**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COUNCIL**

**Meeting held on Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 4.00pm**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:** Gary Dixon (Chair), Professor Nishan Canagarajah, Professor Henrietta O’Connor, Kerry Law, Cathy Ellis, George Acquah, Lauren Bartlett, Liz Blyth, Jack Chambers, Rishi Madlani, Kevin Nagle, Richard Tapp, Professor Catherine Morley, Dr Gabrielle Provan, Professor Stewart Fishwick, Professor Linda Ralphs, Mehmooda Duke (left the meeting at 5.30pm), Dr Sophie Dale-Black, Mary Curnock-Cook, Glynis Wright, and Martin Cullen

**Apologies:** Joshitha Venkataraman

**In attendance:** Geoff Green, Professor Liz Jones, Paul Gowdridge, Elizabeth Warhurst (item 21), Sally Priddle, , Joanna Watson (Items 1-20), Professor Dan Ladley (Item 5), Laurence Perkins (Item 21) and Adam Baynes (Item 21).

1. **Declarations of interest**
	1. Council noted that the Chief Financial Officer and Registrar and Secretary were Directors of College Court Conference Centre and would not report on item 21.

1. **Minutes**

2.1 Council **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 as an accurate record.

2.2 Council **noted** that all actions were completed. A question over whether the new Home UG fee rate would be applicable to continuing students, was confirmed that it would apply to all student groups and it had been communicated to students this week.

1. **Chair’s Business**

3.1 Council **received** an update from the Chair of Council.

3.2 Council **noted** that the sector’s challenges were being widely reported. A number of other Higher Education institutions had announced they were taking action to ensure financial sustainability. The University of Leicester was not immune to these challenges and the Executive had been implementing a financial performance improvement plan to address the challenges with the University’s cost base. Further action would be required to establish a fit for purpose operational structure that would enable the University to be financially sustainable and produce a surplus that could be invested back into the University. Council welcomed the proactive action the Executive was taking and understood that additional proposals would be presented to May and July Council meetings.

1. **President and** **Vice-Chancellor’s business**

4.1 Council **considered** an update from the President and Vice-Chancellor.

4.2 The Vice-Chancellor shared concerns about the government’s proposals to channel funding through devolved authorities. Leicester was not in a devolved authority and therefore the University of Leicester could miss out on funding. The Vice-Chancellor was working with Vice-Chancellors at other institutions not in devolved authorities and had raised concerns with Mayor of East Midlands, Mayor of Leicester and other political leaders who may be able to advocate for University of Leicester. The Vice-Chancellor was ensuring that it was clear how the University’s work, particularly industry strategies, aligned with Government priorities. Council asked whether the University had considered forming partnerships with institutions outside of the East Midlands.

4.3 It was reported that Universities UK (UUK) had submitted a request ahead of the national budget to request additional funding and revision to how funding was managed. This included allowing for tuition fees to rise with inflation, increasing QR funding in line with inflation and establish a strategic priority grant.

4.4 The University had held an event to remember 3 years of Ukraine, recognising the impact for staff and students.

4.5 The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Executive were focused on addressing the top risks on the Strategic Risk Register, including recruitment and financial sustainability. Lower case application scenarios had been built into financial forecasts; Postgraduate Taught applications remained a challenge for the University, and the sector as a whole. The University was looking strategically at how it managed its research portfolio, including how research performance could be maximised and ensuring the University costs required to fulfil research grants were quantified to ensure a benefit could be realised.

**STRATEGIC BUSINESS**

1. **Strategic Theme Update: Our Citizens**

5.1Council **considered** an update on the Strategic Theme Update: Our Citizens and a proposal to revise strategic aim 2.

5.2 Council **noted** that the Executive had endorsed a list of 20 key partnerships for the University, the implementation of the partnership strategy would now commence. The Policy Institute had been launched and would be the vehicle for the University to engage Government ministers and policymakers. The Universities Partnership had secured more than £1 million in external funding for projects that supported the regional economy, education, health, arts culture and heritage and the environment. The Social Values Portal had been introduced which would be a key device for ensuring the suppliers the University worked with and aligned with institutional values. Curriculum review was underway to align the content with the Sustainable Development Goals.

5.3 Council **considered** a proposal to revise strategic aim 2 in light of the launch of the Policy Institute. The intention to revise the strategic aim was to broaden the set of people the University aimed to influence with this work. Concerns were expressed that the definition of stakeholder engagement in the revised aim was unclear, it could be perceived to be less impactful because engagement and influence had different meanings. The strategic aim needed to be active, provide clarity on the impact of influencing and indicative timeframes for outcomes. Council **agreed** that additional work was required on the articulation of the aim, ahead of approving the changes.

**Action:** Circulate a revised articulation of strategic aim 2 for approval via email. The revised articulation should clarify what stakeholder engagement meant in this context and how and when impact would be assessed. It was essential the aim was active and impactful. **[Owner: Dan Ladley]**

1. **Apollo Strategic Partnership**
	1. Council **considered** an update on the Apollo Partnership and **noted** the launch of the Centre for Digital Health and Precision Medicine and three 2+1 undergraduate programmes (BEng Computer Science, BBA Business and Management, BEng Electrical, Electronic and Information).

A memorandum of understanding was signed in February to launch a 2+2 Postgraduate Training Programme which would provide opportunities for junior doctors from India to undertake a two-year work place in the UK. MSc Computational Health Data Science and MSc Mental Health Nursing would be launched in 2025/26 academic year. Council **noted** that the partnership could provide opportunities for additional collaborations with institutions in other countries.

* 1. During Council’s discussion on the update, the following points were made:
		1. The detailed financial considerations of the partnership were welcomed but it would beneficial to understand the set up costs for the University and when the benefits of the on-costs would be realised.
		2. It was important that the University understood the steps required and potential liability if the partnership ended. It was **agreed** that these considerations would be included on the partnership risk register.
		3. The University should seek advice on potential tax liability and remittance to ensure any complexities could be understood.
		4. A member asked if the partnership had had an impact on the University’s international recruitment. It was reported that the partnership had already increased the profile of the University in India but it was too early to see if it had impacted recruitment, this would be monitored.
1. **Risk Management**

7.1 Council **considered** the Winter Term Risk Management Update. It was reported that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professional Services was now Executive lead responsible for risk management. The focus at the next Risk Management Board would be reviewing the articulation of the risks, who was owning and driving the risks, the effectiveness and timely implementation of mitigations. Student recruitment and physical estate remained high risk. The physical estate risk was not reducing and implementation of mitigations was contingent on the financial sustainability of the institution. Council received assurance that health and safety was being prioritised and the Executive had zero tolerance for non-compliance in this area.

**SECRETARY’S BUSINESS**

1. **Honorary Degrees [RESERVED]**
2. **Appointment of Chair of Council [RESERVED]**

### Council considered the appointment of a new Chair of Council on the recommendation from the Nominations Committee. It was noted that the appointment was subject to the completion of Fit and Proper Persons and Register of Interest Process and the submission of a reportable event notifying the Office for Students of the University’s decision to change its Chair of Council.

1. **Amendments to Ordinances and Statutes**
	1. Council **considered** the proposal to amend Statute Four to revise the composition of Council to increase student representation from one to two. In line with the governing instruments, the proposal had been approved by Council in December, Senate in February and was submitted to Council for final approval ahead of submission to the Privy Council for approval.

**Resolved:**

* 1. Council **approved** the proposed change to Statute Four for submission to the Privy Council for its approval and noted that it would take effect from the date of receipt of Privy Council approval.
1. **Assurance and Compliance Items**

11.1 Council **considered** the annual Office for Students Conditions (OfS) of Registration Assurance Report which set out the controls in place to ensuring ongoing institutional compliance with the conditions of registration, where Council delegates responsibility for ensuring compliance and how risks of non-compliance would be escalated to Council, if required.

11.2 Council **considered** the academic annual assurance report which set out the processes in place to ensure quality and standards of provision and continue to comply Quality and Standards (B) Conditions of Registration. The report had been scrutinised and recommended to Council by Senate. Council **discussed** how the report supported the University to continuously improve the academic and student experience; it was reported the report was a requirement under the OfS and ensured that the University had robust audit trails in place that would be essential evidence if it was subject to any investigations in the future.

11.3 Council **considered** the University’s Degree Outcomes Statement 2024 and **noted** that the OfS required the University to publish an outcomes statement annually.

11.4 Council **considered** the Student Protection Plan which was a requirement under the C conditions of registration and set out the manner in which the University protects students’ interest in a number of circumstances relating to the ability of the University to deliver programmes. The plan had been scrutinised and recommended to Council by Senate. It was reported that Senate had discussed the risk articulation of building closure given the ongoing risks with the maintenance of the estate and it had been agreed this risk would continue to be reviewed. The plan would only be implemented in extreme circumstances and was not supposed to replace existing business continuity practice that supported the management of the estate. It was **agreed** a link to the Consumer Marketing Authority website would be added to the document to clarify the circumstances in which the plan would be enacted.

* 1. Council **considered** the Annual Report on Sexual Violence and Harassment including an update on the new OfS Condition of Registration E6 to address harassment and sexual misconduct. The report had been scrutinised and recommended to Council by People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee. Council received assurance that the University had the controls in place to ensure compliance with the new condition of registration once it came into force in August 2025. Council **discussed** the staff turnover and capacity in the team supporting the University’s investigations. Further information on how the University could be preventative and proactive would be brought to a future Council meeting.

*Secretary’s note: Mehmooda Duke left the meeting*

* 1. Council **considered** the Annual Student Conduct Report which provided an overview of formal misconduct activity to date in 2024/25 academic year, benchmarked against the previous years’ data. The report had been scrutinised and recommended to Council by Senate.

**Resolved:**

* 1. Council **approved** the annual academic assurance report.
	2. Council **approved** the annual Degree Outcomes statement for publication of the University’s website.
	3. Council **approved** the revised Student Protection Plan for publication of the University’s website, subject to the addition of the Consumer Marketing Authority website link.
	4. Council **approved** the Annual Report on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

**Action:**

* 1. Provide Council with an additional update on the resource and structures to address sexual harassment and violence and the measures that could be implemented to proactively prevent incidents. **[Action: Registrar and Secretary]**
	2. Update the Student Protection Plan to include link to Consumer Marketing Authority website. **[Owner: Governance Team]**
1. **University Seal\***

12.1 Council **noted** that the University’s Seal had been affixed to three official documents since the last meeting of Council.

 **REPORTED BUSINESS**

1. **Senate\***
	1. Council **noted** the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 12 February 2025 and **noted** Senate’s decision to revise the academic structures within College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities.

1. **Nominations Committee [RESERVED]**

14.1 Council **noted** the minutes of the Nominations Committee meeting held on 20 February 2025 and **considered** the recommendations to re-appoint four lay members of Council.

**Resolved:**

14.2 Council **approved** the re-appointment of Sophie Dale-Black for a further three-year term as a lay member of Council from 1 August 2025.

14.3 Council **approved** the re-appointment of Rishi Madlani for a further three-year term as a lay member of Council from 1 August 2025.

14.4 Council **approved** the re-appointment of Kevin Nagle for a further three-year term as a lay member of Council from 1 August 2025.

14.5 Council **approved** the re-appointment of Richard Tapp for a further three-year term as a lay member of Council from 1 August 2025.

*Secretaries note: Sophie Dale-Black, Rishi Madlani, Kevin Nagle and Richard Tapp returned to the meeting.*

1. **Audit and Assurance Committee** **[RESERVED]**
	1. Council **noted** the minutes of the Audit and Assurance Committee meeting held on 11 February 2025.
2. **People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee [RESERVED]\***

16.1 Council **noted** the minutes of the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 20 February 2025 and noted the University’s annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report including the annual Pay Gap report.

1. **van Geest Board of Trustees [RESERVED]\***

17.1 Council **noted** the minutes of the van Geest Board of Trustees meeting held on 23 January 2025.

1. **Finance and Infrastructure Committee [RESERVED]**

18.1 Council **noted** the minutes of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting held on 13 February 2025.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Dates and times of future meetings\***

19.1 Council **noted** that the dates for the remaining meetings of 2024-25 were:

Wednesday 7 May 2025 - Ordinary meeting 4pm

Tuesday 1 July 2025 - Ordinary meeting 4pm

19.2 Council **noted** that the scheduled dates of meetings for 2025-2026 were:

 Council/Executive Board Awayday: Monday 6 October (1pm)/Tuesday 7 October 2025 all day\*
Wednesday 15 October 2025 - Ordinary meeting
Wednesday 3 December 2025 - Ordinary meeting
Tuesday 3 March 2026 - Ordinary meeting
Wednesday 6 May 2026 - Ordinary meeting
Tuesday 30 June 2026 - Ordinary meeting

\*post-meeting note – note change of dates for Awaydays

1. **Any Other Business**\*
	1. No additional business was raised.
2. **College Court Conference Centre [RESERVED AND COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE]**

*Duration of meeting: 133 minutes*