

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 10 July 2019

Present:

Bridget Towle

Janet Arthur
Edmund Burke
Martin Cullen
Gary Dixon
Sarah Davies
Sandra Dudley
Cathy Ellis

Martin Hindle
Ian Johnson
Andrew Morgan
Oge Obioha
Paul O'Brien
Vijay Sharma

In attendance: Dave Hall (Secretary); Neil Cox (Assistant Secretary); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Richard Tapp (Observer); and Henrietta O'Connor (Head of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, for item 19/M79 only).

Apologies for absence were received from Mehmooda Duke, Janet Finch, Anil Majithia, Azam Mamujee, John Schwabe and Carole Thorogood.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

19/M75 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Vijay Sharma and Martin Hindle declared a personal interest in, and left the meeting for, the business recorded under 19/M83 and 19/M84 respectively.

19/M76 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2019. **Council approved** them as a correct record.

Arising from minute 19/M59 (Senate elections to Council), **Council noted** that in the first part of 2019-20 Graham Wynn would be serving as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). However, the University's Statutes included a rule that individuals elected by Senate to serve as members of Council could not be Pro-Vice-Chancellors. **Council therefore agreed** that whilst he was serving as Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor, Graham Wynn would attend Council meetings as a non-voting Observer, not as an actual member. The arrangements going forward would be confirmed at the appropriate time, when he no longer held the position of Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

19/M77 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair:

- a. Welcomed Oge Obioha to her first meeting of Council in her full capacity as President of the Students' Union; welcomed Martin Cullen to his first meeting of Council in his capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association; and welcomed Richard Tapp to his first meeting of Council, as an

Observer, prior to the commencement of his formal appointment as a lay member of Council on 1 August 2019.

- b. Informed Council that Anil Majithia had tendered his resignation from Council, for personal reasons, effective from 31 July 2019. Janet Finch had tendered her resignation from Council, in order to become a lay member of the governing body at Cardiff University, also effective from 31 July 2019. The Nominations Committee would bring forward in due course its recommendations for the filling of these two positions.
- c. Invited members of Council to provide any feedback (to Gary Dixon and/or Neil Cox) regarding the Council Awayday held on 11 June 2019.
- d. Informed Council that the Nominations Committee, acting within its delegated authority under the University's formal Naming Policy, had approved a proposal for the naming of the new teaching and learning building at Freeman's Common as the *Robert Burgess Building*. This was obviously subject to final confirmation of the commencement of the Freeman's Common Development project (19/M69 refers), and it would be formally announced as part of a wider package of new University naming decisions.

19/M78 **ACTING PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The Acting President and Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to various topical items and developments, including:

- a. The background to a feature article in The Sunday Times' in which a University of Leicester student had spoken about her experience of sexual violence at Leicester, and the support she had received from the University. The University believed that the published article had been constructed in such a way as to seriously misrepresent the facts of the case. The student concerned and the President of the Students' Union had subsequently been interviewed on BBC Radio Leicester and had actually been very positive about the support put in place by the University. The Acting President and Vice-Chancellor had issued a statement to Council and all staff and students in response to the article, and this had also generated positive feedback.
- b. Across the University as a whole 'Overall Satisfaction' in the National Student Survey had improved from 82% in 2018 to 84% in 2019. This was a positive movement after the recent downwards trend in results, with nine subjects now achieving overall satisfaction of over 90%, and with a few subjects recovering very strongly after a disappointing performance the previous year. But there was still much work to be done, with a number of subjects having seen a decline in overall satisfaction and the results in some 'large' subjects such as Management Studies and Economics remained at a disappointing level. This reinforced the priority actions set out in the Recovery Plan, including in relation to ongoing challenges in performance management.
- c. There was a renewed possibility of industrial action being taken by UCU in autumn 2019, this time over future contribution rates to the USS pension scheme. The Acting President and Vice-Chancellor had written to staff to provide a comprehensive update on progress with resolving the issues surrounding the future cost of the USS pension scheme, including on the matter of employer/employee contribution rates. A copy of this letter would be sent for information to members of Council [ACTION: NEIL COX].

- d. As part of the ongoing strategy to better engage with staff and students, to improve staff morale and NSS feedback, the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor was continuing his programme of school visits and had reinstated the VC 'breakfast meetings' with staff. Already arising from this engagement was a commitment to ensure that by no later than September 2020 all undergraduate academic activity (apart from the Business School and some hospital teaching) would be undertaken on the main campus, with appropriate co-location where possible to take advantage of natural synergies.
- e. The University had retained its position in the top 200-250 placings in the 2020 QS World University Ranking. It had been placed among the top 100 universities in the world by U-Multirank, a less well-known ranking of higher education institutions, funded by the European Commission.

19/M79 ANNUAL REPORT FROM HEAD OF COLLEGE

Council received a comprehensive presentation and report from the Head of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Henrietta O'Connor, on the current strategic direction, challenges and achievements in the College.

Council noted that the student demographic of the College now featured a BAME majority (53%), and the College was acutely aware of the need to respond proactively to the learning and teaching requirements of a fast-changing student population, and to tackle associated attainment gaps, through the pursuit of both quick-wins and longer term initiatives.

With regard to the position of individual departments within the College, **Council acknowledged** that the University's recovery plan priorities would need to be a major and immediate focus for the new Dean of the Business School, in order to drive an essential and overdue step-change in performance.

19/M80 STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL REPORT

Council considered the annual report of the President of the Students' Union, covering issues and developments during the 2018-19 academic year.

Council commended the concise but comprehensive and informative format of the report. In terms of the specific topics it covered Council was encouraged by the productive progress that was being made in promoting the *#MeToo* agenda across the University, and welcomed the reintroduction of the Union's safety bus, following concerns over night-time safety. Black History Month 2019 was the biggest run by the Union and had generated very positive feedback.

19/M81 SENATE

Council considered the report of a meeting of Senate held on 26 June 2019. There were no matters that required the approval of Council on this occasion. **Council noted**, however, that the report of the external review of the effectiveness of Senate, conducted at the request of Council, had now been received. The findings contained in the report would now be considered by the Nominations Committee, alongside its review of the new CUC Governance Code (minute C/19M82 also refers), and the Committee would report back to Council, with recommendations as appropriate, during 2019-20.

19/M82 UNIVERSITY COMPLIANCE WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION CODE OF GOVERNANCE

Council considered a summary statement of the University's compliance with the requirements of the CUC's current *Higher Education Code of Governance*. **Council noted** that, at the time of the last external review of Council's effectiveness during 2017-18, a comprehensive summary of evidence was compiled of the University's compliance with the *Code*. The reviewers had concluded that this was consistent with good governance practice and the requirements of the *Code*, and Council had requested to receive an updated summary of compliance on a biennial basis in future, starting in 2019.

Council agreed that the summary statement provided a comprehensive level of evidence and assurance for the University's compliance with the key requirements of the current *Code*. However, the CUC was preparing a completely new edition of the *Code* which was expected to be published by the end of 2019. The Nominations Committee would be responsible for reviewing the requirements of the new *Code* and for making recommendations to Council as appropriate to ensure compliance.

With regard to the above, Council received the public statement issued by the OfS in relation to its recent investigation of matters at De Montfort University, and the public statement and action plan released by DMU. Many of the issues and actions arising from this were likely to be context-specific (although the actual OfS report of the investigation had not been published), but it was possible that the CUC would still want to consider whether there were any general matters that needed to be addressed in the new *Code*, which might have an impact on the publication timetable.

Council noted that during 2019-20 the Nominations Committee would therefore consider in detail whether any changes were required to the University's current framework of corporate governance, in light of the new CUC *Code*, any issues emerging from the OfS investigation, and the report of the Review of the Effectiveness of Senate (minute 19/M81 refers), and report back to Council with recommendations as appropriate.

19/M83 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF COUNCIL

Council considered a recommendation from the Nominations Committee that Council should appoint a designated Vice-Chair of Council from amongst its own lay membership.

Council noted that although the Ordinances made provision for a Vice-Chair of Council, no appointment had been made for many years, apparently out of a concern that it might be perceived unhelpfully as a succession plan for the preferred next Chair of Council. During the review of Council's effectiveness in 2017-18 the reviewers had suggested that this concern was probably overstated. The CUC HE Governance Code also promoted the positive aspects of a Vice-Chair role, not just to cover for absences but also to act as a sounding board and intermediary in the event of significant concerns within a governing body or in its relationship with senior management.

Council approved the establishment of a designated position of Vice-Chair of Council, with the accompanying role description for this as proposed by the Nominations Committee.

Given the limited scope and powers of the role, and the explicit clauses in the role description regarding the appointment of future Chairs of Council and maximum tenure, **Council agreed** that it was appropriate for the Chair of Council to personally identify and approach a suitable candidate with a view to then making a recommendation, endorsed by the Nominations Committee, to Council. On that basis **Council approved** the appointment of Vijay Sharma as Vice-Chair of Council, commencing on 1 August 2019 for a period of three years.

19/M84 **RE-APPOINTMENT OF LAY MEMBER OF COUNCIL**

Council considered and approved a recommendation of the Nominations Committee that, exceptionally, Martin Hindle's final term of appointment on Council should be extended by four months, from 31 March 2021 to 31 July 2021, to correct the anomaly of what would otherwise have been a mid-year end date for this position. Council's explicit consent was required for extensions beyond the normal maximum service limit of nine consecutive years.

19/M85 **APPOINTMENT OF EMERITUS PROFESSORS AS MEMBERS OF COURT**

Council considered and 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 2022 in the first instance:

Jon Scott	Life Sciences
John Thompson	Health Sciences
Simon Wagner	Cancer Research Centre

19/M86 **LAY APPOINTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES AND GROUPS FOR 2019-2020**

Council received details of the intended appointment of lay members to serve on key University committees and groups for 2019-20, as determined by the Nominations Committee on behalf of Council.

The Chair indicated that if any lay members had any issues or queries regarding the committee appointments, including those to which they had personally been appointed, they should contact her or Gary Dixon as soon as possible after the meeting. Council confirmed the appointment of Richard Tapp as the new Chair of the Audit Committee, following Ian Johnson's appointment as Treasurer.

19/M87 **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Council considered a report of a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 24 June 2019.

Council approved a recommendation that, in order to better reflect the developing scope of the Committee's role and remit, it should be renamed with immediate effect as the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

19/M88 STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Council considered a report of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 2 May 2019. **Council noted** that the Standing Committee was working closely with the University's Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer to simplify its messaging activities and to be more nimble and pragmatic in its communications with alumni. The Committee was developing a new action plan and the details of this would be shared with Council in due course.

19/M89 FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE

Council received and noted the outline forward business schedule for its 'Ordinary' meetings throughout 2019-20.

19/M90 COURTESIES TO RETIRING MEMBERS

Council recorded its appreciation to the following individuals, who would be standing down as members of Council on 31 July 2019:

- Paul O'Brien and John Schwabe, who had both served as members elected by Senate since 2016
- Janet Finch and Anil Majithia, who had served as lay members since 2017 and 2018 respectively

Council then recorded its particular appreciation to Bridget Towle, who would also be retiring from Council on 31 July 2019. Dr Towle had been closely involved with the governance of the University for almost 20 years, serving first as a lay member of Council between 2000 and 2009, then as Treasurer between 2009 and 2013, and then as Chair of Council between 2013 and 2019. Speaking on behalf of Council and the wider University community, Professor Burke thanked Dr Towle for her outstanding and dedicated contribution over such a long period. His words were greeted with sustained and warm applause from all those present.

19/M91 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council noted the dates and times of Ordinary meetings and the Awayday in 2019-20, all at 4pm unless stated:

Tuesday 1 October 2019

Tuesday 19 November 2019 (*followed by dinner with lay members - tbc*)

Wednesday 18 March 2020

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Tuesday 9 June 2020 – Council/Executive Board Awayday – all day

Wednesday 8 July 2020

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting (Reserved and Unreserved Business): 2 hours and 55 minutes