

Council

8 July 2021

Minutes of the University Council meeting held on Thursday 8 July 2021 at 2.00pm (ending at 4:45 pm) via video conference.

Present: George Garlick (Chair), Phoebe Bastiani, John Duffy, Professor Phil Gilmartin, Frances Hanson, Matt Jukes, Professor Susan Lea, Ursula Lidbetter, Professor Mark Lorch, Rosalyn Schofield, Matthew Swindells, Richard Thompson, Julia Whittaker.

In attendance: Professor Becky Huxley-Binns, Holly Burton, Professor Paul Hagan, Professor Stephen Hardy, Jeremy Hartley, Professor Andy Heyes, Dr Chris Ince, Liz Jenkinson, Liz Nicholson, Derek Ord, Dr David Richards, Sarah Wilson.

Minutes: 84 - 103

Action by

84 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Vanessa Lee, Professor Lucy Mazdon and Denise Wilson. No declarations of interest were received beyond those included in the Register of Interests.

85 Minutes of last meeting

It was noted that minute 67 – Transformation Programme should read ‘A full report on the Estates strand of activity would come to Council in October’, rather than July.

With the above correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

86 Matters arising

(a) Action Summary

Minute 72 – The President’s Report had been circulated.

87 Chair’s Report

The Chair reported that he was hoping to meet in person with Council members in the autumn, and that the format of all committee meetings would be considered later in the agenda.

It was noted that review meetings for lay members had been organised and would take place over the summer.

88 Transformation Programme

The Committee received the Transformation Phase 3 'Plan on a Page', and a verbal update from the Vice-Chancellor.

It was noted that extensive work had been taking place on enrolment and re-enrolment processes, and student assessment and progression, making the process much smoother for boards and students obtaining their results. Better fee collection and recording processes were also expected to have a positive impact on the enrolment process.

It was reported that work would commence shortly regarding student placements, which had not been well coordinated previously. Current practice was to be reviewed and an improvement project to follow, including policies and processes.

There had been extensive work on the SITS system, prioritising and developing the system to smooth and streamline processes.

It was reported that all strands were in progress and although there were risks around the staffing of the SITS team, this was in hand.

89 Management Report

The Committee received the Confidential Management Report and noted its contents.

It was reported that the Office for Students had recently focussed on harassment and sexual misconduct, and that the University had a project investigating these subjects.

It was noted that the latest guidance from the DfE regarding Covid-19 had been received and that it had left many of the final decisions to individual institutions. Management had been working through the guidance and had been planning for the next year with the expectation of a digitally-enhanced campus based experience. It was reported that much useful feedback had been received from current students, which would be fed into planning for an enhanced experience which would be more inclusive and lead to better outcomes. This was expected to be face-to-face, enhanced by supportive online measures.

It was reported that students were keen to return to on-campus teaching but happy to keep aspects of digital enhancements. The importance of early timetabling with social distancing was noted.

It was noted that the current phase of Covid-19 was most difficult to manage, and that self-isolation may be an issue until August, with high case rates in the local area.

It was reported that a phased return to campus was being planned, with local rules for specific needs. The importance of clear and useful communication to staff and students was highlighted.

A number of senior staff departures were reported as well as several awards and successes for current and former students and the University as a whole.

With regards to student recruitment, it was reported that international applications for PGT courses were substantially higher. At the undergraduate level home firm acceptances were reduced, which was thought to be due to students applying based on teacher assessed grades and the confirmation tactics of some institutions. The data behind the changes in applications and acceptances were being analysed.

Recently announced changes in ITT teacher training were being examined, to understand fully the implications.

90 University of Hull Performance, KPIs and League Table Position

The Committee received a paper on Performance Trends and KPIs and noted the contents.

It was explained that metrics had been mapped against the new University Strategy to 2030, with KPIs to support. All had clear targets with baselines and were reviewed regularly.

It was reported that the KPIs were for all strategy areas, covering People, Place and Partnership, and were available at subject level where possible.

Various league table rankings were being monitored and possible social justice measures were being investigated.

Council noted that it was important not to become overly target focussed and to evaluate progress overall and not just in relation to targets. The use of quartile targets was commended, in addition to the simplicity and clarity of the report.

It was agreed that a wider view of strategy and narrative was important, and that the KPIs should also be integrated into the institutional risk register.

91 Knowledge Exchange Framework

The Committee received a presentation on the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) Inaugural Results.

It was noted that the first set of results from the KEF were released in March. Universities are compared to others in a cluster of similar characteristics and Hull is in Cluster X, which covered a range of high quality research based universities.

It was reported that the KEF captures seven types of knowledge exchange, based on three years of data, using both metrics and narrative, and is likely to be linked to funding in the future.

Hull was reported to be above average in four measures, average in two and below average in one, which were considered to be overall pleasing results.

It was reported that further analysis would take place with a view to improving data collection and classification, and to improve in all measures. It was confirmed that CPD and public and community engagement were areas of future focus.

92 Finance Report

The Committee received the Finance Report.

It was reported that the P9 YTD deficit was £5.5m, which was in line with forecast and that costs were favourable to forecast. Covid-19 had impacted income by £6m, with £2m offset. Cash was £20m, which was £3.7m favourable to forecast. The Q3 forecast for year-end was a £0.7m surplus, which was £4.6m favourable to budget.

It was reported that there had been a reduction in fee income due to increased student withdrawals, but this was offset by increased accommodation income and ongoing vacancy management. There had been £1.8m impairment of assets related to the timing of property disposals. The cashflow was expected to be higher than budget and all bank covenants had been met.

In relation to the capital programme, it was reported that priority academic subjects had been targeted, improving the student experience in those areas. There had been some delays in ICTD projects but these were expected to complete on time.

The sale of Ferens Hall was reported to be progressing well, and it was requested that the decisions on the sale be delegated, with a report coming back to Council for final approval.

RESOLVED:

That decisions on the sale of Ferens Hall be delegated to a group consisting of the Chair of Council, the Chair of Finance & Investment Committee, the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Finance.

With regard to ongoing USS pension discussions, it was reported that UUK had consulted on modifications to the existing scheme proposals, resulting in retaining contribution rates similar to those currently in place. There were also changes to the covenant support measures proposed.

Management had written to the FIC USS Pension Sub-Group with a recommendation to accept the counter proposal made by UUK to the USS Trustees. This had been approved and submitted.

93 Budget 2021/22 and 3 year Operational Plans

The Committee received the 2021/22 Budget and 3 year Operational Plans.

It was reported that the University Strategy had framed the budget and was the result of significant planning discussions to examine data and evidence and align the two.

It was reported that the plan was to have income growth of 6.7%, driven by growth in student numbers. There would be a growth in costs of 5% and capital expenditure of £72m.

A target of achieving a 1% share of the Home UG market was reported as part of the financial strategy, with improvements in retention, progression and outcomes. This would be achieved through focus on the 10 key subject areas, which would receive targeted capital expenditure investment. These subjects would be reviewed in the future.

It was noted that academic areas had formulated their plans first and that professional services had then been asked to examine and respond with supporting plans.

Income was expected to increase to £217m, leading to surpluses, with all key metrics improving.

Council discussed the assumptions around future student number growth in detail. It was noted that the ambitious student recruitment figures would be tracked closely, on a rolling basis, and would continue to evolve as actual figures were available. It was reported that the student numbers were considered achievable and aligned to the Strategy.

The large PGT growth forecast for overseas students may be subject to Covid-19 travel restrictions and that scenarios for reduced numbers would be required. It was reported that the low fees charged for international PG students had resulted in increased interest and numbers. Together with visa changes, this interest was expected to continue to next year.

The student number targets were the result of extensive analysis including the use of external consultants, faculties and admissions professionals. This had resulted in the ten target growth areas which will result in focussed marketing and investment, as well as revised academic content.

It was noted that demographic changes would soon result in increased numbers of eighteen year olds.

Council noted there was a large potential for growth in online learning, including internationally. This would require a tailored response for different geographic areas due to varied willingness to travel and local digital infrastructure. Potential areas of growth were reported to be in India / South Asia and parts of Africa, particularly Nigeria.

In relation to Core Income, it was reported that the University would be seeking an increase in residence occupancy over the planning period, to 94%. It was expected that surpluses would increase to £11.4m in 23/24.

The capital expenditure was reported to be in line with the outline Estates Masterplan and further ICTD investment, totalling £72m over 3 years. Cash flow will remain stable and options for external funding would be investigated.

It was confirmed that bank covenants were planned to be met for all years in the planning period.

It was noted that a number of scenarios had been planned, with impacts resulting from changes to student retention, Covid-19, a reduction in international students, lower home UG intake and possible effects of the Auger Review on home undergraduate fees.

There were mitigating actions for all scenarios and the ability to return to budget was shown together with meeting bank covenants.

RESOLVED:

That the 2021/22 Budget and Financial Projections 22/23 & 23/24 be approved.

94 PGT Fees for entry 2022/23

The Committee received the proposed international PGT fees for 2022/23.

It was reported that international PGT applications were looking very good at approximately 700, compared to 100 in the previous year. This was partly due to international fees being pegged to home fees as a temporary measure due to Covid-19 and Brexit.

It was proposed to hold the international PGT fees at the same level for a further year due to ongoing Covid-19 impact and the impact on student numbers. There would be a very small number of courses attracting a premium fee.

It was confirmed that English language standard requirements would also be raised and that the administrative support required to manage extra students would be considered.

It was confirmed that the fee proposal only applied to full time students, and any exceptions could be made to the Fees Group for consideration.

It was confirmed that the impact of the fee level was being carefully analysed and that external consultants were engaged in devising a strategy to return to normal fee levels.

RESOLVED:

That the PGT fees for entry 2022/23 be approved.

95 Risk Management

The Committee received a paper regarding the Risk Management Policy and Institutional Risk Register.

It was noted that there was a new process, register and reports, which will lead to more reports to Council in the coming year, following discussion at each Audit Committee. It was confirmed that the risk register would be directly linked to the approved KPIs.

RESOLVED:

That the Risk Management Policy and Institutional Risk Register be approved.

96 Hull University Students' Union Report

The Committee Received the HUSU President Team report.

It was reported that there had recently been a handover to the new President team and that there would be a residential in two weeks' time.

There had been few recent in-person events, but there had been a very successful volunteer awards event.

It was reported that planning was underway for the next Welcome Fest and events to integrate existing students back into the usual campus life.

97 HUSU/UoH Code of Practice

The Committee received the HUSU-UoH Code of Practice.

It was reported that there was a legal obligation to have an updated Code, and that it had been endorsed by HUSU.

RESOLVED:

That the updated HUSU-UoH Code of Practice be approved.

98 Chair's Action – Redundancy Committee

The Committee received a request to give authority to the Chair to establish a Redundancy Committee, if required, following the outcome of the consultation regarding the teaching of Modern Languages.

It was noted that establishment of the Committee requires Council approval in accordance with Statutes.

RESOLVED:

That authority to establish a Redundancy Committee be devolved to the Chair to take Chair's Action if such a committee is required.

99 Approach to meetings for 2021/22

The Committee received a paper regarding the holding of meetings in 2021/22 session.

It was noted that the first meetings of Council and its sub-committees should be able to be held in person and the expectation was that most or all Council meetings be held in person.

It was further noted that 'mixed-mode' meetings with partly in-person and partly online attendance can be difficult technically and operationally and should not be the default option, but may be appropriate for smaller meetings on occasion.

The need to learn from Covid-19 was noted, and that a mixed approach may be preferable on occasion, although this may require upgraded IT infrastructure.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to any Covid restrictions, the first meetings of Council and its sub-committees in the next year be held in person, and that all committees to review their own needs. Governance & Nominations Committee to consider and review the implementation of mixed-mode meetings.

100 Office for Students

It was reported that the Office for Students had recently reviewed their own approach to fines and penalties for non-compliance.

101 Minutes/Executive Summary of Committees

(a) Transformation Sub-Committee – 29 April and 14 June 2021

The minutes of the Transformation Sub-Committee held on 29 April and 14 June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

(b) Senate – 9 June 2021

The minutes of Senate held on 9 June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

(c) Audit Committee – 14 June 2021

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 14 June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

(d) Finance and Investment Committee – 24 June 2021

The minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 14 June 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

(e) *USS Pension Sub-Group Report*

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

(f) University Ethics Committee – 5 May 2021

The minutes of the University Ethics Committee held on 5 May 2021 were received.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

102 Valedictions

All members

The Chair thanked Professor Phil Gilmartin and Professor Mark Lorch for their contribution to the work of Council during their time on the Committee.

It was noted that Louise Cook was to shortly leave the University. She was thanked for her work with Council and the wider governance portfolio.

It was noted that John Duffy would shortly be leaving the University to a new post abroad. He was thanked for his excellent work for the University during a difficult period and for his support for the work of Council and its members.

103 Dates of Meetings 2021-22

| Date of Meeting | <i>Deadline for papers</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Monday 25 October 2021, 2.00 pm | <i>11 October 2021</i> |
| Thursday 9 December 2021, 2.00pm | <i>25 November 2021</i> |
| Thursday 24 February 2022, 2.00 pm | <i>10 February 2022</i> |
| Thursday 28 April 2022, 2.00 pm | <i>14 April 2022</i> |
| Wednesday 25 May 2022, Away Day | |
| Thursday 7 July 2022, 2.00 pm | <i>23 June 2022</i> |

104 Any other business

There were no other items of business.

Signature of Chair

Date of signature
