

OPEN

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

29th September 2021 at 9.30a.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members present: Mr Mervyn Walker (Pro-Chancellor and Chair); Professor Helen Abbott; Mr Mikey Brown, President of the Guild of Students; Mr Wei-Lun Chen, Guild International Officer; Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Mr Tim Gardam; Professor David Hannah; Mr Malcolm Harbour CBE; Mr Richard Haywood (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Professor Tim Jones (Provost and Vice-Principal); Mr Harjinder Kang; Mr Richard Swann; Ms Jacqueline Taylor.

Also present: Professor David Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Kathleen Armour (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Professor Richard Black (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Erica Conway (Finance Director); Professor Andrzej Gasiorek (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Cathy Gilbert, Director of External Relations - for Minute 21/78; Professor Laura Green (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Stephen Jarvis (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Deborah Longworth, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Academic Experience) - for Minute 21/79; Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Dr Emma Robinson, Academic Registrar - Minute 21/79; Mr Lee Sanders, Registrar and Secretary; Mr Mark Senior, Chief of Staff; Professor Heather Widdows, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer).

Apologies: Ms Deborah Cadman OBE; Ms Rosie Harris; Mr Steve Hollis; Dame Lin Homer; Mr Mick Laverty; Professor Una Martin; Mr Anthony Lilley.

Papers: The minute book contains copies of all written papers or reports to which reference is made below unless indicated otherwise.

21/71 Declarations of Interest

**Noted:**

- (i) the Register of Interests of Members of Council and UEB, including details of declared membership of the USS pension fund and UCU and other Unions, (CO.21.09.01);
- (ii) that no changes to the Register of Interests or interests were declared in relation to any item on the agenda.

21/72 Membership and Terms of Reference

**Noted:** the membership and terms of reference of the Council (CO.21.09.02).

21/73 Minutes

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 25th and 30th June 2021 be approved (CO.21.09.03).

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21/74 Matters Arising from the minutes not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

**Reported:** that there were no matters arising.

21/75 Pro-Chancellor's Items

**Considered:** the report of the Pro-Chancellor (CO.21.09.04).

**Reported** that:

- (a) the Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Dame Lin Homer (who had kindly agreed to assist given the current vacancy for Treasurer) had conducted 20 one-to-one discussions with members of Council in respect of 2020/21. These discussions provided a formal opportunity for members to reflect on the workings of Council during the academic year. Reflections this year had included the opportunity to discuss how Council had operated during the pandemic and whether there were any changes which should be made to improve the effectiveness of Council in the light of this experience;
- (b) the overall tenor of the feedback from the one-to-one meetings with members of Council had been extremely positive and constructive. There was a consensus amongst members of Council that governance continued to be strong and individual comments/suggestions were made in pursuit of Council's commitment to continuous improvement;
- (c) all felt that Council had continued to operate effectively during the pandemic. The transition to virtual meetings had been smooth and worked as efficiently as possible. The arrangements for the two face to face meetings that had been held during the pandemic were also commended. Council had continued to carry out all its business and had been kept very well informed, maintaining effective oversight. There was strong praise for the role UEB, staff and the Guild had played in enabling the University to navigate the challenges of the pandemic so successfully;
- (d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

**Resolved:** that the key aspects of feedback from the one-to-one discussions would be progressed during the year.

21/76 Vice-Chancellor's Items

**Considered:** the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.21.09.05).

**Reported:**

- (a) that the priorities of UEB for 2021/22 were tabled as an appendix to Paper CO.21.09.05 and noted by Council. These were aligned to the Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework and performance against these priorities would be monitored by UEB throughout the year at its Performance Review Meetings. The importance of having focussed on a small set of overarching priorities and key priorities for each pillar of the Strategic Framework was recognised;
- (b) the current position in relation to UK associate membership of Horizon Europe, noting that this remained uncertain;
- (c) concern about the likelihood of strike action by UCU and the implications of this for the University's students who had already experienced significant disruption for the past 18 months because of the pandemic. The priority for the University would be to minimise the impact of any strike action on its students;
- (d) progress with development of the University's strategic partnership with Siemens which would bring their global experience and knowledge as advisers to develop a University of Birmingham roadmap towards carbon neutrality, in line with the goals

of the sustainability pillar of the Strategic Framework. The importance of ensuring that student awareness of the University's ambitions and targets for sustainability as set out in the Framework was recognised, noting that a communications plan was in place to achieve this, including the appointment of Student Sustainability Champions.

21/77 Making the Strategic Framework Work

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Considered:** an update on the launch and implementation of the Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework which had been approved by Council in June 2021.

**Reported** that:

(a) the Vice-Chancellor had announced the launch of the Strategic Framework by e-mail to all staff and would share more of the thinking and plans behind Birmingham 2030 with staff at the Vice-Chancellor's Open Forum on 6th October 2021. A leaflet promoting Birmingham 2030 was circulated at the meeting and had also been given to key stakeholders who had attended the University Annual Meeting on 22nd September 2021;

(b) to (e) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

21/78 Recruitment and Admissions Update

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Considered:** the Recruitment and Admissions Update (CO.21.09.06).

**Reported** that:

(a) to (j) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

**[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

21/79 2021 National Student Survey Results

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Considered:** the 2021 National Student Survey (NSS) Results (CO.21.09.07).

**Reported:**

(a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(b) the particular context for the scores and rankings in NSS 2021, including the influence of industrial action, the intensity of the pandemic in Birmingham, and the student campaign around 'no detriment' in January, which impacted significantly upon the student response to the survey;

(c) that the University had made extraordinary efforts to support, progress and graduate students successfully through the pandemic-related disruptions, and there were notable successes in all three of these areas, particularly in comparison to some others in the sector. In some respects, therefore, these scores were very disappointing and understated the quality of the student experience. Nonetheless, the University had heard the student voice, especially as expressed in some of the free text comments, and there was an institution-wide plan to enhance the student experience in the short and longer term.

(d) to (i) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

**Resolved:** that Council noted the 2021 NSS results and confirmed its support for the response of the University and its strategy for the 2022 NSS as set out in Paper CO.21.09.07 and above **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. Further updates on progress in relation to the NSS would be provided throughout the year.

21/80 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

**Considered:** the report from the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 22nd September 2021 (CO.21.09.08).

- (1) Pritchatts Park Development Update

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Considered:** an update on the Pritchatts Park Development.

**Reported:**

- (a) to (b) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

- (2) 2020/21 Financial Outturn

**Reported** that:

- (a) to (b) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

- (2) Development of the Gisbert Kapp Building

**Noted:** that SPRC had approved the proposed refurbishment of five floors of the Gisbert Kapp Building, at a total cost of **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**, for:

- (i) a Wellbeing Hub to facilitate cross School research and community engagement between Psychology and Sport, Exercise Science and Rehabilitation Sciences (SportExR);
- (ii) co-location of members of the Institute for Mental Health. The Institute had been recently awarded £1.4m from the Wolfson Foundation for infrastructure support;
- (iii) relocation of the remaining staff from the School of Psychology alongside colleagues in Pritchatts Road to co-locate the School on the same site.

**[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

21/81 Research Grants Performance 2019/20

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Considered:** the University's Research Grants Performance 2019/20 (CO.21.09.09).

**Reported:**

- (a) to (f) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

- (g) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) would be launching a survey of staff engaged with research at the University next month to explore the state of the research culture at the University. The results of the survey would inform work to develop the University's research culture and environment.

**Resolved:** that Council congratulated the University on its research grants performance for 2019/20.

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### 21/82 Audit Committee

**Considered:** the report of the Chair of the Audit Committee on the meeting of Audit Committee held the previous day, noting:

- (i) the plans for review of the University's Risk Register to align it with the Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework;
- (ii) the 'high' assurance rating of the Accounts Payable audit;
- (iii) the progress of the year-end audit **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**.

### 21/83 Treasurer

**Considered:** the vacancy for Treasurer (CO.21.09.10).

**Reported** that:

- (a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) consideration had been given to interim arrangements for the role of Treasurer until a permanent appointment could be made. Following discussions between the Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Registrar and Secretary, Council was advised that Steve Hollis had been approached to act as Treasurer on an interim basis and had confirmed that he was willing to serve. This was on the basis that Steve performed all of the duties of Treasurer, except in relation to Investment Sub-Committee. It was proposed that Richard Haywood would chair meetings of the Investment Sub-Committee until a permanent appointment was made (Richard had significant experience of the business of Investment Sub-Committee having been a member of the Sub-Committee since 2015);
- (c) further consideration was being given to the future configuration of the role of Treasurer and the process for filling the vacancy. A further update would be provided at the next meeting of Council.

**Resolved** that:

- (i) Steve Hollis be appointed as Treasurer on an interim basis until a permanent appointment is made;
- (ii) Richard Haywood be appointed as Chair of Investment Sub-Committee on an interim basis until a permanent appointment is made;
- (iii) a further update on the future configuration of the role of Treasurer and the process for filling the vacancy would be provided at the November meeting of Council.

### 21/84 Academic Assurance Report

**Noted:** the requirements of Council in relation to academic assurance and, prospectively, what academic assurances members of Council would receive and when, as the academic year progressed as set out in the Academic Assurance report (CO.21.09.11). As these materials were then presented during the academic year, members of Council could refer to Paper CO.21.09.11 to remind themselves that they were part of the ongoing assurance to Council on academic matters, including on matters of academic quality and the student experience.

### 21/85 Forward Programme of Business 2021/22

**Noted:** the Forward Programme of Business for Council for 2021/22 (CO.21.09.12).

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21/86 Capital Projects over £10m

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Received:** the progress update on Capital Projects over £10m (CO.21.09.13).

21/87 Affixing of the University Seal

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**Received:** a report noting the transactions which had required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council (CO.21.09.14).

21/88 Sir Samuel Hanson Rowbotham Trust and Waterloo House (Birmingham) Limited

**Resolved:** that Vikas Jolly, the University's Head of Business Partnering, be appointed as:

- (i) a trustee of the Sir Samuel Hanson Rowbotham Will Trust; and
- (ii) a designated officer and representative of the University authorised to exercise all of its powers as a member of Waterloo House (Birmingham) Limited (CO.21.09.15).

21/89 Any Other Business

**Reported:** that there were no items of Any Other Business.

21/90 Programme of Meetings

**Noted:** the programme of meetings of Council for the remainder of 2021/22:

Wednesday 24th November 2021

Wednesday 2nd February 2022

Tuesday 5th April 2022

Wednesday 29th June 2022