**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a Meeting held on**

**Wednesday 10 May 2023**

**Present:**

Gary Dixon (Chair)

Huw Barton Liz Blyth

Nishan Canagarajah Martin Cullen

Sophie Dale-Black Cathy Ellis

Rhiannon Jenkins Ian Johnson

Kerry Law Rishi Madlani

Kevin Nagle Mark Purnell

Vijay Sharma Richard Tapp

**In attendance:** Alison Benson (Assistant Secretary); Nuala Devlin (Academic Registrar for item 23/M26); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor’s Office); Neale Goff (Director of Health, Safety and Sustainability for item 23/M24); Paul Gowdridge (Chief Financial Officer); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Angie Pears (Associate Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for item 23/M27); Alison Phillips (Director of Digital Services for item 23/M25); Archie Robinson (President-elect, Students’ Union); Joe Suffield (Governance Officer); Angela Truby (Director of Student Services and Belonging for item 23/M26)

**Apologies:** From Members: George Acquah; Catherine Morley and Jacqui Shaw and Liz Jones (as an attendee)

The formal meeting was preceded by a development session focused on Risk Management within the University, led by Charles Ellul, Business Continuity and Risk Manager. Rebecca Lord, Head of Strategic Planning (Governance, Planning and Assurance), was also present.

23/M19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of personal interest pertaining to any of the items dealt with in this meeting.

23/M20 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**Council approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 as a correct record.

Council **noted** the verbal responses to the matters arising from that meeting, which related to a new Code of Practice on Personal Tutoring that had been approved by the Executive Board.

23/M21 **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

The Chair recorded his thanks to Craig Brown who was stepping down as a member of Council after many years of service, in order to pursue a new role with the UK Space Agency.

The Chair welcomed Archie Robinson as an observer to Council, ahead of the start of his role as President of the Students’ Union.

The Chair highlighted that a recruitment process had commenced to recruit three new lay members of Council.

23/M22 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor introduced his written report for Council, which provided a comprehensive update on recent developments in the HE sector generally, and at Leicester specifically.

It was reported that the Stoneygate Centre for Empathic Healthcare had been successfully launched, which provided an innovative programme and would act as a sector lead in this area. It would be the first of its kind in the world to focus on the emerging science of empathy.

It was celebrated that Bethan Jones had been awarded Student Nurse or Midwife of the Year: Clinical Research.

It was highlighted that the Vice-Chancellor had visited India, which recognised the importance of Indian students to the University and partnerships in this area. The strong reputation of the University ensured that they were in a strong position in this market. The financial sustainability of the University would largely rely on international recruitment.

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to announce that Henrietta O’Connor had been appointed Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. In light of this, the College for Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities would have an interim Head of College selected, and a task and finish group would be organised to examine the structure for the College moving forward. Any changes would follow the appropriate governance routes.

In response to a comment about the potential risks associated with overseas students that did not pay fees, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted there had been measures taken to tackle this risk further. This included more stringent actions taken against agents who had recruited students that did not pay their fee.

**Council noted** that there were a number of challenges with overseas campuses, therefore the University should build up partnerships in order to strengthen its international presence.

**Council noted** that the industrial action continued at the University, however the level of support and action was lower than the 2021 boycott. They were confident that the measures in place would mitigate the impact on students, and support would be in place. The priority would be to ensure students could graduate.

**Council noted** the report.

23/M23 **BANK GUARANTEES**

**Council considered and approved** the bank guarantee for the US Department of Education as arranged through Barclays as operational banking partner to the University.

Barclays had changed their position and expectations in relation to authorised signatories and requested retrospective approval. The US Department of Education required controls, while pensions accounting within the UK required a guarantee for $363K. The changes had been presented to Finance and Infrastructure Committee and recognised that a level of pragmatism was required in the relationship with Barclays.

**Council noted** that the request for retrospective approval was a concern and would be raised with Barclays.

23/M24 **HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY**

*Neale Goff joined the meeting*

**Council considered and ratified** the Health and Safety Strategic Plan. This built on the previous strategy and the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was not a new plan, but built on the progress of the previous strategy document. The Plan and Strategy had been approved through the appropriate governance routes.

**Council noted** that the aim of the strategy was to incorporate health and safety more effectively which would reduce bureaucracy rather than increase the burden on staff.

Concerns were raised about the increased pressure on academic staff to introduce the changes, and the difficulties to absorbs this work into normal administrative duty. It was recognised that the health and safety team would support the implementation and it required disciple to ensure there was effective health and safety measures. There would be a phased approach, which would be applied over four years to the whole University, with a number of opportunities to evaluate the progress of the plan.

**Council noted** the success of the ROSPA award for four consecutive years.

**Council noted** that non-compliance with health and safety requirements would have serious consequences, both financially and the impact on staff; therefore it was important to implement the plan.

*Neale Goff left the meeting*

23/M25 **DIGITAL STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION MASTERPLAN 2023-2028**

*Alison Phillips joined the meeting*

**Council** **considered** the Digital Strategy and Transformation Masterplan, which required an investment of £25.232m. The strategy would tackle the technology debt and enable Digital Services to move from a service provider to a strategic partner. The Digital Strategy would enable the University to make better decisions and improve capability through four underpinning themes of data driven, automatic and AI, hypersonalisation and an agile approach. The masterplan would align the Digital Strategy to the University Strategy.

**Council noted** that there was a student voice through the process, to ensure they were co-creators in the strategy and masterplan. This was largely through a number of consultation workshops.

**Council noted** that staff would need to be bought along with the changes. The strategy would be accessible through a digital ecosystem and conversations with colleagues to understand resistance to the changes.

**Council noted** that the costs for the masterplan were high, but these were necessary changes. The Finance and Infrastructure Committee would continue to monitor the costs of the masterplan and to ensure that alongside the estates masterplan it would be affordable.

**Council noted** that there had been external engagement for the strategy, through roundtables, links with the industry and collaborations. It was difficult to compare the University to others within the sector, as they had different approaches to digital systems, however the changes would make the University sector leaders.

**Council noted** that the trusted research environment would be implemented this year which would enable the additional Worktribe capabilities to be introduced. This would help to simplify the research process.

**Council noted** that the infrastructure would be built in the cloud which would increase resilience and capability. A network infrastructure project was underway to build up links with the cloud.

**Council approved** the Digital Strategy and Masterplan, while a detailed, fully costed business case would be produced for each project in the digital masterplan, and approval would be requested through the established governance processes.

*Alison Phillips left the meeting*

23/M26 **SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT**

*Nuala Devlin and Angela Truby joined the meeting*

**Council considered** a report on the sexual violence and harassment. It was highlighted that in July 2022 the Office for Students (OfS) had introduced a set of expectations into how sexual violence and harassment would be approached by universities. This was consulted on, and the outcomes would be available shortly. The University would adopt the regulations, regardless of if it was a condition of registration.

It was highlighted that there had been an increase in disclosures of sexual violence and harassment, which showed that student felt more confident to report. However, it was recognised there remained a number of areas which needed to be further developed. There was a balance of work between preventative efforts and casework, but there had been increases in the number of cases and complexity.

**Council noted** that withdrawn cases were often a result of students that did not feel confident in the service. There had been work to ensure students understood the process and what the outcomes could be.

**Council noted** that it was unlikely that all cases would be identified by the University, and therefore it was important to have training on consensual sex and what coercion/control meant in a relationship. It was recognised that given the University had a diverse student population, services should be tailored to the needs of all students.

**Council noted** that the increase in cases had not led to more resources available for the support team. It was identified that there remained under-reporting of cases, which meant that trust in the system needed to be increased.

**Council noted** the report and requested that an update was bought back to Council in 6 months, with a focus on resources.

*Nuala Devlin and Angela Truby left the meeting*

23/M27 **EDI ANNUAL REPORT**

*Angie Pears joined the meeting*

**Council considered** the annual report on the EDI activity within the University over the past twelve months and the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2022. It was highlighted that the diversity of the student and staff demographics had increased over the previous five years. There had been increased organisational capability within EDI, and EDI charters were used to indicate the progress that had been made, but the University was not driven by these charters. The Gender Pay Gap had slightly increased, which contrasted the longer term trend; this was largely due to the distribution of staff across the lower percentile of pay. An action plan had been developed to respond to this.

**Council noted** that information on gender identity was not collected, as it was more important to ensure that the data was accurate and reflected the University community, which was not currently possible.

**Council noted** that a significant amount of activity had been undertaken and there was clear leadership within this area.

**Council approved** the Gender Pay Gap report for publication.

*Angie Pears left the meeting*

23/M28 **SCHEDULE OF DELEGATION**

**Council considered and approved** the updated schedule of delegation.

**Council noted** that College Research Committees were not included as they did not have any formal delegation of powers.

23/M29 **KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK**

**Council noted** a report on the submission to Research England’s Knowledge Exchange Framework. This would be an item covered in more depth at Council’s away day (September 2023).

23/M30 **AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]**

**Council noted** a report of the Audit and Assurance Committee meeting held on 18 April 2023.

23/M31 **FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]**

**Council noted** a report of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting held on 2 May 2023.

23/M32 **PEOPLE, EDI AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

**Council noted** a report of the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 5 April 2023.

23/M16 **ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE**

**Council noted** a report of the Alumni Association Committee meeting held on 13 April 2023.

23/M18 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Council noted** the dates of meetings scheduled for 2022-2023:

* Wednesday 5 July 2023 - Ordinary meeting 4pm

Council noted that dates of meetings scheduled for 2023-2024:

* Tuesday 19 September mid-day to Wednesday 20 September 4.30pm (exact times and schedule TBC) - Council/Executive Board Awayday
* Tuesday 24 October 2023 at 4pm
* Tuesday 12 December 2023 at 4pm
* Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 4pm
* Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 4pm
* Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 4pm

23/M16 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Council noted** its thanks to Rhiannon Jenkins as it was their last meeting on Council, and wished her all the best in the future.

CHAIR Duration of meeting: 1 hour 50 minutes