

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2023**

Present: Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Angela Adimora [via Microsoft Office teams], Simeon Anyalemechi, Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Professor Nic Beech, John Bland, Dr Tony Coombs, Cllr Phil Cusack, Sara Das, Ben Gallop, Stephen Gleave, Philip Green [via Microsoft Office Teams], Cllr Theresa Pepper, Sam Plant [via Microsoft Office Teams from COU.23.85], Claire Sproston, Helen Taylor, Anuoluwapo Ubikitan, Professor Katherine Yates, and Dr Elsa Zekeng.

Apologies: Merlyn Lowther, Ian Moston, Micheal Omoniyi, and Alan Roff.

In attendance: Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Finance), Emma French (Executive Director of Governance and Assurance & University Secretary), Jackie Njoroge (Director of Strategy), and Elaine Pateman Salt (committee secretary). Lesley Horne (Governance Officer, observing).

By invitation: Dr Sam Grogan (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience) [COU.23.76 – COU.23.86], Humoud Aljassar (student), John McCarthy (Associate Chief Operating Officer), and Ed Moloney (Chief Executive Officer, University of Salford Students' Union) [COU.23.83 – COU.23.84], Dr Victoria Halliwell (Deputy Dean, School of Health and Society) and Mark Wantling (Chief Information Officer) [COU.23.89].

**COU.23.76 WELCOME**

Noted:

- i) that the undernoted members were welcomed to their first meeting:
  - a) Professor Nic Beech (Vice-Chancellor, *ex officio*);
  - b) Claire Sproston, John Bland, and Stephen Gleave (independent member appointments);
  - c) Councillor Teresa Pepper (independent member appointment through Salford City Council); and
  - d) Sara Das (HR Business Partner), newly appointed professional services member.
- ii) that the Chair formally thanked Ms Julie Charge on behalf of the Council for her exemplary interim leadership prior to Professor Beech's arrival.

**COU.23.77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Reported: that the Chair, Lord Keith Bradley, had an interest in Item 15, Reappointment of the Chair and would absent himself from the Chamber during considerations.

Noted: that in the absence of the Deputy Chair, Mr Sam Plant, Chair of Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee would assume the Chair for Item 15.

**COU.23.78 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July 2023 (COU/23/56).

**COU.23.79 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Noted: that there were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**COU.23.80 CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS**

Confirmed: that Item 20 (Use of University Seal; COU/23/71) was noted without discussion.

RESOLVED: that Item 18 (Treasury Management Policy; COU/23/69) and Item 19 (Counter Fraud and Response Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy; COU/23/70) be approved without discussion.

**COU.23.81 CHAIR'S ACTION: MEMBERSHIP**

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting regarding approval for appointment to the membership (professional services representative) (COU/23/57).

**COU.23.82 CHAIR'S ACTION: PERU STREET**

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting regarding approval for the Peru Street Site Business Plan with the Private Sector Partner (COU/23/58).

**COU.23.83 UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION**

Received: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, a report from the University of Salford Students' Union (USSU) (COU/23/59).

Reported:

- i) that the USSU had confirmed its standing as a 'good Union' and was now exploring the concept of a 'brilliant Union';
- ii) that the key strategic focus for the Union was a bold mission to eradicate loneliness over the period of the refreshed strategic plan;
- iii) that formal ranking of Students' Unions was expected later in the year - *redacted* -
- iv) that the USSU had received higher than average outcomes in the National Student Survey (NSS) results for Students' Unions;
- v) that 100% satisfaction had been achieved in three areas of the National Union of Students' staff survey;
- vi) that a democracy review had been conducted by the USSU, with some adjustments to be made following recommendations received;

- vii) that Sabbatical Officers' priorities for the academic year had been appended to the Report;
- viii) that the USSU had concluded the financial year with a pre-audit surplus of £-  
*redacted* -;
- ix) *redacted* -

Noted:

- i) that the student poll had a return rate of approximately 9.5%, with some slightly higher balance of international student participation;
- ii) that the USSU was mindful to ensure sample balance;
- iii) that in seeking to overcome barriers to learning, the USSU was developing itself as a purpose-orientated organisation.

#### COU.23.84 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Received:

- i) an oral update on the principles framing the student experience lead item on the schedule of business; and
- ii) (in advance) a video presentation on the theme of 'loneliness' followed by a discussion with a student on their personal experience of loneliness at the University.

Noted:

- i) that members sincerely thanked Mr Aljassar for sharing his personal story and experience as a student at the University;
- ii) that the University worked hard to ensure extensive pre-arrival communications were made with new students, including access to the Umii networking app, but acknowledged this had not been the experience of Mr Aljassar;
- iii) that support for transition between countries of study was also provided by in-country agents of the University, but that opportunities to learn from individual experiences were followed up on;
- iv) that mentor relationships normally commenced post-arrival, but that a peer-to-peer buddy system was also being explored;
- v) that there had been low take up of buddy offers by international postgraduate research students ahead of their arrival, and the view that the primary issue for those moving country was to establish what was needed on arrival, for example accommodation;
- vi) that the concept of 'loneliness' was deceptively broad and was known to be classified as three types (lack of social connection; absence of meaningful relationships; existential crisis), and that care should be taken in developing support systems that could differentiate between types;
- vii) that also, the view that there should be demonstrable evidence that support mechanisms were ready to handle the different types;
- viii) that the USSU was a learning organisation and had recognised it would need to draw on experts to support it in its anti-loneliness strategy;
- ix) that it was generally accepted the Covid-19 pandemic had brought about a level of social disconnection for many people, but that loneliness had been widely discussed by society prior to this;

- x) that the Government had established a Minister for Loneliness following the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness;
- xi) that policy and sector interventions into loneliness would be monitored and participation by the USSU would be considered as appropriate;
- xii) the view that wellbeing information or support could be provided to students at the beginning of timetabled events;
- xiii) that following publication of the anti-loneliness strategy there would be a review of alignment between the strategy and the policies and processes of both the USSU and the University;
- xiv) that the University was already fairly well established in developing its Campus Life Team in alignment with the University's nine student personas, and that this work was in partnership with the USSU;
- xv) the view that location might be considered as a contributing factor to loneliness, for example increased student accommodation on campus might reduce loneliness caused by distance from campus;
- xvi) the view that the range of student cohorts needed to be considered, both individually and collectively;
- xvii) that the item had generated an important discussion, and regular reports on implementation would be received at future meetings.

#### COU.23.85 **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key issues for the University (COU/23/60).

Reported:

- i) that the portfolio of capital estates projects remained a key focus for the University Leadership Team (ULT);
- ii) that the University had achieved a Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and successfully improved its standing in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), which were both important outcomes and demonstrated considerable trajectory improvements;
- iii) that the Vice-Chancellor had attended Conservative and Labour party conferences in his first weeks after taking up his appointment, and intended to increase policy makers' knowledge of, and interaction with, the University;
- iv) that initial discussions had been held with policy makers on topics such as social mobility, welfare and mental health, tertiary education policy, and skills;
- v) that the Vice-Chancellor was an active member of Universities UK (UUK);
- vi) that the University's position had remained relatively similar to the previous year in key sector league tables, but that these had been published in advance of the National Student Survey (NSS) results and consequently had not captured some of the gains made by the University in the NSS;
- vii) that however, a new league table this year published by the Daily Mail had included the latest NSS data and the University's results had been more fairly reflected (although the impact of this new table was yet to be determined);
- viii) that the University's position in the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) social mobility table (excluding apprenticeships) was strong in 12<sup>th</sup> place;
- ix) the view that social mobility was one of the key considerations toward achieving the goal to be one of the top 50 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK;

- x) that independent investigations regarding use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in the University's estate had nearly concluded, and that no RAAC had been found;
- xi) that advice and guidance had been issued to colleagues regarding the recent situation in Gaza, and ULT had convened a working group to consider support and responses to potential impacts arising from the conflict.

Noted:

- i) that one of the student members congratulated the University on its TEF award on behalf of the Student Union;
- ii) that reduced funding for foundation years would impact on a portion of the University's portfolio, but this impact would not be large;
- iii) that the Vice-Chancellor had been consulted on decisions regarding the executive team prior to his appointment date, and that it was not the intention to seek an immediate replacement in the role of Chief Operating Officer, reflecting firstly on the current talent pipeline and strategic distribution of accountabilities;
- iv) that the Vice-Chancellor was assured of the interim arrangements put in place and reiterated his commendation of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for her leadership during the period between Vice-Chancellor appointments.

#### **COU.23.86 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT**

Received: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, a detailed report on the National Student Survey results 2023. Also included was the University's performance against lead indicators during Quarter 4 2022/2023, with the Top 10 Risk Profile appended on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee (COU/23/61).

Reported:

- i) that in confirming the Silver Award for TEF, acknowledgment was made of the hard work of colleagues and the USSU;
- ii) that sections of the TEF award report in student experience and student outcomes noted some work being achieved at gold award standard;
- iii) that the award was a significant step towards changing perceptions of the University, and that time would be taken to celebrate the results with colleagues;
- iv) that the Education and Employability Strategy would be the future mechanism toward the strategic goals, and that the scheme of academic governance was being reconsidered by Senate in order to support this;
- v) that the next TEF submission would be in four years' time, and work would commence shortly on the next exercise;
- vi) that the NSS results had been largely positive for the University, but that more could be done to seek improvement, and in particular in reviewing the verbatim comments received regarding student voice;
- vii) that there was a current focus on the capturing of student voice 'in-year' in order that agility could be developed to correct issues, and this work was in conjunction with the student representative system;
- viii) that further, consistency and alignment in communications was paramount to success;

- ix) that each School was working towards its detailed improvement action plans;
- x) that where excellent practice was identified, the University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre (LTEC) captured and disseminated this;
- xi) that LTEC was to focus on the theme of assessment and feedback this academic year;
- xii) that despite not being a 'like-for-like' comparison outcome between NSS surveys, the University had demonstrated improvement in learning and teaching;
- xiii) that the top ten corporate risks had been appended to the Report, and that these were regularly monitored by ULT and Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

Noted:

- i) that members endorsed the intention to mainstream the work undertaken for the enabling student success (ESS) strategic plan;
- ii) that regarding student voice, the USSU was also responsible for effecting a 'joined up' approach with the University and that in doing so could share the resource burden in supporting student representatives;
- iii) the view that student frustration in reaching out for support could be addressed through a proactive approach, with trained staff reaching out to check wellbeing and triggering healthy conversations;
- iv) that in particular the placement experience feedback had raised an issue to support students of minoritised ethnicities;
- v) the view that access to information was a challenge, despite the many successful communication and information cascades;
- vi) that regarding placements, enhanced support processes were under development;
- vii) that the project approach to implementing the Education and Employability Strategy was designed to re-engineer processes to support the student experience;
- viii) that the personalisation of student timetables was over halfway complete, and would be fully completed within the next calendar year (2024);
- ix) that the Student CRM project would improve the student experience and provide different ways to address the challenges the University was facing in access to information and support;
- x) that the University was implementing continuous communication and feedback loops, as well as introducing a consistency of voice and tone ('what needs to be heard, rather than what we want to say').

#### **COU.23.87 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting on behalf the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) (COU/23/62).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee had scrutinised and was assured of the items recommended to the Council.

#### **COU.23.88 QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE**

Received: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the Quarter 4 2022/23 (unaudited year-end) finance report (COU/23/63).

Reported:

- i) – *redacted* -

## COU.23.89 **CAMPUS MASTERPLAN: HEALTH CLINIC BUILDING**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the financial business plan for the health clinic building, under the masterplan for the Health Quarter (Frederick Road campus) (COU/23/64).

(Secretary's note: regarding personal interests, Mr Stephen Gleave confirmed his retirement from AECOM as of the end of October 2023 and Professor Dame Sue Bailey reminded members of her non-executive role on the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board – the Chair accepted both confirmations during proceedings and no further action was required).

Reported:

- i) that since previously reported for the Health Quarter development [COU.23.11], the phase one proposal had been adjusted to include two health clinics and the proposed costings reflected this change;
- ii) that the University had a good track record in delivery of capital building projects, - *redacted* - ;
- iii) that detailed costings were being developed through the RIBA design stages;
- iv) that the project had the potential to provide a unique learning experience for the University's allied health students, as well as provision of significant public-facing services;
- v) that in-house placement hours would be considerably increased through the new clinic, and student numbers could be increased in support of the NHS Workforce Plan;
- vi) that further industrial collaboration would be achieved by developing the clinic and School facilities;
- vii) that student and staff stakeholder events had been undertaken;
- viii) that an Equality Impact Statement (EIA) had been completed for the project, and that the WELL Building Standard had been incorporated in the design to-date.

Noted:

- i) the view that further value engineering of the design would require firm management of the approved contractor to remain on approved scope;
- ii) the view that the proposal had the potential to be of national significance and could be an exemplar for future clinic developments;
- iii) the view that if the project could be funded, the outcomes were wholly aligned to the University's mission and values;
- iv) that the refreshed principles and priorities of the Campus Masterplan (including the health clinics) were currently being discussed by ULT and would be brought before FRC and Council shortly;
- v) that it was proposed the current design consultant (Kier) services be retained, with potentially a separate build contractor appointed;

- vi) the view that in maintaining oversight of the progressing stages and risks involved in the project, an informal engagement group be convened from the membership similar in construct to previous iterations;
- vii) that the Project Team were thanked for their hard work and efforts in reaching this point for the complex project.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) that the project approach outlined in Option 2 of the Health Clinic proposal be approved, including to progress to the next RIBA stages;
- ii) that the indicative budget of £-redacted - be approved (subject to further report of costings following RIBA Stages 3&4);
- iii) that an engagement group be formed to support the development of the latter stages of the project alongside the refreshed Campus Masterplan, overseen in the first instance by the Finance and Resources Committee.

**ACTION iii) CHAIR/UNIVERSITY SECRETARY**

**COU.23.90 GOVERNANCE, NOMINATIONS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (GNEC) (COU/23/65).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee received reports on the Prevent Duty and the Freedom of Speech Act, and was to consider both again at the next meeting;
- ii) that membership was kept under continual review;
- iii) that the Committee had noted that the practice of a co-opted member pipeline had been successful, and that it intended to recruit to co-opted vacancies in the near future possibly through alumni and honorary award routes alongside traditional advertising;
- iv) that the Committee had felt that a significant prior commitment to the University could be demonstrated through co-opting alumni;
- v) that a review of the terms for co-opted members would be taken at future meeting.

**COU.23.91 REAPPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR**

(Secretary's note: Lord Bradley left the Chamber and was not present for the item)

Considered: on the recommendation of the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee, the re-appointment of the Chair (COU/23/66).

Reported:

- i) that the comments received to GNEC through the annual survey and otherwise regarding the Chair had been predominately positive and a unanimous recommendation had been put forward that the Chair remain for a final term;
- ii) that also, GNEC had been mindful during its consideration for continuity during the period of transition between Vice-Chancellor appointments;
- iii) that the Chair had indicated his willingness to be reappointed;



- iv) that a paper copy of the proposal had been provided due to the unintentional omission of the text confirming the process undertaken via the meeting and circulation of the Committee to reach a recommendation.

Noted: that there were no objections raised, and the proposal was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED: that the reappointment of The Right Honourable The Lord Keith Bradley as Chair of the Council for a final term of three years commencing on 01 January 2024 be approved.

(Secretary's note: Lord Bradley accepted a third term in the Chair on his return to the Chamber).

#### COU.23.92 **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) (COU/23/67).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee had discussed the Corporate Risk Register, and the Chair noted that risks related to – *redacted* -
- ii) that the Committee had agreed to invite the Executive Director of HR and OD to a future meeting in order to explore common themes related to HR;
- iii) that the principal risk to the University remained – *redacted* - ;
- iv) that the Committee had considered the final reports from the programme of internal audit for 2022/23;
- v) that updated Counter Fraud and Anti-Bribery policies had been recommended to the Council for approval;
- vi) that also, the Committee would seek to recommend service providers for internal and external audit in the coming year through procurement run alongside the schedule of Committee meetings.

#### COU.23.93 **REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Remuneration Committee (RemCo) (COU/23/68).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee had reviewed the use of Settlement Agreements over the past year and noted these were used slightly less than in 2021/22;
- ii) that the Committee was consulted for changes in the senior team and had access to independent legal advice if required;
- iii) that regarding industrial action, the Committee had been apprised of local and national consultations;
- iv) that a detailed update on pension schemes had been received, and it had been noted there was low participation at the University in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS);
- v) that the ULT collective targets had been endorsed, and the process for dissemination across the Schools and professional services noted.

**COU.23.94 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Reported: that no other items of business has been notified to the Chair.

**COU.23.95 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted: that the next meeting was scheduled for Friday 08 December 2023.