



## **Minutes                      Meeting of the Council**

<b>Date:</b>	27 February 2023
<b>Present:</b>	M Temple, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair)  C Brownlie (Pro-Chancellor), A Stone (Pro-Chancellor), R Memmott (Treasurer), Professor Lamberts (President & Vice-Chancellor) D Bagley, A Belton, Professor Gee, A Kay, Professor Kirby, Dr Nic Dháibhéid, P Rodrigo, Professor Valentine, Professor Vincent, A P Wray
<b>Secretary:</b>	J Strachan (Interim)
<b>In attendance:</b>	J Jones, R Franchi, D Swinn  D Harrison and I Wright (item 7); B Abrams and C Willis (item 8); A Carlile (item 9); A Harris (item 10)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Dr Gilvary, G Greenup, L Hand, Professor Hartley

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting, in particular Dr Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, who was attending their first meeting of Council having replaced Willy Kitchen, who became ineligible to remain a member of Council on their promotion to Professor.

### **2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests**

- 2.1 Professor Kirby declared an interest in relation to an item referred to in item 11, Capital Report, which Council was asked to note.

No other conflicts were declared.

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

(Meeting held on 21 November 2022)

- 3.1 The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

### **4. Action Log and Matters Arising on the Minutes**

- 4.1 Council approved the updated Action Log. There were no other matters arising.

### **5. Approval of Category C Business**

- 5.1 Council considered Category C business, which are covered in Minutes 13-18, below.

## 6. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

6.1 Council received and discussed the President & Vice-Chancellor's report, in which they provided information on key current and forthcoming developments in the policy environment and against each of the themes in the University's Strategic Plan. Attention was drawn to the following updates and developments since the written report was prepared:

(a) UK Government:

Treasury documents for the 2022-23 financial year, published during the week of 20 February, showed that £1.6 billion of funds, previously earmarked for Horizon Europe, were returned to the Treasury, rather than transferred to the newly formed Department for Science, Innovation and Technology for spending on research, as previously promised by the government. This contradiction suggested that 'Plan B', the UK's domestic alternative to Horizon Europe would receive less funding, as had been the case with EU regional development funding when it was replaced by the domestic Shared Prosperity Fund. This was a concerning development and the University would continue to work with the sector to resist this change and advance the case for UK investment in science and research.

Despite the government confirming that its preference remained to associate to Horizon Europe, talks on the UK's membership of Horizon Europe could not progress until disputes over the Northern Ireland Protocol part of the UK-EU post-Brexit trading arrangements had been resolved. Recent reports suggested that such a deal was closer to being reached and there were further positive indications following a meeting of the Prime Minister and the President of the European Commission, although it was unclear whether any agreement that had been reached would command the support of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Conservative European Research Group.

(b) Teaching Excellence Framework:

Council noted that the University and Student's Union TEF submissions had been submitted to the OfS, and the documents made available to Council as part of the meeting papers.

Although there were concerns in the sector about the TEF evaluation process and methodology, the University had prepared its submission from a position of confidence, supported by insights gained from submissions by providers who achieved Gold in the last TEF exercise. Council was assured that the University had done all it reasonably could to maximise its chances of achieving an optimal outcome.

(c) Student Protection Plan:

It was reported that the University had now received notification from the OfS that its updated Student Protection Plan, which was submitted in October 2022, had now been approved and, therefore, the Plan had been published online. All providers were required to have such a plan in force and approved by the OfS under the ongoing registration conditions. The OfS intended to consult on changing its approach to student protection plans as a result of what it perceived as variable quality and a lack of detail in some plans that the OfS had received.

(d) Review of the Office for Students:

The Government had announced its current intention that the OfS would be reviewed under the Public Bodies Review Programme from autumn 2023, with findings likely published by April 2024. The requirements that underpinned these reviews of Arm's Length Bodies were governance, accountability, efficacy and efficiency. However, this review would be different from that which the Russell Group and the other mission groups had jointly called on the Commons Education Select Committee to undertake. The University continued to make the case for this broader review of the OfS, which would look at the wider and more fundamental question of whether the OfS was performing as intended and include the vital question of the extent of the OfS' independence from government.

(e) Industrial Relations:

Shortly after the written report had been circulated, UCU had informed its members that strike action would be paused for two weeks, meaning that strike days planned at Sheffield and around 150 other institutions on 21-23 February and 27 February-2 March had not or would not go ahead. This pause had been agreed to reflect the progress in talks between the trade unions, including UCU, and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), in discussions facilitated by ACAS.

Nevertheless, there were further strike days scheduled for 16-17 and 21-22 March, which may still go ahead, and UCU had announced a further day of strike action on 15 March to coincide with other industrial action taking place on the day of the Chancellor's Budget Statement. UCU had also begun a rebalot of members to extend its mandate for six months beyond the current end date of 20 April 2023. This ballot would run from 21 February to 31 March but talks between UCEA and the recognised trade unions (including UCU) would continue to the end of February.

As industrial action continued, including ongoing action short of a strike, Council received assurances that the University remained committed to and focused on ensuring that the impact on students was minimised and that any disruption to studies was mitigated. Members received an overview of the differential impact across different departments and programmes and noted details of the particular

measures implemented to manage the impact of action and support affected departments and, most importantly, their students. It was also recognised that under the OfS' regulatory framework, lost learning as a result of industrial action was not distinguished from other types of lost learning opportunities and so the University's starting position was to replace learning opportunities that were affected by any form of industrial action.

Council also noted that the dispute over USS pensions was ongoing, although recent financial monitoring reports, ahead of the full valuation in March, indicated a much improved financial position for the scheme, with a surplus of up to £5bn. Although this was an interim valuation, there could be scope for improvements to benefits and/or reductions to contributions. The joint USS – UCU Valuation Working Group continued to meet, and would feed into any consultation.

(f) Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health:

It was reported that, at its April meeting, Council was expected to receive detailed proposals for formal approval, in relation to major structural changes proposed for the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health. The draft proposals would be presented to Senate in March in order for it to make formal recommendations to the Council.

The proposals involved structural change to create three principal Schools, with one of them sub-divided into three Divisions due to its size. The new structure would correlate broadly with the existing departments and schools and it was not anticipated to result in any job losses, although some roles may change slightly to reflect the new structure. Attention was drawn to the significant piece of work, led by the Vice-President and Head of Faculty, to review an optimum structure that would maximise the Faculty's strengths and ability to realise opportunities. This had been a consultative and collaborative process, conducted in a positive manner, and was informed by discussions across the Faculty and supported by a senior Task and Finish Group and Professional Services expertise.

With respect to the rationale for change, clarification was provided that the Faculty's existing structure was the result of historic and iterative evolution and was not reflective of the existing structures at comparable universities. The modernised structure would also enable the Faculty to address a number of issues highlighted in the recent staff survey in the most effective way.

Council also noted that the proposals were underpinned by a clear rationale and principles for what the University sought to enable the Faculty to achieve, were anticipated to deliver a wide range of benefits, including: job security and career development; greater collaborative working practices and research, including the exploitation of research synergies; equity of teaching and research; improved external visibility and brand recognition; greater coordination of REF-related

activities; more effective sharing of best practice; and greater flexibility around resource allocation to respond to strategic need and opportunity.

## **7. Health and Safety Update**

(D Harrison and I Wright in attendance for this item)

- 7.1 Council received a presentation by way of update on the University's Health & Safety work and the impact that the various related actions were beginning to have. Attention was drawn to the three-year plan and objectives for the period 2021-24; particular activity aimed at enhancing the organisational H&S culture under a dedicated action plan approved in July 2022 and informed by HSE literature and guidance; updated data on mandatory training completion rates and incident reporting and near misses, with related enhancements around senior leadership ownership and staff development; an enhanced H&S governance structure covering strategic and operational matters and continuing to report into UEB; and additional activities and planned next steps, including external validation and an internal audit review.
- 7.2 With respect to the internal audit review, it was clarified that this would focus on the effective escalation and mitigation of issues that were identified in risk assessments; Council suggested that consideration be given to testing the adequacy of risk assessments themselves. Further clarification was provided about the terminology used, particularly incidents and accidents, which was consistent with that applied by the HSE and related training. However it was recognised that "incident" implied an underlying cause and effect, and so may be more persuasive than "accident" in fostering a positive health and safety culture. It was noted that Council would continue to receive regular updates on Health and Safety through the P&VC's report as well as the Annual Health & Safety Report, which would include detailed data and trend analysis. It was also reported that departmental processes were increasingly consistent across the University. An ongoing series of departmental reviews had found that departments were meeting the University's basic requirements but were also facilitating greater standardisation, which was positive.

## **8. Information Technology**

(B Abrams and C Willis in attendance for this item)

### **8.1 Technology Enabled Strategic Framework Progress Report**

- 8.1.1 Council received and noted an update on the status of the overall TEF portfolio for 2022/23, the current financial position and forecast outturn 2022/23, and a summary of work to mature the approach to current and future years' activity under the TEF. During a related presentation attention was drawn to, and Council discussed, the following:
- i. An overview of the six product areas, which were aligned with strategic imperatives as well as including the Student Roadmap and an underpinning Infrastructure and Enablers element.
  - ii. Progress over 2022/23, which was slower than planned due to additional technical and resourcing challenges experienced over the year that had not been reflected in the assumptions underpinning the original project plans. These issues were being addressed by increasingly mature IT governance processes and by embedding key elements within substantive activities under each product area.

- iii. An overview of the key risks and mitigations, which were set out in detail in the related paper.
- iv. CIS Re-hosting activity under the Student Roadmap and an overview of the entirety of the CIS ecosystem. This was of critical importance to the totality of institutional student systems across the whole of the student journey. Significant progress had been made to update systems and processes, thereby significantly reducing exposure to risk. However, this remained highly complex and challenging. It was vital that the system could launch as intended in May in order not to adversely affect admissions processes and extensive departmental engagement. As a result, prudent business continuity planning was being undertaken alongside the necessary technical work and testing.
- v. Forthcoming milestones and next steps for the remainder of 2022/23.

8.1.2 During discussion, clarification was provided that, once the CIS rehosting was concluded successfully, the system would be locked to local level development and subject to central IT Services control and oversight. In addition, work would begin to decommission all remaining local legacy systems and processes that had not already been removed in earlier phases of work. It was also noted that the re-hosting would not lead to functional changes and so there was no related need for user training. Members also noted an overview of the TEF governance arrangements that would identify and prioritise areas for further development or enhancement across each product area, aligned to the University strategic priorities.

## 8.2 Information Security

8.2.1 Council received and noted an update report on the University's information security activities and risk mitigation, together with a summary of the threat landscape and security-related major incidents, much of which was aligned with and being progressed through the TEF. During a related presentation, attention was drawn to, and Council discussed, the following:

- i. The key challenges, being institutional complexity and variety; the hostile and varied cyber threat landscape; and greatly elevated legal, regulatory and contractual assurances required in this area, including by strategic partners and collaborators.
- ii. The University's response, within the framework of its dedicated Cyber Security Programme that had established baseline requirements and protections and had enabled the University to defend itself effectively against the types of attacks that had affected several of its peers.
- iii. Next steps, in particular moving to being more proactive, i.e. tactical and strategic, than reactive; promoting and enabling continuous vigilance and awareness; and effecting positive cultural and process changes. The UEB Information Management and Security Group provided ongoing coordination and oversight of these activities, including prioritisation in the context of the University's academic and other strategic priorities.

8.2.2 Clarification was provided about the extent of systems testing, scanning, protection and monitoring that the University undertook in the context of risks associated with the Bring

Your Own Device policy. It was also reported that consideration was being given as to how, and in which areas, to introduce enhanced vetting for prospective employees in roles with access to sensitive data. Council recognised that the University's approach to information and cyber security was of vital importance given the sensitivity of much of the data and information it held, and the related importance of maintaining the trust and confidence of stakeholders, particularly strategic partners and research collaborators. Further consideration would be given to the frequency with which Council received reports and updates in this area in future.

## 9. University Vision: Annual Performance Update on One University

(A Carlile in attendance for this item)

- 9.1 Council received a presentation on the University's performance against the One University and other related corporate KPIs and the One University Strategic Delivery Plan, following the annual performance update report that Council considered in October and equivalent detailed discussions of the Research and Education pillars.
- 9.2 Attention was drawn to: the One University Vision and related priorities; the key activities under each priority area in 2021/22 and key priorities for 2022/23; performance compared to target against the relevant corporate KPIs and the developments and challenges in relation to each of them.

In particular, Council noted:

- i. KPI 8, Staff Diversity, performance was broadly stable but below the corporate target, although overall numbers of BAME staff had increased, and the percentage figure was lower than that for Sheffield and the UK. A number of related strategic actions were underway, including under the Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan and the broader Talent Attraction Strategy and emergent Staffing Strategy that were linked to the institutional Strategic Planning Framework.
- ii. KPI 11, Environmental Sustainability, was on a positive trajectory under a five year strategy to achieve the ambitious corporate target. While good progress was underpinned by a number of positive interventions and developments, there were significant complexities and challenges – notably in relation to scope 3 emissions, which were exacerbated by the impact of high inflation on energy costs.
- iii. KPI 10, Financial Sustainability, was already tracking above the corporate target and had remained broadly stable but this would be challenging to sustain given the known challenges and uncertainties to institutional income and expenditure. Council would consider these issues in more detail in the context of the financial forecasts and budgets and the Finance Strategy, at its April meeting.
- iv. KPI 9, Reputation, was broadly stable, recognising that league tables were not a true and effective comparative measure of institutional performance and the University sought to focus on its core business rather than chase metrics. However, it was noted that the University's trajectory and position in key rankings was important to its business model. The University had already commenced work to mitigate risks in relation to overseas recruitment, but the relative proportion of the University's

Chinese student population meant that where possible these activities had been accelerated or brought forward.

- 9.3 During discussion, clarification was provided about variations in staff diversity across different grades and efforts to generate a pipeline of academics through the retention of PGT and PGR in academic careers, including through the University's Research Culture programme and work with the White Rose consortium, as well as maximising the engagement of staff from the local population, particularly in professional roles. It was noted that the One University Pillar encompassed a board and ambitious range of activities but there was now sufficient leadership capacity, complemented by coordinating structures to advance the various strands, although the timescales for some aspects may need to be revised in future given the inherent challenges and complexities.
- 9.4 Council also noted that the values and ambitions expressed under the One University theme were similar to those of a number of other universities nationally and globally. This alignment – and the University's clarity of expression in relation to them – was helping to attract potential strategic partners and generate collaborative opportunities. A forthcoming internal audit of institutional culture would offer an important early indicator of the University's maturity in this area and the extent to which the concept of One University was being embedded as business as usual.

## **10. Annual Report on Fundraising, Campaigns, and Development**

(A Harris in attendance for this item)

- 10.1 Council received a presentation during which attention was drawn to annual comparative data on alumni engagements; Campaigns and Alumni Relations' mission and areas of focus in support of the University Vision; an update on fundraising activity and alumni volunteering in support of the University; campaign themes and related promotional and developmental work in readiness for entering the public phase in summer 2024; benchmarking data against the University's peer group, and currently underexploited opportunities, e.g. commercial and industry; the active pipeline of philanthropic opportunities and future prospecting; and the new Sheffield Connect platform to strengthen students' and alumni relationships with the University.
- 10.2 Council also noted the approach taken to tailoring messages about the University's strengths and capacity to different audiences and markets according to their respective interests. It was agreed that the case for support should be shared with members of Council to support their own institutional advocacy.

## **11. Capital Report**

- 11.1 Council received and noted an update on the progress of projects in the capital programme, including certain projects recently considered and approved by ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation and those considered by the most recent meeting of the UEB Capital Prioritisation Group, and an update on the urgent Finance Committee's Chair's Action taken to approve an uplift to the RAPD capital budget. Council also approved an increase to and release of the budget for the Elmfield Refurbishment, as set out in the report.
- 11.2 It was also noted that where projects had been added to the capital pipeline then the individual business cases would be developed and presented for formal governance

approval in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, in due course. Clarification was provided that the University's capital programme was self-funded, with the exception of specific grant funding for certain projects, and so budget underspends could be carried forward. It was also reported that the University was increasing projects' contingency budgets to withstand increased inflationary pressures.

## **12. Report of the Council Nominations Committee**

- 12.1 Council approved the Report, including the appointments to Council of Dr Philip Tenney, with immediate effect for the period to 31 July 2026, and of Varun Kabra for the period of 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026. During discussion, Council was pleased to note the positive impact that targeted efforts had had in generating a diverse list of candidates at all stages of the process and noted Council Nominations Committee's plans to launch a further round of recruitment for additional members to join Council from 1 August 2023, and the specific skills and experiences and diversity characteristics that would be emphasised in this next phase of succession planning.

## **13. Recommendation of the Senate: Change of Department Name**

- 13.1 Council considered and approved a recommendation from the Senate to change the name of the Department of Journalism Studies to the School of Journalism, Media and Communication.

## **14. Minutes of the Finance Committee**

- 14.1 Council received and noted the Minutes of the Committee's 14 November 2022 meeting.

## **15. Minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

- 15.1 Council received and noted the Minutes of the Committee's 14 November 2022 meeting.

## **16. Council Business Plan 2022-23**

- 16.1 Council received and noted the business plan, which would be updated regularly to inform future agenda planning.

## **17. Application of the University Seal**

- 17.1 Council received and noted a report on the application of the University seal since the previous meeting.

## **18. Public Availability of Council Papers**

- 18.1 Council received and approved recommendations concerning the publication on the web of papers presented at the meeting, in accordance with previously agreed proposals on the disclosure of information. It was noted that a number of papers were confidential and would not be made publicly available.

**19. Any Other Business**

19.1 There was no other business.

**20. Feedback on the Meeting**

20.1 Members commented positively on the quality of the meeting papers and the timeliness with which the meeting had taken place, which was helped by having papers taken as read. Greater opportunities for discussion remained a key point for future development.