



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

## **Minutes Meeting of Council**

<b>Date:</b>	15 June 2021
<b>Present:</b>	Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair); Mrs Hope and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors; Professor Lamberts, President & Vice-Chancellor; Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Ms Brownlie, Ms Eyre, Dr Forrest, Ms Hague, Professor Hartley, Dr Kirby, Professor Layden, Dr Nicholls, Mr Sutcliffe, Treasurer; Mr Wray, Professor Valentine
<b>Secretary:</b>	Dr Strike
<b>In attendance:</b>	Mrs Jones; Mr Swinn; Mr Weir; Mr Colley
<b>Apologies:</b>	Professor Brazier; Mr Rodrigo; Mr Sly

### **1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

1.1 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

### **2. Review of Archaeology – Presentation of Findings**

2.1 Council considered a report and recommendations from the Executive following its discussion of the report of an Institutional Review of the Department of Archaeology, and received a presentation from the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor. It was noted that the substantive matter was not before Council for a decision, but had been brought to enable Council to agree to consider and decide the matter at its next meeting, and to agree to consult with the Senate in accordance with Regulations, without dealing with the substantive issues at the current meeting.

2.2 In considering the related paper and presentation, Council noted the origin and purpose of the review, the terms of reference and membership of the Review Group, and the process followed. Members also noted the context as regards the Department's history and reputation, staffing arrangements and its wider role in the University and SCR, specifically the University's prioritisation of the Heritage Project Castlegate as part of its commitment to maximising the regional impact of its teaching and research.

2.3 Council received an overview of the Review's key findings and the rationale for them. The Department was facing significant academic challenges resulting from the difficult national disciplinary context, increased competition and declining performance over a number of years. The Review Group's report highlighted difficulties around undergraduate recruitment, limited opportunities for PGT growth, together with a significant decline in research performance and a lack of sufficient leadership. These issues were all compounded by the loss of a number of experienced teaching and research over recent years to adequately and effectively address the extent and breadth of the challenges faced. The Review Group had concluded that the Department was too small to be sustainable as an academic unit. However, it had recognised key strengths and opportunities in research, innovation and education – specifically in osteoarchaeology and cultural heritage.

- 2.4 Council noted the three options which the Review Group had proposed to UEB, and that UEB had considered these carefully before agreeing its recommendation to Council. UEB had proposed that the status quo could not be maintained given the small-scale but highly diverse nature of the activity and that, in effect, the Department was not academically sustainable. However, they remained committed to retaining and supporting areas of research and teaching strength in the discipline of archaeology and investing in areas of excellence in line with the University Vision. Council noted UEB's recommendation, by way of an enhanced version of Option 3, under which the University would retain key areas of strength in archaeological research and teaching by aligning them with other parts of the University, with a strong commitment to supporting the transition and to targeting investment in the further development of these areas, including extending inter-disciplinary collaborations. Aligning and co-locating areas of strength with other areas of academic excellence was in line with the approach at many other universities and would help to sustain and develop education and research activity.
- 2.5 Council noted the responses to the UEB recommendation from Archaeology staff, students who had participated in the Review, campus Trade Unions and external representations, which included a petition and email campaign. It was recognised that these responses and related internal and external representations had been made without reference to the findings of the Review Group and its evidence, which was being shared with decision makers and relevant stakeholders sequentially in line with the formal governance processes. If Council agreed to consider the matter then the Review Report would be shared with Senate in advance of its meeting. It was also noted that the sharing of information would take into account issues including sensitivity, commercial confidentiality, and personal data, informed by external legal advice. It was reported that the University must consult with students ahead of a final decision and trigger its Student Protection Plan as part of its regulatory obligations; the University had made a reportable event to the OfS that it was contemplating that some programmes would be taught-out and would not continue.
- 2.6 During discussion, Council raised and noted the following points:
- (a) Clarification was provided about the relative size, academic sustainability and financial viability of the Department compared with others across the University.
  - (b) The role of the Implementation Group would be to implement any decision of the Council. Under the UEB proposal it would ensure that retained areas of strength and excellence were realigned with the most appropriate cognate areas and any strategic investment requirements to enable them to thrive. The Group's longer-term strategic prioritisation work would include consideration of the programmes that the University would continue to offer and seek to develop.
  - (c) Members noted the existing and emergent institutional mechanisms by which to understand departmental performance, identify and address challenges and exploit opportunities. Clarification was provided about the success of previous interventions where coordinated actions through Departments, Faculties and the University had led to improved performance and sustainability.
  - (d) The significant interest that already existed about the outcomes of the Review was noted, both within the University and from the wider community of stakeholders, and the need to be mindful of regional partners and the wider community, including reputational risk. It was clarified that UEB had been developing a dedicated, tailored communication and stakeholder engagement plan to have been initiated at appropriate points to coincide with the formal governance process. Council agreed that it would have been improper for the University to have communicated publicly in any detail prior to information being provided to the appropriate decision-making and consultative bodies for their proper consideration. Ongoing communication and engagement activities included meetings with students, staff and Trade Unions,

and a commitment to meeting with all staff who could be affected by any changes on an individual basis and ensuring that they were able to access all available support for their wellbeing.

- (e) Clarification was provided that the Executive had considered the Review process and related governance requirements carefully and was satisfied that these had been appropriate to enable UEB to make fully informed recommendations to Council, on the basis of academic sustainability.
- (f) The Students' Union President reported that representations from the student body to the SU indicated a lack of support for proposals.
- (g) Issues relating to the impact on staff, students – including teach-out arrangements and measures under the Student Protection Plan, and the alignment of proposals with the University Vision, were expected to be matters on which members of Senate could express a view.
- (j) Members recognised the need for recommendations to be made and decisions to be taken in the best interests of the University achieving its strategic objectives and delivering its charitable objects.
- (k) In seeking the advice of Senate, Council was particularly concerned with views on the academic merits of the proposal. The University Secretary would devise an appropriate mechanism to gather this information and present it to Council in a full, comprehensive and transparent manner. The routine report to Council on the proceedings of Senate would provide a collective view of Senate itself.
- (l) Members of Council who were also members of the Senate would be entitled to express their views through the Senate consultation, as members of that body.

#### 2.8 Council agreed the following:

- (a) To receive a recommendation for decision from the Executive in relation to the Department of Archaeology at its ordinary meeting in July
- (b) To request and consider advice, as appropriate, from Senate, the President & Vice-Chancellor and members of the Executive Board, prior to making a decision. In seeking advice from the Senate, the Council wished to benefit from the views of all members of the Senate through an appropriate mechanism. Recognising that members of Senate could express an opinion on any matter, Council sought advice from the Senate in particular on the academic issues involved.
- (c) That the related report be shared with the Senate to communicate the intended proposal, and to seek advice from the Senate, in advance of the meeting of the Council at which the recommendation would be considered.
- (d) The UEB proposal and advice from the Senate would be presented to Council to enable it to reach an informed view.