

## **Summary of the Council Effectiveness Review (2025)**

In line with the [Chairs of University Councils \(CUC\) Code](#) of Governance, every three years, Council commissions an independent external review into the effectiveness of its governance and makes recommendations to improve any issues identified. The Good Governance Institute (GGI) was selected to undertake the review during the first half of 2025. The review examined how well the Council fulfils its role as the University's governing body, how it communicates, how it measures impact, and how effectively members are engaged and supported.

Overall, the review found that the Council is strong, committed and operates with integrity: "capable individuals, strong working relationships, and effective processes and systems." The review also identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement to strengthen governance at the University.

This is summary of the findings from the Effectiveness Review.

### **Areas of good practice**

#### **1. A strong and capable Council and Sub-Committee structure**

- Council members bring wide professional experience and are committed to the University.
- Council members all participate actively in the discussion.
- In comparison with other universities, Leicester's Council is relatively diverse.
- The Executive team is highly regarded by Council and by staff who engaged in the review.
- Rich discussion takes place in the committees, including deep dives into topical issues.

#### **2. Understanding of role and responsibilities**

- Executives and Council members were clear about the role of Council in terms of setting the direction of travel and exercising oversight and accountability, as opposed to managing the day-to-day business of the institution.
- Working relationships between Council and the Executive are positive and based on trust.
- The President & Vice-Chancellor is active in external engagement across the city of Leicester and more widely across the sector, championing the good work of the university and building strategic networks, for example through writing articles for publications such as WonkHE.

### **Key Recommendations and University's response to date**

#### **1. Create time for a more strategic focus**

- Council meetings sometimes focus more on backward-looking assurance rather than forward-looking strategic discussion. Council agendas have now been restructured to provide more time to consider strategic priorities which to date have included, but not limited to, Financial Performance, the Strategic Review, University Strategy refresh and the Apollo Partnership.
- Committee meetings enable richer debate, but Council could make more effective use of committee outputs and chair reports. New Committee summary reports have been introduced to highlight to Council key discussions and risks.

- There are opportunities to streamline paperwork to support scrutiny of key matters. A new report writing template, that includes expectations on paper length, has been implemented. It has been agreed any powerpoint presentations will be shared with Council in advance. A revised Schedule of Delegation sets out expectations on what matters needed to be considered by Council and which matters are delegated to Sub-Committees.

## **2. Improving academic assurance**

- There are opportunities to strengthen the relationship and communication between Council and Senate. A new Senate report has been implemented to provide improved, focused assurance on business covered and risks managed by Senate.
- Council could receive greater insight into academic assurance processes and student experience. An academic assurance development session has been scheduled for March 2026 to support Council members' understanding of key regulatory documents- Degree Outcomes Statement and Student Protection Plan- and institutional controls.

## **3. Membership, diversity and development**

- Induction and training for Council members has been improved but there are opportunities for ongoing development of members. A Higher Education Finance briefing has been developed to support new members' understanding of Council's role in financial sustainability, key principles of university finance, the financial cycle and the University's financial performance headlines.
- Pre-Council development sessions have been scheduled three times a year, these sessions are opportunities to support members' ongoing understanding of different aspects of the University's operations. Furthermore, the development sessions will provide an opportunity to expose colleagues across the University to Council members.

## **4. Communication and visibility**

- Staff and students have limited understanding of Council's role, influence and decisions. Revised governance webpages are being developed to improve the presentation and articulation of the institutional governance structures and decision-making. Staff facing Sharepoint pages are being created to support those participating in governance and improve awareness of how the structures work in practice.
- The Executive team is visible and communicates effectively, but Council is seen as distant, and opportunities exist to raise the profile of Council in internal communications. The revised governance webpages will also improve access to information on Council including membership and bios, minutes and Council role descriptors; links to this information will be embedded in future communications to improve signposting.
- Council's profile across the University could be improved. A new Chairs' message following each Council has been implemented to highlight key aspects of Council business to the community.

Council considered the governance review at its away day in October 2025 and an action plan setting out how the University would take the recommendations forward was considered by Council in November 2025. The action plan will be implemented over the course of the next two academic years to enhance strategic focus, strengthen academic assurance, improve visibility across the

institution, and broaden member support and development. We will continue to keep colleagues informed through the new Chair's Message following each meeting of Council.