The start of term period had run smoothly with the extended two-week welcome period received positively by the Students' Union.
- .3 Council were reminded that the UCU was currently balloting for further strike action to take place in the autumn term.
- .4 Nationally, the outcome of the comprehensive Spending Review was awaited and a consultation on fees and funding was underway. The Freedom of Speech Bill was moving from the House of Commons to the House of Lords and the Government's White Paper on levelling up was expected.
- .5 A Council member requested a briefing note on the outputs of the Spending Review following its announcement.

ACTIONS		Owner	Due
.6	To circulate a briefing note on the Spending Review	Registrar	Following announcement of the Spending Review

3856 Update on Health and Safety

Council RECEIVED and NOTED papers C/21/81 and C/21/93, the second of which included minutes of the meeting of Health and Safety Committee held on 1 July 2021.

FINANCE MATTERS

3857 2020/21 Preliminary Financial Performance

Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/77.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3858 Research Strategy – Improving Performance

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/78.
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor provided context and background to the development of the current research strategy which had been launched in 2017. It was designed to be highly ambitious and planned £200m of internal funding over five years, much of which was to seed activity with resultant increases in external funding not expected for a number of years. It was developed with the expectation that robust

Government research funding would continue along with inflationary uplifts in tuition fees. Those circumstances did not transpire.

- .3 As a result of the long lead in time to realising the results of a research strategy, it was still not clear how effective it had been. The REF results due in May would be an indication.
- .4 The external landscape had changed significantly in the last two years with a challenging Spending Review expected and with international student recruitment and research and development funding from industries and charities likely to take time to recover post-pandemic.
- .5 There had been a number of success stories from the current strategy including the establishment of the Nottingham Research Fellowship scheme which had already resulted in fellows being awarded funding as principal investigators and Nottingham Technology Ventures which supported the University's spin-out portfolio.
- .6 Other successes, not specifically linked to the research strategy, included the establishment of frameworks with Siemens and BAE Systems and the leverage of significant external funding in the area of propulsions futures.
- .7 It was acknowledged that not all the Research Beacons established by the strategy had performed well and achieved their objectives. There were pockets of underperformance across the University and the Medical School still faced challenges in achieving prestigious funding awards. Grant capture remained lower than hoped.
- .8 As part of the development of the new research strategy, the University was conducting a thorough assessment and reflection on what was required to ensure improvement.
- .9 The PVC RKE set out the University's developing approach to improving research performance and confirmed the University's aim to be in the top 10 for research income in the next five years which would require a step change in activity including immediate interventions. There had been wide consultation across the University on the development of the strategy.
- .10 Council members were directed to the paper which set out details of actions already ongoing to improve performance. Opportunities for targeted intervention had been identified based on the size of the opportunity for growth and improvement.
- .11 Within the areas identified for targeted institutional invention there would need to be a strategic review of the opportunities available. Consideration would be given to how to invigorate leadership, to recruitment and performance management, whether the balance of research and teaching was optimum and how to accelerate a change in research culture. Improvement activity would require major engagement and change programmes. Work would also be required to support and oversee action plans following the publication of REF results in May.
- .12 The research support structure would be included within the considerations for improving performance.

- .13 In response to a question by a Council member the PVC RKE confirmed that the publication of the REF would provide a good insight into the areas where weaker research was being conducted and might be phased out.
- .14 It was expected that in order to accelerate a change in research culture, the right oversight and support would need to be in place for teams and individuals. The role of Head of School was critical as it set the research culture and environment for the School. Thought would be given to how to strengthen the role and improve recruitment. Ensuring the institutional KPIs were threaded down to Heads of School and teams would also be important, something that the University had not been able to achieve that in the past.
- .15 The PVC RKE was asked to comment in more detail on the Research Beacons. It was confirmed that four of the six Beacons were performing well and had a long-term future. One had been stood down following leadership challenges and one was still at a very initial stage. A review would be undertaken to identify the lessons learned from the programme.
- .16 The importance of research areas connected to climate change and sustainability was highlighted.
- .17 A concern was raised by a Senate Council member about the risk of demotivating staff as a result of the new approach to professorial banding project and potential EDI impacts. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there had been a focus in questioning during open sessions with Heads of School and level 7 professorial staff on the possibility of moving down the salary banding. As a result of this further communications would be issued to staff to address misconceptions. It would be exceptional to moved to a lower salary band and would result from ongoing performance management issues. Professors would not be required to formally justify their current salary every three years. There was evidence from other institutions already operating a similar professorial banding approach that it had had a positive affect on EDI issues, likely as a result of the transparency of the process.
- .18 The Chair confirmed that the University was introducing a professorial banding approach much later than many of its peers. Council would welcome further update on the progress of the implementation of the new approach.
- .19 A number of Council members did not have the opportunity to pose their questions on the paper and presentation. It was agreed that their questions would be added to the minutes as a post meeting note and followed up at the next meeting.

ACTION		Owner	Due
.20	To schedule an update on the implementation of the professorial banding project.	DVC, Registrar	Annually

Post meeting note of questions to be address at the next meeting:

- .1 No specific performance improvement has been identified in relation to ***Infrastructure and platforms for excellence***; however, in green paper discussions with colleagues on Senate and others in general, our existing processes and systems for procurement and purchasing have been identified as a major chokehold on research productivity and impact. What actions are planned to address this issue going forward?
- .2 ***Performance and Impact***- Apart from the fellowship scheme, what is our strategy for retention of talent and mitigation against unnecessary loss of key research staff? What can we learn from other

Russell Group institutions that are performing better than us in relation to funding and supporting research staff? What concrete actions can we take to drive/support systemic change?

- .3 Does the University have the systems (including data crunching capacity to measure us against peers) and processes in place to assess progress against relevant KPIs once they have been agreed and set? Is there a need for further investment here?
- .4 This is a major culture change project. Could a future session cover this in more detail, eg what method(s) are being used, what are the key blockers and how bold is the University prepared to be in tackling them? Is there general buy in amongst staff for the new strategy, do we have the right leadership in place to deliver on it and will we move some of them out of role or out of the university if necessary?
- .5 Is there clarity on the role of the Head of School with regard to management, research and teaching?

3859 Acquisition of Castle Meadow

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/91.
- .2 Council members were reminded about the tight schedule associated with the proposed purchase of the Castle Meadow site and thanked for the time they had devoted to engaging with the executive over the last few weeks and in visiting the site.
- .3 The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of the potential opportunities available if the acquisition went ahead. It would be a significant transformation programme for University. The site would provide a home for the Digital Nottingham project and potentially allow the redevelopment and growth of Nottingham University Business School. Both projects were already in University plans, but locating them at Castle Meadow would allow them to be delivered more quickly, more cost effectively and in a more environmentally sustainable way. The acquisition of the site would also facilitate the University's ambition to deepen its civic engagement and support plans for lifelong learning. The acquisition provided an opportunity to develop a professional focused campus which looked to business engagement in its education and research.
- .4 Details of the risks associated with the acquisition had been set out in the paper alongside their mitigation. There was risk around executive bandwidth to deliver such a large project. Consequently, the commitments of UEB members who would lead on the project were being reprioritised and reallocated where appropriate. It had been confirmed by the Estates department that it had capacity to support the project without impact on health and safety remediation activity.
- .5 It was not considered a significant risk to be increasing the University's physical footprint whilst other sectors were divesting of their estates. There was a general view within the HE sector that the importance of the campus university would remain. A city centre site would speak to the Government's agenda and support the University's civic ambitions. There were longer term plans to reduce the University's footprint through the sale of the Kings Meadow Campus.
- .6 The Chair of Finance Committee reported that there had been a thorough discussion on the business case for the acquisition at the Committee's meeting on 14 September. A number of comments were raised and the executive were asked to address them in a revised version of the business case. Following circulation of the revised business case, Finance Committee had agreed that it should be recommended to Council for approval. The Chair of Finance Committee

considered that the University's finances were strong, the project was affordable, and it allowed earlier delivery of the Digital Nottingham and Business School projects.

- .7 The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the MTFP included costs associated with the acquisition of UNM and Castle Meadow. Ongoing investment in UNM would be achieved through reinvesting its generated surplus. Some short-term loans might be required from UNUK but the amounts were anticipated to be small.
- .8 A Council member was keen that a detailed plan for the mix of use on the site was developed including potential tenants. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that such a plan was under development.
- .9 It was confirmed that mixed feedback had been received from staff about the proposed acquisition. Communication with staff had been limited pending Council consideration of the business case, but if approved, opportunities for deeper engagement with staff would be possible and a careful programme of communication would include steps to manage any concerns about affordability after the impacts of Covid-19.
- .10 Council members were invited to respond to the recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the proposed acquisition. Council members unanimously APPROVED the acquisition of the Castle Meadow site with no abstentions.

3860 USS Pension Update

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/79.

COMMITTEE AND OTHER REPORTS

3861 Faculty of Arts Update

- .1 Council RECEIVED a presentation from Professor Jeremy Gregory, Faculty Pro--Vice-Chancellor for Arts (paper C/21/80).
- .2 An overview of the Faculty size and its comprehensive nature was provided. Healthy recruitment was reported.
- .3 Within Education and Student Experience, work continued on the Faculty's programme level curriculum review and the ongoing implementation of plans to decolonise the curriculum and close the BME awarding gap. The introduction of a foundation programme in arts and humanities was highlighted as a major addition to the Faculty's widening participation strategy. There were also long-term plans to develop capacity for 'multiflex' teaching to retain the accessibility and flexibility of online learning without undermining in person provision.
- .4 Professor Gregory confirmed that the biggest challenge for the Faculty was the reduction in the number of pupils studying arts and humanities subjects at A-level. There was a general misconception that they did not offer a clear route to employment.

3862 Finance Committee

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes and report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 14 September 2021 (paper C/21/72).
- .2 The Chair of Finance Committee confirmed the Chief Financial Officer was currently reviewing whether some of the University's debt could be secured on a longer term basis.

3863 Audit and Risk Committee

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes and report from the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee held on 14 September 2021 (paper C/21/94)
- .2 The Chair confirmed that an Internal Audit report on timetabling had been considered at the last meeting and it included lessons learnt for the University on the impact of the breadth of options made available to students.
- .3 The meeting also discussed the role of Internal Audit moving more to a pattern of assurance.

3864 Honorary Degrees Committee

Council received and NOTED the names of recipients of Honorary Degrees to be conferred in 2022 (paper C/21/73).

3865 Nominations Committee

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes and report from the meeting of Nominations Committee held on 1 October 2021 (paper C/21/95).
- .2 Council ENDROSED the proposed approach to reviewing the process used for the last round of Council member recruitment, the proposed criteria for the recruitment of a Council member to fill the upcoming vacancy and the proposed timetable for recruitment.
- .3 The Chair requested volunteers to act as mentors to the Governance Apprentices. Volunteers were asked to contact the Chair directly and copy in the Registrar.

3866 Access and Participation – Annual Progress Report

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED the Access and Participation Annual Progress Report (paper C/21/74).

3867 Council Agenda Forward Plan

- .1 Council RECEIVED and NOTED paper C/21/92.

3868 Suspensions/Discipline Cases

The Registrar REPORTED that since the last meeting one student had been excluded from the Medical School joint campus at Lincoln. They had been suspended from the University and were subject to an ongoing investigation by the Police.

3869 Council Instruments for Annual Approval

- .1 Council RECEIVED and APPROVED the following documents:
 - .1 Standing Orders of Council (paper C/21/88)
 - .2 Role, Powers & Responsibilities of Council: Delivery and Scheme of Delegation (paper C/21/83)
- .2 Council RECEIVED and NOTED the following documents:
 - .1 Delegated Financial Authorities (paper C/21/84)
 - .2 Council Members: Requirements and Expectations (C/21/87)

3870 Membership Information and Guidance to Note

- .1 Council NOTED the following documents:
 - .1 Conflict of Interest Policy (paper C/21/85)
 - .2 Responsibilities and Liabilities of Council Members (paper C/21/86)
 - .3 Membership and Periods of Office of Council for 2021/22 (paper C/21/75)
 - .4 Council Members' Attendance 2020/21 (paper C/21/76)

3871 Modern Slavery Act 2015 Annual Statement for 2021

- .1 Council RECEIVED paper C/21/82
- .2 The Registrar confirmed that the legislation and Annual Statement applied to UNUK.
- .3 Council members were keen to understand more about the work ongoing at UNNC and UNM in connection with modern slavery and it was AGREED that further information would be provided.
- .3 Council APPROVED the Modern Slavery Annual Statement for publication.

ACTION		Owner	Due
.4	To circulate a note to Council on modern slavery activities at UNNC and UNM.	Chief Financial Officer	30 November