

**COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 November 2023**

<b>Members:</b>	John Hinchcliffe	Raja Waseem Ahmad	Professor Shirley Congdon
	Dr Stewart Davies	Dame Sally Dicketts	Paul Donovan
	Professor Maryann Hardy	Faiz Ilyas	Kate Ireland
	Hamza Khan	Simon Lewis	Victoria McKay
	Ash Mehta	Sally Neocosmos	Sanjay Patel
	Professor Amir Sharif	Iqra Tabassum	Professor Vishanth Weerakkody
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Jacqui Holgate	Head of Governance	
	Wahid Khan	University Lawyer (for item 24 only)	
	Andrew Lang	Chief Finance Officer	
	Professor Ifiok Otung	Professor of Space Engineering (for item 33 only)	
	Professor Sankar Sivarajah	Dean of School of Management (for item 33 only)	
	Professor Hassan Ugail	Professor of Visual Computing (for item 33 only)	
<b>Apologies:</b>	Matthew Atkinson	Terry Hartwell	Professor Zahir Irani
	Ibrahim Mahmood		

17.23-24 **Welcome and Report from the Interim Chair**

- 17.1 The Interim Chair of Council welcomed Members to the meeting and provided some opening comments noting the challenges that the sector continued to face including the ongoing and unparalleled turbulence in HE and the volatility in student recruitment.
- 17.2 The Interim Chair also noted that the recruitment processes for a new Chair of Council and University Secretary were progressing, supported by external search agents, and Council would receive an update on the appointments in due course.
- 17.3 **ACTION: provide an update on Chair of Council and University Secretary appointments (Vice-Chancellor / Interim Chair of Council)**

18.23-24 **Vice-Chancellor Update Report including Student Recruitment Update (Documents C14 and C16/23-24)**

- 18.1 Council considered the Vice-Chancellor's report in which she provided information on key matters affecting the University since the last meeting and against each of the University's sub-strategies. Among topics highlighted were:
- the Executive's commitment in ensuring the University fulfilled its mission and vision and delivered its strategic objectives in line with its values.
  - the ongoing and increasing pressure on the HE funding regime. Universities UK continued to lobby for a sustainable funding model to reverse the long-term decline in funding although it

was unlikely there would be a positive change in the near future; it was more likely that the unit of resource would continue to decrease further in real terms.

- current and complex geo-political issues, including the impact of Brexit, and the continued conflict in the Middle East.

18.2 An update was provided on the shortfall in student recruitment noting this was disappointing and challenging and remained a key priority for the Executive. The Council informal briefing in mid-December would provide an update on what the University was going to do differently with regards to its marketing to influence the 2024 intake.

18.3 [Redacted]

18.4 [Redacted]

*Note: The above minutes have been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.*

18.5 Council was assured the University was being proactive in mitigating future risks, with an emphasis on high-quality, excellence and sustainability. The cost saving measures agreed by the Executive, including the financial implications associated with the lower-than-budgeted student numbers, had been communicated to staff at the recent University Assembly and other leadership forums. The need for all staff to take a collective responsibility for budget savings was reiterated.

18.6 Executive leadership was key with Deans and Directors continuing to ensure their areas of responsibility operated as efficiently as possible, minimising waste, and adhering to strong expenditure controls, including challenging the need for expenditure, and providing colleagues with the confidence to drive prudent, lean behaviours.

18.7 Noting that the University's five-year plan was predicated on growth, Council considered the update provided by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Finance Officer, and in response had a detailed discussion about the current recruitment position and emerging 3+9 forecast. Council

debated, and challenged the Executive, on a range of matters during its deliberations, and points of note included:

- the importance of setting robust but realistic and achievable student number targets as a foundation for income budgeting. The need to deliver incremental increases in student numbers in line with the University's growth and sustainability plan was emphasised.
- that successful student recruitment was critical to the delivery of the University's financial plans in order to generate the funds required to enable both capital and revenue investment which would help drive growth ambitions.
- the importance of student retention and progression, noting the financial implications associated with this. A business case was being presented to the University's Investment Panel to fund a new way of tracking students through academic and administrative processes which would involve a whole institutional change approach.
- that cost saving mitigations must be undertaken in a way that would protect the student experience noting that strategy delivery was the primary means to enhancing the student journey and student experience. Council was reminded that £14M had been invested in additional resources during the last three years, this being in addition to inflationary increases and much of which enhanced the student experience, noting the University continued to make positive changes in this area.
- that cost mitigations should provide ongoing, long-term reductions in operating costs, not just delay expenditure in the current year.
- the importance of delivering a surplus budget to ensure the financial sustainability of the University.
- the importance of the of the current work on the branding ensuring the University had a strong and distinctive identity necessary in the increasingly highly competitive HE sector.
- the need to ensure that the focus on main scheme continued to increase in future recruitment cycles.
- to identify what the University would stop doing noting this would be managed through the integrated planning process.
- the need to maintain investment, where required, to drive the growth plan.
- the role of Council in seeking assurance that the growth plan and budget were adequate and effective thus ensuring financial viability, sustainability, and delivery of the University strategy.

- 18.8 The following suggestions were made by Council with Council Members requesting that the Executive provide clarity on their adoption: i) enhanced scenario and financial planning at Institutional and Faculty level; ii) review the University's marketing function; and iii) reflect on the University's operating model.
- 18.9 Council questioned if the University's pedagogy was flexible enough to meet student needs, and concern was expressed with regards to the high number of micro-cohorts and overly complex programmes, noting that recruitment should always be at a level that promoted financial sustainability and vibrant programme size. Council noted the need to have effective systems and mechanisms in place for the delivery of key administrative processes, for example, on-time, stable annual academic timetables. There was also a discussion on the approach to ensure that programmes were efficient and effective.

- 18.10 A brief overview of the University's scholarships and bursaries was also provided noting that these were being managed for maximum efficiency, as well as an update on data capability, noting that the University had invested in a new system that would provide more accurate, transparent, auditable, and accessible reporting outputs.
- 18.11 The Vice-Chancellor thanked Council for the valuable debate and **agreed** to reflect upon the discussion (M18.7, 18.8 and 18.9 refer) noting this would be further explored with the Executive outside of the meeting. Council would be kept informed of actions taken in response to the discussion, and feedback would be provided to Council in due course.

18.12

[REDACTED]

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- 18.13 **ACTION: reflect on the discussion and provide feedback to Council on actions taken / key priorities in response to these issues (Vice-Chancellor)**

19.23-24 **UBU (University of Bradford Union) Update Report (Document C15/23-24)**

- 19.1 Council discussed a report from the Students' Union on student engagement activities including Freshers Week and other events and campaigns, including student volunteering, noting that over 400 student representatives had been recruited from across Faculties, including PGR representatives. Positive engagement from the Faculty of Health Studies was commended noting the difficulty in engaging students from this Faculty in the past. Student coaching was also discussed noting that coaches could provide guidance and support to help students navigate challenges, develop essential skills, and maximise their potential; this would be discussed further outside of the meeting between Iqra Tabassum and Sally Dicketts.

- 19.2 An update on the recruitment of the UBU Chief Executive Officer was provided noting that the new CEO would commence in post from January 2024.

- 19.3 Council also offered congratulations to Iqra Tabassum who had been presented the 'Achievement in Education' award at the recent Yorkshire Young Achievers Awards ceremony.

20.23-24 **Student Recruitment (Document C16/23-24)**

- 20.1 Student recruitment was considered in detail under M18 above.

21.23-24 **KPI Review (Document C17/23-24)**

21.1 Council received the latest version of the KPI dashboard.

22.23-24 **Financial Statements 2022/23 (Document C18/23-24)**

22.1 Council considered the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the University for the year ended 31 July 2023 noting these were compliance with the Office for Students Accounts Direction, and as such **approved** signature by the Chair of Council and the Vice-Chancellor.

22.2 Council noted that Financial Statements had been through an iterative process and had been subject to considerable scrutiny and constructive challenge by the Executive Board and a Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees (which included representatives from the University's external and internal auditors, BDO and RSM) who had endorsed the approach set out in the report.

22.3 Council also approved the Letter of Representation the University's external auditor, BDO, and **delegated** signature to the Chair of Council.

23.23-24 **Annual Risk Management Report 2022/23 and Risk Management Policy (Document C19/23-24)**

23.1 Council **approved** the Risk Management Annual Report and Risk Management Policy noting they had been considered in detailed by the Audit Committee, and provided assurance that the University had a framework, policies, and processes in place to effectively managed corporate risks.

23.2 An effective process of risk management was embedded at all levels of the University with horizon scanning of emerging issues being regularly undertaken allowing for preventative and mitigating controls to be put in place.

24.23-24 **Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2023/24 (Document C20/23-24)**

24.1 Council **approved** the University's Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for the 2023/24 academic year which set out the steps the University had taken and would take to mitigate any risk of modern slavery and human trafficking. Council noted that the Statement would be signed by the Chair of Council and would be published on the University website.

24.2 The potential for students' family members to be at risk of modern-day slavery was raised, noting that the University worked in partnership with the West Yorkshire Anti-Slavery Partnership and local prevention programmes and had safeguarding mechanisms in place.

- 25.23-24 **Prevent Update & Office for Students Prevent Accountability and Data Return (Document C21/23-24)**
- 25.1 Council **approved** the University's Prevent Accountability and Data Return for submission to the Office for Students and authorised the Chair of Council to sign the statement of declaration on its behalf.
- 25.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead responsibility would move from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, LTSE to the Associate Director, Student Wellbeing from Semester 2 of 2023/24.
- 26.23-24 **EDI Report 2023 (Document C22/23-24)**
- 26.1 Council received the EDI Annual Report noting it had been endorsed by People Committee and would be published on the University's website. It presented the University's EDI progress and provided an update on activity delivered between January – August 2023. The report also demonstrated how the University was delivering the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, noting the emphasis on impact.
- 27.23-24 **City Centre District Heat Scheme (Document C23/23-24)**
- 27.1 Council received the report noting that it had been subject to considerable scrutiny by the Finance Committee in November, and that a business case would be presented to a future meeting of Council, for consideration.
- 27.2 **ACTION: add to Council schedule of business (Governance)**
- 28.23-24 **University Secretary Report (Document C24/23-24)**
- 28.1 Council received a report on the ongoing work related to areas of governance relevant to Council and the University. Following consideration of the report, Council **approved**:
- a delegation of authority to the Chair of Council and Chair of Finance Committee to approve the final form of the return in advance of the submission deadline in December 2023.
  - the new Ordinance 28 relating to the Appointment and Role of Chancellor of the University.
  - the recommendations for Honorary Awards set out in Document C24.
  - revised timings of future formal Council meetings between 1300-1600, with lunch being held at 12 noon.
- 29.23-24 **Report from Senate including Senate Annual Report 2022/23 (Document C25/23-24)**
- 29.1 Council received the summary report and annual report of the business of Senate which provided assurance of the robustness of the University's academic governance arrangements.
- 30.23-24 **Report from Joint Audit and Finance Committee (Document C26/23-24)**
- 30.1 Council received the summary report from the Joint Meeting of the Audit and Finance Committees.

31.23-24 **Report from Audit Committee (Document C27/23-24)**

31.1 Council received the summary report from Audit Committee.

32.23-24 **Report from Finance Committee (Document C28/23-24)**

32.1 Council received the summary report from Finance Committee.

33.23-24 **Presentation on 'AI for Bradford and an Inclusive Society'**

33.1 Professor Sankar Sivarajah (Professor of Technology Management and Circular Economy and Dean of School of Management), Professor Hassan Ugail (Professor of Visual Computing), and Professor Ifiok Otung (Professor of Space Engineering) attended the meeting to deliver an insightful presentation on artificial intelligence at Bradford showcasing the University's pioneering work on data science, and how AI was being used to further develop teaching and learning, and research and innovation at the University, noting that Bradford had the highest number of applied AI and data analytics postgraduate students in the UK.

33.2 Examples of how the University was pioneering the use of AI in a range of applications included a revolutionary method used to assess the quality of organs for transplantation which had the potential to save lives, and the work that was being undertaken with a Yorkshire-based housing association in using AI expertise to explore how to reduce costs and improve efficiency. AI challenges, opportunities and impact were also highlighted, including the importance of AI as a subject area and its alignment to the University's growth and sustainability plan.

33.3 Council commented positively on the presentation and welcomed the University's success as a leader in AI teaching and research. Points noted in discussion included the role the University had to play in looking at the social and ethical implications associated with AI and potential policy remedies that that could come from the application of AI. The recruitment and retention of AI staff was also discussed.

34.23-24 **Report from Committees (Documents C29-32/23-24)**

34.1 Council received the summary reports from Remuneration Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee, Honorary Awards Committee, and People Committee.

35.23-24 **Financial Strategy (Document C33/23-24)**

35.1 Council received the University's Financial Strategy that had been approved by Finance Committee.

36.23-24 **Annual Report from UBIC Steering Board to Council (Document C34/23-24)**

36.1 Council received the annual report to Council of the business undertaken by UBIC Steering Board in 2022/23.

37.23-24 **Access and Participation Plan Update (Document C35/23-24)**

37.1 Council received an update on the University's work to implement its Access and Participation Plan.

38.23-24 **Register of Interests (Document C36/23-24)**

38.1 Council received and noted the report.

39.23-24 **Minutes of the Meeting on 20 September 2023 (Document C37/23-24)**

39.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 20 September 2023 were approved by circulation prior to the meeting.

40.23-24 **Action Tracker (Document C38/23-24)**

40.1 Council received a report on matters arising from the Council meeting on 20 September 2023 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

41.23-24 **Terms of Reference and Membership 2023/24 (Document C39/23-24)**

41.1 Council received and noted the report.

42.23-24 **Draft Council 3 Agenda, 21 February 2024 (Document C40/23-24)**

42.1 Council received and noted the report.

43.23-24 **Council Schedule of Business (Document C41/23-24)**

43.1 Council received and noted the report.

Secretary: Jacqui Holgate, Head of Governance

Date: December 2023