



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Minutes Meeting of Council

Date: 13 July 2020

Present: Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair for items 1-20 and 23-33);
Mrs Hope (in the Chair for items 21-22) and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors;
Professor Lamberts, President & Vice-Chancellor;
Mr Sutcliffe, Treasurer;
Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Professor Brazier, Ms C Brownlie, Dr Forrest,
Ms Hague, Professor Layden, Professor Maltby, Professor Morgan,
Dr Nicholls (items 1-10), Professor Petley, Mr Sly, Professor Valentine,
Mr Verity, Mr Wray

Secretary: Dr Tony Strike

In attendance: Mrs Jones; Mr Swinn; Mr Weir; Mr Wild; Mr Borland (10-22); Mr Smith
(items 1-9 and 23-33); Mr Sykes (item 7); Mr Willis (item 15)

Apologies:

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting, which was being held virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the SU President, Ms Eyre, and the SU Development Officer, Mr Weir, were attending their first formal Council meeting.

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

1.1 Council noted the following:

1. Mrs Jones and Mr Petley potential conflicts of interest.
2. The Report of the Council Nominations Committee, item 20, included recommendations relating to some Council members.
3. Mr Pedder had a conflict of interest in relation to item 22 and would vacate the Chair and leave the meeting for that item.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Meetings held on 27 April and 23 June 2020)

2.1 The Minutes were approved as an accurate record, subject to minor corrections to the attendees.

3. Matters Arising on the Minutes

3.1 Council received and noted the matters arising on the Minutes.

4. Health and Safety Update

4.1 Council received and noted the update, including the programme of health and safety audits planned for 2020-21, which Council members would be given the opportunity to

shadow. Having noted that plans in place to enable the gradual return of staff and students to campus for certain activities from September, Council sought assurance about how staff and student health and safety would be protected in relation to Covid-19. Members also noted the importance of communicating to students the seriousness with which the University and Students' Union was taking the issue. It was reported that Estates Committee had noted the importance of good records keeping and evidence of good governance around these activities. An update would be provided at the 25 August informal Council dial-in, informed by relevant working groups.

5. Category C Matters

5.1 Council considered Category C business, which are covered in Minutes 23-33, below.

6. Update on COVID-19 response

6.1 Council noted updates on a range of matters relating to the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which were contained in the written report under agenda item 14.

- (a) Government Support Packages: The Department for Education (DfE) had announced a sector stability package in response to the impact of Covid-19. The UUK proposals had not been accepted, with the exception of the temporary Student Number Control. The nature of Government support and eligibility criteria were complex and vague but was an attempt to mitigate the loss of international student fee income and protect ongoing research. The package would allow research intensive universities to bid for a combination of long term, low interest loans and some grant support to help fund research.
- (b) Return to Campus: The University would be as flexible as possible in planning the phased return of on-campus activities with reference to changes in national regulations.
- (c) Mental Wellbeing: UUK had published a refreshed version of its strategic framework to mark Mental Health Awareness Week, reflecting the needs of students and staff when adapting to new ways of living and working. The University was still providing the full range of student support programmes, and additional support was being offered to those who were self-isolating or remained in university accommodation.
- (d) Digital Learning: As a result of the Covid crisis there had been an increased use of digital learning tools, and significant changes to the University's learning, teaching & assessment practices from Virtual Open days to online PhD vivas.
- (e) PGR Students: The PGR community had experienced disruption to research, as well as impacts on mental health, due to Covid-19. UKRI had offered funding extensions to PGRs in their final year, for which 66% of the University's eligible students had applied. The University had agreed to mirror the UKRI scheme for internally funded PGRs and had also established a dedicated hardship fund.
- (f) MP Engagement: The University continued to foster positive, constructive relationships with Sheffield MPs, the SCR Mayor and senior politicians, such as Lord Blunkett, through regular meetings and briefings. These had informed notable interventions in parliamentary debates and ministerial engagement, and strong positive institutional advocacy. In continuing to develop these relationships, the University was working with the wider SCR in planning the post Covid, regional recovery.

7. Student Recruitment and Scenarios for 2020-21

Mr Sykes in attendance for this item.

- 7.1 Council received and noted an update on the latest student recruitment and admissions position and the University's approach to maximising student registrations in September, as well as key actions to inform and support student recruitment for 2021 entry. Council also noted the latest available admissions data and an analysis of the potential financial impact. Council noted the variable position across different student categories and the challenges of translating offers and acceptances into student registrations, particularly with respect to overseas students. Council also discussed the University position relative to key competitors; the impact institutional recruitment strategy in recent years, which was linked to wider reputational enhancement activities; risks; and future plans. It was reported that a new University Education Strategy was being developed, informed by the new Vision (see Minute 8, below).
- 7.2 During discussion Council endorsed the strategic intent to maximise the quality of applicants, and noted the ways in which this was being achieved, but recognised the need to balance this with short-term financial imperatives whilst protecting the integrity of the University's academic offer. Members also noted that the University was subject to a number of regulatory requirements relating to admissions, learning and teaching, notably from the OfS and CMA.
- 7.3 Council also discussed the additional risk of a future "local lockdown" to 2020 recruitment and actions in hand to understand and plan how the University would mitigate the impact of such a scenario. Further details about the University's contextual admissions policy would be made available offline for interested Members.

8. One University – A Vision for our Future 2020-25

- 8.1 Council considered the proposed new University Vision, the development of which had been reported to Council on a regular basis. The President & Vice-Chancellor gave a presentation in which he drew attention to the extensive consultation process and Council and UEB discussions which had informed the proposal; the strategic pillars and underpinning priorities; and provided examples of the visual and narrative elements. It was noted that hard copies of the Vision would not be printed, although a pdf version would be available. New webpages were being developed to make content available to staff, students and other stakeholders in an engaging and interactive manner, which had received positive feedback from stakeholder focus groups. Subject to Council approval, the Vision would be formally launched early in 2020-21.
- 8.2 Council noted the high level nature of the Vision in setting out institutional identity, purpose, values and priorities and that this would be underpinned by detailed supporting strategies, a new department planning framework (see Minute 9, below) and a new planning and budget setting process, as well as new institutional level corporate performance indicators that would be shared with Council in October. Members welcomed efforts to highlight and celebrate areas of differentiation, in particular the One University pillar and world-leading excellence through the use of compelling stories and narrative.
- 8.3 Council approved the University's new vision, subject to final proof reading and amendments to reinforce the narrative to capture the strength of University-Students' Union collaboration, for which Sheffield was renowned.

9. Planning Round Outcomes and Actions

- 9.1 Council received a presentation from the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor in which she set out the new department planning framework, which would act as an enabler to deliver strategic priorities under the new Vision and was clearly aligned to them. The framework had been developed as a means to guide and support departments in directing their activity appropriately and measuring their respective contributions to the overall institutional mission. It had been developed in response to feedback from Heads of Department, who were represented on a cross-University working group that had overseen this development. The use of core and enhanced elements were intended to recognise significant variations in departments' size and disciplinary differences whilst giving agency to departments in setting strategies to contribute to overall institutional achievement of the Vision, which would be coordinated at Faculty and institutional (UEB) level. The framework would support a long-term planning focus, with performance measured and reviewed with reference to departmental targets, both qualitative and quantitative, and objectives that would facilitate greater mutual appreciation of individual departments' respective contributions to the institutional goals and targets, and the sharing of good practice.

10. Closed Minute and Paper

11. Capital Programme: Update and Business Cases

- 11.1 Council received an update on progress of projects in the capital programme, including projects recently considered and approved by ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation. The report provided an update on the University's capital investment programme, which was subject to the development of a review of capital plans to prioritise projects.

12. Leadership, Management and Governance Arrangements during Covid-19

- 12.1 Council received and noted a report on the University's decision-making and assurance arrangements during the pandemic, which had been implemented to ensure that these remained robust but were sufficiently agile to allow urgent decisions to be made in response to the pandemic. Audit Committee had endorsed the arrangements and commissioned an internal audit review of this area to strengthen the assurances to Council.

13. Academic Assurance and the Student Experience

- 13.1 Council received and noted the report, which had been considered and endorsed by Senate in June, about how the University was managing the impact of Covid-19 on learning, teaching and assessment, including safeguarding academic quality and standards, providing student support and the wider student experience. Particular attention was drawn to the establishment of a dedicated Management group, supported by five sub-groups, and the ongoing arrangements and oversight for planning delivery in 2020-21.

14. President and Vice-Chancellor's Report on Other Matters

- 14.1 The President and Vice-Chancellor presented his report, in which he drew attention to the following:
- (a) Immigration: The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2019-21 had passed the report stage. The Bill would end freedom of movement under retained EU law and repeal other retained EU law relating to immigration. Like UUK, the University continued to lobby for flexibility in enabling EU and non-

EU student mobility in light of Covid-19 and confirmation of graduate immigration rules to allow graduates to remain in the UK after graduation.

- (b) Graduate Outcomes: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) had published experimental statistics from the new Graduate Outcomes survey, which replaced the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. The University level data was encouraging. The University was first amongst institutions in Yorkshire and the Humber, second amongst Northern universities and 13th in the Russell Group for the percentage of graduates in highly skilled employment.
- (c) Industrial Relations: The UCU disputes over USS and the national pay negotiations and related matters remained live, though the earlier mandates for industrial action had expired. UCU planned to re-ballot its members over the summer in respect of the outcome of the 2019 national pay negotiations but it was unclear whether this was likely to lead to a further mandate for action. The 2020 national pay negotiations process had been paused but the clear steer from employers to UCEA (the representative body) was that any increase in pay would be unaffordable in light of the impact of Covid-19, which had been challenged by UCU. It was noted that the impact of any future industrial action on pay and/or pensions would vary across the sector. The University continued to seek constructive and open dialogue with all of the campus Trade Unions. There was considerable political pressure on the sector to seek to end industrial action, alongside resolving wider issues with USS, and free speech, all of which could have implications for any further government sector support and any conditions attached to this.

A further update on the USS 2020 valuation and related consultation and wider industrial relations would be provided to Council at the informal Dial In on 25 August.

15. **Cyber Security**

Mr Willis in attendance for this item.

- 15.1 Council received a presentation from the Interim Chief Information Security Officer in which he provided an overview and update on developments in this area, including positive progress over the previous three years. Attention was drawn to the cyber security challenges that the University faced, both specific to HE and shared with many other large organisations; the University's approach, including high level risk management and governance arrangements, dedicated resource and a dedicated Cyber Security Programme; increased and emerging threats, notably the volume and sophistication of attacks and the remote working environment; a comparison of the position three years ago to the present; and further planned tactical and strategic measures. Council noted that the University was more resilient in its ability to safeguard its information and cyber security and the range of specific measures that been implemented to achieve this. The Cyber Security Programme provided the overarching framework under which the University would build on the positive progress to date.
- 15.2 Council welcomed the update and agreed to receive further updates in due course. During discussion it was noted that there were likely to be significant research and educational opportunities in this area as the UK sought to develop skills and capability. IT Services was closely engaged with academic colleagues, including seeking NCSC accreditation for a Cyber Security Centre of Excellence.

16. **Closed Minute and Paper**

17. **Closed Minute and Paper**

18. Council Effectiveness Review

- 18.1 Council received and noted an update report from the Council Task and Finish Group, which was due to meet again on 22 July to discuss findings from the second phase of fieldwork before a further meeting August to consider a first draft of the report.

19. Corporate Risk Register 2019-20

- 19.1 Council received and approved the most recent iteration of the 2019-20 Corporate Risk Register and noted an accompanying report from the UEB Risk Review Group. It was particularly pleasing to note the positive engagement of the new AMG management team with the risk management process. As a result of Covid-19, changes to 15 controls and mitigating actions were noted. Further attention was drawn to the work of the University's Brexit Coordination Group in overseeing the University's preparations for managing the institutional risks in the event that the transition period would end on 31 December 2020 without further agreement on the future UK-EU relationship.

20. Report of the Council Nominations Committee

- 20.1 Council received and approved the report, including recommendations relating to Council membership and Council representation on other committees.

21. Class (3) Member and Vice-President Pairings

- 21.1 Council received and noted proposals to rotate the pairing of Class (3) Council members with members of UEB, as a means to increase Council members' exposure to and awareness of different areas of the University. The proposed pairings were endorsed and Council agreed that meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis, with the arrangements to be reviewed after six months.

22. Chair of Council

- 22.1 Council considered proposals relating to the Chair of Council's term of office and succession planning. These proposals had been informed by the University Secretary's discussions with individual Council members, the President & Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor and subsequent discussion by Council Nominations Committee, all of whom were supportive. It was noted that the current Chair's term of office was set to expire in July 2021, and was the last permitted under the Regulations of Council. Members recognised that the impact of Covid-19 demonstrated the need for stability, and was likely to adversely affect recruitment of lay members. Council noted that the current Chair was willing to extend his term due to the exceptional circumstances and indicated its unanimous support for this course of action.
- 22.2 Council agreed:
- (a) To waive the Council Regulation VI:2.4 for the period from 31 July 2021 to 31 July 2022, which states the Chair of Council appointment is limited to two four year terms, given the exceptional nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact on the University and the need for continuity in governance and oversight.
 - (b) To extend the term of office of the current Chair of the Council, Mr Tony Pedder, from 31 July 2021 to 31 July 2022, providing one more year in office as Chair, in addition to the two four year terms served to 2021.
 - (c) To seek to appoint at least one more Class (3) member to Council, and to consider further the succession of the Chair of Council.

23. Report of the Senate

23.1 Council received and approved the Report, including the University's Degree Outcomes Statement.

24. Report of the Audit Committee

24.1 Council received and approved the Report.

25. Report of the Finance Committee

25.1 Council received and approved the Report.

26. Report of the Estates Committee

26.1 Council received and approved the Report.

27. Minutes of the Senior Remuneration Committee

27.1 Council received and approved minutes of the previous two meetings.

28. Annual Report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

28.1 Council received and approved the Report, noting the wide range of issues with which the Committee was concerned and the inter-relationship with activities in key areas such as oversight of the University's Access and Participation Plan. EDIC would consider whether its remit or priorities needed refining to achieve the necessary coverage. Clarification was provided that there had not an appetite from relevant staff and students groups for reverse mentoring in the past but that this could be revisited with the SU BME Committee. It was also reported that learning and teaching activities over the previous year had included the theme of "inclusivity". Council agreed to return to consider Council's role in setting and demonstrating an open and inclusive culture in due course.

29. Office for Students

29.1 Update on the OfS Requirements during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Council received and noted an update on the OfS requirements during the pandemic, including the suspension of a number of ongoing registration conditions and the introduction of temporary additional conditions and reportable events. The University had submitted its updated Student Protection Plan for OfS approval prior to publication but the OfS had indicated that approving updated SSPs was not deemed a priority at present.

29.2 Prevent Monitoring: Outcome of Assessment

Council received and noted the outcome of the OfS' positive assessment of institutional compliance.

30. Council Matters

30.1 Council Scheme of Delegation

Council confirmed the Scheme of Delegation for 2020-21.

30.2 Functions of Council (Statement of Primary Responsibilities)

Council confirmed the arrangements in place for Council to fulfil its responsibilities.

30.3 Compliance and Assurance Framework

Council noted the framework, which would be kept under review and updated to ensure that the University was able to comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements and provide assurance to the appropriate body.

30.4 Council Business Plan 2019-20

Council noted the business plan, which would be reviewed to inform the first iteration of the 2020-21 plan.

31. Returning Officer's Report on the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers Election 2020

31.1 Council received and noted the Report.

32. Use of the University Seal

32.1 Council received and noted a summary of the application of the University Seal since the previous Council meeting.

33. Public Availability of Council Papers

33.1 Council approved arrangements for the online publication of Council papers.