

## **COUNCIL – MINUTES**

### **22 November 2019**

**PRESENT:** Pro-Chancellor, Lord Liddle (in the chair); Interim Vice-Chancellor; Professor Sir Ian Diamond (lay member); Mrs R. S. Georghiou (lay member); Professor S. C. Guy (Senate representative); Mr I. Johnson (lay member); Ms B. T. Morgan (student representative); Ms A. M. Mullan (Senate representative); Mr G. S. Nuttall (Students' Union President); Lord Price (lay member); Mr S. N. Reynolds (lay member); Professor E. Ritchie (lay member); His Hon. Judge P. Sycamore (lay member); Mrs V. Young (lay member).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr P. T. Boustead (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development) (*attended for items 7-8*); Mr T. Buckley (Director of Recruitment, Admissions and International Development) (*attended for item 18*); Mrs C. Geddes (Committee Secretary); Professor A. L. Heathwaite (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)) (*attended for item 10*); Professor Sharon Huttly (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and EDI)) (*attended for item 9*); Mr S. J. Jennings (Director of Strategic Planning and Governance); Mr P. Morris (Director of Capital Development and Estate Operations) (*attended for items 5-6*); Ms N. C. Owen (Chief Administrative Officer and Secretary); Mrs S. J. Randall-Paley (Director of Finance) (*attended for items 13-19*).

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Professor K. C. Jones (Senate representative); Baroness Neville-Jones (Deputy Pro-Chancellor).

#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Council noted apologies for absence.
- 1.2 Council members were reminded of confidentiality protocols.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES**

**PAPER A**

- 3.1 Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2019.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

- 4.1 There were no matters arising discussed.

#### **5. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE AND QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

- 5.1 Professor Steve Bradley reported on:
  - (a) the strength of this year's admissions particularly the numbers of postgraduate taught overseas students;
  - (b) the success of the University's Executive MBA in being ranked amongst the top 100 in the world;

- (c) the appointment of Professor Nigel Davies as interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development);
- (d) the change in the title of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Digital, Global and Development) to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global);
- (e) the appointment of Dr Anne-Marie Houghton as Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;
- (f) his dialogue with various parties regarding the impending industrial action and how the student interest would be protected.

## 5.2 ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***

5.3 The Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Capital Development and Estate Operations, Mr Morris, reported on matters connected to student accommodation relating to a recent fire in privately-owned student accommodation in Bolton. This included that:

- (a) a letter had been received from the Secretary of State for Education requiring a review of, and assurances regarding, fire safety and compliance with Building Regulations, this applied to University or city private student accommodation blocks. The letter and associated issues had been discussed at the Council Safety, Health and Wellbeing Committee the previous day. Recent audits conducted on the University's fire safety records found full compliance with regulations;
- (b) the University would be working in co-operation with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services (LRFS) in the city, including to review any private providers including any that may use high pressure laminate (HPL) cladding – one low rise building had potentially been identified by the LRFS. However, at this point there was no clear evidence to suggest that HPL promoted the spread of fire or did not conform with Building Regulations.

5.4 The Council noted the forecast student number planning for next year and discussed the considerations being undertaken with regards to accreditation, occupancy and allocation of accommodation at Lancaster, noting in particular the preferences and prioritisation of first year undergraduates for provision of on-campus accommodation. It was agreed that a report reflecting on the considerations of student growth in relation to maintaining the student experience would be brought to Council in the Lent Term.

## 6. **PRESIDENT OF LU STUDENTS' UNION: REPORT**

**PAPER B**

6.1 The President of the Students' Union introduced the report and highlighted issues of resourcing and support for off-campus first year students, including issues arising in relation to a private accommodation block in Lancaster (Caton Court), motions approved at the Students' Union's recent Annual General Meeting concerning: climate emergency; proposals for changes to University Council; the Sugarhouse; and ethical banking and investment.

6.2 In discussion it was noted that:

- (a) the Council had received a presentation on the University's approach to environmental sustainability, which reflected the significant progress already made on carbon management, but also the significant challenges and engagement required to address Scope 3 emissions resulting from travel and procurement. The University was developing a holistic Sustainability Plan which would come through to Council for further consideration;
- b) the changes arising in Council membership had been introduced as a result of a review to ensure its effectiveness. Council had recently considered the impact of those changes and had determined that these had been successful. Anyone who met eligibility criteria could nominate themselves for a lay membership and the City Council was invited to encourage applications from City Councillors. It was noted that a member of Professional Services staff was prioritised from within the Senate nominations and that the method of nomination of the additional student member was a matter for the Students' Union.

6.3 Members recognised the significance of the Sugar House issue within the student body and, whilst noting this was a matter for the Students' Union, indicated its interest in the outcome of the Trustee Board's decision post referendum. The President's comments on the need for a longer term, more fit for purpose solution were noted.

6.4 A discussion took place around ethical investment and it was **noted** that the Finance and General Purposes Committee would review the current investment policy in due course.

6.5 Council **noted** the report.

**7. VICE-CHANCELLOR RECRUITMENT** **TABLED PAPER**  
*Restricted and Confidential*

**8. UPDATED ON BALLOTS FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION** **ORAL UPDATE**  
*Restricted and Confidential*

**9. ANNUAL REPORT ON TEACHING QUALITY ASSURANCE** **PAPER C**

9.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and EDI) introduced the report by reminding the Council that its purpose was to provide assurance with respect to the assurance return made to the Office for Students. Process improvement examples requested by the Audit Committee had been included and members welcomed these additions.

9.2 The Council **confirmed** the report provided full assurance for them in relation to the statements required for the Office for Students return for 2018-19.

- 10. RESEARCH INTEGRITY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19** **PAPER D**
- 10.1 It was reported that none of the complaints received during this year had been upheld on investigation. It was also noted that there was a new Chair of the University's Research and Ethics Committee.
- 10.2 The Council **approved** the Research Integrity Report.
- 11. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS) PREVENT ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DATA RETURN** **PAPER E**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*
- 12. MODERN SLAVERY ACT STATEMENT** **PAPER F**
- 12.1 The Council **reviewed and approved** the updated Modern Slavery Act statement.
- 13. ORAL UPDATE FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**
- 13.1 The Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee reported on the Committee's key business since the previous Council and not covered elsewhere on the agenda. In particular Council noted the Financial Regulations and residence charges had been reviewed and revised.
- 13.2 The Council **approved** the changes to the Finance and General Purposes terms of reference.
- 14. UA92 PROJECT UPDATE** **PAPER G**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*
- 15. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2019** **PAPER H**
- 15.1 The Director of Finance gave an overview of the financial performance. The meeting discussed the substantial adjustment to the USS pensions liability based on the 2017 valuation, noting that this would be consistent across the sector for USS member universities. Council advised this would require longer term risk monitoring alongside other budget pressure, and noted that targeted in-year savings had been successfully achieved.
- 15.2 Members noted that the statements had been reviewed by both the Finance and Audit Committees and were recommended by both Committees for approval. The Chair of Finance and General Purposes advised that the University's position remained strong, and that Lancaster's position, as a top performing institution, would be of increasing importance given indications of lenders' perceived increase of risk within the sector. Relationships with all lenders would be important to maintain over the medium term, especially in respect of the revolving credit facility and its potential extension or replacement.
- 15.3 The Finance Team were congratulated on the clarity of the report.
- 15.4 The Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2019 were **approved**.

16. **AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL AND THE VICE-CHANCELLOR 2019** **PAPER I**  
*some Restricted and Confidential material*
17. **AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT: MEETING OF 29 OCTOBER 2019** **PAPER J**  
*Restricted and Confidential*
18. **PRELIMINARY ADMISSIONS RESULTS FOR THE 2019/20 INTAKE OF UG AND PGT STUDENTS** **PAPER K**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*
19. **FINANCIAL FORECAST INFORMATION FOR 2019 FINANCIAL AND STUDENT NUMBER DATA: RETURN TO THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS)** **PAPER L**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*
20. **OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS) CORRESPONDENCE**
- 20.1 **Compliance with Regulatory Deadlines** **PAPER M**
- 20.1.1 Council considered a letter from the Office of Students in relation to non-compliance with subscription deadlines, which included a request for the Council to specifically consider the reasons for non-compliance, record their considerations and provide a report on their consideration to the Office for Students. The Chief Administrative Officer and Secretary noted that at least 249 other institutions in the sector had received a similar letter in relation to QAA subscriptions. Members noted that the payment had been made one working day late and that, unlike communications relating to OfS' own subscription, there had been no indication that this was a statutory deadline on the invoice or in accompanying communications. Nonetheless, members noted that processes were being reassessed with a view to ensuring full compliance with the Office for Students' regulatory deadlines.
- 20.1.2 The Council **noted** the future potential fine liability and expressed surprise at the tone of the correspondence from the Office for Students in contrast to the relative risk, given that the University's payment of just over £10k had been actioned in advance of the deadline, a remittance had been received by the QAA prior to the deadline and the monies had been credited a single day late following processing within the banking system. The Pro-Chancellor indicated he would consider writing directly to the Chair of OfS in relation to the matter in light of the cost and bureaucracy associated with the requirement for Council to review reasons for one day delay in payment.
- 20.2 **Unconditional Offers** **ORAL UPDATE**  
*Restricted and Confidential*

- 21. KPI PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018-19 YEAR END** **PAPER N**
- 21.1 The Director of Strategic Planning and Governance presented the year-end review of key performance indicators. Members noted that these supported the areas which the Executive and Council had targeted for improvement, including tariff scores and assessment and feedback. In discussion it was acknowledged that moving upwards in the international league tables remained a particularly difficult KPI to influence given the significant reliance on survey measures of reputation.
- 22. EU EXIT PREPARATION UPDATE** **PAPER O**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*
- 23. ORAL REPORT FROM ESTATES COMMITTEE**
- 23.1 The Chair of Estates Committee provided a short oral report and members noted that decisions on key building projects would come before the Council in January.
- 24. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE**
- 24.1 The Council approved the proposed amendments to the terms of reference.
- 25. COUNCIL CHAIR'S ACTIONS** **PAPER Q**
- 25.1 The Council noted the decisions taken by the Chair since the last meeting.
- 26. WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS** **PAPER R**
- 26.1 The Council noted the written reports.
- 27. USE OF UNIVERSITY SEAL** **PAPER S**
- 27.1 The Council noted the use of the seal since the November 2018 meeting of the Council.
- 28. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS** **PAPER T**
- 28.1 The Council noted the proposed forward schedule of business.
- 29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
- 29.1 Members noted that the next Council meeting will be held at 1.00 p.m. on Friday 24 January 2020 in the Private Dining Room, County College.