

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

**Meeting was held on Wednesday 15 October 2025 at 2.00pm
in the Council Room, First Floor, Fielding Johnson Building**

MINUTES

Attendees: Neil Goulden (Chair), Nishan Canagarajah, Henrietta O'Connor, Kerry Law, Cathy Ellis, George Acquah, Lauren Bartlett, Liz Blyth, Jack Chambers, Martin Cullen, Mary Curnock Cook, Sophie Dale-Black, Rishi Madlani, Kevin Nagle, Richard Tapp, Glynis Wright, Stewart Fishwick, Alison Snape, James Fitchett, Hilary Coyle, Edith Malemba and Matt Schofield (left the meeting at 16.20).

In attendance: Geoff Green, Paul Gowridge, Sally Priddle, Elizabeth Warhurst (Item 2), Emma Stevens (Item 6 and 7) and Ian Forristal (Item 9).

INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1. Welcomes and Declarations of interest

- 1.1 Council noted apologies from George Acquah and Richard Tapp.
- 1.2 Council welcomed Neil Goulden, Hilary Coyle, James Fitchett and Edith Malemba to their first formal meeting of Council.
- 1.3 Edith Malemba and Stewart Fishwick noted potential conflicts with the Strategic Review as they were located in one of the affected Schools.
- 1.4 James Fitchett and Geoff Green, as University Secretary, declared an interest in the Whistleblowing report.

2. Whistleblowing Report of Review Panel [RESERVED]

- 2.1 Council considered a report from a Whistleblowing panel.

Resolved:

- 2.4 Council **APPROVED** that the report should be shared with the Registrar and Secretary.

3. Minutes

- 3.1 Council considered the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2025.
- 3.2 Council considered the updates on matters arising. It was noted that Council would consider in the future potential opportunities to engage with the staff trade unions, but it was not appropriate to do so during a formal dispute.

Resolved:

- 3.1 Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the Meeting held on 1 July 2025 as an accurate record.

4. Chair's Business

- 4.1 The Chair reported that no formal business had been undertaken on behalf of Council.

- 4.2 Council noted a verbal report from the Chair of Council, including that he had met with the Registrar and Secretary to consider the governance effectiveness review and next steps and a key priority was to ensure a better balance between time allocated to strategy discussions and governance matters.
- 4.3 Council noted that there was a need for Council to consider the long term financial viability of the University and make the necessary decisions to address the structural deficit; the financial challenges were not a control issue. The University needed to have the headroom with resources to invest in its strengths, the estate and digital infrastructure. It was reported that at this meeting, Council was not being asked to approve specific actions or redundancies but to rather approve the strategic direction and financial targets, including the commencement of collective consultation process, and the launch of a voluntary severance scheme. Council needed to operate independently and strategically, seeking assurance that a robust process had been undertaken. Council discussed the role of Senate in the strategic review and the importance of seeking community input during the consultation to shape recommendations.
- 4.4 Council noted that a letter from a Senate representative on Council had been circulated ahead of the meeting and its receipt was noted in the minutes.

5. President and Vice-Chancellor's Business

- 5.1 Council considered a report from the President and Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor had attended the Labour Conference on behalf of the University, sessions had included the role of civic universities, health and how universities had contributed to growth in the Country. It was a positive opportunity to engage with ministers and local MPs. Bridget Philipson announced that maintenance allowance would be reintroduced for disadvantaged students studying subjects that aligned with the industry allowance. The Vice-Chancellor and leaders of other institutions had pushed for a review of the maintenance allowance and although the proposal was welcome, there were concerns it was only for certain subjects. The allowance would be funded by the international student levy which was problematic and made institutional finances worse, the cost of the levy would be £4m for University of Leicester. There was ongoing lobbying to review the international levy. The previous government's target was no longer necessary, the revised target was two thirds of students would go to Higher Education or a gold standard degree awarding apprenticeship.
- 5.2 Council noted that the University had received three awards at the AdvanceHE Education Awards.
- 5.3 The Vice-Chancellor had joined the Prime Minister on a delegation to India, it had been a positive opportunity to recognise the role of higher education in the country's partnership and meet with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade.
- 5.4 Council discussed the market diversification and the importance of the University's international strategy not being overly reliant on specific countries. The Executive was aware of this risk around internationalisation and the need to develop a sustainable portfolio with the agility to respond to a volatile geopolitical climate.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS

6. Strategic Review [RESERVED]

- 6.1 Council considered an update on the Strategic Review and the proposed next steps.

Resolved:

- 6.2 Council **APPROVED** the commencement of the Strategic Review collective consultation process.

7. Voluntary Severance Scheme (VSS) [RESERVED]

7.1 Council considered a proposal to launch a Voluntary Severance Scheme.

Resolved:

7.2 Council **APPROVED** the launch of a Voluntary Severance Scheme (VSS) on 3 November 2025 to 9 January 2026.

8. Finance [RESERVED]

8.1 On the recommendation of Finance and Infrastructure Committee, Council considered the proposal to extend the Revolving Credit Facility (RCF).

8.2 Council considered the draft (pre-audit) 2024/25 Financial Performance Report and noted it was currently being reviewed by external auditors with the final version due to be submitted to Council for consideration in December.

Resolved:

8.4 Council **APPROVED** the Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) extension.

9. Annual Review of Strategy and Progress and KPIs

9.1 Council considered the Annual Review of Strategy and Progress and Key Performance Indicators and noted that there had been positive progress on 4 KPIs and 2 had decreased. Council discussed whether the KPIs remained appropriate and aligned with the University's strategic ambitions. It was reported that the University was now five years into the implementation of the Strategy, therefore, it would be reviewed and evaluated from 2026; this would include reconsideration of the KPIs and whether the University was assessing and measuring the right things.

10. Students' Union Priority Report

10.1 Council received an update on the Students Union Priorities and noted that the priorities for the year were: providing targeted support for students in departments affected by the university's strategic review to maintain a high-quality student experience, lobbying to increase meaningful on-campus student employment, building a stronger Postgraduate Research (PGR) student community, undertaking analysis of NSS addressing areas where student experience scores were disproportionately low, and tackling loneliness particularly among groups such as LGBT+, Disabled, and Mature Students through targeted community-building initiatives.

10.2 Council welcomed the focused priorities for the 2025-26 academic year and the focus on employment and loneliness. It was noted that there was a decrease in part time roles available for students as a result of the University's financial savings initiatives but future opportunities would be considered.

10.3 Council discussed how it could support the Students Union to deliver their priorities and it was agreed ongoing communication was key.

REPORTED BUSINESS**11. Nominations Committee**

- 11.1 Council considered the summary of business from the meeting held on 3 October 2025.
- 11.2 Council considered the re-appointment of Sophie Dale-Black as Vice-Chair of Council for a second three year term.
- 11.3 Council considered the nominations for membership of Court and noted the Committee's request to undertake a review of membership to maximise stakeholder engagement.
- 11.4 Council noted the annual report.
- 11.5 Council noted the annual Register of Interests 25/26 and Fit and Proper persons confirmation.

Resolved:

- 11.6 Council **APPROVED** the re-appointment of Sophie Dale-Black as Vice-Chair of Council for a second three-year term.
- 11.7 Council **APPROVED** the nominations for membership of Court.
- 11.8 Council **APPROVED** the membership of Council's Committees for 2025-2026.

12. Finance and Infrastructure Committee [RESERVED]

- 12.1 Council considered the summary of business from the meeting held on 25 September 2025.

13. Audit and Assurance Committee [RESERVED]

- 13.1 Council considered the summary of business from the meeting held on 30 September 2025.

Resolved:

- 13.4 Council **APPROVED** the Health and Safety Policy.
- 13.5 Council **APPROVED** the Due Diligence – Philanthropic Funding Policy, noting the need for the policy to be reviewed within the academic year.

Action:

- 13.6 Circulate the revised Due Diligence-Philanthropic Funding Policy to Council for information, ahead of the policy being reviewed. **[Owner: Head of Governance]**

14. Senate

- 14.1 Council considered the summary of a meeting of Senate held on 1 October 2025. Council noted the World-Changing Research annual report 2024-25, the Research Inspired Education annual report 2024-25 and the analysis of the NSS Results for 2025, and follow-up actions. Council also noted the "Good" outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection into the University's apprenticeship provision. Council noted the progress against the academic KPIs and welcomed the review of these KPIs as part of the strategy review, ensuring there was a balance between stretch and achievability.

14.2 Council welcomed the revised reporting from Senate to Council, highlighting the key items and risks considered at the meeting. It was reported that the Senate effectiveness review and Council effectiveness review had both highlighted the need to improve communication between the two bodies, this would be picked up as part of the implementation of the review's recommendations. Council discussed how it received assurance on academic matters, it was suggested that the current reporting was too long and focused more on activity than impact.

SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

15. Council Governance Framework 2025-2026

15.1 Council considered the revised Council governance framework 2025-26 which sets out the membership, powers and the operation of Council for the coming academic year. The report recommended revisions to Council's Standing Orders to clarify the legal and equal responsibilities of members, how decisions of Council were made and how motions could be submitted. The report recommended the incorporation of the public interest governance principles into Council's Governance Framework to ensure there was clarity on Council's responsibility to operate in accordance with these principles.

Resolved:

15.2 Council **APPROVED** the revised Council Governance Framework 2024-2025.

16. Schedule of Delegation including Legal SOP and Contracts Matrix

16.1 Council considered the revised Schedule of Delegation, the revisions aimed to improve clarity and transparency of the University's governance arrangements. A contracts matrix and legal standard operating procedure had been developed to ensure approvals and oversight sat at the right levels within the University.

Resolved:

16.2 Council **APPROVED** the revised Schedule of Delegation including the Contracts Matrix and Legal Standard Operating Procedure.

17. Terms of Reference for all Council Standing/Sub-Committees

17.1 Council considered the revised Terms of Reference and composition of its Sub-Committees.

Resolved:

17.2 Council **APPROVED** the revised Terms of Reference and composition of its Sub-Committees for 2025-26.

18. Changes to Statutes and Ordinance

18.1 Council considered the proposal to revise Statute Six and Ordinance 24 to align the membership of Senate with the new four College structure and noted that the Statutes would have to be submitted to Privy Council for approval.

Resolved:

18.2 Council **APPROVED** the proposal to revise Statute Six and Ordinance 24.

Actions:

18.3 Submit the proposal to revise Statute Six to the Privy Council for approval. **[Owner: Registrar and Secretary]**

19. Prevent Duty Annual Report and Action Plan

19.1 Council considered the Prevent Duty Annual Report and Action Plan for submission to the Office for Students (OfS). The OfS no longer provided confirmation that the University met requirements but they would contact the University if they had concerns; the University of Leicester had not received notification of any concerns so it could be assumed it had satisfactory controls in place.

Resolved:

19.2 Council **APPROVED** the Prevent Duty Annual Report and Action Plan for signature by the Chair of Council and submission to the Office for Students.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

20. Dates and times of future meetings

20.1 Council noted the dates and time for future meetings.

21. Any Other Business

21.1 Council noted the importance of maintaining confidentiality. The discussions for the Strategic Review were difficult but were being made for the long term future and sustainability of the University. The University would do everything it could to mitigate redundancies and operate in a thorough and transparent manner.

The meeting lasted 180 minutes.