

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 18 May 2015

Present:	Dr B Towle (Chair)	
	The President and Vice-Chancellor	Professor M Lester
	Mr P Ash	Dr D Lockett
	Professor M Barstow	Mr D Moore
	Mr G Dixon	Mr A Morgan
	Mr I Johnson	Professor M Peel
	Mr M Hindle	Dr N Reed
	Mr I Johnson	Mr M Rubin
	Professor J Ketley	Professor M Thompson
	Mr P Lawson	Professor D Wynford-Thomas

In attendance: the Registrar and Secretary, the Director of Finance, the Director of Estates, Mrs L Bailey (for 15/M24 only), Ms B Johnson (for 15/M26-27 only) and Mr N Cox (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Judge A Hampton, Professor E Raven, Dr M Rawlinson, Dr V Sharma, Ms C Thorogood and Mr L Trotman

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

15/M22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The President and Vice-Chancellor, Mr Moore and Mr Morgan declared an interest as Directors of College Court Conference Centre Limited. Mr Rubin and Dr Reed declared an interest as Trustees of the Students' Union.

15/M23 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2015. **Council approved** them as a correct record.

Arising from minute 15/M4 (Strategic Conversation), **Council noted** that it had been decided that it was not necessary for the Ranmore consultants to make a further presentation to Council at the May 2015 meeting.

15/M24 **'THE DIGITAL CAMPUS'**

Council received a presentation from the Director of IT Services on the underlying strategic and operational benefits of the development of a fully digital campus, which was the subject of work undertaken by Task and Finish Group 11.

Council noted the scale of investment in the digital infrastructure at some competitor UK universities, and the inherent business risks of any failure to keep pace with students' rapidly developing expectations of the digital environment.

This presented a financial challenge of generating appropriate levels of funding for IT developments, alongside the competing demands for investment in other priority areas. If positive cultural change could be used to encourage staff to consider possible IT solutions, alongside more traditional options, when developing new initiatives, this would help to provide a broader base for strategic IT developments to be pursued across the institution, not just by IT Services.

The Director of IT Services offered to provide occasional IT updates and briefings for Council members, outside of the regular meetings, and this opportunity was welcomed by members [ACTION: LIZ BAILEY].

15/M25 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

Council received a copy of the new *Higher Education Code of Governance*, recently published by the Committee of University Chairs as a replacement for its first Code of Practice on HE governance, published in 2004.

Council noted that the purpose of the new Code was to update and provide fresh emphasis for the key requirements of effective governance of HEIs, and how they should be discharged, and also to help protect the autonomy of institutions against excessive external interference and overregulation.

Council agreed to consider proposed arrangements for a full review of the requirements of the Code, and any action required to ensure compliance with it, at a future meeting, following the conclusion of the *Strategic Conversation* [ACTION: CHAIR OF COUNCIL/NEIL COX].

15/M26 **FEEDBACK FROM THE STRATEGIC CONVERSATION**

Council received an update from the Director of Strategic Projects on feedback generated from the Strategic Conversation.

Council noted that the process of strategic engagement with the University's staff, students and external stakeholders had generated more than 2,000 engagements up to the end of April. A number of common themes had emerged from this process, including a strong commitment to excellence in all of the University's activities and the need for clear strategic leadership in order to achieve this; a need for better communication of the University's strategic objectives inside and outside the organisation, using more effective partnerships and links; and improved career development opportunities for staff.

Council noted that all of these key themes and other prominent issues from the Strategic Conversation were informing the drafting of the University's new strategic plan (minute 15/M27 also refers.)

15/M27 **DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY STRATEGY**

Council received a report from the President and Vice-Chancellor on the approach being taken in the drafting of the University's new strategic plan.

Council noted that the plan would seek to reflect the key themes and other prominent issues from the Strategic Conversation, and to be short, dynamic, readable and memorable. It would focus on the development of Leicester's

distinctive character and discovery-led commitments and priorities, each with an appropriate balance of clear quantitative and qualitative targets to measure success. There would be strong emphasis on collective ownership of the plan and responsibility for its delivery.

Council noted that the draft plan would be shared and discussed with staff and a sub-group of Council members during June, and the final strategic document would be presented to Council at its meeting on 8 July 2015. Detailed work on delivery plans would continue during the summer and the new Strategic Plan would be launched formally in September 2015, coinciding with the launch of a new logo and website.

15/M28 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor updated Council on the progress of work undertaken by the various Task and Finish Groups established to examine and bring forward recommendations on key streams of work arising from the Strategic Conversation. **Council noted** that detailed updates from four of the Groups featured elsewhere on the agenda, as recorded under 15/M24, 15M29b, 15M29c and 15/M30

Council noted the planned timetable for a number of senior management appointments to be made at pro-vice-chancellor/head of college level. Senate had recommended for approval by Council that one of the pro-vice-chancellor posts be designated as that of the Provost, as recorded under 15/M29a.

15/M29 **SENATE**

Council considered a report of a meeting of Senate held on 6 May 2015, including specifically:

- a. Senior Management Team: **Council noted** that Senate had considered and recommended for approval by Council proposed changes to the senior management structure of the University at pro-vice-chancellor level. The role of Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor would be replaced and expanded through designation of one of the pro-vice-chancellor posts as that of the Provost. The Provost would act as deputy to the President and Vice-Chancellor and would have additional responsibilities for implementing the strategic plan, inter-college collaboration, planning and career enhancement.

Council approved the changes to the senior management of the University and the creation of the post of Provost.

- b. Changes to the University's academic structure: **Council noted** that Senate had approved a recommendation from Task and Finish Group 1 for the number of Colleges in the University to be reduced from four to three, through the merger of the College of Arts, Humanities and Law and the College of Social Science. The new College would be called the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities.

Council noted that Senate had also approved proposals for the phased realignment of academic departments and a reduction over time in their number, from 32 to around 20.

- c. Staff career enhancement: **Council noted** that Senate had welcomed a report and recommendations from Task and Finish Group 6 on the issue of career enhancement for University staff. The report addressed a wide range of issues including appraisal, merit and reward, support for specific staff groups, retention and leadership. It also set a series of short, medium and long term career enhancement objectives, with an immediate priority of establishing a clearer role description and appropriate training for Heads of Academic and Professional Services Departments.

Council welcomed and was encouraged by the report, but acknowledged that it represented a major programme of work for the University and would require fundamental cultural change, particularly on such matters as the pay, progression and career opportunities for female members of staff.

15/M30 **RETHINKING THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

Council considered a discussion paper and received a presentation from the Registrar and Secretary, on behalf of Task and Finish Group 11, on a possible framework for the reorganisation of the University's governance and committee structure, and the principles which should underpin any future changes.

Council endorsed the overarching principle and objective of the University's committees as being to enhance the performance of the institution against its strategic objectives, to ensure that all decisions were taken in the best interests of the University and, in some specific areas, to comply with the requirements or expectations of external bodies such as HEFCE. But it was recognised that committees were not always conducive to decisiveness and prompt action, and could be time-consuming and expensive if not used efficiently. There was potential for the professionalisation of leadership and management inside the University to be enhanced, through the delegation of more decision-making powers to academic and administrative managers, who would be held accountable in a supportive and constructive way for their actions.

Council noted that the Nominations Committee would have an opportunity at its next meeting to reflect in more detail on the scope for possible changes to the governance structure, and on the role of lay members of Council in the committee system and the governance framework more generally. A further report would be presented to the next meeting of Council [ACTION: REGISTRAR AND SECRETARY].

15/M31 **AMENDMENTS TO ORDINANCES**

Council considered proposed amendments to the University's Ordinances. The amendments gave effect to the changes to the senior management structure of the University at the level of pro-vice-chancellor, and changes to the academic structure of the University at college level, as recorded under 15/M29 above.

Council confirmed its initial approval for the proposed amendments to Ordinances and referred them for consideration by Senate at its meeting on 1 July 2015. Any comments from Senate would be reported to Council at its meeting on 8 July 2015.

15/M32 FINANCE COMMITTEE

Council received a report of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21 April 2015.

Council noted the contents of the report, none of which required approval or ratification by Council on this occasion.

15/M33 HEFCE ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK

Council received the outcome letter of HEFCE's annual assessment of institutional risk. Council **noted** that based on the accountability returns submitted for 2013-2014 the University of Leicester was deemed to be 'not at higher risk', and was meeting its accountability obligations as required by HEFCE. However, HEFCE had noted that the internal auditors had not been able to provide a satisfactory opinion on the effectiveness of the University's risk management arrangements, following weaknesses identified during the year. HEFCE had noted that the University had established an action plan to address these weaknesses, and looked forward to a clean audit opinion being achieved in 2014-15.

Arising from the HEFCE assessment **Council also noted** the comparative position of the University against a benchmark group of former 1994 Group and Russell Group Institutions. With regard to the sector's average historical cost surplus as % of total income, the HEFCE documentation showed that this was expected to fall from 5% in 2013-14 to 3.3% in 2014-15. **Council noted** that the University's own performance on this measure would be in line with the general downward movement, although it was some way below the sector average. This confirmed the importance of a continued focus on achieving the financial strategy and moving towards a sustainable position in the longer term.

15/M34 GENDER SEGREGATION AT UNIVERSITY EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Council noted that the Equalities and Human Rights Commission had issued legal guidance to universities on the issue of gender segregation of audiences at meetings and other events held on university premises. The guidance indicated that the courts were likely to find any instance of gender segregation to be unlawful (other than in acts of religious worship, which was not covered by equality law), and recommended that institutions should protect themselves from liability by prohibiting gender segregation at all events other than acts of religious worship.

Council approved the inclusion of a proposed new clause in the University's Code of Practice on freedom of speech to confirm that it would not allow the gender segregation of audiences at any event held on its premises, with the sole exception of acts of religious worship.

15/M35 RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Council received and approved the 2015 annual summary statement of actions taken by the University to support and strengthen departmental and staff understanding of research integrity issues across the University.

Council noted that, having completed its work on overseeing the University's response to meeting the requirements of the RCUK Concordat on research integrity, the Research Integrity Working Group had now been disbanded. The Research Policy Committee was considering how the remit for research integrity would be taken forward by the University in the longer term.

15/M36 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Council noted the dates of forthcoming meetings, all to commence at 4pm:

Wednesday 8 July 2015

Tuesday 24 November 2015

Thursday 17 March 2016

Monday 16 May 2016

Wednesday 6 July 2016

15/M37 **COURTESIES**

Council recorded its appreciation and best wishes for the contribution and support of the following members of Council, who were attending their final meeting:

Mr Michael Rubin, President of the Students' Union in 2014-15; and

Professor David Wynford-Thomas, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology since 2009.

CHAIR

Duration of meeting (including Reserved Business): 2 hours and 40 minutes