

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 5TH JULY 2022**

Present: Canon Dr J. Turnbull (*President*), Professor J. Alcolado, Mr F. Ball, Mrs C. Bond, Dr D. Briggs, Professor S. Broomhead, Mr M. Clinton, Sir Neil Cossons, Councillor R. Daniels, Dr M. David (*Deputy President*), Professor C. Forsdick (*via Teams*), Mrs J. France-Hayhurst, Ms L. Friel (*CSU President*), Mr N. Jenkins, Mrs K. Nwosu Aaron-Efe, Professor H. O'Sullivan, Professor E. Simmons (*Vice Chancellor*), The Very Revd Dr T. Stratford, Rt Revd M. Tanner, Dr A. Seeney and Mrs S. Verity.

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms K. Howell.

In attendance: Professor P. Bissell (*PVC, Research & Innovation*) (*via Teams*), Mr S. Dobson (*Council Member-elect*), Dr H. Galbraith (*PVC, Student Experience*), Ms K. Joynson (*Student Projects & Development Manager, item 10.5.2 only*), Mr J. Moores (*University Secretary*), Mr A.J. Parker (*Committee Secretary*), Mr J. Rankin (*previous past CSU President*) and Mr R. Waddington (*PVC Resources & Chief Financial Officer*).

3395 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Mrs Cathy Bond, Dr Angela Seeney, Mrs Jeannie France-Hayhurst declared an interest in item 10.4.4 in relation to their re-appointments.

3396 MEMBERSHIP

- (a) It was noted that it was the last meeting for Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull, Sir Neil Cossons, Mr Francis Ball, Mrs Sandra Verity and Mr Jack Rankin. All were thanked for their contributions to the life of the University.
- (b) It was noted that it was the first meeting for the newly elected CSU President, Ms Lauren Friel.
- (c) Mr Stephen Dobson was welcomed to the meeting as an observer. Mr Dobson's term of office as a University Council member would start on 1st August 2022.
- (d) Election of Deputy President (Appendix A)
The University Secretary reported one nomination had been received for the position of Deputy President of the University Council: Mrs Cathy Bond.

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Mrs Cathy Bond as Deputy President with effect from 1st August 2022.

3397 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

The minutes of the meeting of the University Council held on Tuesday 29th March 2022 (Appendix B) were received and approved.

3398 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3382 Vice-Chancellor's Report: it was noted that matters arising from the March 2022 meeting would be addressed in the Vice-Chancellor's Report to this meeting (*see minute 3340*).

3399 PADGATE CAMPUS - UPDATE

The University Secretary reported as a consequence of the greater than expected number of bids received, additional time was required by Cushman & Wakefield in order to undertake the evaluation process; hence the reason for deferral of this item.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the initial review of bids would be delegated to the Planning & Resources Committee. A final proposal and decision would be a matter for the full Council.

3400 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

The Vice-Chancellor's Report (Appendix C) was received and discussed and focussed on the key matters impacting the University:

1. Financial Update: The overall financial outturn for 2021/22 was greatly improved compared to the original deficit forecast and was likely to be a breakeven position at year end. The improved position was primarily as a result of increased international student recruitment, and the forecast outturn for 2021/22 had been buoyed by a one-off capital receipt following the surrender of the lease at Sealand Road. The financial position for 2022/23 would be challenging and had been positioned as a period of growth set against rising operating costs. The SET were confident that the correct strategy had been adopted and progress would be regularly reported via the Planning & Resources Committee.

Further details on financial matters were provided by the CFO (*see minute 3402 (ii)*).

2. Operational Matters:

(i) **KPIs:** Appendix 1 to the report provided an update on progress against the KPIs and it was acknowledged that some KPIs were still in the early stages of development. A new Head of Planning had been appointed and would ensure progress continued on the development and reporting of KPI data.

(ii) **Industrial Action:** There would be a period of turbulence with UCU passing a motion to run an aggregate ballot for industrial action over the summer in response to the 2022-23 pay offer. Unison had also indicated a rejection to the 2022-23 pay offer and thus was in dispute with employers.

(iii) **Undergraduate Modular Programme Progression:** Following an initial review of assessment results, it had been identified that a number of students had deferred assessment having made use of the safety nets procedures introduced during the pandemic; processes that would be withdrawn for 2022/23. In response, action had been taken in order to bring forward the timings for re-assessment and a proactive campaign launched in order to encourage students to undertake re-assessment in July

rather than wait until August/September. It was confirmed that the same rules applied, simply the timings for re-assessment changed. Evidence to date suggested that the campaign had been positively received by students.

The Council welcomed this proactive use of in-year data and action, and it was noted that data on assessment and progression would be scrutinised by the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee during 2022/23. The University would also make greater use of in-year assessment in order to enhance progress tracking and enable action if necessary.

(iv) League Tables: The University had risen 11 places in the Complete University Guide 2023 and the outcome of REF2021 had elevated the University to 56th position (up 16 places) for Research Intensity and to 111th (up 4 places) for Research Quality. The results of the NSS 2022 would be issued on 6th July 2022.

(v) New Faculty Structures: In order to support the achievement of the Citizen Student Strategy the current Faculty restructure would be reduced from seven down to three, being 'Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences', 'Faculty of Health & Medicine' and 'Faculty of Science, Business & Innovation'. Faculties would be led by a PVC/Executive Dean and recruitment to these posts was underway. Consultation was also currently being undertaken with staff and confirmation issued that there would be no redundancies as a result of the restructure. The new structure would be in place by December 2022.

3. Ofsted Inspection: An Ofsted inspection of Degree Apprenticeship provision had been undertaken during the week commencing 17th May 2022 and the inspection report had recently been published and was attached as Appendix 2 to the report. The overall outcome was 'requires improvement', which was in line with expectations. The report highlighted a number of positives and areas of good practice. Nevertheless, there had been insufficient progress since the previous inspection in 2019 and an inconsistent approach across the four faculties delivering apprenticeship provision. Data presentation and reporting to governors also required improvement in order to allow effective scrutiny and challenge.

The Council discussed the outcomes of the report in detail and noted that the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee had already planned an additional meeting in order to review in more detail the inspection report and resulting action plans. Regular updates on progress would be reported during 2022/23. A further monitoring visit would be undertaken within 7-12 months with a full inspection visit within the next 12-24 months.

4. Student Numbers:

(i) UCAS applications: Overall UCAS applications remained positive and were ahead of the 17,500 target set, with four weeks of the main recruitment cycle remaining. The focus of activity remained on offers and conversion which was challenging. It was evident that applicant behaviour had changed with a slower

response rate than in previous years. The University would seek to recruit strongly in Clearing, which would be operational from 5th July 2022.

(ii) International: Despite the pandemic international student applications for 2022/23 remained positive with several intakes at various stages of the recruitment timeline. Recruitment for September 2022 was strong with high levels of applications, although uncertainty existed with Home Office delays in visa processing predicted to continue throughout the summer. Contingencies were in place should students experience delays in being able to travel to Chester.

5. Research Excellence Framework (REF): Professor Paul Bissell (PVC, Research & Innovation) gave an update on the results of the REF 2021. Overall results and all Units of Assessment showed improvement since REF2014 with the 'grade point average' increasing from 2.08 to 2.50 and the percentage of 'world leading, 4*/internationally excellent, 3*' increasing from 31% to 51%, with particularly good results in TRS, Allied Health Professions, Education and Art & Design. Institutionally, the University scored more poorly under the 'Environment' sub-profile than under 'Outputs' and 'Impact' and lessons would be learnt from those Units that had scored well. Similarly, research grant income, PhD completions and support for early career researchers all needed to increase going forward.

In order to maintain momentum on REF it had been agreed that the REF Management Group would be reinstated and a comprehensive analysis of submissions and results would be undertaken to ensure lessons learnt were disseminated. Systems and processes to support research management would be upgraded with the purchase of a bibliometric analysis tool and a research information management system. Regular mock REF exercises would be conducted and the establishment of reading groups to support staff to increase the quality of outputs prior to publication. A REF-informed research strategy would also be developed with four specific work streams established to order achieve this.

The Council welcomed this positive outcome and noted that reporting on future action and progression would be made via the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee.

Mrs Jeannie France-Hayhurst left the meeting at this point.

6. Strategic Projects:

(i) Thornton: The due diligence with the investment partner continued. An offer had yet to be received and thus it remained premature to confirm if an agreement would be concluded by year end; assumptions in the financial forecasts predicted a conclusion during 2022/23. It was anticipated that disposal of the site would improve the underlying trading position by some £2M to £3M per annum. An extraordinary meeting of the Planning & Resources Committee would be called over the summer if necessary. Support from the local authority would be required.

(ii) Warrington: The relocation from the Padgate campus continued and an event to formally open the Warrington Town Centre facilities would take place on 13th September 2022. One hall of residence would be retained at Padgate for 2022/23 in

order to mitigate the slow development of private sector student accommodation in the centre of Warrington.

(iii) Shrewsbury, UCS: A positive meeting with Shropshire Council had taken place. The Council were keen for the University to pay some rent for Guildhall, although the original agreement was that this would only occur once UCS was in a surplus position. Dialogue would continue with the Council to ensure that UCS remained viable.

(iv) Chester City Centre: The SET continued to actively explore possible locations for a Chester City Centre presents for the University.

(v) Medicine: The GMC had undertaken a planned visit on 30th June 2022 as part of the on-going approval processes. Oral feedback following that meeting indicated some areas of concern that could impact on the University's ability to recruit for September 2022. Formal feedback was awaited and would be carefully reviewed and challenged if necessary.

The University Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the detailed update and acknowledged the many challenges and opportunities facing the University during the period of change.

3401 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms Friel spoke to the CSU President's report (Appendix D). It was highlighted that student engagement had been challenging during the year due to disruption caused by the pandemic and the inability to hold in-person events especially at the start of the academic year. Work was being undertaken to create new societies and to embed societies within academic disciplines; work that was being undertaken in conjunction with the University. The benefits to wellbeing, mental health and engendering a sense of community through student social networks was acknowledged and thus this remained an important area of focus for the CSU.

Engagement with the local community remained a priority and the inaugural 'Students in Chester' forum had launched on 16th May 2022 with staff and student representatives from FE and HE providers across Chester together with representatives from CWaC. The agenda had been set by students and covered 'student safety and the night-time economy', 'health and wellbeing' and 'sustainable travel'.

Engagement with the services of the CSU Advice Centre had increased during the year and in order to support demand, training had been undertaken for the student engagement co-ordinators and student voice coordinator, in order that they may provide an initial point of contact and triage cases as necessary. Collaboration had been strengthened between the CSU Advice Centre and Student Services in order to ensure that students were referred appropriately to the right service and received

timely and impartial advice. It was noted that the rise in engagement with the advice centre was typical across the sector.

The 1839 Awards and Societies Awards had been well received and provided an opportunity for both staff and students to celebrate and give thanks for their hard work and dedication over the past year. The CSU had also supported the Warrington Alumni weekend, an event held to celebrate the history of the Padgate campus. Officer induction training and handover was currently being undertaken with the newly elected Officers formally taking office on 1st July 2022. Four new CSU Trustees had been appointed and planning for the 2022/23 academic year induction was underway.

The University Council thanked Ms Friel for her update and took the opportunity to wish Mr Rankin well for the future.

3402 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Reports from the Chairs of committees were received and considered on the following meetings of the committees by reference to matters listed in a written summary, with the resolutions or other action shown. The draft minutes of the meetings were included amongst the papers for the meeting of the University Council.

(a) Planning & Resources Committee (Tuesday 3rd May 2022 and Tuesday 7th June 2022) (Appendix E1)

The University Council noted the following main items:

(i) Chester Students Union: The on-going monitoring of the CSU's financial performance which remained on target to achieve the planned deficit position of £15K at year end. The Committee also reviewed and recommends approval of the break-even CSU Budget 2022/23.

(ii) 2022/23 Budget and Financial Forecast to 2025/26: Mr Waddington (CFO) presented Appendix E3, the budget for 2022/23 and financial forecast to 2025/26. The budget presented a challenging financial picture with income expected to be similar to that in 2021/22 however, costs would increase significantly. Staff costs would increase as a result of pay awards and national insurance increases, together with investment in priority posts identified as part of the strategic planning process. Non-pay costs would also rise significantly primarily driven by inflation with the greatest impact on utilities. Cashflow forecasts remained positive over the life of the forecast, with the lowest point being £16.7M in April 2026. The cashflow position would support the investment included within the forecast, subject to the capital disposals (£9.5M) proceeding as planned and TSP site costs being passed to the development partner from 1st August 2023.

Key assumptions for the budget 2022/23 included static home undergraduate numbers, international student numbers increasing by 500, staffing gap savings of 5.5% and modest net profits on the disposal of assets. Tuition fees had been capped so it was imperative that the university increased students' numbers in order to improve its financial position. Investment was therefore required in the short term

in order to make the necessary enhancements to both the IT and physical environment as well as in staffing in order to reposition the academic portfolio and offer.

The University Council acknowledged the challenging financial position and the planned growth in order to support recovery. This would be monitored carefully during 2022/23.

(iii) Subsidiary Companies Update: A number of subsidiary company changes were required due to the forthcoming retirements of directors and these were detailed in Appendix E4 and would be effective from 1st August 2022. In respect of Thornton Research Ventures (a dormant, charitable company) the University Council had the power to remove and appoint Members of the company. It was therefore proposed to remove Canon Dr J Turnbull and Professor TJ Wheeler as Members and replace with Dr M David and Professor EA Simmons.

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) To approve the Chester Students' Union Budget (Appendix E2)
- (2) To approve the 2022/23 Budget and Financial Forecasts 2025/26 (Appendix E3)
- (3) To approve the removal of Canon Dr J Turnbull and Professor TJ Wheeler as members of Thornton Research Ventures and replace with Dr M David and Professor EA Simmons.

The following report was noted:

- (1) Management Accounts, May 2022 (Appendix E5)

(b) Audit & Risk Management Committee (Thursday 19th May 2022) (Appendix F1)

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) To approve the Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 and Strategy 2022/23 - 2024/25 (Appendix F2)
- (2) To approve the External Auditor's Audit Plan 2021/22 (Appendix F3)
- (3) To approve the Financial Regulations Updates (Appendix F4)
- (4) To approve Procurement Policy Updates (Appendix F5)

(c) Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee (Thursday 9th June 2022) (Appendix G1)

The Executive Summary of the above meeting was received and noted. The Chair highlighted that this was the first year of operation for the new Committee following its establishment as part of the governance effectiveness review undertaken in 2021. The focus of the meeting had been on the results of REF 2021 and on the changes being implemented by the University in order to ensure on-going compliance with changes to the OfS conditions of registration applicable to quality and standards.

Regrettably, the number of allegations of breaches of academic integrity continued to increase. A variety of strategies are being explored; the Faculty of Business and Management have undertaken to expedite a review of their pilot project to make Turnitin originality reports available to students prior to summative submission, the Directorate of Access, Skills and Apprenticeships are reviewing the study skills support available through Studiosity and in-house resources and Student Services are considering how training on academic integrity might be further embedded into induction activities.

As mentioned earlier in the meeting an additional meeting of the Committee would take place in order to review in further detail of outcome of the Ofsted inspection of degree apprenticeships and resulting action plans.

It was also reported that the University had been unsuccessful in its ITE re-accreditation application to the DfE. Feedback received indicated that the University had failed by one point in one of the four categories. A re-application had been submitted and a final outcome was awaited. The process indicated a greater level of bureaucracy and intervention from the Government; failure to gain re-accreditation would result in the University having to cease ITE delivery from 2024.

The following reports were noted:

- (1) Academic Quality & Standards Report, Summer 2022 (Appendix G2)
- (2) Apprenticeships: Quality Improvement Plan (Appendix G3)

(d) Nominations & Governance Review Committee (Tuesday 14th June 2022)
(Appendix H1)

The President spoke to Appendix G1 with particular attention given to the updates made to the recommendations following the Governance Effectiveness Review; the majority of which had been implemented during the year. Discussion focussed on the work undertaken in order to articulate the University Council's desired impact, value and assessment of its own performance. The following was agreed:

- (i) each committee consider at its first meeting the impact it wishes to see through the year;
- (ii) each committee considers its own contribution to council effectiveness at the end of the year and includes this in the executive summary report to the final full Council of the year;
- (iii) feedback from the one to one meetings between President/Deputy and Council members be formally synthesised each year for the Council.

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) To re-appoint for a second term of office (1st August 2022 to 31st July 2025):
 - (i) Mrs Cathy Bond
 - (ii) Dr Angela Seeney

- (2) To re-appoint for third and final term (1st August 2022 to 31st July 2025):
 - (i) Dr Meredydd David (as a consequence of election as President)
 - (ii) Mrs Jeannie France-Hayhurst
 - (iii) Ms Karen Howell
- (3) To retain the services of Nurole to manage the process for recruitment of new members.
- (4) To make the following changes to Committee membership for 2022/23:
 - (a) Audit & Risk Management Committee:
 - (i) To appoint Mr Peter Wallach.
 - (b) Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee:
 - (i) To appoint Ms Karen Howell.
 - (ii) Ms Lauren Friel to replace Mr Jack Rankin as CSU President (effect 1st July 2022).
 - (iii) To appoint two CSU student representatives from the Student Insight Committee to be agreed between the CSU and SET (in attendance).
 - (c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee:
 - (i) To appointment Mrs Cathy Bond.
 - (ii) To appoint Councillor Razia Daniels.
 - (d) Planning & Resources Committee:
 - (i) To appoint Mrs Cathy Bond as Chair.
 - (ii) To appoint Ms Sara Popplewell.
 - (iii) To appoint Mr Stephen Dobson.
 - (iv) Removal of Ms Karen Howell (added to Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee and Senior Salaries Committee)
 - (5) Senior Salaries Committee:
 - (i) To appoint Mrs Cathy Bond as Chair.
 - (ii) To appoint Ms Karen Howell.
 - (6) University Mission Committee:
 - (i) To appoint Mr Peter Wallach.

The University Secretary reported that as a consequence of Mrs Bond election as Deputy President she would be required to step down as Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee. A review of the Committee's membership would be considered outside of the meeting and proposals considered in due course.

- (5) To amend the Instrument & Articles of Government with effect from 1st September 2022 to give effect to the following:

- (i) Reduction of membership to twenty-one, being:
- Eleven Foundation (four ex officio and seven co-opted) members;
 - Ten Non-Foundation (two ex officio, two staff nominated and six co-opted) members;
 - communicant members of the Church of England to be four not five;
 - quorum to be eight.
 - nomenclature changes including gender neutral language

Mrs Jeannie France-Hayhurst re-joined the meeting at this point.

(e) University Mission Committee (Wednesday 11th May 2022) (Appendix I1)

The Executive Summary of the above meeting was received and noted. The University Council benefited from an informative presentation from Kara Joynson, Student Projects & Development Manager on the work of the Unacceptable Behaviours Taskforce and the University's use of funding received from the 'Safer Streets' bid. Questioning focussed on the measures of success and the need to ensure that all students were made aware of the behaviours expected.

Minor updates were proposed to the Mission, Vision & Foundation Values and it was agreed that Governors should receive Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) training.

IT WAS RESOLVED:

- (1) To approve the updates to the Mission, Vision & Foundational values as detailed in Appendix I2
- (2) That Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training should form part of the suite of Governors training.

3403 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (a) Planning & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 3rd May 2022 (Appendix J1) and Tuesday 7th June 2022 (Appendix J2)
- (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee held on Thursday 19th May 2022 (Appendix K)
- (c) Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee held on Thursday 9th June 2022 (Appendix L)
- (d) Nominations & Governance Review Committee held on Tuesday 14th June 2022 (Appendix M)
- (e) University Mission Committee held on Wednesday 11th May 2022 (Appendix N)
- (f) Senate Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd June 2022 (Appendix O)

3404 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS)

An up-dated list of OfS publications (Appendix P) was received and noted.

3405 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of any other business.

3406 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting: Tuesday 22nd November 2022, 9.30am (F2F, CCU103, Churchill House, Queen's Park)

Future meetings – commencing 9.30am:

Tuesday 28th March 2023 – via Teams

Tuesday 27th June 2023 - (F2F, CCU103, Churchill House, Queen's Park)

3407 SCHEDULE OF 2022/23 MEETINGS

The schedule of 2022/23 meetings (Appendix Q) was received and noted.