

THE COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting held 11 May 2020

Present:

The Chair of Council	Ms L. McGillivray
The Treasurer	Mr M Williams
The Vice-Chancellor	Professor D Richardson
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Professor N Ward
The Pro Vice-Chancellor	Professor F Lettice
Independent Members	Mr S Blease
	Mr J Clayton
	Mr M. Davies
	Mr S. Evans
	Mr G Jones
	Miss G Maclean
	Dr K Skoyles
Members appointed by Senate	Ms J Wheeler
	Dr L Bohn
Member appointed by the Support Staff	Professor R Chakraborty
Student Representatives	Mrs D Mailey
	Ms S Atherton
	Ms A Trew

With: The Chief Resource Officer and University Secretary (Mr I Callaghan), the Chief Operating Officer (Ms J Baxter), the Director of Finance (Mr J Brown), the Assistant Registrar (Ms L Williams) and the Assistant Head of Corporate Communications (Mrs S Lawson).

In attendance: The Pro-Vice-Chancellors of Faculty (Professor S Barrow, Professor F Bowen, Professor D Edwards and Professor M Searcey)

Apologies: None

78. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

Confirmed

the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 March 2020 and review the action log.

79. MATTERS ARISING

Noted: action b) on Page 9 re: terms of reference of Estates strategy review: this would take place in due course and be reported to Audit Committee in the first instance.

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80. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

- a) The new Chair welcomed Stephen Evans, her successor as CEO at Norwich City Council to this his first meeting of UEA Council.
- b) At the Chair's invitation, the VC outlined how to use the Teams chat function in order to ask questions or indicate a wish to make a comment/ask a question to the meeting.
- c) The Chair paid tribute to the excellent work carried out by staff and students since the last Council meeting in response to the pandemic. Noted that the university has been forced to change its operating model to a very great extent and now faced severe financial constraints and quite possibly disruption to learning, teaching, research and student life for at least a year. Noted that she as Chair formally endorsed those actions on behalf of Council and also recognised that there were still significant strategic choices going forwards.
- d) As the role of Council is to set the strategic direction and the resource envelope for the future operations of the University, the Chair outlined that the UEA plan would now need to be reworked. The task will therefore be to understand the current constraints and consider the most appropriate strategy(ies) and strategic choices for the future.

81. STATEMENTS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

- a. The VC formally welcomed Laura McGillivray as the new Chair of Council.
- b. Noted that the VC had provided a briefing to Council members on 22 April on UEA's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The VC outlined that in terms of future phases of work the Executive Team had now put in place all the teaching and learning and financial changes needed to enable us to complete the year successfully, despite the considerable challenges. There was now active planning taking place for 2020-21 in terms of teaching and learning and research strategies. Teaching had been rationalised without removing opportunities. The approach taken would enable the university to continue undertaking its world leading research. As previously indicated, a reduction in income of at least £30m is expected next financial year. The longer term UEA Plan would cover 2021-2030. New opportunities were already being discussed, including looking at other ways of being a global university at a time when travel will be restricted. Further information will be shared in June and then these ideas will be developed over the summer and more formal proposals will be brought to Council next academic year with an expectation that implementation will commence from 1 August 2021. Noted that in terms of any impacts on staff, consultation with the trades unions will be required and built into the timeline.
- c. **Minister of State for Universities Michelle Donelan's letter to HEIs** on 4th May 2020 on **stabilising admissions** was discussed. The proposal is that providers will be able to recruit full-time, domestic students up to 5% above their

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forecasts in the next academic year. VC outlined his concerns (shared by some other VCs) that this will in fact destabilise the market. The VC indicated that these proposals together with the enhanced Clearing operation is most likely to give opportunities for Russell Group to increase their student numbers to mitigate their international student losses.

- d. **University research funding** – noted that the Government is bringing forward £100m of Quality-related research funding for providers in England into this current academic year as immediate help to ensure research activities can continue during the crisis. While this sounds good in headline terms, this is not a large figure at sector level and bringing forward the funding to this financial year is not helpful to cashflow either.
- e. **Research sustainability taskforce** – DfE and BEIS Ministers will set up an advisory sector working group with the Devolved Administrations to consider how best to respond to the challenges universities face on research as a result of Covid-19, and so university research can continue to support the UK's economic recovery following the crisis.
- f. **Financial challenges:** the VC's view is that some of these measures are simply re-profiling of existing funds rather than the £2.6bn bailout that is being presented in the media. No new funding available.
- g. **Restructuring support** – Noted that should providers face further financial difficulties, the Government will work with institutions to review their financial circumstances and assess the need for structured transformation.
- h. Overall the VC noted the destabilising nature of the government's proposals and has put his concerns to the President of UUK, who in turn indicated that these measures were a compromise position i.e. the situation could have been a lot worse.
- i. **Reopening campus.** The Prime minister's statement last night had caused some confusion and as a result the VC reported that he had sent an email to all staff to clarify that they should not return to campus on Monday morning. A sub-group of Gold chaired by COO Jenny Baxter has been looking at a phased reopening of campus. The reopening of research laboratories will be in the first phase along with the introduction of a library click and collect service. The COO went on to outline the 5 stages of a phased approach to the return to campus. HR guidance and policy on the safe return to work will be critical and this would be discussed further at a meeting with the trades unions later today. Standard recommissioning of buildings will be looked at along with any additional practical safety measures e.g. new signage, one way corridors, hand sanitisers, potentially face masks, Perspex screens etc. There are further Workstreams looking at Comms and engagement, and support for staff continuing to work at home. Networking with other HEIs was underway to ensure that best practice was being adhered to in all areas. The aim was to plan for a full campus reopening in next academic year. Further detail on the government guidance was expected in next 48 hrs.

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- j. On behalf of Council, the Chair endorsed all the VC's actions.
- k. **On Governance review and the recruitment of new Chair** the VC reported that the processes outlined at prior meetings have not been progressed yet, due to other priorities, which may mean that the new Chair's tenure might be longer than first expected. In response to Mark Davies' request that Council set a timetable for both processes, the Chair indicated that there would be a review every three months.

82. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

The Chair indicated that Stephen Evans should consider any conflict re: planning on the estates item but she had previously taken the view that there was separation around the decisions of planning authorities; and Stephen Evans concurred that there was no conflict in this regard.

83. MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

- Learning and Teaching Committee (11 March 2020)
- Inclusive Education Committee (17 March 2020)
- Audit Committee (20 March 2020) [Cancelled]
- Standing Committee of the Assembly (24 March 2020)
- Finance Committee (23 April 2020)
- Learning and Teaching Committee (6 May 2020)
- Gold Business Continuity meetings (frequently during the period)

84. ASSESSMENT, TEACHING AND ADMISSIONS

Considered

a confidential report (a copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU19D060) from Professor Neil Ward in respect of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic with specific focus on:

1. Teaching
2. Assessment
3. Admissions
4. Preparations for start of 2020/21

After discussion it was agreed that Council:

- a) endorsed the approaches taken to learning and teaching, assessment and admissions and an approach that seeks to balance the concerns around protecting the value of a UEA qualification while at the same time introducing greater flexibility and discretion around assessment

- b) would receive a report at a future meeting about how key areas of potential weakness and risk are being addressed and how we can be assured of consistent quality of delivery in the 20/21 year
- c) would have the opportunity to consider at a future meeting how these actions taken create choices and opportunities for the future operating strategy of the University

In discussion, PVC ACAD outlined that collaboration with other universities has increased during the pandemic. The Student union representatives confirmed that the report was as expected and they had been involved/kept informed of decisions along the way. PVC ACAD indicated that work continued on planning for academic year 2020/21 and for the arrival of new students. Sophie Atherton (UEASU) noted that there is a lot of work being undertaken to keep in touch with students and applicants. It was hoped that most prospective students are still planning to go to University; potentially there could be a slight upsurge as gap years may not be happening. Equally the student experience may not be as expected due to lack of large lectures and social distancing. VC has asked UUK to encourage government to take action to discourage deferrals, to mitigate the risks. The situation would be monitored closely.

85. RESEARCH, INNOVATION, PGR

Considered

a confidential report (a copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU19D061) from Professor Fiona Lettice in respect of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic with specific focus on:

1. REF
2. Support to the NHS and other agencies
3. PGR students

It was agreed that Council should:

- endorse the actions taken to support research students;
- applaud the actions taken by staff and students to respond with positive measures to support the national emergency; and
- consider at a future meeting how these excellent initiatives can be built on in future; and
- welcome the university joining the Civic universities network and the opportunities that will create to further strengthen relationships with local institutions to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the area.

Prof Lettice indicated that the University's wish was to proceed with REF but that there were some concerns re: a second peak of the virus, so the timeline may need to be reconsidered. Noted that some impact cases had been badly affected.

In response to questions, Prof Dylan Edwards indicated that the NRP does have spare testing capacity which is not being used yet. A new experimental track and trace study has been proposed to government and further updates will be provided in due course.

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Stephen Evans suggested that if it had not been done so already, it would be useful for this work to be raised with the Norfolk Resilience Forum as the statutory body for overseeing C19 response. It was confirmed that the NRF was being kept informed of all activity.

Noted that the Civic universities agreement involved an initial pledge and then a process for working with key partners in the region. PVC RI is currently working on the plan, a key part of which will be resilience building and recovery.

The future UEA strategy will focus on dual excellence and will provide strategic support for world class research. NRP will be a key part of this going forward. UEA experts are already advising government and media.

Door mats will be ordered in sufficient quantity for all staff and to welcome new students in September.

*86. FINANCE AND HR

This minute is confidential and attached as a separate sheet.

*87. CAPITAL AND ESTATES PLAN

This minute is confidential and attached as a separate sheet.

*88. EDUCOR

This minute is confidential and attached as a separate sheet.

89. POWER OF ATTORNEY

Approved

a report from the Chief Resource Officer regarding renewal of a power of attorney. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU19D066)

90. ITEMS FOR REPORT

Received

the following Items for Report:

1. Sealings

(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU19D067)

91. UNION OF UEA STUDENTS – ELECTION 2020/21 RESULTS

Reported

the results of the election:

Full Time Officers

Activities & Opportunities Officer – Lizzie Payne
 Campaigns & Democracy Officer – Hamish Williams
 Undergraduate Education Officer – Callum Perry
 Postgraduate Education Officer – Ayane Hida
 Welfare, Community & Diversity Officer – Emily Anderson

Part Time Officers

Ethical Issues Officer – Zaib Ali
 International Students Officer (EU Place) – Ghazal Qadir
 International Students Officer (Non-EU) – Syed Saad
 LGBT+ Officer (Open Place) – Kasper Hassett
 Mature Students Officer – Adrian Ashby
 Women's Officer – Briony Randell
 People of Colour Officer – Serene Shibli Sexton
 Environment Officer – Eva Korczynski
 Non-Portfolio Officer(s) – Amelia Trew
 Non-Portfolio Officer(s) – Sophie Ciurlik Rittenbaum
 Non-Portfolio Officer(s) – Tristan Michel Cyril Politt
 Non-Portfolio Officer(s) – Tyler Bell

92. DATES OF MEETINGS

Reported

that the date of the next Council meeting is Monday 22 June, 09.30

93. DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2020/2021

Confirmed

that the meetings of Council in 2020/21 have been confirmed as:

- 28 September 2020, 09:30-14:00
- **Friday** 27 November 2020, 09:30-18:00, COUNCIL STRATEGY DAY (including Council Meeting)
- 25 January 2021, 09:30-14:00
- 15 March 2021, 09:30-14:00
- 10 May 2021, 09:30-18:00, COUNCIL STRATEGY DAY (including Council Meeting)
- 28 June 2021, 09:30-14:00