

THE COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5 February 2024

Present:

The Chair of Council	Dr Sally Howes
The Deputy Chair of Council	Jeremy Clayton
The Treasurer	Simon George
The Vice-Chancellor	Professor David Maguire
The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Professor Christine Bovis-Cnossen
Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (R&I)	Professor Brian Reid
Independent Members	Professor Lu-Yun Lian
	Gillian Maclean (from minute 68)
	Bill McCluggage
	Dr Jonathan Paine
	Francis Tengesha
	Jeanette Wheeler
Members appointed by Senate	Professor Laura Camfield
	Dr Usha Sundaram
Member appointed by the Support Staff	Kristopher Harper-Allison
Student Representatives	Serene Shibli-Sexton
	Taylor Sounes

With: The Chief Resource Officer and University Secretary (Ian Callaghan), the Interim Director of Governance and Assurance (Rob Bloomer), Governance Business Partner (Hen Branston), Governance Administrator and Personal Assistant to the Chair of Council (Rebecca Phillips).

Apologies: Senior Independent Member (Dr Andy Wood), Independent Members Thomas Mather, David Hansom)

57. MINUTES & ACTIONS

Confirmed

the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 November 2023 and review the actions log.

Minutes confirmed.

58. MATTERS ARISING

Considered

Council Actions Log.

The Chair requested that Sub-Committee chairs focus on actions allocated to their sub-committees. The following actions were discussed as high priorities:

- 1) Action 8: clarity of research grant data and research income. The interim PVC R&I confirmed that a paper is ready for discussion at Executive Team and Senate and will be brought to Council following this.
- 2) Action 15: The ASRP closure report is due at the next Council meeting. The CRO confirmed that a draft is with Executive Team for review and will then progress to Finance Committee, Audit Committee and be presented to Council on 18 March.
- 3) Action 26: Requirement for an additional decision point for Council on CDP prior to contract award. The CRO confirmed this decision point has been built in for Finance Committee and will be built in for Council. Other independent assurance is being evaluated.

59. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair noted the sense of a new era for UEA, highlighted by a well-delivered launch of the University Strategy 2030 and expressed thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Team. It was noted that Council's feedback has been considered in the formation of the focus areas of Strategy 2030: student education and experience, research and innovation, and organisational development.

The Chair updated Council that external perspectives of UEA's position were positive and that the reputation of the Vice-Chancellor as UEA's leader is strong. There is also a clear sense that UEA's recovery to date has outpaced expectations and that the University has come a long way in the last year. Looking ahead, strong leadership will be key, and there is a current focus on succession planning in preparation for the conclusion of the Vice-Chancellor's term in Spring 2025. To inform decisions around the future leader of the University, the Chair is consulting with staff and stakeholders, including one-to-one meetings with Council members. These consultations will inform a proposal to be presented at the March Council meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor's work on the structure of the Executive Team, SORC working to provide enhanced rigor in senior staff performance management, and the report from the Director of People and Culture all further inform our discussions on leadership. There are also some changes in membership of Council coming up, across student, Senate

and Independent members. We will be using specialist search agencies to assist us with independent trustee appointments.

60. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

The Chair declared that she is starting work on a review and reform of the UK Planning System. There are no anticipated issues arising from this.

61. UPDATES FROM COUNCIL'S SUB-COMMITTEES

Key updates from Chairs of Council's sub-committees plus other matters the Committee wishes to bring to Council's attention (not otherwise on the agenda).

For information, meetings since last meeting of Council:

- Strategic Finance Working Group (30 November 2023)
- Estates Strategic Advisory Group (11 January 2024)
- Digital Transformation Advisory Group (11 January 2024)
- Finance Committee (24 January 2024)
- Governance Committee (25 January 2024)
- Audit Committee (19 January 2024)

The Chair confirmed that a written report from the Governance Committee will come to Council on 18 March 2024. In the interim the Chair highlighted Governance Committee's work ongoing in considering the appointment of the university's next Vice-Chancellor and supporting the Vice-Chancellor on reviewing the governance of Estates and Digital programmes.

62. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

Received

An update on matters from the Student Union (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D041)

The student members of Council highlighted some key elements from their report:

- 1) The impact of the cost of living remains significant for students. The Student Union Officers have been seeking to support students with the increased cost of living including providing free food hampers.
- 2) Engagement between students and the Students Union is high, especially in student clubs and societies, academic representation and Union Council.

- 3) The Union's financial statements will be ready shortly and the Union's new Chief Executive will attend the Council meeting on 18 March 2024 to discuss them further.
- 4) Following an external review of governance, the Union is proposing to make several changes to governance structures.
- 5) Students of Colour Ambassador interviews took place last week with a high number of applications. The roles work to create community and a better sense of belonging in their schools, in a bid to tackle the degree awarding gap.
- 6) The student members expressed thanks to the university for support on a number of projects, including the upcoming Student Officer elections and the Transforming Education Awards.

Members of Council discussed the cost-of-living crisis and the issue of food scarcity. Council also discussed lecture capture as it is noted in the SU report as an issue. University policy is that lectures are recorded by default, with an opt out if necessary and performance is improving in this area.

The Treasurer, as a trustee of the Students Union, highlighted that there will be significant work upcoming on the financial position of the Union and this will return for discussion to Finance Committee and Council.

63. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Received

The Vice-Chancellor's Report and a presentation on progress against the Strategy 2030 (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D042)

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted some key points from his report:

- 1) 2024 is likely to be a year where the systemic issues with the UK higher education funding model become very apparent. The Executive Team are ensuring this environment is factored into our strategic planning.
- 2) The Department for Education and UUK will each be conducting a review of international student recruitment practises in light of media reporting under the umbrella of 'cash for courses'. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that we recruit quality students and do take international student recruitment seriously. However, the reviews do represent a possible risk to the sector.
- 3) On student recruitment, the Vice-Chancellor updated Council on the position after the Equal Consideration Deadline, which is in effect the Home Undergraduate application deadline. The University is performing favourably when compared with direct

- competitors, and better than the sector at large. The university is clear that this recruitment round will be highly competitive.
- 4) The Vice-Chancellor updated Council on current recruitment processes for the PVC International, PVC Research and Innovation and PVC Faculty of Science roles. These have attracted high quality candidates.

Council had a detailed discussion on home and international student recruitment. In relation to the significant reduction in applications to medicine courses, the Vice-Chancellor reassured Council that UEA expects to meet targets in this area. The Vice Chancellor noted that we have already undertaken a significant package of work to invest in recruitment activity including investing in major international student recruitment networks and adding more staff in target recruitment countries. The website scheduled for launch in August, as well as the implementation of the strategic plan also support this work. Council noted the importance of ensuring we invest sufficiently to get the return we need in student applications.

Strategy 2030

The Vice-Chancellor gave a presentation update of the progress with UEA's strategy 2030, the slides are included in the minute book. This included a review of the University's overarching strategic themes and high-level objectives as well as an update on the implementation plan.

The length of the implementation plan was discussed, with the Vice-Chancellor highlighting some key requirements such as costed Estates and Sustainability Strategies which affect the delivery timetable. The implementation plan is not holding up immediate work to improve the university.

Council requested that the next Vice-Chancellor's update be a deep dive of the strategy, along with detail of the governance processes which support this, and how Council fits into that governance structure.

ACTION: Vice-Chancellor and CRO to prepare a deep dive session on Strategy implementation and governance for the VC update on Wednesday 6 March.

64. FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Received

- 1) Summary report to Council of Finance Committee held on 24 January 2024. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D043)
- 2) 2023-24 Financial position December 2023 (Month 5) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D044)
- 3) Update provided to the Council Long Term Finance Working Group 30 November 2023. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D045)
- 4) HP3 strategic benefit paper (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D043)

The Treasurer reported that the last meeting of Finance Committee focussed on reviewing the period 5 financial update, the treasury report (noting that the next meeting will look at the revolving credit facility refresh), a review of debt management, approving the process for creating the TRAC return and discussed the strategic case for investment in HP3. The meeting also discussed the potential of developing mid-tech units on the University's land at the Triangle site as part of the wider NRP development plans.

The Director of Finance updated Council on the Month 5 position, noting a current deficit of £15.5m in contrast to the budgeted £28.7m deficit, showing clear improvement. Cash holding at month end was £46.6m and is forecast to sit around that level for the next 3 months. In addition, headroom against banking covenants has doubled since last year. Risks around income from donations and adverse variances in the Faculty of Science remain.

In updating Council on progress developing the long-term plan, the Director of Finance noted that the long-term plan update paper provides some context around why we approach the financial planning model in several stages along with how strategy 2030 will influence the long-term financial plan.

New Generation Infrastructure for John Innes Centre 'HP3' Strategic Case

Graham Moore, Director of the John Innes Centre and Dave Forman, Chief Operating Officer of the John Innes Centre, joined the meeting.

The Chair introduced the paper, noting that HP3 investment was discussed in November 2023 where Council agreed in principle that this was a wise strategic investment, but asked to be appraised on the return on investment that the university should expect.

Professor Moore provided an overview of some of the key benefits to UEA, which include benefits to REF score, the opportunity for additional joint staff positions, the opportunity to use space vacated through the project and the opportunity to improve research led teaching.

The Vice-Chancellor added that whilst this was a strong investment in its own right, this is part of a wider strategic matter of supporting and developing our relationship with the institutes on the Norwich Research Park.

Independent member of Council Jonathan Paine confirmed that the Chairs and CEOs of the Research Park were aligned in wishing to increase collaboration and that UEA should expect that this investment will generate future benefits. Putting the alternative point, Gillian Maclean stated (by email ahead of the meeting) that she did not consider the document produced to be a business case and that she did not support the proposal as it stood.

The Chair summarised the discussion, reiterating that agreement in principle was already given and noting that this was an investment proposal, rather than a full business case. The Chair asked Council to confirm approval of the investment in HP3.

Approved.

65. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Received

Summary report to Council of Audit Committee held on 19 January 2024. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D046)

The Chair of Audit Committee highlighted some key points from the Audit committee report, explaining his approach to undertaking the work of the Audit Committee under a risk management framework. This includes ensuring that audit committee are supporting the Vice-Chancellor in managing his top identified risks and ensuring third party audits/reports are factored into our evaluation of risk and assurance.

On identified risks, the Chair of Audit Committee updated good progress on fire safety including a positive visit from the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. ITCS actions remain an area of discomfort and Audit Committee has asked for monthly updates on progress against these actions.

No questions were received.

66. RISK MANAGEMENT

Received

- 1) The update report on the University Risk Management including:
Risk Management Dashboard
University Risk Register
(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D047)
- 2) Safeguarding Update (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D048)

The Chair of Audit Committee noted progress on the development of the risk register. This will be further improved when underpinned by a clear risk management ethos.

The Chief Resource Officer informed Council that the risk register and dashboard presented are reflective of an updated approach across the institution which includes all faculties and divisions reviewing their risk management and reporting. The Chair of Audit Committee confirmed that he had requested a one-page summary of risk from the Executive Team to accompany the detailed risk register each time it was considered by Audit Committee.

ACTION: Executive Team to add commentary of mitigating actions against each risk present on the high-level risk register.

The Chief Resource Officer also introduced the safeguarding report. Safeguarding information will be reported regularly to Council in line with best practice and regulatory requirements. In this report no concerns raised at a university level have required escalation.

67. PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR INTERNATIONAL

Noted

That Governance Committee met on Thursday 25 January 2024 and considered a proposal in respect of membership of the Executive Team. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D049)

Reported

That Governance Committee recommends that Council approves the proposal.

Approved.

68. APPRENTICESHIPS ANNUAL UPDATE

Received

The Annual Update on Apprenticeships Provision, to include Apprenticeships Quality Improvement Project.

(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D050)

The Chief Resource Officer introduced the update which highlights the work undertaken to develop and assure the University's apprenticeships provision and the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection and report.

Council was reminded that the university was subject to an Ofsted inspection of its apprenticeships provision in December 2023. Following publication of the final report, the Ofsted inspection graded the university's provision as "Good" across all aspects of the inspection. The CRO noted that the outcome is representative of the hard work of all those involved in apprenticeships provision at UEA in both academic and professional services teams. Student members noted that the Ofsted outcome is reflected by the feedback gained from the student body by the Students Union.

Council welcomed the outcome and discussed the opportunities for growth in the university's apprenticeships provision, noting that apprenticeships generate c£4m of income for the university. Strategic thought on this topic will be included in the strategic plan for Student Education.

69. PEOPLE AND CULTURE BI-ANNUAL UPDATE

Received

A report from the Director of People and Culture (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D051)

The Director of People and Culture highlighted several themes from her report. Staff morale and engagement were discussed. The last year has been challenging for all staff. The People and Culture division are seeking to help staff find new ways of working in line with the future strategy 2030 and to create a sense of trust, stability and security.

The Director of People and Culture expanded on efforts to gain feedback from staff and increasing engagement with the Pulse survey is a key objective. Feedback received highlights a focus required on addressing the impact of long-lasting changes of the ASRP.

Additionally, there has been increased focus on developing management and leadership capability across UEA. An apprenticeships programme for staff, alongside developing in house programmes to supplement apprenticeship provision and coaching and mentoring, are all supporting this objective.

The university is also reviewing how we reward good performance. Work has started on a 'Reward' function within the People and Culture Division. Academic promotions and professorial review have been reintroduced.

70. PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Received

An update report on the Executive Team (ET) Objectives (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D052)

The Vice Chancellor reminded Council of the ten projects which were introduced to Council in November 2023. A revised approach to progress monitoring has been implemented. Amongst these projects the Vice Chancellor noted that the Campus Development Plan and Digital Transformation Plan are red rated.

The CRO explained that the red rating on the Campus Development programme reflects the anticipated high costs of completing work in Building 3 of the Lasdun Wall. Council was advised that a substantial Campus Development Plan (CDP) report featuring a decision on phase 1 costs and an update on RAAC in university buildings will come to Council in 24 June 2024.

In respect of Digital Transformation (DTx), significant work has been undertaken to stabilise the digital estate but as the programme draws to a close there continues to be more work required. This will be picked up as part of the Digital response to Strategy 2030 but there continues to be a challenge balancing the availability of funding with the aspirations for improved digital services. Council noted the importance of ensuring a clearer sense of whether digital projects are on/ahead/behind schedule in management reporting.

The Vice-Chancellor updated Council on the developing relationship with partners on the Norwich Research Park, highlighting three major projects (shared research strategy, shared REF strategy and shared development strategy). All three projects are making good progress.

71. PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Received

An update report on the Campus Development Plan (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D053)

Council received the written report from the Director of Estates. All discussion can be found in minute 70 as part of the Executive Team strategic objectives update.

72. PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Received

An update report on the Digital Transformation Programme (DTx) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D054)

Council received the written report from the Director of Digital and Data. All discussion can be found in minute 70 as part of the Executive Team strategic objectives update.

In relation to the Digital Transformation Programme, Council was asked to approve the final drawdown of funds to support:

- Web development programme
- SITS Cloud Migration Phase 2
- balance used to support seed funding for Strategy 2030 projects.

This request comes with a recommendation from Executive Team and the Programme Board.

Approved.

73. PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Received

A verbal update on NRP.

Council received a verbal update from the Vice Chancellor and Independent member of Council Jonathan Paine. All discussion can be found in minute 70 as part of the ET strategic objectives update.

74. REVIEW OF COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS

In reviewing the effectiveness of the Council meeting, independent member Jeanette Wheeler felt there was evidence of progress against all of Council's Strategic Objectives, through extensive discussion on strategy 2030, People, and Audit Assurance.

JW confirmed that the meeting was conducted in accordance with university values.

75. RECORD OF UNIVERSITY SEALINGS

Reported

the use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D055)

76. DATES OF MEETINGS 2023-2024

Reported

the dates of the remaining Council meetings were:

- Monday 18 March 2024, 13:00-17:00
- Monday 20 May 2024, 9:00-18:00
- Monday 24 June 2024, 13:00-17:00

77. REPORTABLE EVENT TO THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

Considered

The recommendation contained within the report. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D056)

The CRO advised Council that he recommended submission of a reportable event form to the Office for Students in respect of the national group action by students in respect of both the response to the pandemic and the impact of industrial action on students' studies.

AGREED.

78. SENIOR OFFICERS REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Considered and noted

The recommendation contained within the report (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU23D057)

The Chair of SORC reminded Council of his verbal report given at the last meeting. The written report provided supports that verbal report. SORC meets again at the end of February.

Confirmed: Publication of the annual remuneration report.