



COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 March 2023

Members:	Eileen Milner (Chair)	Matt Atkinson	Karl Bates
	Professor Shirley Congdon	Paul Donovan	Kersten England
	John Hinchliffe	Faiz Ilyas	Victoria McKay
	Terry Hartwell	Ahmed Malik	Sally Neocosmos
	Professor Amir Sharif	Lee Rawlinson	Iqra Tabassum
	Professor Vishanth Weerakkody		

In attendance: Professor Udy Archibong, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, EDI (for item 51)
Ailie Ferrari, Associate Director, Advertising, Marketing & Student Insight (for item 49)
Richard Greenwood, Associate Director, Planning and Performance (for item 53)
Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head, Governance
Professor Zahir Irani, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Andrew Lang, Chief Finance Officer
Max Longstaff, Hybrid (for item 49)
Jennifer Neville, Hybrid (for item 49)
Riley Power, University Secretary
Paul Watson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience (for item 53)

Apologies:	Karen Bach	Zoe Burns-Shore	Dame Sally Dicketts
	Ibrahim Mahmood	Professor Maryann Hardy	Sanjay Patel

The meeting was preceded by an insightful presentation from Paul Mount, Deputy Agent, Bank of England on the role of the Bank of England in the economy, the general market outlook and interest rates, and views on the Yorkshire economy.

46.22-23 Report from the Chair

- 46.1 The Chair of Council noted that Paul Donovan was attending the meeting via MS Teams. This was exceptional as attendance via Teams was not a practice that would be adopted by Council going forward. The importance of in-person attendance was noted.
- 46.2 The Chair drew attention to the complex and challenging environment in which the University operated, including the fragility in the sector with regards to funding and HE policy. Point of note included:
- that international students continued to be a political flashpoint and the Executive would continue to closely monitor future immigration policy changes. Universities UK, a collective voice of 140 universities, continued to work to influence government plans in relation to international students. An announcement from government was expected imminently.

- that Dame Nicola Dandridge, former Chief Executive of the Office for Students, had been invited to visit the University as part of her new research portfolio.

47.22-23 **Vice-Chancellor Update Report (Document C43/22-23)**

47.1 Council received and discussed the Vice-Chancellor's report, in which she provided information on key matters affecting the University since the last meeting and against each of the University's sub-strategies. Among topics highlighted were:

- that a sub-group of Council had been convened to further support the Executive with the development of the University's institutional growth and sustainability plan as outlined in Document C43. Council would have an opportunity to greater consider the emerging growth and sustainability plan at its next strategy day in May.

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- Clearing would be critical to optimise recruitment in 2023/24 and Council was assured that mechanisms were in place to deliver a resilient, quality and fit for purpose service during the Clearing period. The University's approach to Clearing would be shared with Council in due course.
- BTEC qualifications would no longer be funded by government from 2024 and work was underway to evaluate and mitigate any risk to undergraduate admissions.
- the installation of the Chancellor would take place on 6 March.
- the University enhanced performance on graduate outcomes.
- that the £3M SITS development programme would support the implementation the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy and ongoing quality monitoring of the academic portfolio.
- a net-zero plan would be developed, led by the Director of Infrastructure, and supported by Council expertise.

Note: parts of the above minute have been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.

47.2 [REDACTED]

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Note: the above minute has been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.

47.3 The Vice-Chancellor reported that the number of students failing academically or deciding to withdraw was generally in line with the sector in terms of pre-pandemic levels and the University was not out of kilter with other universities. Engagement plans were being developed to ensure that Faculties continued to engage with students who were retaking modules / assessments, including those on non-clinical placements to ensure they returned to full-time study. Council was assured that further work was being undertaken to maximise students completing repeat assessments / returning to study, and data on how many repeating students completed their degrees would be shared with Council. It was also noted that 'student retention and progression' was a workstream within Phase I of the growth and sustainability plan.

- 47.4 **ACTIONS:**
- share the University's approach to Clearing (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
 - share data on how many repeating students completed their degrees (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

48.22-23 **Report from the Students' Union (Document C44/22-23)**

48.1 Council received a report from the UBU Education and Student Affairs Officers on current issues and recent activities which included an update on Semester 2 events (refreshers' week and the Kickstart programme); UBU elections which would take place at the end of March; implications associated with the cost-of-living crisis for students; student representatives; the support provided by the UBU advice centre; and Sabbatical Officer objectives for the remainder of the academic year.

48.2 Council thanked the UBU Officers for their report and commended the excellent work that was being undertaken by the UBU, including their contribution to the Teaching Excellent Framework via their student submission. Thanks, were also extended to the TEF Working Group, led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience for coordinating the institutional submission. The University's commitment to be recognised for the excellence of its teaching under TEF was welcomed by Council.

49.22-23 **Branding Project Presentation**

- 49.1 Council received a detailed presentation from Hybrid (external marketing specialist) on the work that was being undertaken on the University's brand development project. The creative concept / brand identity was shared with Council noting it was based on extensive research and consultation that had received positive feedback from the Brand Steering Group and was supported by the Executive Board.
- 49.2 Council considered the presentation and recognised the importance of the University having a strong, distinctive identity and brand in a highly competitive HE sector. The creative concept, which was centred on the 'threads that made the fabric of Bradford' was discussed, including the approach to testing the effectiveness of the visual identity, and valuable feedback and reflections on the approach were provided. Clarification was provided on the concept noting it was about turning heritage into a modern connotation, with the potential to bring this 'to life' in the visual design, with a focus on the University's approach to employability, inclusivity and impact being 'woven' in. It was further noted that the brand essence needed to be fit for the present, as well as the future. The importance of capturing the essence of 'why Bradford' was also emphasised.
- 49.3 Council sought further assurance around the value proposition underlying the brand and it was confirmed that an inclusive and comprehensive approach to 'audience' testing would be undertaken, including students, staff, and key stakeholders. Council was pleased to note that a consultation and testing session would be arranged at which the brand essence, creative concept and the visual design approach would be further explored.
- 49.4 **ACTION: provide further consultation and testing session with Council as part of the Brand Project (University Secretary)**

50.22-23 **Early Financial Forecast (Document C45/22-23)**

- 50.1 The Chief Finance Officer noted the early financial forecast (3+9) and provided a brief overview of the mid-year (6+6) forecast which was under development. The mid-year forecast, which would be subject to review by Finance Committee in late March, predicted a surplus of £6.8M; this was ahead of budget and forecast and would generate an EBITDA of c.£15M which was in line with the University's Financial Strategy. This reflected strong student recruitment and continued firm cost control.
- 50.2 The forecast highlighted the University's reliance on international postgraduate income. The undergraduate shortfall in 2022/23 was offset by the exceptional international postgraduate recruitment; this was not anticipated to recur to the same extent in 2023/24. The importance of having a managed and robust growth and sustainability plan, specifically in relation to undergraduate home recruitment was emphasised.
- 50.3 Points of note included that the University had measures in place to assist with debt recovery in order to improve this position. Debt recovery would also help with cash balance projections in future years; that plans were in place to significantly improve

student retention; the need to be considerate with long-term investment; that student number targets had been agreed for 2023/24-2027/28 and these would be used in budget setting and operational planning; and that undergraduate international fees, including scholarships, would be considered by the Fees and Scholarships Group to ensure they remained competitive and in line with the sector. Clarification was sought on the shortfall in returners against the undergraduate recruitment target and this would be addressed outside of the meeting by the Pro Chancellor and Treasurer and the Chief Finance Officer.

50.4 Following discussion of the report, Council **approved** the early financial forecast, and thanked the Chief Finance Officer and his team for the detailed work that was being undertaken on the mid-year financial forecast.

51.22-23 **EDI Annual Report 2021/22 (Document C46/22-23)**

51.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, EDI attended the meeting to present the University's first EDI Annual Report which provided a powerful and positive overview of the University's compliance with, and delivery of, the Public Sector Equality Duty. It reported on activities from 2021/22, noting it had been subject to detailed review at the preceding meetings of People Committee and Executive Board.

51.2 Attention was drawn to the key achievements against the University's EDI Strategy which reflected the first phase of EDI delivery. Council was pleased to note the Executive's continued commitment to this area, noting that the EDI Strategy aligned with the University Strategy which together provided a robust framework within which to embed and champion EDI across the institution. The Chief Executive of Bradford Metropolitan District Council welcomed the EDI work being undertaken with the city and wider region and extended the district's gratitude in relation to this. Council also welcomed the important consideration being given to issues of intersectionality, and the closer alignment between the EDI and People Strategy implementation plans.

51.3 Following discussion, at which Council commended the University's achievements and future plans, Council **endorsed** the Annual Report, noting it provided assurance as to the extent and effectiveness of activities in this area and that the University continued to work on developing sector-leading practice. The University had achieved external recognition for its continued commitment to EDI through several awards and it was recommended that these should be highlighted in the Vice-Chancellor's Foreword. It was further noted that the Annual Report would be made publicly available via the University's website as evidence of the University's commitment to EDI.

51.4 Council noted that the next iteration of the report would include stronger reference to the work being undertaken in relation to LGBT+ to deliver a climate of inclusion; this was a priority for 2023, and the work that was being undertaken on managing the presence of children on campus, in conjunction with HR, noting the importance of health and safety in this regard.

52.22-23 **KPI Review (Document C47/22-23)**

- 52.1 Following feedback from Executive Board and Council a review of the University's KPIs had been undertaken to rationalise and reduce the number of institutional KPIs. Document C47 presented a proposed list of 28 KPIs (reduced from 43), noting that each KPI had a member of Executive Board as its 'owner'. The KPIs were designed to provide a broad overview of progress against University strategies and a specific measure of that progress against a defined target. It was reported that over half of the KPIs remained annual measures and further work was being undertaken in order to move to more frequent 'in-year' measures to assess progress against strategic objectives and enable appropriate intervention where required.
- 52.2 During discussion Council noted that the quality of the measures was paramount; that sustainability was broader than estates; and the suggestion to have a measure around brand/brand awareness once this had been defined. It was questioned why the league tables indicators had been removed from the proposed KPIs and it was noted that it was more important to monitor what drives the leagues tables as this resulted in the league position and these measures (i.e., NSS, completion rates, graduate outcomes, spend etc) had been captured in the essence of the proposed KPIs. Council also recommended moving from an annual staff survey to more frequent opportunities to engage with staff with regular 'temperature checks' being undertaken in a shorter more targeted format. This would give closer to real-time data about staff sentiment on key matters of institutional significance. It was requested that this be taken forward as a priority action.
- 52.3 Council **approved** the proposed suite of KPIs, subject to consideration of M52.2, and noted that further work would be undertaken with Executive leads to agree the targets, tolerances, and variances for the new measures.

53.22-23 **League Tables Presentation**

- 53.1 Council received a detailed presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience on University leagues tables namely The Times Good University Guide, The Guardian University Guide, The Complete University Guide, The Times Higher World Rankings, and The QS Rankings.
- 53.2 During the presentation, the PVC, LTSE outlined what drives the leagues tables and the conflict between the drivers, which metrics were important, the variables that generated change, and what was required to seek improvements, noting that the Guardian's methodology most closely aligned to the University's mission, vision, values, and strategy. It was noted that league tables were published annually but had inconsistent publication dates and overlapping data periods. The importance of the NSS results in league tables was discussed with Council noting that work continued to secure improvements in NSS scores, with strategy delivery being the primary means to enhancing the student journey and student experience and achieving positive changes in this area. Council also noted that the University's relative future performance would also partly depend on actions by other UK and global institutions.

53.3 Council welcomed the presentation noting the complexities and challenges associated with league tables. Each compiler developed their own methodology and methodological differences led to different overall positions in the different rankings. The University continued to drive institutional performance to improve the University's ranking in the league tables and to optimise and demonstrate progress with league tables metrics / indicators aligned to strategy.

54.22-23 **Report from the University Secretary (Document C48/22-23)**

54.1 Council received a report from the University Secretary on the ongoing work related to areas of governance pertinent to Council and the University. Following consideration of the report, Council **approved**:

- the extension of the contracts for the internal audit (RSM) and external audit (BDO) suppliers for a term of two years, as proposed by the Audit Committee.
- the University's Risk Management Policy, following endorsement by the Audit Committee.
- the acceptance of the donation of c£2.25M from Dr Murthy Renduchintala over a period of three years to establish and seed fund the Bradford Enterprise Ecosystem, following endorsement by the University Ethics Committee.
- the Research Concordat.

54.2 Council also noted:

- the minor amendments to the Council Member Privacy Notice that had been made to ensure that the notice indicated that Council meetings may, on occasion be recorded.
- the Office for Students reportable events, noting that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience would become the University's Designated Safeguarding and Prevent Lead from March.
- that following a tender exercise, GatenbySanderson had been appointed to lead the Council Effectiveness Review.
- that the University had engaged executive search consultants to support in lay governor recruitment, including a new Chair of the Audit Committee.
- that the 2023/24 Committee Year Planner would be circulated to Council outside of the meeting, for reference.

55.22-23 **Reports from Senate and Council Committees (Documents C49-53/22-23)**

55.1 Council received and noted the summary reports from Senate, Audit Committee, Finance Committee, University Ethics Committee and People Committee.

56.22-23 **Register of Interests (Document C54/22-23)**

56.1 Council received and noted the register of Council members interests.

57.22-23 **Minutes of the Meeting on 30 November 2022 (Document C55/22-23)**

57.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 30 November 2022 were approved by circulation prior to the meeting.

58.22-23 **Matters Arising and Action Tracker (Document C56/22-23)**

58.1 Council received a report on matters arising from the Council meeting on 30 November 2022 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

59.22-23 **Student Recruitment Update (Document C57/22-23)**

59.1 Council received the report which provided an update on applicant numbers for April and September 2023 intakes, the new creative marketing and recruitment activities being undertaken to increase applications for these cohorts and the key risk factors impacting each market segment.

60.22-23 **Prevent Report (Document C58/22-23)**

60.1 Council received the report which provided an update on the University's implementation of the Prevent Duty.

61.22-23 **Council Terms of Reference and Membership (Document C59/22-23)**

61.1 Council received and noted the report.

62.22-23 **Draft Council 4 Agenda, May 2023 (Document C60/22-23)**

62.1 Council received and noted the report.

63.22-23 **Council Schedule of Business (Document C61/22-23)**

63.1 Council received and noted the report.

Secretary: Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head, Governance

Date: March 2023