

OPEN

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

29th November 2023 at 8.30am

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members present: Mr Mervyn Walker (Pro-Chancellor and Chair); Professor Helen Abbott; Ms Lucy Baldwin; Ms Amira Campbell, President of the Guild of Students; Ms Lisa Fretwell; Mr Tim Gardam; Ms Rosie Harris; Mr Mick Laverty; Dame Lin Homer; Professor Stephen Jarvis (Provost); Professor Pam Kearns; Mr Anthony Lilley OBE; Ms Tianjie (Alice) Liu, Guild International Officer; Mr Nick Owen CBE; Professor Catherine Mangan; Mr Richard Swann; Dame Cilla Snowball; Ms Jacqueline Taylor; Professor Adam Tickell (Vice-Chancellor and Principal).

Also present: Professor William Bloss (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Nicolle Charlton, Deputy Director of Finance - for Minutes 23/82 to 23/84; Ms Erica Conway (Chief Financial Officer); Professor Jo Duberley (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Cathy Gilbert, Director of External Relations - for Minute 23/80; Professor Neil Hanley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Rebecca Lambert, Director of Planning and Performance Insight - for Minute 23/79; Professor Deborah Longworth (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Head of Governance); Gillian McGrattan, Director of Human Resources - for Minutes 23/81 and 23/95; Trevor Payne, Director of Estates - for Minute 23/85; Professor Rachel O'Reilly (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)); Mr Lee Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Mr Mark Senior (Chief of Staff); Professor Marika Taylor (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College).

Apologies: Dr Clive Hickman OBE; Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Professor David Hannah; Mr Steve Hollis; Mr Harjinder Kang; Ms Deborah Cadman OBE.

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

23/74 Declarations of Interest

Noted: that no changes to the Register of Interests were declared.

23/75 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11th October 2023 be approved (CO.23.11.02).

23/76 Matters Arising from the minutes not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

Noted: that there were no matters arising.

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23/77 Pro-Chancellor's Items

(1) Evening Presentation (28th November 2023)

Reported: that Council had received a very informative and thought-provoking presentation from Paul Kett, Senior Advisor and Global Director for Education and Skills, PWC, and Karen Best, Head of Education & Student Accommodation Lead Advisory, PWC. This had covered their research in partnership with Universities UK on the financial position of the higher education sector, together with their view of the political environment and policy context, and how higher education institutions might respond effectively to these challenges.

(2) Dubai Visit

Reported: that the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Audit Committee had visited the University of Birmingham Dubai from 22nd to 24th November 2023. They briefed members of Council on their visit, particularly noting the energy and enthusiasm of the incoming Dubai Provost, Professor Yusra Mouzughy, and the significant opportunities for research in Dubai.

23/78 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Noted: the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.23.11.03), including the positive outcome of the recent visit to the University by the University of Glasgow Senior Management Group and the return visit by UEB to Glasgow which was being planned for Summer 2024.

23/79 Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework: Annual Measures of Success Update

Considered: the Birmingham 2030 Strategic Framework: Annual Measures of Success Update (CO.23.11.04).

Reported that:

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

Resolved: that the Annual Measures of Success Update and the changes to the Student Experience Measure of Success be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.04, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

23/80 Recruitment and Admissions

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

(1) Update

Considered: the Recruitment and Admissions Update (CO.23.11.05).

Noted that:

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

(2) International Student Recruitment Strategy

Considered: a presentation by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Director of External Relations on international student recruitment.

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

Resolved: that Council thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Director of External Relations for their presentation and was assured by the University's response to the new challenges for recruitment and admissions which had emerged since September, noting the need to keep this major issue under close review. The next recruitment and admissions update would be provided to Council in February 2024, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

23/81 Staff Survey and Action Plan

Considered: the University's response to the feedback provided by the 2023 Staff Survey (CO.23.11.06).

Reported that:

- (a) an analysis of the bottom-up commentary, the institutional-level scores and a high-level review of free text comments by the external provider of the software used in the survey had confirmed the initial headline results on the areas of strength (including local collegiality and teamwork, pride and purposeful work, sense of belonging in many areas and general campus environment) as well as commonly identified areas for improvement (e.g. effective working across boundaries, perceptions of workload and bureaucracy, variability in leadership and effective communication);
- (b) since organisations often found there to be a close correlation between staff satisfaction and the quality of the customer experience, analysis had been undertaken to see if there were linkages between composite measures from the staff survey and the University's National Student Survey performance but no statistically robust link had been found in the most recent data;
- (c)-(d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Resolved that Council approved:

- (i) the institutional and local actions to be taken in response to the 2023 Staff Survey as set out in Paper CO.23.11.06;
- (ii) the proposed approach and timetable for future Surveys, including the addition of interim short Pulse surveys to a statistically significant sample of staff, followed by a full Have your Say Survey in June 2024 and the supporting timetable.

23/82 Five-Year Financial Plan

Considered: the Five-Year Financial Plan (CO.23.11.07).

Reported that:

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

Resolved that the Five-Year Financial Plan be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.07, noting:

- (i)-(ii) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

23/83 Report of Audit Committee

- (1) Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Considered: the Annual Report of the Audit Committee (CO.23.11.08).

Resolved: that the Annual Report of the Audit Committee be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.08.

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- (2) Report from the meetings of the Audit Committee held on 3rd October and 14th November 2023

Noted: the report of the meetings of the Audit Committee held on 3rd October and 14th November 2023 (CO.23.11.09).

Resolved: that EY be re-appointed as external auditor to the University and the Group for the 2023/24 Financial Year, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

23/84 Annual Report and Accounts for the Financial Year Ending 31st July 2023

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

- (1) Accounts

Considered: the University's Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year ending 31st July 2023 (CO.23.11.10).

Reported that:

- (a) the external audit by EY had commenced in mid-September and was expected to conclude by the end of the week;
- (b)-(c) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (d) EY had confirmed that they would issue an unqualified audit opinion on the Accounts following their approval by Council;
- (e) SPRC on 16th November 2023 had recommended that Council approve the final version of the accounts at its meeting on 29th November 2023, subject to completion of the external audit and consideration of its outcomes, notification of any significant changes to SPRC and Audit Committee, and confirmation from Audit Committee that it recommended that Council approve the Annual Report and Accounts;
- (f) Audit Committee on 23rd November 2023 had recommended that Council approve the financial statements of the Group, the University and of its subsidiary undertakings for the year ending 31st July 2023, subject to completion of the External Audit and the Chief Financial Officer and External Auditor confirming to the Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Audit Committee that no significant issues or concerns had arisen in the final stages of the audit process.

Resolved: that the financial statements of the Group, the University and of its subsidiary undertakings for the year ending 31st July 2023 be approved, subject to completion of the External Audit and the Chief Financial Officer and External Auditor confirming to the Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Audit Committee that no significant issues or concerns have arisen in the final stages of the audit process.

- (2) Going Concern Assessment Report

Resolved: that, having reviewed the University going concern assessment as set out in Paper CO.23.11.11, Council approved that the University is a going concern, noting that this approval was required for the completion of the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts.

- (3) OfS Annual Financial Return

Considered: the draft OfS Annual Financial Return for 2022/23 (CO.23.11.12).

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

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Resolved that:

- (i) the content of the draft Annual Financial Return for 2022/23 to be submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) be approved, the first draft of which was at Appendix 1 to Paper CO.23.11.12;
- (ii) the content of the required narrative items relating to the Return be approved, the first draft of which was at Appendix 2 to Paper CO.23.11.12;
- (iii) once complete, authority be delegated to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, as Accountable Officer, to sign off the final Annual Financial Return for 2022/23 to the OfS;
- (iv) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

23/85 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

23/86 Effectiveness Review of Council

Considered: the arrangements for the next Effectiveness Review of Council (CO.23.11.14).

Resolved: that the arrangements for the next effectiveness review of Council be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.14., including the appointment of Will Spinks, External HE Governance Consultant and former Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer at the University of Manchester (and prior to that a senior manager in the pharmaceutical sector), to provide external scrutiny and advice.

23/87 Academic Assurance Reports

- (1) Annual Report on Academic Quality, Standards and the Student Experience

Considered: the Annual Report on Academic Quality, Standards and the Student Experience (CO.23.11.16).

Resolved: that the University's approach to academic quality, standards, and the student experience be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.16.

- (2) Annual Report on Research Integrity

Considered: the Annual Report on Research Integrity (CO.23.11.17).

Resolved: that the University's Annual Research Integrity Statement be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.11.17.

23/88 Annual Report to Council on the Prevent Duty 2022/23

Considered: the Annual Report to Council on the Prevent Duty 2022/23 (CO.23.11.18).

Resolved: that the Annual Report and Data Return for Prevent Monitoring 2023 be approved, to inform the declaration and signature by the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council for submission to the Office of Students as set out in Paper CO.23.11.18.

23/89 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Noted: the report of the meeting of Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee (SPRC) held on 16th November 2023 (CO.23.11.19).

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23/90 Senate

Noted: the report of the meeting of the Senate held on 8th November 2023 (CO.23.11.20).

23/91 Capital Projects over £1m

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Noted: the progress update on Capital Projects over £1m (CO.23.11.21).

23/92 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.23.11.22).

23/93 Any Other Business

Reported that there were no items of any other business.

23/94 Programme of Meetings

Noted: the programme of meetings of Council for the remainder of 2023/24:
Tuesday 6th February 2024, 5.00pm to 9.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
Wednesday 7th February 2024, 9.00am to 12 noon, Council Meeting
Wednesday 24th April 2024, 9.00am to 9.00pm, Council Strategy Day and Dinner
Tuesday 25th June 2024, 5.00pm to 9.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
Wednesday 26th June 2024, 9.00am to 12 noon, Council Meeting

23/95 Remuneration Committee

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Considered: the report from the meetings of the Remuneration Committee held during 2023 and the proposed revision of the University's Senior Staff Pay Policy (CO.23.11.15).

Reported:

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

Resolved that Council:

- (i) approved the Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee for 2022/23;
- (ii) approved the amendment of the University's Senior Pay Review Policy as set out in Appendix 2 to Paper CO.23.11.15. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (iii)-(iv) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Note:

At the request of the Pro-Chancellor:

1. *the members of UEB who had been in attendance left the meeting;*
2. *the Vice-Chancellor and Principal left the meeting (having confirmed that members of Council did not have any queries about the remuneration of senior staff other than himself);*
3. *Professor Helen Abbott who was currently Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts and Law, and Mark Senior, who had been in attendance, also left the meeting].*