**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COUNCIL**

 **Minutes of a Meeting held on**

**Tuesday 12 December 2023**

**Present:**

Sophie Dale-Black (Chair)

 Lauren Bartlett Liz Blyth

 Nishan Canagarajah Jack Chambers

 Martin Cullen Mehmooda Duke

 Rishi Madlani Catherine Morley

 Kevin Nagle Henrietta O’Connor

 Gabrielle Provan Archie Robinson

 Jacqui Shaw Richard Tapp

**In attendance:** Alison Benson (Assistant Secretary to Council); Paul Gowdridge (Chief Financial Officer); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Liz Jones (PVC Education); Kevin Joyce (Secretariat)

**Apologies:** George Acquah; Gary Dixon; Cathy Ellis; Mark Purnell

23/M73 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

23/M74 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

 **Council approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023 as a correct record and **noted** the responses to the matters arising from that meeting.

Council **noted** that exploring the frequency of DBS checks for Council members would be discussed by the Nominations Committee.

23/M75 **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

 The Chair congratulated Josh Smalley on his success on ‘*The Great British Bake Off’* television show.

The Chair congratulated Vijay Sharma on her appointment as Pro-Chancellor, Community Engagement at the University.

The Chair reminded members that the annual meeting of Court would take place on 9 February 2024.

23/M76 **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 highlighted that the autumn term had seen a lively and busy atmosphere on campus with positive comments from students and staff on the support being provided by the University and the Students’ Union.

The University had seen a decline in International Postgraduate Taught registrations this year in line with the wider sector.

Following a review of the University’s overall Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission after representations to the Office for Students, the final outcome had been confirmed as Gold. This would be made public on 18 December 2023.

**Council received** a short video highlighting the key achievements of 2023.

Following the Chinese government’s comments that Chinese public bodies should only employ graduates from the top 100 universities worldwide, the University of Leicester was taking steps to enhance the narrative of employability in China and to promote the positive benefits of coming to study in Leicester.

It was highlighted that the University regularly reviews the network of recruitment agents used to build relationships in countries such as China and India, where the use of agents is required in order to fully engage with the market.

**Council noted** the report.

23/M77 **UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTS AND OFS RETURNS 2022/2023**

**Council considered** in detail the full-year 2022/23 Financial Performance Report, the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2023, an assessment regarding Going Concern, the report of the External Auditors and the associated Management Representation Letter, and the OfS Annual Assurance Return including the final 5-year Financial Plan. Council received assurance that all items had been scrutinised by the Finance and Infrastructure Committee and Audit and Assurance Committee.

a) 2022/23 Financial Performance Report

**Council approved** the Financial Performance Report for 2022/23.

b) Assessment of Going Concern

**Council approved** the Going Concern assessment report.

c) Financial Statements 2022/23

**Council noted** that the report reflected the conclusion of the external audit and the signing of all subsidiary financial statements earlier in December 2023. Council noted the contribution from Committee Chairs in reviewing an early draft.

 **Council approved** the Financial Statements and endorsed the proposed process for signing.

 d) External Auditors’ Audit Report 2022/23

**Council noted** that the University had been pleased with the overall audit process and conduct.

 **Council approved** the External Auditors’ report.

 e) Management Representation Letter to the External Auditors

**Council noted** the summary of assurances. It was noted that the Letter for 2022/23 had largely retained the same format to that signed in respect of 2021/22.

 **Council noted** the letter, and authorised the Vice-Chair to sign this on behalf of Council.

 f) OfS Annual (Financial) Assurance Return including 5-year Financial Plan

**Council noted** that the initial draft OfS return had been submitted on 1 December 2023 and was now subject to a period of data verification. The next deadline was 8 January 2024 with final sign off by the President and Vice-Chancellor required by 22 January 2024.

**Council noted** that the return was consistent with the 2022/23 Financial Statements and 5-year Financial Plan. The 5-year Financial Plan had previously been reported to Council on 5 July 2023 and had now been updated in line with the Q1 reforecast.

**Council approved** the OfS Annual (Financial) Assurance Return including 5-year Financial Plan.

23/M78 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

 **Council considered** the latest Strategic University Risk Register (SURR), updated for the autumn term 2023, and the University’s Risk Management Policy, which had received prior scrutiny from the Audit and Assurance Committee.

 **Council noted** the report.

23/M79 **STRATEGIC GUIDING PRINCIPLE: SUSTAINABILITY**

*Sarah Davies joined the meeting*

**Council considered** a presentation on the Sustainability strategic guiding principle.

**Council noted** the agreed corporate and academic governance structure of the principle alongside the energy usage breakdown in buildings on campus.

**Council noted** that the University had moved up to 37th out of 93 in the UK external QS sustainability rankings.

**Council noted** that the Universities Partnership had won an a £2.65m Innovate UK grant, with £300k coming to the University of Leicester to support our journey to Net Zero.

**Council noted** the presentation.

*Sarah Davies left the meeting*

23/M80 **SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT/STUDENT WELLBEING**

 **Council received** a verbal update on resourcing following the annual Sexual Violence and Harassment update given in May 2023**.**

**Council noted** that in May 2023, the support team had consisted of 2.6 FTE. This had increased to 3.6 FTE however due to a maternity leave, the team was currently staffed at 2.6 FTE with a maternity cover replacement expected to be appointed in early 2024.

**Council noted** the continued increase in reported cases which was to be expected with the increased visibility and awareness on campus. However, there was no consistent sector-wide reporting mechanism in place.

**Council noted** that the Students’ Union Board had released funds to engage in project work in collaboration with the University and Standing Together, the national charity bringing communities together to end domestic abuse.

23/M81 **STUDENTS’ UNION ELECTIONS**

**Council noted** that Ordinance 22(8) required that the conduct of the election of Officers of the Students’ Union be subject to inspection by a person appointed by the Council.

**Council approved** Professor Elizabeth Jones, Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, be appointed to inspect the conduct of the Students’ Union elections in 2023-2024.

23/M82 **COURSE FEES**

**Council noted** the summary of the course fees charged by the University in 2023-2024.

23/M83 **FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]**

**Council received and noted** a report of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting held on 23 November 2023.

23/M84 **APOLLO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP [RESERVED]**

*Tom Robinson joined the meeting*

 **Council considered** a presentation on the progress of the proposed partnership with Apollo Hospitals Group**.**

**Council noted** the Apollo partnership update.

*Tom Robinson left the meeting*

23/M85 **AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]**

**Council received and noted** a report of the Audit and Assurance Committee meeting held on 21 November 2023, the Audit and Assurance Committee’s Annual Report for 2022/23, the Internal Auditors’ Annual Report for 2022/23 and the Annual Information Compliance Report for 2022/23.

23/M86 **REMUNERATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Council considered** the annual report of the Remuneration Committee for 2022/23.

**Council noted** that the process for remuneration of senior staff and the associated annual reporting reflected the guidance provided by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) HE Senior Staff Remuneration Code. This included the consideration of detailed benchmarking within the sector.

**Council approved** the Remuneration Committee annual report for publication on the University’s website.

**Council approved** the revised Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference for 2023/2024.

23/M87 **VAN GEEST BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of the van Geest Board of Trustees.

23/M88 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

 **Council noted** the dates of meetings scheduled for 2023/2024:

* Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 4pm
* Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 4pm
* Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 4pm

23/M89 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

 **Council noted** that the Estates Masterplan continued to be reviewed on a regular basis, based on student number growth and hybrid working.

CHAIR Duration of meeting: 2 hours