

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Unreserved Minutes of a Meeting held by 'Teams' on  
Wednesday 17 March 2021

Present:

Gary Dixon (Chair)

Janet Arthur	Stephen Garrett
Huw Barton	Alison Goodall
Craig Brown	Martin Hindle
Edmund Burke	Ian Johnson
Nishan Canagarajah	Azam Mamujee
Martin Cullen	Andrew Morgan
Sophie Dale-Black	Mia Nembhard
Sandra Dudley	Vijay Sharma
Mehmooda Duke	Richard Tapp
Cathy Ellis	Carole Thorogood

**In attendance:** Philip Baker (PVC and Head of College, for 21/M30 specifically); Neil Cox (Assistant Council Secretary); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Paul Gowdrige (Director of Finance); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Aash Khadia (Director of Planning, for 21/M28 and 21/M29 specifically); Kerry Law (Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer); Angie Pears (Associate Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Organisational Development, for 21/M31 specifically); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Operating Officer); Emma Stevens (Director of Human Resources, for 21/M28, 21/M29 and 21/M31 specifically); and Graham Wynn (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education).

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

21/M25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of personal interest in any of the items dealt with under the Unreserved Business section of this meeting.

21/M26 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the unreserved (only) minutes of the virtual meeting held on 25 February 2021. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

21/M27 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor introduced his written report for Council which provided an update on recent developments and news in the HE sector generally, and at Leicester, as well as key student and staff achievements.

The President and Vice-Chancellor expressed his pride in the ongoing achievements of the University's staff and students, in areas such as research awards and fellowships, and scholarships and internships, during the continued restrictions of the third national lockdown. He also recorded his particular appreciation - echoed by the Chair - for the work undertaken by Lisanne Gibson to oversee the preparation of the University's 2021 REF return, some examples from which would be shared with Council after the return had been submitted at the end of March, and for the unstinting efforts of Graham Wynn and his colleagues to support and protect the student experience during the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19.

Council recorded its continued support for the President and Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Board in taking forward the consultation programme on Shaping for Excellence (21/M29 also refers) and for their consistent, dignified responses to associated criticism and coverage which in some cases had been of a highly personal nature. Council confirmed its support for such incidents to be monitored closely against the expectations of the University's Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy, and for appropriate action to be taken where necessary. The importance of appropriate support being provided to managers across the University, including those who were not operating at a very senior level, to help them deal with queries and challenges on strategic developments, was also acknowledged. Approval and articulation of the new strategic plan and the institutional principles associated with it (minute M21/28 also refers) was an important component of this.

## 21/M28 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Council considered a report which provided an update on progress made so far with the development of the University's new 10-year strategy, including its Mission, Vision, Strategic Themes, Strategic Aims, and Key Performance Indicators.

Council was reminded that it had been necessary for the original timeline for the development of the new strategy to be paused in Spring 2020, due to COVID-19 and the restrictions of the first national lockdown, although the new strategy had actually been close to completion at that point. The subsequent impact of the pandemic and other external developments had resulted in a need to change the intended delivery plans and key performance indicators to better support the strategic direction of the University. The most significant change involved the refinement of one of the three strategic themes that was focussed pre-lockdown on "Sustainable Partnerships" but had since been changed to reflect a more inclusive strategic theme focussed on "Our Citizens".

**Council noted** that the Strategy featured a brief opening statement on the University's background, heritage and history, followed by two short statements of its strategic mission and values. Council received the proposed text for these three elements and welcomed them as a concise and succinct statement of the University's overarching objectives.

**Council noted** that the Strategy had three themes – *Research-Inspired Education*, *World-Changing Research* and *Our Citizens* - with underpinning strategic aims to ensure the University vision was achieved. The strategic themes would also have detailed delivery plans, for completion in July 2021, focussing on short, medium and long term objectives over the next five years. Strategic decision making would then be informed by four guiding principles covering *Health and Wellbeing*, *Equality and Diversity* (it was suggested that 'Equity' might be an alternative term), *Environmental Sustainability* and *Operational Excellence*.

**Council acknowledged** that some strategic momentum had been lost due to COVID-19, and that the strategic changes under Shaping for Excellence had been something of a diversion in the short term. It was obviously important to re-engage with staff and improve morale - both had been hindered by over a year of remote working - and to be alert to opportunities to gain competitive advantage by emerging quickly at the end of the national lockdown.

**Council strongly welcomed and approved** the new Strategic Plan, and **noted** that it would receive the new institutional Values and KPIs for the strategy for consideration at its first meeting in the next academic year.

21/M29 **SHAPING FOR EXCELLENCE**

Council received a further comprehensive update on the current progress of the Shaping for Excellence programme. Council was reminded of the academic and professional services areas that were included in the programme, and **noted** the current status of the formal consultation process that would conclude at the end of April. (Some of the professional services areas were still in the pre-change engagement phase and the formal consultations on those areas would run on an extended timescale, until the end of the calendar year.)

**Council noted** that no decisions could be made on the final outcomes of the cases for change until the conclusion of the formal consultation process. Significant feedback had already been received, from across the University and from external stakeholders, and all of this advice was being incorporated into the consultation process and would be considered before any decisions were made.

**Council noted** that the University had been meeting with the three campus Trade Unions throughout the programme. There had been some correspondence around the University's interpretation of the Redundancy Ordinance Policy and Procedure, in particular the timescales cited within it. Legal advice had been taken and, based upon that advice, the University remained of the view that its timescales and sequence of meetings complied with the Ordinance and that it had been consistently applied for consultation on cases for change in recent years. It had not previously been challenged by the Unions.

**Council noted** that in line with University Ordinances, any planned changes would require consideration and approval through the formal governance structure, with Council required to consider and/or note appropriate aspects of the proposed changes, at the conclusion of the process. It was expected that this would take place at the scheduled Council meeting on 10 May 2021.

21/M30 **NHS PARTNERSHIP**

Council considered a proposal for the University, via the College of Life Sciences, to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (KGH) and the Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust (NGH).

**Council noted** that it was widely accepted that a close interaction between a University Medical School and the local NHS could play an important role in enhancing the performance of both partners in a way that was greater than the contributions of either partner in isolation. KGH and NGH had come together as a new hospital group to serve the population of the whole of Northamptonshire and beyond, approximately 700,000 people. Collectively, the two Trusts had 1,440 beds, a revenue budget of over £500million and approximately 9,000 staff. KGH and NGH already worked closely with the Leicester Medical School and, more recently, with the School of Allied Health Professionals at the University of Leicester, and were developing a shared vision for an Academic and Research Strategy to develop and deliver a broader multi-disciplinary clinical education prospectus, generate further research portfolio growth and improve patient outcomes.

**Council noted** that the partnership presented a significant opportunity to increase medical student numbers within the Leicester Medical School, by KGH and NGH providing additional undergraduate teaching opportunities, including significantly more clinical placements and ward-based apprenticeship opportunities. The University's participation in the partnership would not involve any financial liability as the investment was being made by the KGH/NGH Group. The UHL NHS Trust was aware of and comfortable with the proposed partnership.

**Council approved** the proposal for the University, via the College of Life Sciences, to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (KGH) and the Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust (NGH), and to seek University Hospitals Accreditation for the partnership.

#### 21/M31 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Council considered a report which outlined the activity undertaken by the University over the last year to further embed the EDI agenda across the institution. **Council was pleased to note** that EDI activities and initiatives were now being implemented within a much clearer but still developing strategic framework. Work to comprehensively embed the Dignity and Respect at Leicester policy and framework had been one of the highlights of the year, alongside the strengthening of the EDI governance infrastructure and efforts to monitor and minimise the impact of COVID-19 policy responses on different equality groups.

With regard to the gender pay gap, **Council noted** that the University's mean gender pay gap had declined from 24.1% to 20.3% between 2017 and 2020, and the median pay gap had declined from 22.7% to 19% in the same period. The University was committed to closing its mean and median pay gaps to the Pre-92 sector averages of 18.9% and 14.0% respectively by 2024. **Council was therefore pleased to note** the details of an exercise that was underway, with external specialist support, to identify specific changes that were needed to achieve a positive, substantial and sustainable impact on the current gender pay gap.

#### 21/M32 **SENATE**

Council received reports of business conducted by Senate by correspondence, in January 2021, and at a virtual meeting held on 2 March 2021.

Specific matters drawn to the attention of Council included the use of Chair's action (by the Chair of Council) to confirm Senate's approval for the revocation of an honorary degree, made at the request of the recipient; a summary of outcomes from reports of undergraduate external examiners in 2019-2020; Senate's approval of proposed changes to the University's Student Protection Plan, following its annual review; and the requirements set by the OfS for all higher education providers to undertake a review of their compliance with consumer rights legislation, in light of the impact of the global pandemic on educational and other service provision in 2020-21. With regard to the latter, **Council noted** that it was due to receive a report on the outcome of this review at its meeting in May 2021.

#### 21/M33 **NEW APPOINTMENTS TO COURT**

**Council considered and approved** a recommendation of the Nominations Committee that the following newly-appointed emeritus professors should be invited to become Associate Members of Court, effective until 31 December 2023 in the first instance:

Janet Ainley	- Education
Peter Andrew	- Respiratory Science
Robert Garner	- Politics
Irene Gottlob	- Neuroscience
George Jones	- Biological Sciences
Clive Marsh	- Lifelong Learning
Nicole Snashall	- Mathematics

21/M34 **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** a report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16 February 2021. The key issues considered by the Audit Committee at this meeting, in relation to the sign-off and approval of the financial statements and OfS financial monitoring return for 2019-20, had already been reported to and discussed by Council at the meeting held on 25 February 2021.

21/M35 **HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

Council considered reports of two meetings of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee held on 25 January and 23 February 2021 respectively.

**Council noted** that the Committee was being particularly careful to keep its COVID-19 risk assessments up to date, and was positively encouraging feedback from staff and the trade unions on any areas of concern.

21/M36 **STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

Council considered reports of two meetings of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 3 December 2020 and 25 February 2021 respectively.

**Council noted** that holding the Alumni Association's AGM online in 2020 because of COVID-19 had enabled more of the alumni community to become engaged, especially internationally, and consideration would be given to holding more virtual events in future to continue to expand reach and accessibility.

21/M37 **STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS 2021**

**Council noted** that the outcome of the 2021 elections for Executive Officers in the Students' Union was as follows:

President	- Rhiannon Jenkins
Education	- Anne Marie Deeb
Wellbeing	- Karli Wagener
Liberation	- Nic Farmer
Activities	- Manoj Chowdary Kanikanti
Sports	- Georgia Henton

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), in his capacity as Council's appointed 'Observer', confirmed that no significant issues had been identified in the overall conduct of these elections, although one candidate had been removed from the election process, with the approval of the Independent Returning Officer, due to multiple breaches of the rules and regulations. The final turnout was 1,650 which compared with 2,400 in 2020. Virtual campaigning and voting under the COVID-19 restrictions had probably hindered the level of interest in the 2021 elections, and the voting system had been down for one day due to the nationally used election system being hit by a malicious attack.

National turnout data would be available in due course and would help to inform a discussion about how to improve the turnout at Leicester, although anecdotal evidence suggested that other institutions had also seen a decline in turnout this year.

21/M38 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Council received the University Risk Committee's spring term update on the current status of risk management at the University. The report had already been presented to and considered in detail by the Audit Committee.

**Council noted** the Very High risks in the Strategic University Risk Register and the nominated risks from the College risk committees/Professional Services Risk Committee.

21/M39 **VAN GEEST FOUNDATION HEART AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES RESEARCH FUND**

**Council received and noted** the report of the annual meeting of the managing trustees of the van Geest Foundation Heart and Cardiovascular Diseases Research Fund, held on 1 December 2020.

21/M40 **UNIVERSITY SEAL**

As custodian of the University's Seal **Council received and noted** details of the affixing of the Seal to the document(s) as listed in Appendix C/21/M340App, attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

21/M41 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Council noted** the dates and times of remaining scheduled meetings and an Awayday in 2020-21, all to commence at 4.00pm unless stated otherwise:

Monday 10 May 2021 - Ordinary meeting  
Tuesday 8 June 2021 - Council/Executive Board Awayday, from 9.30am-4.30pm  
Tuesday 6 July 2021 - Ordinary meeting

With regard to the above Awayday, **Council noted** that an all-day virtual event was not ideal and it might be rescheduled (to be confirmed) for a slightly later date if there was confidence that a live event might become possible during the summer.

**Council also noted** the provisional dates of meetings in 2021-2022, all to commence at 4.00pm unless stated otherwise:

Wednesday 29 September 2021 - Ordinary meeting  
Tuesday 23 November 2021 - Ordinary meeting  
Tuesday 15 March 2022 - Ordinary meeting  
Wednesday 11 May 2022 - Ordinary meeting  
Tuesday 7 June 2022 - Council/Executive Board Awayday, 9.30am-4.30pm  
Thursday 7 July 2022 - Ordinary meeting

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting: 1 hour and 50 minutes