

Council

24 February 2022

Minutes of the University Council meeting held on Thursday 24 February 2022 at 2.00pm, ending at 4.10pm, via MS Teams.

Present: George Garlick (Chair), Dr David Barrett, Phoebe Bastiani, Frances Hanson, Professor Susan Lea, Vanessa Lee, Ursula Lidbetter, Dr David Richards, Neil Robinson, Rosalyn Schofield, Matthew Swindells, Richard Thompson, Denise Wilson.

In attendance: Professor Becky Huxley-Binns, Dr Alexis Brown (HEPI, for item 47), Professor Philip Gilmartin, Professor Paul Hagan, Professor Stephen Hardy, Jeremy Hartley, Professor Andy Heyes, Dr Chris Ince, Liz Jenkinson (for item 50) Dr Darren Mundy, Derek Ord

Minutes: 43 - 58

Action by

43 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations

David Barrett and Neil Robinson were welcomed to their first meeting of Council.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Holly Burton, Matt Jukes and Julia Whittaker.

44 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 were approved as a correct record. It was agreed that the minutes be published on the University website.

45 Matters arising

There were no matters arising noted.

46 Chair's Report

(a) Senate appointment to Council

It was reported that following a recent election, Dr David Barrett was nominated as Senate member on Council.

RESOLVED:

That Dr David Barrett be approved as Senate member on Council.

(b) Vice-Chancellor Recruitment update

It was reported that the closing date for applications was imminent and that several positive conversations had taken place with possible applicants. There was felt to be a strong interest in the position.

47 Dr Alexis Brown – Director of Policy and Advocacy, Higher Education Policy Institute

Dr Alexis Brown presented to the meeting on the subject of 'Current Issues in Higher Education Policy'.

It was noted that the recent announcements regarding possible changes to the tuition fee regime had made the presentation particularly apposite.

It was noted that several options had been available to the government to address perceived problems with student funding, but that a decrease in the fee levels was not currently suggested. It was discussed that the changes in the fee and repayment system may not dissuade students from entering HE, but that the loans do negatively affect students once on course, leading to stress and mental health issues.

The possible disproportionate impact on non-traditional entrants and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds was noted, and particularly the possible impact on Hull. The apparent lack of connection between the proposed changes and the current 'levelling up' agenda was noted.

Concern was also expressed that the proposed policy changes may lead to a north/south disparity, particularly if students will opt to live at home in increasing numbers.

Dr Brown was thanked for her interesting and valuable presentation and discussion.

48 Management Report

The Committee received the Management Report to Council.

It was reported that the University had recently held its Strategy 2030 Launch events, and that these had been well received with excellent feedback. It was expected that the Strategy would be embedded in all areas and that staff must feel connected to the Strategy. Communications and work embedding the Strategy were planned to continue for some time.

It was reported that focus in student admissions was now on maximising conversion for 2022 entry, being fully mindful of grade inflation and similar pressures. It was reported that international applications were higher for both undergraduate and taught postgraduate, and that work was ongoing to obtain additional visas.

It was noted that the University apprenticeship provision had received an overall Requires Improvement grade from Ofsted, and that work was already ongoing to address specific issues identified. It was noted that governance arrangements for apprenticeships had been revised.

It was reported that irrespective of national guidance, the University had retained some Covid measures to ensure as safe a working environment as possible.

It was noted that HUBS had recently been awarded the Small Business Charter.

49 Transformation Programme

It was reported that the main focus of the Programme continued to be on systems and processes. It was noted that new project managers were now in place and that there is increased confidence that the programme is progressing well.

50 Enterprise Activity

Liz Jenkinson presented a Knowledge Exchange Update.

It was reported that the KE Strategy was now in its third year and was proving to be successful in driving the required change; a number of valuable investments had been made using HEIF funding.

The KE Concordat was discussed and it was noted that the KEF review had been published, with many changes to reporting expected.

Concern was expressed at the 'process heavy' nature of the work. It was acknowledged that it had been difficult to explain all the aspects to external partners.

The increased engagement and participation by academic staff was noted and welcomed, particularly the successful promotions of staff on the KE pathway.

Concern was expressed at the possibility of pressure from some institutions to change the framework methodology to the detriment of Hull.

51 Finance

(a) Finance Report

The Committee received the Finance Report.

It was reported that the University was running a YTD deficit of £10.2m, favourable to both budget and prior year. The cash position was reported to be favourable to forecast.

It was noted that the operating income was adverse to budget due to lower than expected student numbers and reduced catering income. Operating costs were reported to be favourable to budget.

All bank covenants were assessed and forecast to be met.

It was reported that the P6 income was showing an improving position on both income and expenses.

The latest view was reported to show the budgeted surplus of £3.9m was achievable, despite the tuition fee shortfall and reduced catering income.

It was noted that planning meetings were taking place in relation to the next year's budget, which will provide an update to Council in April with a full budget to approve in July.

It was reported that there remained delays in the sale of The Lawns and Ferens Hall, although the University was still in discussions with the buyer.

It was noted that the sale of Thwaite Hall had completed and funds had been received.

It was reported that an offer had been accepted for the Dennison Centre, with completion expected in December 2022.

In relation to USS pension changes, it was reported that the member consultation had ended in January and that UUK had consulted employers regarding moving the indexation cap. This had been agreed.

It was reported that UCU had proposed to increase member and employer contributions in order to ensure that member benefits not be reduced as planned. It had been felt that such a change may have led to many members opting out of the scheme, and a significant increased cost to the University. The proposal was not supported by the University.

It was reported that on 22 February, the JNC had approved the UUK proposals.

(b) Office for Students Financial Return 2021

The Committee received the OfS Financial Return 2021.

It was noted that due to the changes in the student mix since budget, amendments to the return had been made accordingly.

It was confirmed that there was a forecast of increased full time UG student numbers and that these had been reached through close consultation with faculties to ensure confidence in our ability to meet the targets. It was noted that the figures also included other student categories.

It was noted that the student number increase was a large change and that scenario planning must take place in case targets are not met.

RESOLVED:

That the OfS Annual Financial Return 2021 be approved.

(c) Private Placement

The Committee received an update on the Private Placement Parameters.

It was noted that parameters had been approved previously and that the position had been reviewed. It was reported that the EIB breakage costs were less than anticipated and can be funded internally. The target was therefore reduced from £83m to £80m.

It was confirmed that the tenure was unchanged and that the covenants had been redefined to allow greater flexibility. In addition the pricing had been changed slightly to reflect the current market position and advice received.

It was noted that rates can change quickly and that the limits in place will ensure that the University is protected by a cap.

It was clarified that the amended covenants had been discussed with advisors and that although they will require careful monitoring, they are not expected to prove challenging to meet.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed updates to the parameters that the Council PP subgroup are permitted to operate in be approved.

It was reported that the transaction was planned to launch on 2 March. Presentations would be provided to investors and all bids were expected by 22 March.

In relation to the Green Finance Framework, it was reported that the bond will be issued under the sustainability framework. It was confirmed that although this does give an extra framework to work within, it also enhances our reputation, confirms our strategy commitments and has the potential of leading to better finance terms in the future.

52 Charter and Statutes

The Committee received proposed changes to the Charter and Statutes of the University.

It was noted that many of the changes had been approved previously but, due to Covid and staff changes, had not all been implemented or taken to the Privy Council. It was confirmed that the proposals had been recommended by Governance and Nominations Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed changes to the Charter and Statutes be approved and recommended to the Privy Council.

USCCO

53 Council Appointments

The Committee received a table of current Council committee membership. It was noted that most lay members terms of office are ending in July 2022 and that of those, all except one are willing to serve for a further three year term.

It was noted that Governance and Nominations Committee would review committee memberships in 2022-23.

It was noted that the position of non-academic staff member of Council will become vacancy in summer and an election will be required.

RESOLVED:

That the seven lay members eligible for reappointment and willing to serve for another term be re-appointed.

54 Health and Safety

(a) Health and Safety Policy Statement

The Committee received the revised Health and Safety Policy Statement.

The importance of the Policy was noted and it was suggested that Health and Safety may be included as a briefing to Council, or as part of the upcoming Away Day.

RESOLVED:

That the Health and Safety Policy Statement be approved.

(b) Annual Health and Safety Report for 2020-21

The Committee received and noted the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2020-21.

It was noted that significant work had taken place in relation to Covid, and in meeting internal audit requirements.

55 University of Hull Performance Trends and KPIs

The Committee received and noted the Performance Trends and KPIs.

56 Minutes/Executive Summary of Committees

(a) Audit and Risk Committee – 24 January 2022

The minutes of Audit and Risk Committee held on 24 January 2022 were submitted.

It was reported that the Committee had received a detailed update regarding cyber-security and had discussed the relevant risks with ICTD.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes be noted.
- (ii) That the Annual Report on Whistleblowing be approved.
- (iii) That the Institutional Risk Register be noted.

(b) Transformation Sub-Committee – 25 January 2022

The minutes of the Transformation Sub-Committee held on 25 January 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes be noted.

(c) Governance and Nominations Committee – 3 February 2022

The minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee held on 3 February 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes be noted.
- (ii) That the Governance and Nominations Committee Terms of Reference and Composition 2021-22 be approved.
- (iii) That the membership of Governance and Nominations Committee 2021-22 be approved.
- (iv) That the appointment of David Barrett as Senate member to Council be approved.

(d) Finance and Investment Committee – 3 February 2022

The draft minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 3 February 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes be noted.

(e) University Ethics Committee Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership 2021-22

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the University Ethics Committee Terms of Reference and Composition 2021-22 be approved.
- (ii) That the updated membership of University Ethics Committee 2021-22 be approved.

(f) Honorary Awards Committee – 7 February 2022

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Honorary Awards Committee Terms of Reference and Composition 2021-22 be approved.
- (ii) That the membership of the Honorary Awards Committee 2021-22 be approved.

57 **Valedictions**

All members

58 Dates of Meetings 2021-22

Date of Meeting	<i>Deadline for papers</i>
Thursday 28 April 2022, 2.00 pm	<i>14 April 2022</i>
Thursday 7 July 2022, 2.00 pm	<i>23 June 2022</i>
Other dates to note	
Tuesday 24 May 2022, Council Dinner	
Wednesday 25 May 2022, Away Day	

Signature of Chair _____

Date of signature _____