UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COURT

Minutes of the Sixty-Fourth Annual meeting of Court
held on Friday 11 February 2022

Present: The Rt Hon the Lord Willetts (Chancellor)
Mr G Acquah Mr J Higgins
Mr A Aggarwal Mr M Hindle
Mr G Arthur Mr B Hindocha
Mrs J Arthur Sir L Howard
Mr P Ash Mr I Johnson
Cllr Mr E Baines Mrs G Johnston
Mr R Bettles Mr J Kapasi
Mr G Bodiwala Mr P Lawson
Mrs S Bowie Ms A Linsell
His Hon Judge D Brunning Dr G Lewis
Professor E Burke Col R Martin
Professor N Canagarajah Mr D Moore
Mr J Chandarana Mrs L Perham
Mr M Cullen Professor K Pounds
Dr S Dale-Black Mr P Rivlin
Mr G Dixon Mr R S Sandhu
Ms M Duke Dr V Sharma
Mrs S Forsyth Dr P Sykes
Dr J Foster Mr D Tams
Mrs S Furness Dr B Towle
Mr R Graham-Brown Mr M Turnbull
Mr G Green Mrs S Waddington
Lady Gretton Mr A Wessel
Dr R Hake Mrs C Wessel
Mr D Harrison Mr D Wood
Mrs B Hellyer Mr D Woodhead

In attendance: Mr M Riddleston (Chief Operating Officer, University of Leicester); Mr P Gowdridge (Director of Finance, University of Leicester) Ms K Law, Ms R Faint, Mr J Pandya and Ms M Perkins (all from the Division of External Relations, University of Leicester); Mr A Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor’s Office, University of Leicester), and Mrs A Benson (Acting Assistant Secretary to Council and Court, University of Leicester)

Apologies for absence were received from those members of Court whose names are listed in the Appendix attached to these minutes.

22/M1 COURTESIES

The Chancellor welcomed all Court members to the meeting, particularly the Lord Lieutenant of Rutland, Chair of Leicestershire County Council and High Sheriff of Rutland and those members joining the meeting by Teams.

22/M2 MINUTES

Court formally received the minutes of the sixty-third Annual Meeting, held on 14 February 2020.
MEMBERSHIP OF COURT

Court received the current list of the Full Members of Court, as at 1 February 2022. Court noted that the current list was presented each year at the Annual Meeting. The complete and updated Full and Associate membership lists could be viewed at any time on the University’s website.

ANNUAL PRESENTATION BY THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

The University’s President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nishan Canagarajah, gave his annual presentation to Court, including an update on progress against the University Strategy.

The President and Vice-Chancellor outlined the achievements of the University since 2020 across the key themes of education, research, student recruitment and community engagement.

The President and Vice-Chancellor emphasised the University’s adaptability, resilience and continued success in its education delivery despite the ongoing impact of the COVID pandemic. It was noted that the ability of students to succeed in and progress with their studies had not been materially affected. This was attributed both to the hard work of students and staff as well as mitigation measures which had been put in place. Specific examples of innovative teaching and student success were highlighted.

In relation to research, the President and Vice-Chancellor reported £61.6m of research income for the 2020-21 year, with new research awards of £76m secured in the same period (£9.9m of which was for COVID research). Major research awards across several disciplines were highlighted alongside high-profile research successes such as the discovery of the Rutland Mosaic and the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope. It was noted that Professor Kamlesh Khunti had received a CBE in the New Year’s Honours List 2022 for services to health. It was reported to Court that five new Research Institutes had recently been approved.

Turning to student recruitment, the President and Vice-Chancellor noted that UK and international recruitment was holding up well, with a future focus on strengthening the UK undergraduate position and reducing reliance on Clearing. It was reported that for 2022 entry, the University was tracking ahead of its competitor set and of the sector as a whole at this stage. This was attributed to innovative recruitment approaches, increased marketing activity earlier in the cycle, improved league table positioning and more targeted activity as well as the return of on-campus Open Days.

The President and Vice-Chancellor highlighted several key areas of the University’s engagement with the local community, including the Heritage Hub, the Civic University Agreement with De Montfort University, sponsoring key Leicester calendar events and the Centenary Community Engagement Fund. It was noted that the University had been awarded the Freedom of the Borough by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council as part of its Centenary, in recognition of its local and civic contribution. The University had also joined with Sporting Equals in a strategic partnership to promote ethnic diversity amongst sports leaders.

Considering future challenges, the President and Vice-Chancellor drew the attention of Court to the University’s need to deliver on its academic mission post-pandemic, embark on and develop partnerships to deliver the mission and add value, and to build on its founding principles in bringing civic benefit to Leicestershire and Rutland.
Finally, the President and Vice-Chancellor gave an overview of the University Strategy which had been launched in November 2021 around three themes: Research-inspired education; World-changing research; Our Citizens. The Strategy was underpinned by values of health and wellbeing, equality and diversity, environmental sustainability and operational excellence.

Court discussed the relationship between the University’s league table performance and its student success, the impact of Brexit on EU student recruitment across the sector and the impact of the pandemic on face-to-face learning and grade inflation. Court commended the University for its civic contribution during the pandemic, particularly in relation to medical students graduating early to commence hospital work.

22/M5 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2020-2021

Court formally received the University’s audited financial statements for the last two financial years, covering the period from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2021. The statements also included a strategic overview report of the institution’s activities and highlights, and a corporate governance statement of the responsibilities of the Council (as the University’s governing body) and its key committees, over the last year. The statements had been approved by the Council and submitted to the Office for Students, the regulator for universities, in line with the relevant timeframes.

The University’s Chief Operating Officer, Martyn Riddleston, presented an overview of the University’s current financial situation.

Court noted that in the year to 31 July 2021 the University’s income had totalled £316.7 million with a surplus (before pension accounting movements) of £13.4 million.

The impact of the COVID pandemic was outlined. It was noted that in 2020/21 the University’s income had reduced by 2.8% and operating expenses managed carefully. The University had accessed a £60m Covid Corporate Financing Facility from the Bank of England and had made new short-term borrowing facilities available. All existing and new loan repayments and obligations had been met.

Key capital investments had included the redevelopment of the Percy Gee Students’ Union Building on the main campus, the Brookfield School of Business and Space Park Leicester, all of which were now fully operational. The Sir Bob Burgess Building was already operational and Freemen’s Common would be fully complete during 2022/23.

It was noted that the University was forecast to end the 2021/22 year with in excess of £50m cash and a forecast strengthened by January student recruitment. However, pressure from accommodation and utility costs would be ongoing.

22/M6 CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Court received a presentation by the University’s Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer, Kerry Law, with insight into the celebrations taking place to mark the University’s second century. Events included a Poppy Pilgrimage to lay wreaths across 100 memorial sites in Leicestershire and Rutland, the Changemakers Centenary Festival and Leicester Symphony Orchestra 100th Anniversary. The attention of Court was drawn to the 100 Trees initiative and to details of future events, which would be circulated to Court members for information.
The Chancellor, Lord Willetts, informed Court that he would step down as Chancellor at the end of his term of office in February 2023. Lord Willetts reflected positively on his time in office and noted that he would continue his association with the University as Chair of the Space Park Strategy Board.

Court noted that the appointment process for the next University Chancellor would be underway shortly.

Duration of meeting: 1hr 30 mins

CHAIR
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
MEETING OF COURT
Friday 11 February 2022
Apologies

Mr K Beaumont
Dr M Chamberlain
Mr S De Looze
His Hon Judge G Dickinson
Mr H Doyle
Ms C Ellis
Mr H Ghelani
Mr D James
Ms R Jenkins
Cllr Mrs L Kaufman
Mr A Mamujee
Mr I Mattioli
Mr A Morgan
Mr P Mulvihill
Mr C Ramsey
Dr N Reed
Mr V Sethi
Professor S Sharma
Mr H Stevenson
Mr R Tapp
Ms C Thorogood
Mr P Wilson