

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a teleconference meeting held on  
Wednesday 18 March 2020

**'Present':**

Gary Dixon (Chair)

Craig Brown	Alison Goodall
Edmund Burke	Martin Hindle
Nishan Canagarajah	Ian Johnson
Martin Cullen	Azam Mamujee
Sophie Dale-Black	Andrew Morgan
Sarah Davies	Oge Obioha
Sandra Dudley	Vijay Sharma
Cathy Ellis	Richard Tapp

**'In attendance':** Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Operating Officer); Kerry Law (Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer); Neil Cox (Assistant Council Secretary); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Graham Wynn (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education); and Angie Pears (Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, for item 20/M9 only).

**Apologies for 'absence'** were received from Janet Arthur, Mehmooda Duke and Carole Thorogood.

20/M1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/M2 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- a. The Chair welcomed Martyn Riddleston to the meeting in his new capacity as the University's Chief Operating Officer, and also welcomed Geoff Green as the University's interim Registrar and Secretary. The permanent appointment to this position would be made in 2021 through an external recruitment process, and would require the approval of Council, as set out in the Statutes.
- b. The Chair indicated that the University's response to the CUC Consultation on its new Higher Education Code of Governance had been prepared and submitted by the Assistant Council Secretary, with input from the Chair of Council and the Chair of the Audit Committee. The CUC had intended that a 'final' draft of the new Code would be presented for discussion at its Spring Plenary in early April, with a view to publication in May, but this schedule had been suspended until further notice due to the situation with Covid-19 (also referred to under 20/M3a below).

20/M3 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor introduced his written report for Council which provided an update on recent developments, news, and key student and staff achievements since the last meeting of Council. On this occasion the section of the report which dealt with the developing situation regarding Covid-19 was supplemented by a further written update circulated to Council just before the meeting. With regard to specific elements of the overall report:

## a. Covid-19

**Council noted** that the University's operational response and communications planning for Covid-19 was being jointly managed and co-ordinated by the Chief Operating Officer, the Registrar and Secretary and the Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer. A Major Incident Management Group was meeting daily to keep the situation under review. Seven work streams were currently in operation, with relevant business continuity plans in place or being implemented, for academic continuity (including students), communications, campus operations, travel, remote working, staff, and research. All teaching had already been moved to on-line delivery only and campus services had been significantly scaled back. At the time of the meeting the University was not planning to close early for Easter, but this could obviously change in the light of any new advice or instructions from the government.

The key academic issue in the immediate term was contingency planning for current and planned student assessment in the summer, and for appropriate communication and support for students. The President of the Students' Union was invited to communicate any significant concerns or queries raised by students to the Registrar and Secretary on a regular basis, who would keep the President and Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Council aware of any common themes and how they were being addressed.

**Council noted** that other key issues in the short and medium term included the development of staff remote working facilities; the possible impact on the progress of capital build projects; uncertainty over campus opening in the summer term and possible loss of income from student accommodation fees; and the risk to student recruitment and income for autumn 2020.

With regard to Covid-19 communications moving forward, Council members would be copied into regular staff briefings that would probably continue to be issued several times a week, or as otherwise required. Other means of communication with Council, and their frequency, would be implemented as deemed necessary in the light of events, and Council members could email questions at any time to the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer, or the Registrar and Secretary.

## b. Industrial action

**Council noted** that the recent phase of industrial action had generally been less disruptive on campus than the action taken during November 2019. The University had focussed its efforts on minimising the impact on its students, and maintaining positive liaison and relationships with the local trade unions.

20/M4

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

**20/M5 STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Council received a report from the Director of Planning, the Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer and the Registrar and Secretary on progress made in the development of the University's new 10-year strategy. The report outlined the progress made to date in relation to the Mission, Vision, Strategic Themes, Strategic Aims, and Key Performance Indicators.

Council acknowledged the importance of this topic, which obviously needed to be considered in appropriate depth and detail, but in the circumstances of this meeting **agreed** to defer the discussion to a later date.

**20/M6 FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Council considered reports of two meetings of the Finance Committee, held on 29 January and 11 March 2020 respectively.

With regard to the meeting held on 11 March 2020, **Council noted** that the rapidly emerging and unpredictable threat posed by Covid-19 had obviously featured prominently in the Committee's deliberations. This was particularly in relation to financial planning, cash flow forecasts and contingencies for 2019-20 and 2020-21, but also other aspects such as the possible impact on contractors and sub-contractors, and the progress of capital projects. The Treasurer was receiving regular updates on the situation from the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Finance, and it was likely that the Committee would be convened again, by some means, before its next scheduled meeting, to discuss the developing situation.

In the meantime, **Council endorsed** in principle a recommendation from the Finance Committee that the University should seek to put in place some form of revolving credit facility as a contingency to be called upon, if required. Council would need to approve the final details of any such arrangement, which might be in the order of £45 million initially.

**20/M7 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Council considered a report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on 25 February 2020.

**Council noted** that the Committee and the external auditors had reflected upon how the increasingly complex audit processes had contributed to the timing challenges which had impacted upon the conclusion of the 2018-19 external audit. To avoid a repeat of this, initial work was already underway to realign the timing and sequencing of relevant governance meetings in the autumn term. Issues affecting the completion of the 2018-19 external audit of the Leicester Services Partnership were also the subject of ongoing investigation.

The Committee had noted that, under the new internal auditors, significant improvements were already becoming evident in the timely completion of scheduled internal audit reviews and reports.

**20/M8 RISK MANAGEMENT**

Council received the University's latest risk register report, as updated for the spring term 2020. **Council noted** that the rapidly emerging threat from Covid-19 (dealt with

in detail under 20/M3a) had been added late in the update process, as a high-level description of the risk. A wider set of risks would be developed separately as part of the detailed situation monitoring and contingency planning work that was underway.

#### 20/M9 **ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY, DIVERSION AND INCLUSION (EDI)**

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 activities and initiatives were being implemented across a broad range of key areas, with highlights including:

- the development and launch of a “Dignity and Respect at Leicester” Policy and Framework
- significant progress in the development of deeper evidence-based understanding of the experiences and challenges facing BAME staff and students
- advancing race equality as an institutional priority, including a number of projects directly aimed at closing the BAME awarding gap
- a staff recruitment programme designed to achieve a more representative profile and balance between BAME University staff and students
- co-ordination of the University’s equality-related requirements for REF2021
- a reduction in the gender pay gap, from a mean of 23.1% in 2018 to 20.6% in 2019, and a median of 19.6% in 2018 to 18.4% in 2019.

With regard to the gender pay gap, the University acknowledged that this was still at an unacceptable level, despite the modest progress that had been made over the last three years. The target for the next three years was to reduce the gender pay gap to that of the average figure (when it became available) for the pre-92 universities. Advance HE was currently quoting a mean gender pay gap of 15% for the HE sector as a whole.

**Council was pleased to note** that the President and Vice-Chancellor had taken over as the Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, to help ensure that its remit and progress was properly captured and articulated against clear and comprehensive KPIs, as set out in the Appendix to the Annual Report.

#### 20/M10 **EQUALITY, DIVERSION AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** a report of a meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 31 October 2019. There were no matters that required the approval of the Council on this occasion.

#### 20/M11 **SAFETY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT**

Council received the 2019-20 annual report from the Director of Safety Services. The report had been produced to provide Council with an appraisal of the current arrangements for managing health, safety and wellbeing at the University, and reflected on the progress made since the last report was presented to Council in March 2019.

Council acknowledged the importance of the report, which needed to be considered in appropriate depth and detail. In the circumstances of this meeting **Council agreed** to defer the report to a later date.

With regard to specific fire safety issues at Nixon Court (referred to at the last meeting under minute 19/M119d), **Council noted** that the mitigating actions remained in place, and the building was being used and managed, in accordance with the oversight provided by the West Midlands Fire Service.

#### 20/M12 **HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** a report of a meeting of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee held on 24 February 2020. There were no matters that required the approval of the Council on this occasion.

#### 20/M13 **SENATE**

**Council received and noted** a report of a meeting of Senate held on 4 March 2020. There were no matters that required the approval of the Council on this occasion.

**Council also received and noted** a summary report of the consideration and outcomes of external examiners' reports for undergraduate programmes in the 2018-19 academic year, with an overview of school responses and any accompanying actions. The report had been considered in depth by the Learning and Teaching Committee, which had agreed that it should be forwarded to Council to provide additional assurance of the University's academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities offered.

#### 20/M14 **STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS**

**Council noted** that the outcome of the 2020 elections for Executive Officers in the Students' Union was as follows:

President:	Mia Nembhard
Activities:	Elle Phipps
Education:	Adnan Rahman
Equality and Liberation	Tony Magaia
Sports:	Hannah Belcher
Wellbeing:	Karli Wagener

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), in his capacity as Council's appointed 'Observer', confirmed that no significant issues had been identified in the conduct of these elections.

Council expressed its congratulations to all of the elected candidates, and noted that Mia Nembhard was currently serving as the Students' Union's elected Sports Officer for the 2019-20 academic year.

#### 20/M15 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF COURT AND COUNCIL**

Council considered a report of the Nominations Committee regarding the appointment of members of Court and Council.

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

Jonathon Chambers	Engineering
Eric Hope	Chemistry
Clare Madge	Geography, Geology and the Environment
Andrew Wardlaw	Respiratory Sciences
Jan Zalasiewicz	Geography, Geology and the Environment

- b. **Council noted** that a recommendation of the Nominations Committee, that Cathy Ellis be reappointed to Council to serve until 31 July 2023 (in one of the four places on Council appointed directly by the Court), had been approved by Court at its Annual Meeting held on 14 February 2020.

20/M16 **STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

**Council received and noted** the reports of two meetings of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 5 December 2019 and 13 February 2020 respectively. There no matters arising from either meeting that required approval by Council on this occasion.

20/M17 **FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE**

**Council received** the outline forward business schedule for its remaining 'Ordinary' meetings and Awaydays during 2019-20, but **noted** that in current circumstances any further 'virtual' meetings would be likely to deal with only a small number of key/urgent items.

20/M18 **UNIVERSITY SEAL**

**Council received and noted** details of the affixing of the University Seal to documents as listed in Appendix C/20/M18 App, attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

29/M19 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Council noted** the dates and times of:

- a. remaining Ordinary meetings and Awaydays in 2019-20, all at 4pm unless stated otherwise:

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Tuesday 9 June 2020 – Council/Executive Board Awayday (*under review*)

Wednesday 8 July 2020

- b. **provisional unconfirmed** dates of Ordinary meetings and Awaydays in 2020-21, all at 4pm unless stated otherwise:

Wednesday 30 September 2020 **ORIGINALLY TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER**

Wednesday 25 November 2020

Wednesday 17 March 2021

Monday 10 May 2021

Tuesday 8 June 2021 - Council/Executive Board Awayday (all day)

Tuesday 6 July 2021

Total duration of meeting: 1 hour and 35 minutes

*Note to these minutes: supporting papers for some of the business recorded under these minutes were presented to Council on a separate reserved section of the agenda for the meeting, due to the commercial and/or personal sensitivity of their detailed contents.*