

THE COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2022

Present:

The Chair of Council	Dr S Howes
The Treasurer	Mr M Williams
The Vice-Chancellor	Professor D Richardson
The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Professor C Bovis-Crossen
Independent Members	Mr S Blease
	Mr J Clayton
	Miss G Maclean
	Dr J Paine
	Ms J Wheeler
	Mr A Wood
Members appointed by Senate	Professor R Chakraborty
	Dr U Sundaram
Member appointed by the Support Staff	Mr K Harper
Student Representatives	Ms E Payne
Governor Apprentices	Ms Disa Lee Choun
	Dr Mei Ren

With: The Chief Resource Officer and University Secretary (Mr I Callaghan) and the Assistant Registrar (Ms L Williams).

Apologies: Mr I Garnham (SU Representative) and Mr S Evans

66. MINUTES & ACTIONS

Confirmed

the minutes of the Council meetings held on 24 January 2022 and reviewed the actions log.

The Chair recommended that in future the minutes should focus on reflecting the key points of discussions held and the decisions made. This was AGREED.

67. MATTERS ARISING

Updates on open Actions were noted as follows and one Action was completed (2021/55)

COU21M005

COU-M2

14.03.2022

Min. 67

15/03/2021	Jeremy Clayton suggested: 1) a 2-side clear differentiated strategic story for UEA and 2) meaningful and usable KPIs. ACTION: Provost/Integration Team	This action is remaining on this log as a reminder for the new strategic plan	Open until new strategic plan is approved by Council.
28/06/2021	Stephen Evans indicated that the City Council will be putting in a bid to the levelling up fund round 2 and that the City and UEA should have a conversation as we work up capital plans. ACTION: CRO	Followed up. City Council are awaiting contact from government.	Open
28/06/2021	VC indicated that Phase 2 of the Arts quarter needs to be brought forward. New sources of funding would have to be identified to enable this. ACTION: VC/CRO	Links to 2021/56 and 2021/61	Open
04/10/2021	VC pledged to Council that he would continue his work on tackling violence against women, following the Sarah Everard case, which had shocked everyone. The VC outlined his work on the UUK Taskforce tackling violence against women, which had issued guidance for universities in 2019. He will report to Council on implementing Changing the Culture in future. ACTION: VC/PVC SEE	VC will report to March Council Deferred to a future meeting due to lack of time.	Ongoing, re-scheduled for June 2022
04/10/2021	Mark Williams requested a future updated on Mental Health and Wellbeing following UEA being previously identified as a suicide risk. ACTION: VC/PVC SEE/LW	PVC SEE will report to the March Council Deferred to a future meeting due to lack of time.	Ongoing, re-scheduled for June 2022
04/10/2021	Mark Williams asked what percentage of teaching is online versus f2f by student/faculty. It was agreed to provide this information. ACTION: COO/PVC SEE	Data provided	Closed

04/10/2021	Andy Wood indicated that Council would benefit from understanding the residential property side of UEA business, running 4000 rooms. ACTION: CRO	Scheduled for May 2022 meeting	Ongoing, scheduled
04/10/2021	Ivo Garnham suggested an easy guide for students on the workings of Council would be helpful – to increase understanding of university governance and where decisions are made. ACTION: The issue of communicating more will be looked at by Dir Governance, CRO and Chair of Council.	Chair and CRO have met with the communications team on 20/1/22 to discuss Council communications and will update. This requirement has been added into the list	Open until a clear plan is brought back and approved by Council.
29/11/2021	<u>VC REPORT</u> Gillian Maclean asked for a finance report at the back on key points and suggested a format that may be useful. ACTION: CRO/Dir FIN	Dir FIN is working on and early drafts are being reviewed. Plan to bring to the May meeting.	Open, Scheduled
24/01/2022	Consider adding staff morale to the corporate high level risk register	Included in the update to the May meeting	Closed
24/01/2022	Future admissions numbers should include a breakdown by School		Open
24/01/2022	CRO to identify from the Director P&C about more detailed information on the categories of usage for the Employee Assistance Programme specifically with regard to mental health and occupational health referrals	Circulated to Council	Closed
24/01/2022	The budget and in year position should be carefully examined at Finance Committee and reported back to Council	Considered at subsequent meetings of Finance Committee.	Scheduled, May 2022, June 2022

COU21M005

COU-M4

14.03.2022

Min. 67

24/01/2022	Financial modelling required to ensure that various admissions scenarios are planned for.	Considered at subsequent meetings of Finance Committee.	Scheduled, May 2022, June 2022
24/01/2022	Deep-dive into the variations between the UEA and Lancaster respective positions required.	To include in May meeting	Ongoing, scheduled

68. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

- The Chair outlined that she has now met with most Directors of Professional Services and is currently meeting with the Faculty PVCs and Student Services. Additionally, she has been meeting with senior staff from the NRP, with the VC.
- The Governance review by Halpin is continuing apace. Some early findings are being identified and reported back. The final report is likely to be considered at the June meeting of Council (but will be circulated as soon as it is available).
- Recruitment of new members of Council (Trustees) continues and interviews are anticipated in May/June.
- This meeting would focus on the financial position of the University and some other items may be deferred to later meetings.
- The Vice-Chancellor noted that Covid had not yet disappeared though restrictions had been lifted. Climate change was also a pressing issue.
- The UK stands ready to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Norwich is a City of Sanctuary and UEA a University of Sanctuary and we will do what we can to help. This is a global war and on behalf of Council the VC expressed support for the Ukrainian people.

69. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (IF ANY): None declared.**70. CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR'S ACTION: None****71. MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

- Sainsbury Centre Board (10 January 2022)
- Governance Committee (24 January 2022)
- Senate (23 February 2022) – the VC noted that the effectiveness of Senate will be evolved further in terms of monitoring educational quality and research and innovation performance.
- Finance Committee (3 March 2022)

72. UEA STUDENTS' UNION

Received

a presentation from Aaron Campbell and Lizzie Payne on behalf of the Officers of the UEA Students' Union (Students' Union CEO (Toby Cunningham) was also present.

Existing strategic priorities were noted. Current challenges for students were outlined.

Council was informed that the Students Union welcomed collaboration and partnership between the University and the Students Union. The Students Union will always be an independent voice but can and does work together with the University for the benefit of students.

A further Teams meeting would be set up for all attendees to explore some of the issues raised. The slides would be circulated beforehand. ACTION: VCO

73. DRAFT UEA PLAN 2022-2027

Considered

a report from the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor in respect of the draft UEA Plan (2022-2027). (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D048)

Council stated that the draft UEA Plan as currently configured was too high level and lacked sufficient detail to enable Council to fully assess the plans for the University for the period 2022-2027. The aspiration and vision for the University was unclear as were the strategies driving the financial Plan. The apparent decoupling of finances from the UEA Plan was not deemed helpful.

The Provost confirmed that beneath the document provided for Council significantly greater detail had been provided by the Success Theme Leads. These included SWOT analyses and draft KPIs. Council was also asked to note that the Plan provided for a two-year stabilisation and period prior to a three-year growth plan.

COU21M005

COU-M6

14.03.2022

Min. 73

Council requested further details on ET's plans for closing the financial gaps and noted that all major changes of strategy should come to the Board.

RESOLVED that ET should consider the feedback from Council and seek to articulate further the connections between the current downturn in student numbers, finances and future ambitions in revised documents to be presented at the May meeting.

74. CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Received

a confidential update on the Campus Development Plan from the Chief Resource Officer (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D049)

It was noted that significant cultural change was taking place across the University because of the changes to space allocations. This was resulting in most professional services moving to open plan and a much more significant number of academic staff moving to shared offices. All moves had gone well so far, and Council noted that both Phase 0 and Phase 1 of the project were continuing to operate on budget and on time (noting a switch between two streams of movement to facilitate some additional works required in the Registry). It was re-confirmed that inflation has been built into the project's costings and remains under review through the Cost Review Group.

75. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PLAN UPDATE

Received

a confidential update on the Digital Transformation Plan from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D050)

COO updated on the appointment of a new Director of Digital and Data (Sean Green) who was CIO at the Corporation of London and City of London Police. Stephen Kirk will be interim Director in the meantime. There will be an update to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on the new roles.

Cybersecurity risks continue to be concerning. The director designate will provide additional support and experience in this area. There will be a future Council discussion on cybersecurity when the new appointee starts.

Council was informed that the digital investment spending was on track. Capital and revenue balances were being optimised for the purposes of meeting banking covenants. Benefits realisation will be incorporated into future staffing strategies.

Noted that there will be a further verbal update from COO at a future meeting to meet audit committee concerns.

76. REPORT AND STATEMENTS FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Considered

- (1) a confidential summary of events that have taken place since the last meeting of Council (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D051)
- (2) summary metrics providing a comparison of UEA performance with that of other institutions (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D065)
- (3) The Staff Pulse survey results (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D052)
- (4) Blended Learning (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D052)

In addition, Council noted:

- The continued freeze on the maximum rate that may be charged to Home undergraduate students and that this had been extended for at least another three years. The University will work with UUK on making the case for maintaining the unit of resource in real terms but in the current national environment it is clear that university funding is lower down the government's priority list. International and postgraduate fees continue to be set at institutional discretion and no caps apply (except Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)).

COU21M005

COU-M8

14.03.2022

Min. 76

- Comparator groups: The Wesley Group (convened by the VC) would be reaching out to government. Andy Haldane (Permanent Secretary for Levelling Up at the Cabinet Office, on secondment from the RSA where he is Chief Executive) will be speaking to the Wesley group.
- The first staff pulse survey was undertaken in December 2021 and established a baseline. The positive statements on mental health and feeling supported were noted as were the variations between different faculties and departments. Specific issues around workload were noted. On the visibility section, Council noted that heads of schools and line managers were considered visible; the Executive Team less so. The differences between academic and Professional Services staff were noted. The second survey has been issued and results are anticipated in the coming weeks and will enable trend monitoring to be established. **ACTION: an update to Council on staff matters should be scheduled to include consideration of training plans and how the values are being embedded.**
- Council observed the important role played by second tier managers (Heads of Schools/Directors of Services) in managing staff performance and morale and the importance of ensuring they remain enfranchised via the regular Senior Leadership Team meetings.
- Blended Learning: it was noted that the government is very clear that all institutions should return to face-to-face learning and that temporary online solutions should stop. The critical point is that students should be experiencing the provision promised at the time of application to ensure that institutions are compliance with the Competition and Markets Authority requirements.

77. QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Considered

a confidential report from Senate and the Learning and Teaching Committee in respect of how the Council may be assured that academic quality and standards are achieved.

Confirmed

that the standards of awards for which the University is responsible have been appropriately set and maintained. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D054).

Council noted that the document did not contain quantitative data and requested that future documents should include the key metrics. They asked about the previous OfS request for information in respect of grade inflation (degree classifications) and it was confirmed that there had been no further interactions with the OfS in this respect. This is a standard approach by the OfS where they only re-engage if they have further queries. **ACTION: next year's update to include quantitative data. (Provost and PVC SEE supported by Eve Dewsnap, Director of Academic Services.)**

78. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received and considered

1. The latest financial forecast for 2021/22.
2. A report from Finance Committee held on 3rd March 2022.

(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D064)

Please note that the full papers in respect of the current year and the budget have been attached as appendices for information. Finance Committee members have read them in detail.

The Treasurer provided a verbal update and commentary on the papers received. It was noted that the budget for 2022/23 was due to be finalised in June 2022. The Treasurer underlined the position of Finance Committee being the budget must be built on compliance with banking covenants as an essential minimum position. It had requested that realistic worst-case scenarios should be used for planning purposes to enable the institution to have a back-up plan ready and waiting in the event that there are revenue shortfalls.

Noted that the current long-term financial plan was approved by Council in November 2021. As members are aware, we are on a 3-year recovery plan to bring the University's headroom back to levels anticipated prior to the pandemic. Council's expectation outlined in

COU21M005

COU-M10
14.03.2022
Min. 78

November 2021 is that the University should achieve or out-perform the approved budget position. Council noted that there are a number of additional challenges which, before mitigation, could lead to an adverse movement of between £11m -£18m. It is expected that this will be addressed prior to the final submission of the budget in June.

Dir FIN indicated that, in common with all organisations, a significant challenge for UEA is energy costs. These have now been fixed for the current financial year (but not for future years). As the remainder of this financial year concludes it is anticipated that further savings will be delivered to bring the overall outturn in line with or better than budget.

Next Steps and considerations

- the Provost, Chief Resource Officer and Director of Finance (Dir FIN) will be meeting with all budget leads across the University (Faculty, Professional services, Commercial and Estates) during March and April to review budgets in detail. There will be opportunity for budget leads to contribute to the review, but the primary focus will be to ensure that the budget presented is appropriate to the internal and external challenges. An update will be provided at the April Finance committee meeting on progress and actions.
- A number of mitigations will be explored.
 - Non-pay budget reductions
 - Removing vacancies from plans and replace them with a central provision against which all posts compete against University priorities
 - Revision of contribution rates (short and long-term)
 - Review of the cost base and complete rebuild of the operating cost model
 - Review/deferral of DTx revenue spend to ensure opportunities to capitalise cost are optimised

In response to questions, Dir FIN confirmed that he had not had specific discussions with lenders about banking covenants but that regular interactions take place between him, the CRO and lenders. He shares the view that covenants must be met.

RESOLVED

that ET should consider all the mitigations proposed and recommend a 5-year financial plan which will meet Council's requirements for a long term sustainable plan at the May meeting. **ACTION: VC/CRO/Provost**

79. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Deferred

an update (report) from the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience and Education in respect of mental health and wellbeing. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D056)

If Council members have any issues they should discuss with authors in the meantime.

80. CHANGING THE CULTURE

Deferred

a report from the Head of Student Services (Life and Learning) in respect of Changing the Culture. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D057).

81. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT TO COUNCIL

Deferred

the confidential annual report from the Director of Safety Services. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D058)

82. RISK APPETITE

Received and considered

a report from the Chief Resource Officer and the University Secretary in respect of risk appetite. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D059)

COU21M005

COU-M12
14.03.2022
Min. 82

The Chair confirmed that Council had a role in terms of setting the risk appetite for the university and that this needed to be in harmony with the finance plan. This would be brought together with the Plan for the May meeting. Treasury government definitions of risk had been used and applied.

RESOLVED

that Council was comfortable with the proposed approach. ET and Audit committee would review the implementation plan and to consider the proposed risk appetites. A final version would be presented to the May meeting of Council and all relevant committees.

Council also observed that with the reduced financial headroom available in future, there may be a need to monetise risks and agree a contingency. CRO reported that there will be a new risk specific post in Safety services which will help make Risk reporting will be easier in future and linked to the Plan.

There was a request for a Risk assessment using the new specific definitions to be introduced into Council papers in future and it was AGREED. ACTION: CRO

83. TIMETABLING REPORT

Received and considered

the final version of the timetable report in the planned publication format. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D060)

Council welcomed the report and its transparency. It was requested that the same level of communication and transparency should continue in terms of the next phase of timetabling. **ACTION: Provost to report back Council's request for continued high level communication and transparency to the Timetabling team.**

84. DRAFT CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

RESOLVED

To approve the draft policy and to note the practical measures required to implement it. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D061)

85. AUDIT COMMITTEE: ADDITIONAL AREAS OF REVIEW/AUDIT

Received

a note from Audit Committee confirming the work that will be undertaken to identify areas outside the current internal and external audit programmes. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D063)

86. ITEMS FOR REPORT

Received

the following Item for Report.

1. Sealings

(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU21D062)

87. DATES OF MEETINGS

Reported

1. that the date of the next Council meeting is:
 - Monday 16 May 2022, 9:30. This is planned to be a Strategy Day and will finish at 17:30.
2. that the dates of future Council meetings in 2021-2022 are:
 - Monday 27 June 2022, 9:30. This will be a normal meeting.
3. that the dates of Council meetings in the next academic year of 2022-2023 are (time tbc)
 - Monday 10 October 2022
 - Monday 28 November 2022
 - Monday 6 February 2023
 - Monday 17 April 2023
 - Monday 22 May 2023
 - Monday 3 July 2023