

## COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022

<b>Members:</b>	Eileen Milner (Chair)	Karen Bach	Zoe Burns-Shore
	Carl Chambers	Professor Shirley Congdon	Terry Hartwell
	John Hinchcliffe	Victoria McKay	Karen McMahon
	Ahmed Malik	Ibrahim Mahmood	Sally Neocosmos
	Professor Amir Sharif	Iqra Tabassum	

**In attendance:** Professor Zahir Irani, Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
Andrew Lang, Chief Finance Officer  
Joanne Marshall, Director of People and OD  
Riley Power, University Secretary  
Rachel Trawally, Governance and Projects Officer (Secretary)  
Paul Watson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, LTSE (for item 1)

**Apologies:** Karl Bates                      Kersten England                      Jacqui Holgate  
Sanjay Patel

1.22-23    **Update on Student Surveys – Presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience**

- 1.1 Council received a presentation from the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience on student surveys, which included the International Student Barometer (ISB), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), National Student Survey (NSS) and the Times Good University Guide (TGUG).
- 1.2 The presentation highlighted:
  - ISB had outperformed in overall satisfaction against the University's benchmark and satisfaction from international students had increased since the last survey,
  - PTES had outperformed in most areas – specifically against overall satisfaction and the University's own benchmark.
  - TGUG indicators relating to teaching quality and student experience had slipped considerably which had impacted on the overall scores.
  - There had been a reduction in overall satisfaction compared to the previous year in the NSS and a detailed analysis had been undertaken.
  - That across all the student surveys, satisfaction varied between the experience of home and international students, as well as across subject areas, noting that home and EU students reported lower overall satisfaction.
- 1.3 A discussion proceeded in relation to the importance of the focus on improving the student experience by ensuring students were clear on what the course involved, where they needed to be, what the assessment was, that they were valued and that

they were aware of the support services available throughout their studies. This would be discussed further at the Council strategy away days on 13-14 October 2022.

### 2.22-23 **Report from the Chair**

- 2.1 The Chair of Council welcomed all members to the meeting. Zoe Burns-Shore and Karen Bach, two new lay members, the Sabbatical Officers, Ahmed Malik and Iqra Tabassum, and the new Chief Finance Officer, Andrew Lang were also welcomed to Council.
- 2.2 Thanks was noted to Baroness Ann Taylor for her work and support to the new Chair of Council during the transition. Thanks, was also noted to Shahnaz Ali, whom had been a lay member of Council since 2015 and had stepped down with immediate effect due to personal/health issues.
- 2.3 The new Chair of Council introduced herself to Council and noted the importance of celebrating the University's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary which provided an opportunity to set the future ambitions for the University. This would be discussed further at the Council away days.
- 2.4 It was noted that following the change of leadership within Government, a new Secretary of State for Education had been appointed with an apparently significant focus on early years education. No clear steer had been provided on the focus in terms of higher education going forward, however this would be discussed as details emerged.

### 3.22-23 **Vice-Chancellor Update Report (Document C1/22-23)**

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor formally welcomed the new Chair of Council and new members and provided an update on key matters affecting the University since the last meeting of Council including the key challenges facing the sector over the coming year.
- 3.2 Highlights included:
  - the increased impact of the financial crisis, noting there had already been a strong call on the hardship funds and further consideration was being given to additional measures of support that could be provided.
  - the successful graduation ceremonies held over the summer which included graduates from the last academic year and a number of students that had been unable to attend previously due to the pandemic.
  - the positive news that the University's 2-year funding raising target had been exceeded.
  - the successful launch of the Renduchintala Centre for Space AI.
  - an update on communication channels within the University noting the University Assembly, which took place in June 2022, provided staff with the opportunity to

ask questions of the Executive. Regular meetings were also being held with middle managers and the re-introduction of a revised format for 'TeamTalk' to support internal communication was noted.

3.3 Council discussed the following matters:

- cost of living – the importance of ensuring the University was connected to the wider work of the district was noted.
- that additional measure of support for students were being considered to assist students who were suffering financial hardship.
- the importance of working with local agents to ensure availability of student accommodation, especially for international students with dependents, given the high demand for property in Bradford. This was being considered by the Director of Infrastructure.

3.4 **ACTION: provide a briefing on the student hardship fund to a future Council (Pro Vice-Chancellor, LTSE)**

#### 4.22-23 **Report from the Students' Union (Document C2/21-22)**

4.1 Council received a report from the UBU Student Affairs Officer and the UBU Education Officer on their strategy and key goals for the 2022/23 academic year, noting:

- the plans for freshers' activities, including events and activities arranged for new students, sports and social clubs and faculty specific events.
- the new sports model that had been put in place by reducing the price of membership and offering an early bird rate.
- that all fresher events were being subsidised to help students given the cost-of-living increases.
- a new LGBTQ+ safe space and renovation of the student media space had been opened.
- the Student Representation Policy had been reviewed to provide clarity on their roles.
- given the rise in academic misconduct cases, the UBU was launching its own campaign to engage students to support them with their studies and raise awareness on academic misconduct regulations.

4.2 Council fed back that it would be useful to provide a metric on key measures to see how many students the UBU were looking to attract, so that next year they could assess whether they had achieved their targets. It was noted that data was now being collected and as such they would be able to provide an update on this going forward.

4.3 The importance of educating students on key messages was also noted e.g., "you said, we did", including the importance of students being proud of studying at the University.



*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.*

## 7.22-23 **Summary of Financial Position, September 2022 (Document C5/22-23)**

- 7.1 The Chief Finance Officer provided an overview of the financial position at the start of the 2023/23 year, noting that the results were well ahead of budget, and this was not expected to change significantly.
- 7.2 The CFO highlighted the following points:
- The external auditors, BDO, were progressing their year-end work, and noted that no significant issues had arisen to date.
  - It was expected that the year-end would close ahead of the late forecast of £7.1M. This did not factor in the pension valuation adjustments.
  - Bad debt provision had doubled this year, and work was underway to mitigate the risk associated with this.
  - The increase in postgraduate student numbers put extra pressure on resources and temporary recruitment would be made to support this.
  - The cost-of-living crisis was noted. The University had budgeted for increase costs, but its impact was anticipated to be worse than originally expected given increases in energy costs and squeezes on supply chains.
  - It was reported that the current Pension deficit was at £14.9b, with an interim quarter deficit of £1.8b.
  - Capital expenditure was expected to be higher than anticipated, with £7M being carried over from 2021/22. A progress report would be provided to Council in due course on plans for the upgrade of the estate.
- 7.3 **ACTION: present progress report on plans for the upgrade of the estate to a future Council (Director of Infrastructure)**
- 7.4 Council discussed the report and noted that the University would commence work on its growth plan aligned to its strategy, with the focus on increasing student numbers in line with growth targets whilst ensuring quality and sustainability for the future.
- 7.5 The Chief Finance Officer also reported that Incanthera plc had requested a payment holiday from the University in order to meet going concern requirements for its year end accounts in August 2022. Incanthera were hopeful they would secure commercial contracts within the next year and an update would be provided at the next Finance Committee.
- 7.6 It was noted that there had been a reduction in the University's investment portfolio, and the Chief Finance Office was meeting with Stanhope, the Investment Advisor, in

early October to discuss this. It was noted that this was within the tolerance levels and that energy stocks had been impacted given recent markets.

#### 8.22-23 **People Update Highlights (Document C6/22-23)**

8.1 The Director of People and OD presented an overview of current and upcoming issues on the People agenda and provided updates on the pay award, industrial action, staff vacancies and recruitment, and the Staff Pulse Survey.

8.2 The following areas of work were highlighted:

- the need to move forward with the People Strategy delivery plan, considering the EDI agenda and the importance of ensuring employees felt a sense of belonging and value, and the impact of this on students.
- that a Staff Pulse Survey was being undertaken in October to identify gaps and areas of improvement.
- cost-of-living – consideration was being given on support measures for staff, building on the pay award and what was happening nationally.
- UNISON had not secured the threshold for strike action following a recent ballot.
- the UCU ballot was currently open, but it was not expected that this would impact students given the low numbers of staff in the Union.
- the University had appointed over 400 new starters, despite the current labour market.
- staff turnover was high for 2021/22 at 16.5%, this had dropped during the pandemic but had been at 20% in 2018/19. Measures had been put in place to support recruitment to posts and more proposals were being developed, with 41 projects under the delivery plan.

8.3 Council discussed the following matters in relation to the update:

- the lead time on vacancies and the impact on the student experience. It was confirmed that for Professional Services vacancies the lead time was 12 weeks, however for academic post this was longer due to notice periods, noting that temporary staff were being required to support the gaps.
- the long lead time between the staff pulse surveys noting it would be difficult to pinpoint issues over an annual period which highlighted the importance of more real time feedback.
- clarification was requested on whether the 41 projects within the People Strategy delivery plan were all projects or whether a number were simply actions that required completion. Council suggested that the Executive should reflect on the projects in order to give greater focus to the delivery plan.

#### 9.22-23 **Report from the University Secretary (Document C7/22-23)**

9.1 Council received a report from the University Secretary on the ongoing work related to areas of governance pertinent to the work of Council and the University.

9.2 The University Secretary provided an update on the appointment of a new Chancellor, noting that a joint meeting of Senate and Council would take place in October 2022 to approve the appointment.

9.3 The University had undertaken a successful lay governor recruitment process and three candidates had been appointed to commence their terms of office on 1 October 2022. A strong field of candidates had been received and a fourth candidate would be brought onto Council in conjunction with any vacancy that may arise by July 2023. In order to keep the candidate engaged they would be provided with opportunities to observe and informally engage with Council.

9.4 Council **approved** the removal of Regulation 20 concerning the use of the Library, noting its replacement with the 'Use of the Library Policy' that would be considered and approved by Executive Board on 28 September 2022.

10.22-23 **Register of Interests (Document C8/22-23)**

10.1 Council received and noted the register of Council members interests. No further declarations of interest were received in relation to the business of the meeting.

11.22-23 **Minutes of the Meeting on 6 July 2022 (Document C9/22-23)**

11.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 6 July 2022 were approved by circulation prior to the meeting.

12.22-23 **Matters arising and action tracker (Document C10/22-23)**

12.1 Council received a report on matters arising from the Council meeting on 6 July 2022 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

13.22-23 **Council Terms of Reference and Membership (Document C11/22-23)**

13.1 Council received and noted the report.

14.22-23 **Draft Council 2 Agenda, November 2022 (Document C12/22-23)**

14.1 Council received and noted the report.

15.22-23 **Council Schedule of Business (Document C13/22-23)**

15.1 Council received and noted the report.

16.22-23 **Any Other Business**

16.1 The Chair of People Committee noted that following the introduction of this Committee in 2019, there had been absence, external membership issues, and the

impact of the pandemic. It was therefore intended to develop a clearer focus on the work of the Committee to ensure its terms of reference was being implemented, noting that this Committee was responsible for providing governance oversight and assurance to Council on strategic people matters. The importance of bringing together HR, EDI, and Health and Safety and to focus on the employer brand and the student experience was noted.

Secretary: Rachel Trawally, Governance and Projects Officer

Date: 27 September 2022