

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2024**

- Present: Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Angela Adimora, Professor Dame Susan Bailey, Professor Nic Beech, Philip Bishop, John Bland, Helen Brown, Dr Tony Coombs, Sara Das, Stephen Gleave, Philip Green [via Microsoft Teams from COU.24.87], Alvina Imran, Merlyn Lowther, Professor Peter McDermott, Cllr Theresa Pepper, Alan Roff, Adnan Sabir, and Helen Taylor.
- Apologies: Micheal Omoniyi, Claire Sproston, Nigel Wilcock, Professor Katherine Yates, and Dr Elsa Zekeng.
- In attendance: Professor Simone Buitenijk (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost), Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer), Emma French (Chief Academic Services Officer & University Secretary), Jackie Njoroge (Chief Strategy and Data Officer), and Elaine Pateman Salt (committee secretary).
- By invitation: Cherie Bosama (Equity Ambassador Lead), Tamia Hall (Equity Ambassador), Professor Claire Hamshire (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience), and Anis Rahman (Equity Ambassador) [COU.24.81], and Ed Moloney (Chief Executive Officer, Salford Students' Union) [COU.24.84].

**COU.24.76 WELCOME**

Noted: that Mr Phillip Bishop and Ms Helen Brown were welcomed to their first meeting as newly appointed independent members.

**COU.24.77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Noted: that there were no known or newly made declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

**COU.24.78 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 05 July 2024 (COU/24/68).

**COU.24.79 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Considered: matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Reported:

- i) that regarding an action taken under minute reference COU.23.11 to consider alternative commemoration of Roy Allerton upon demolition of the Allerton building, it was anticipated there was a similar consideration due for the Brian Blatchford building and others; and that the University policy on naming of the

estate would ensure the principle of commemoration was included in discussions in the coming years;

- ii) that regarding a response to the Chair's letter on student travel costs, Andy Burnham, Mayor for Greater Manchester had written outlining commitment to a half-price Bee Network monthly bus pass for 18–21-year-olds;
- iii) that negotiations for disposal of a parcel of land at Adelphi House had concluded with no sale being agreed, and that it was not in the interest of the University to proceed further at this time.

Noted: that the reduced cost student travel initiative was received positively by Members.

RESOLVED: that the action regarding individual commemoration be referred to procedures under the University policy regarding naming of the estate, and that the action of Council be closed at this time.

#### **COU.24.80 MEMBERSHIP**

Considered: on the recommendation of Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee, appointments to the membership and appointments from the co-opted members to the membership (COU/24/70).

RESOLVED:

- i) that Sophy Jacob be appointed as a co-opted member of committee with effect from 18 October 2024;
- ii) that Suzanne Robinson be appointed as an independent member of Council with effect from 18 October 2024.

#### **COU.24.81 STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Received: an advance video presentation followed by a discussion with the University's Equity Ambassadors on the Equity Ambassador project and using student voice to deliver the EDI Statement of Ambition.

Noted:

- i) that regarding clarity of assessment briefs raised as a barrier to student success in the presentation, this issue was being addressed by the University;
- ii) that the equity ambassador project was due to run for two years, and would be subject to impact assessment;
- iii) that the project goals had been aligned to the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP);
- iv) that overall reduction in inequity was likely to improve student success and experience across measures in the University's strategy;
- v) that understanding of the lived student experience was part of a portfolio of continuous work listening to the student voice to accommodate diverse needs;
- vi) the view that the University should not underestimate the power of the 'translation service' provided by the project in relation to understanding student experience, strategy, and policy;

- vii) that Members offered their support to the project; and the Chair confirmed appreciation and thanks to the presenting team.

#### **COU.24.82 CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS**

Confirmed:

- i) that Item 21 (Criminal Finance Act Policy; COU/24/83) was approved and adopted without discussion;
- ii) that Item 22 (Use of the University Seal; COU/24/84) was noted without discussion.

#### **COU.24.83 CHAIR'S ACTION**

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting (COU/24/69).

Reported:

- i) that the cost variation for the Greater Manchester Institute of Technology had been approved;
- ii) that amendments to the University's Standing Orders for Committees had been approved;
- iii) that appointments to the membership and committees (independent and co-opted members) had been approved.

#### **COU.24.84 UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION**

Received: on the recommendation of University Leadership Team, the biannual report of the University of Salford Students' Union (COU/24/71).

Reported:

- i) that Salford Students' Union (SSU) had confirmed 9m views on TikTok regarding the day-to-day student experience of life on campus;
- ii) that over 12k students attended SSU welcome week;
- iii) that SSU had recorded above sector average student satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey (NSS);
- iv) that SSU had been in the top five student unions in the United Kingdom for student officer election turnout;
- v) that the anti-loneliness strategy had been presented at over 25 events;
- vi) that SSU would be the first UK students' union to produce a policy book, and that this was attracting a lot of national interest;
- vii) that the democracy review had reported and changes to practice would be received by Council when it next reviewed SSU's articles of association;
- viii) that SSU had been pleased with the response of the University to issues it had previously raised regarding discrimination during health placements;
- ix) that the student job strategy had received positive feedback so far and would be presented to Council shortly.

Noted:

- i) the view that SSU might want to consider key themes and approaches that had been successful in addressing mental health as a barrier to a positive student experience;
- ii) that the policy book would be a reflective step in pushing forward on SSU's vision;
- iii) that the staff survey would be repeated in January 2025 and a future report would include measurement of any changes in satisfaction;
- iv) that SSU remained seriously committed to tackling loneliness and that despite 41% of students reporting being lonely this figure rose considerably for different characteristics – e.g., LGBTQ+, disabled, or cognitively challenged students;
- v) that the next step in the strategy was to focus and coordinate resources providing support directly to students;
- vi) the view that all staff be included who were in contact with students, including estates and facilities teams;
- vii) that the anti-loneliness strategy was a partnership strategy and would be inclusive;
- viii) the view that there was considerable need to support students with a range of issues and challenges at this time, including external factors such as conflict in the Middle East, and that ULT should keep live its discussion with SSU on their resourcing;
- ix) that SSU societies requiring support had been identified and allocated a named support person;
- x) that the student jobs strategy was being rolled out through ULT into each professional services department and through Unitemps;
- xi) that ULT had directed the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Education to facilitate the student jobs strategy at the University; and that the leaders of professional services were to identify definable metrics to achieve student job uptake;
- xii) that due to the very recent rebranding of the Union, it was too early to understand what impact the SSU resources and website were having but that data was being collected;
- xiii) that the President was sponsoring the project developing the University's student application (app);
- xiv) that SSU was committed to improving how it surfaced important issues for students, and this was likely to be via web and app interactions in future rather than emails;
- xv) that the Chair thanked SSU for the detailed report and work to-date, and on behalf of members re-iterated support for collaboration and partnership between the Union and the University.

RESOLVED: that the Report be noted, and:

- a) that the Anti-Loneliness Strategy action plan be received at the meeting in December 2024;
- b) that once completed, the SSU Policy Book be circulated to members.

**ACTIONS: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SSU**

Reported: that the Chair, in advance of the Vice-Chancellor's report proper, confirmed the Vice-Chancellor had successfully completed a first year in position and that his permanent appointment had been agreed.

Noted: that on behalf of the members, the Chair congratulated the Vice-Chancellor.

## COU.24.86 **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key strategic activities of the University (COU/24/72).

Reported:

- i) that compliance rates with staff training on the GDPR e-module had reached 92 per cent against a target of 95 per cent agreed with Audit and Risk Committee;
- ii) that student registration, including re-registration, was at 99.9 per cent of plan which was a remarkable achievement and demonstrated in-year interventions regarding admissions had been effective; and that the Vice-Chancellor thanked colleagues involved;
- iii) that free period products would be available in rest rooms shortly due largely to the perseverance of SSU in raising this matter and the professional services staff involved;
- iv) that the University had collaborated with SSU on a menopause awareness launch event;
- v) that the Higher Education (HE) sector continued to be a challenging operating environment and particularly in matters of financial sustainability;
- vi) that Mr Tom Stannard had announced he would be stepping down as Chief Executive Officer of Salford City Council (SCC) to take up a position as Chief Executive for Manchester City Council and would be greatly missed for his support of the University;
- vii) that Ms Bridget Phillipson MP, Secretary of State for Education, was in contact with the University to discuss its practices;
- viii) that Ms Jacqui Smith MP, Minister for Skills, Further Education, and Higher Education in the Department for Education, had been given a brief by Government to improve equity which was a vital component of the University's foundation and mission;
- ix) that debate on student maintenance packages had been raised again in the media recently;
- x) that – redacted - the new appointee to Pro Vice-Chancellor Dean of the School of Science, Engineering and Environment (SSEE) would be unable to take up the appointment, and alternative interim arrangements had been put in place until such time that a recruitment exercise could be re-visited.

Noted:

- i) the view that the University's research on the uptake of subprime loans due to cost-of-living related events was significant;
- ii) that the University was considering this more widely in its relationship with the City of Salford and local community;

- iii) that also, the implementation of the pay element to the Oracle platform would enable structured support in accessing monies earned during the month;
- iv) that the Salford Credit Union was a local resource available alongside other Greater Manchester based credit unions offering affordable loans for travel and other items;
- v) that regarding the senior appointment in SSEE, the impact on students was mitigated but that a timeline to a permanent appointment was not yet clear.

RESOLVED: that the Report be noted and that thanks be noted in writing to colleagues involved in recruitment and registration.

**ACTION: CHIEF ACADEMIC SERVICES OFFICER & UNIVERSITY SECRETARY**

#### **COU.24.87 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION**

Received: a report regarding introduction of a new ongoing condition of registration – Condition E6 Harassment and sexual misconduct – effective from 01 August 2025 (COU/24/73).

Reported: that the University would report on compliance with the new condition in due course.

#### **COU.24.88 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT**

Received: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, a detailed report on the University's results in the National Student Survey. Also included is the University's performance against lead indicators during Quarter 4 2023/24, with the Top 10 Risk Profile appended on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee (COU/24/74).

Reported:

- i) that the report included analysis of the University's position in relation to the sector, including where data improvements were being made;
- ii) that the list of National Student Survey (NSS) questions had been appended;
- iii) that the OfS had released subject benchmark data and helpfully had constructed similar student body datasets;
- iv) that the comparative data had been discussed with each School.

Noted:

- i) that whilst the University had improved results in academic support questions, there was still a gap between its performance and the sector;
- ii) that qualitative comments had been passed to the relevant programmes to tailor action planning;
- iii) that also qualitative and quantitative results were comprehensively triangulated with student voice data to address issues;
- iv) the view that the refreshed strategy and associated delivery plans could change student experience;
- v) that the NSS did not provide specific data for the University to be able to correlate with known student mental health experiences, but that the

- University was undertaking a pathfinder project with two Further Education (FE) partners on how to better support neurodivergent students;
- vi) that the national data set could be re-visited to see if further insight could be identified as the NSS developed in its new format;
  - vii) the view that the definitions of neurodiversity and mental health were very complex, and that care should be taken in looking for data-led relationship to experience;
  - viii) the view that the University was not alone in trying to model data scenarios, but robust statistical analysis might act as a good level to demand supportive action;
  - ix) that NSS feedback and analysis was provided by the Strategy team to Schools within 48 hours of the national data release, and that the Quality Management Office picked up programme-level support with Programme Leaders following update of the programme action plans;
  - x) that the University intended to foster live adaptations and real-time learning;
  - xi) the view that wellbeing communications were vital to raise the profile of support to students and staff;
  - xii) that the student app would improve the option to communicate and interact on wellbeing issues;
  - xiii) the view that the NSS provided rich data each year which was often valuable at an institutional level too, and that wholesale consistent improvement would lift the student experience overall;
  - xiv) that staff accountability for student experience was cascaded from corporate targets;
  - xv) that an element of system performance accountability had also been identified;
  - xvi) that the Chair thanked members for the useful discussion and challenge to the Executive.

#### **COU.24.89 SENATE REPORT**

Received: a report of the meeting of Senate held on 18 September 2024 (COU/24/75).

Reported:

- i) that academic governance aspects of the NSS results were discussed at Senate;
- ii) that preparation for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise was considered, including research culture at the University; and that this would be a regular item at future meetings;
- iii) that approval had been agreed for the University joining the Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN).

#### **COU.24.90 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meetings from the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee (COU/24/76).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee had received a presentation on development of the University strategy, and had suggested inclusion of a 'Salford way' element;
- ii) that also, an update on the people and culture delivery plan had been given;
- iii) that there had been a detailed report of the major projects being undertaken and in the pipeline;
- iv) that regarding oversight of the subsidiary companies, - redacted -

**COU.24.91    QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE**

Received: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the Quarter 4 2023/24 Finance Report (unaudited year-end position) (COU/24/78).

Reported:

- i) that the external audit of the University's management accounts was nearing conclusion and that – redacted - ;
- ii) that – redacted - ;
- iii) that there had been a significant release of provision in the accounts for the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) following changes implemented to the scheme in January 2024;
- iv) that members of USS would all report similar adjustments in their annual financial reports;
- v) that – redacted - ;
- vi) that – redacted - ;
- vii) that the University was complaint with its financial covenants.

Noted:

- i) that University Leadership Team (ULT) was monitoring the debt position with – redacted - , and considering options to seek recovery of monies owed;
- ii) that one option might be to pursue a legal negotiation but that specialist legal advice on this matter was being procured before a decision was to be made against any of the available courses of action;
- iii) that in line with University procedure, a 'lessons learnt' exercise would be undertaken once the situation had concluded but this was likely to be several months hence;
- iv) the view that there was no concern being transparent in the narrative that ULT were seeking further legal support to consider its options in the matter.

**COU.24.92    HEALTH AND SOCIETY CLINIC BUILDING CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the final budget for the health clinic building following the outcome of RIBA Stage 4 design process (COU/24/78).

Reported:

- i) that the Chair accepted a tabled amendment to the proposal; that it be to request an additional – redacted - to the original indicative budget;
- ii) that the proposing team had considered the risk profile in detail, and that there was an element of risk once groundworks commenced which the University would underwrite;



- iii) that in assessing potential land abnormality risk, the experience of building Energy House 2 and the North of England Robotic Centre (NERIC) had been considered;
- iv) that for each project a small amount of contingency budget had been taken up related to groundworks;
- v) that initial works on the land had identified potential for surface asbestos and cost forecast to address this was manageable;
- vi) that the proposal was made with additional assurances as outlined;
- vii) that the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee confirmed assurances had been sought as to the reduction in contingency; and that 2% had been accepted as a comparable contingency value to the two most recent capital projects delivered by the University;
- viii) that also, the Committee supported the final budget and to move to contract signature; and to meet the deadline for the Office for Students funding contribution.

Noted:

- i) that governance process for future capital project budget approvals would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee to mitigate against a similar position again;
- ii) that there had been robust cost challenges made to the construction partner with no perceived impact on the relationship between parties;
- iii) the view that flagship projects created lessons to be learnt from and process improvements;
- iv) that land sampling had been undertaken and surface asbestos had been established; and that this was comparable to the works undertaken on the neighbouring site in the construction of Energy House 2;
- v) that also, a main sewer was known to be underneath the site and an agreement had already been made with the other party on the handling of this obstacle;
- vi) the view that reasonable assurance could be taken from the information established;
- vii) that Audit and Risk Committee sought to pick up significant risks in the Campus Connectivity Plan and was developing its general approach and procedure to provide future support and alignment to Finance and Resources Committee considerations;
- viii) that if further budget variation were proposed, governance processes were in place that could accommodate the required pace and agility.

RESOLVED: that the final confirmed budget of – redacted - for the Health and Society clinic building be approved.

## COU.24.93 **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meetings from the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee (COU/24/79).

Reported:

- i) that the Committee had held a robust discussion on compliance rates for cybersecurity training, which on 26 September had been only 69%;

- ii) that cybersecurity had been the top risk of the University for a significant period, and compliance was consequently of great importance and the University was thanked in its efforts to raise the compliance rate;
- iii) that the internal audit of space utilisation had reported an overall high-risk rating, but the Committee had accepted this was in part due to transformation of the campus through the Connectivity Plan and improvements were reflected in the outcome report;
- iv) that the internal audit of student experience of organisation and management had reported an overall medium-risk rating;
- v) that the internal audit of student welfare – partnership working to facilitate student sense of belonging - had reported an overall low-risk rating;
- vi) that both of the audits relating to student experience had received direct student feedback which had informed and enhanced the audit process;
- vii) that at the next meeting, the Committee was to review its terms of reference mapped against the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Code of Practice for Audit Committees.

Noted: that regarding the report narrative suggesting student mental health was an '*emerging risk*' this was only in respect of risk calculation towards the top ten register, and not suggestive of student mental health being an unrecognised factor of the student experience.

#### **COU.24.94 DATA PROTECTION POLICY**

Considered: on the recommendation of Audit and Risk Committee, the University's Data Protection Policy (COU/24/80).

(Secretary's note: Angela Adimora reminded members of her appointment to the People Committee of the Information Commissioner's Office, and her substantive role responsibilities for GDPR).

Noted:

- i) the view that the Policy could be strengthened in parts;
- ii) that there were links between the Policy and transition to systemised personnel data through the Oracle platform;
- iii) that ULT and ARC received data reports on significant cybersecurity attacks and would in future also receive reports of data breaches.

RESOLVED: that the updated Data Protection Policy (V4.0) be approved and adopted subject to the undernoted caveats:

- a) Section 1.0: Purpose, a continuous improvement approach to achieve greater levels of adherence be included; and
- b) Section 3.0: Data Protection Principles, reference to approach personal data aligned with the Subject Access Request (SAR) process be included.

**ACTION: DATA PROTECTION OFFICER**

#### **COU.24.95 GOVERNANCE, NOMINATIONS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (COU/24/81).

Reported: that members who had not yet completed the 2023/24 members' evaluation survey were politely reminded to do so.

#### **COU.24.96 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of Remuneration Committee (COU/24/82).

Reported:

- i) that the confirmation of the Vice-Chancellor's permanent appointment had been endorsed by the Committee;
- ii) that performance review of ULT had been undertaken and that the next meeting was scheduled to consider objectives for 2024/25;
- iii) that the volume of settlement agreements had increased in the past year but that this was inevitable with changes across the senior leadership teams during the transition between Vice-Chancellor appointments; and that the cost quantum was relatively low;
- iv) that settlement agreement analysis had confirmed no defined characteristics had been adversely impacted;
- v) that the Committee had approved the annual Remuneration Report;
- vi) that a report on the national pay uplift had been received, alongside a salary benchmark review for ULT.

#### **COU.24.97 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

Noted: that the University had been awarded a position, to be fulfilled by Professor Peter McDermott, on the Liverpool to Manchester Railway Partnership Board.

(Secretary's note: the appointment was declared as an interest by Professor McDermott and was added to the Register of Interests including public disclosure).

#### **COU.24.98 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted: that the next meeting was scheduled for Friday 13 December 2024.