

## THE COUNCIL



### Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021

Present:

The Chair of Council	Ms L McGillivray
The Treasurer	Mr M Williams
The Deputy Chair of Council	Dr K Skoyles
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
	Miss G Maclean
	Ms J Wheeler
	Mr A Wood
	Mr S Evans
	Dr S Howes
Members appointed by Senate	Dr L Bohn
	Professor R Chakraborty
Member appointed by the Support Staff	Mrs D Mailey
Student Representatives	Ms E Payne

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), Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Education (Professor E. Sutton)

Head of Planning (Garrick Fincham) was in attendance for items 56 and 57 and Director of Governance and Assurance (Dr A Blanchflower) in attendance for item 59 - Ac Dir Professor Helena Gillespie and Assistant Head of Planning: WP and Business Intelligence Becky Price were in attendance for item 58.

Apologies:

44. MINUTES & ACTIONS

Confirmed

the minutes of the Council meetings held on 25 January 2021 and 3 February 2021 and to review the actions log.

On the action around the SU position in respect of the SU Council resolution providing automatic support to UCU in respect of industrial action, Lizzie Payne advised this matter will go to UEASU Council in April/May. **ACTION: EP to update Council once UEASU have considered their stance.**

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### 45. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

### 46. APOLOGIES

None received.

### 47. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed the new incoming Chair, Sally Howes, who has joined Council with effect from 1 March 2021 prior to taking up the Chair from 1 August 2021. Dr Howes outlined that she had been a member of University of Surrey Council for 5 years and currently chaired the Research Park at Surrey; this latter role will conclude by the time she takes over as UEA Chair. She noted that the papers for Council showed the impressive reach of the university.

Noted that the Sainsbury Centre, where the Board is a sub-Committee of Council, is required to report to Council annually. A report is due but pending some personnel changes it is proposed that this is deferred to next academic year when the new Director will be able to present their vision for the Centre. **ACTION: CRO**

June meeting will be on campus. **ACTION: CRO**

### 48. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

None

### 49. CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR'S ACTION

### 50. ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

Further to the item on the 25 January Council agenda, in respect of appointment of a new Chair, additional information was circulated by email to all Council members on 2 February 2021. A significant majority responded to confirm the preferred candidate and there were no voices of dissent. As such, Dr Sally Howes, OBE will be appointed as an independent member of Council from 1 March 2021 and will become Chair of Council on 1 August 2021. Formal letters of appointment have been issued and returned.

### 51. MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

- Student Experience Committee (8 February 2021)
- Sainsbury Centre Board (8 February 2021) \* first time this has been reported
- Senate (24 February 2021)
- Senior Officers' Remuneration Committee (23 February 2021)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (3 March 2021)
- Finance Committee (4 March 2021)
- Inclusive Education Committee (4 March 2021)
- Learning and Teaching Committee 10 March 2021)

52. REPORT AND STATEMENTS FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

## Considered

a confidential summary of events that have taken place since the last meeting of Council:

1. Verbal update on Executive Team recruitment
2. Verbal update on AIP LLP Recruitment of Chair
3. Covid-19
4. Admissions position on taught programmes
5. SU TUPE Transfer
6. Accommodation
7. Student Services
8. Library
9. Faculty of Science

VC reminded Council that he provides a fortnightly briefing on all aspects of the University's work.

VC outlined that he would be taking a permissive approach to any UEA vigil in the light of the tragic death of Sarah Everard, working closely with UEA Security, Norfolk Police and the Chief Resource Officer. He also noted that in 2016 he was a member of UUK report on "Changing the Culture: Report of UUK Taskforce" examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students. He collaborated with the Students Union on their "Never OK" campaign. More recently VC had chaired the UUK Advisory Group on tackling racial harassment in HE which reported in November 2020. He was continuing to highlight the work that is ongoing in this area.

The Chair noted that Council as a whole would wish to share the VC's concerns about harassment and violence towards women and endorsed his important national work in this regard.

The City Council were planning to publish a statement of support on women's safety. Daisy Mailey noted that she was fully supportive of the increased visibility of the Never OK campaign and queried whether Council was also satisfied that our procedures for responding to any concerns were as good as they can be? The VC indicated that work was ongoing in this area and was covered in the EDI report later in this agenda.

On the international front the VC outlined that the Government had recently announced cuts to **Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds to UKRI** which will affect the university. The research community are dismayed by the scale of the cuts. This funding had enabled the UK to play a major role in tackling global challenges. The budget cuts just announced will likely lead to significant resource challenges on some current projects. PVC RI indicated that she would be objecting (and welcomed suggestions about any MPs etc to contact) and that an open letter was being prepared. Research income and ongoing partnerships will be devastated, projects will come to an abrupt end. Overall this was very disappointing news for the research and global community. Council noted these developments with concern.

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There was good news on the introduction of **Post-study work visas** for international students. UEA's International Office was geared up to help students to take advantage of this.

The **new Turing initiative** had been announced following the ending of the Erasmus Plus funding as part of Brexit agreement. UEA has done well with Erasmus over the years, both inwards and outwards. There would now be opportunities for placements in other countries not just Europe as part of Global Britain. Narrow definition of disadvantaged background. Starts in September. Short placements possible. 70 people attended a Q&A last week.

Noted that the **Averil Hart** inquest and case had concluded. Her father had withdrawn his case against the university.

VC was involved in Chair of AIP interviews in Friday. The outcome will be announced later today.

Members queried what would happen to students from countries who have not had their vaccine yet. VC outlined this was being worked through and a report would be made to Council in future. **ACTION: COO/CRO**

VC outlined that **Andrew Thomson** had recently passed away. He had joined the university in the 1960s and led Chemistry, formed the new school of Pharmacy and became the first Dean of Science in 2004, prior to the VC taking over that role in 2008. Council recorded their thanks for his contribution to the university and to science more broadly.

### **Covid section of VC Report.**

Hardship funds – additional funds received by OfS and funds were made available and well signposted especially for international students.

### **VC job description**

Noted that Council would have an opportunity to comment on the draft job description at the end of the meeting under the Audit section.

## 53. 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. COU20D034)

Noted that ET have had several sessions on this already and were continuing to address all the issues, in conjunction with Bryan Thomas. Currently ET were in the process of reviewing the proposals in respect of the significant moves and adjustments to working practices that will be required to enable all current occupants of Building 3 to leave that building by 31 July 2022.

It was confirmed that all possible efforts had been used to speed up the spandrel panel work taking advantage of the reduced occupancy of the Lasdun Wall during the pandemic response.

In terms of future hybrid work, Jeannette Wheeler noted that the majority of workforce surveys show that about 70% of staff want a hybrid approach post Covid.

54. UPDATES ON STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2021/22 ACADEMIC YEAR AND BEYOND

Considered and approved

the UEA Plan confidential report from the Chief Operating Officer (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D035)

Noted that further consideration would be given to the contents of our published strategic plan. This would include homeworking and the digital transformation which had both shifted considerably over last 12 months. Steven Blease requested that the list of themes on page 3 should be developed into a SWOT analysis.

Council members were invited to feed in their ideas to COO and Chair. **ACTION: all**

ET would be considering next steps prior to putting forward recommendations to Council at the June meeting. Paperwork at May meeting would provide a framework for June. COO will work with the current and future Chairs to provide a framework. Further consideration would be given to whether this would be a 1 year plus 5 year plan or 1 year plus 1 year in the light of continuing Covid impact uncertainties.

Andy Wood indicated that it would be helpful for Council to see more detailed competitor analysis, so that Council is not operating in a vacuum. Noted that comparator universities have changed – and can vary between the institutional and subject level. It was important to highlight adaptability and flexibility as no one can predict very far forward in current climate.

Jeremy Clayton suggested: 1) a 2-side clear differentiated strategic story for UEA and 2) meaningful and usable KPIs.

**ACTION: COO**

55. ANNUAL REPORT: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Considered

a report from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee to Council. This report was presented by Sarah Barrow, Chair of EDI Committee and Ian Callaghan, CRO. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D036.)

While the EDI department sits within the People and Culture Division their work covers all aspects of EDI on campus and the overlap of this work with the student experience is increasing. This joining up of EDI work is reflected in this year's report to Council in several areas with, for example, the inclusion of the first analysis of the Report and Support initiative, which is managed by the Student Support service.

Noted this included the first full year of Report and Support. The disproportionate number of incidents reported by women and ethnic minorities was notable and there are issues to be addressed. Noted that 50% of complaints were anonymous, which made follow-up to these complainants impossible. Jeanette Wheeler indicated that it was important that the issues themselves were dealt with as far as possible and that outcomes were audited, potentially via a random selection of reviews. **Noted that it would be useful to have Jeanette Wheeler's input into Report and Support in future and she indicated her willingness to help out. ACTION: VC/PVC HUM.**

Noted that Report and Support was also a key plank of UEA's tackling racism work

and formed one of the projects under the VC Taskforce. There were undoubted challenges, to promote more trust in the system and to ensure that action was taken.

Whilst it remains an area across the sector that is not without its challenges, it was important for Council to recognise UEA as leaders in this aspect of provision.

UEA was one of the first HEIs to establish a Report and Support system (open to students and staff), and it was noted in the discussion that anonymous reports are followed up through discussing and addressing the themes with relevant groups. Work would continue to encourage a reduction in the number of reports where the reporter considers they need to remain anonymous especially as this would provide the opportunity to provide support to the reporter but overall it is most important that reports are made.

Noted that Council is responsible for EDI and the Chair had always attended the meetings where her support was hugely welcomed. UEA was one of the very few universities to have achieved Athena Swan Silver status.

Matthew Gooch has become Head of EDI, part of the new People and Culture directorate under Helen Wiseman.

56. STUDENT PROGRESSION RATES AND DEGREE CLASSIFICATION DISTRIBUTION 2019/20: POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 MEASURES

Head of Planning Garrick Fincham was in attendance for this item.

Considered

the confidential report. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D037)

Noted

- that the information in the report may be used to inform understanding where there is a change in Good Honours profiles;
- the continued use of the 2019/20 safety net for 2020/21 finalists;
- that the report provides context to inform subsequent decisions regarding provision of measures to offset the detrimental impact of Covid should they become necessary

Changes in Good honours profile noted. Learning outcomes were met, rigour is maintained, external scrutiny. No compromise of standards but a range of measures were introduced to mitigate the impact of covid.

Jeannette Wheeler requested that the writers of all reports to Council define any abbreviations at least once in any document. CRO indicated agreement and offered to provide an updated glossary and publish to the Council Blackboard site. **ACTION: CRO**

57. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF UEA'S POSITION IN LEAGUE TABLES

Received and considered

an analysis of the current position in UK League Tables from Dr Garrick Fincham (Head of Planning) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D038)

Head of Planning (Garrick Fincham) in attendance for this item.

Jeremy Clayton noted that on research reputation we had emphasised our regional credentials over our global ones, which presented a real risk. There was a need to address this in our strategy and mindset if we are to rise up the rankings. PVC RI indicated that improved research data would assist with research reputation. BIU had recently acquired SCIVa software which would help in this regard. QS survey – this is being analysed and can be brought to Council. It has been shared with ET. There are differences between subject areas. The Sainsbury institutes will be an important part of this strategy going forward, gaining visibility for UEA.

It was noted that it was important to ensure the University wide marketing strategy is consistent with the organisation strategy and addresses teaching and research reputation.

Sally Howes noted that public policy work could be included in bids, which could make it potentially self-financing. PVC RI noted that historically UEA has under costed on research grant applications and that this was being addressed and we were looking for improvements in this area in future.

Council noted that this had been a useful discussion and should be returned to in future.

**ACTION: PVC RI/CRO**

58. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

considered

a report from Academic Director for Inclusive Education, Professor Helena Gillespie, Assistant Head of Planning: WP and Business Intelligence, Becky Price and Assistant Head of Outreach, Charlotte Wheatland on UEA's response to the requirements for monitoring of Access and Participation 2019/20 set by Office for Students.(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D048)

Ac Dir Professor Helena Gillespie and Assistant Head of Planning: WP and Business Intelligence Becky Price were in attendance.

Noted that expected progress had been made in 15 areas, limited in 5 and no progress in only 1. There had been a few challenges around outreach targets, due to difficulties with working with schools during the pandemic. Good progress overall, under the circumstances. Our experience in obtaining approval for our plans certainly goes a long way to show how well ET, academic and professional staff have worked and delivered and the understanding of our students. The VC asked that it be put on record the extent of his gratitude for all the staff involved.

Noted the UCU position on face to face teaching. Prof Gillespie indicated that our belief is that students want face to face teaching and it is our responsibility to deliver that in a Covid-secure way. SU position is to support UCU. PVC ACAD indicated that there

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is no evidence of any transmission of Covid in non-residential spaces. (We monitor this very carefully.) Our Covid measures around teaching are working well.

On the Access and Participation plan, only 12 out of over 200 that were accepted without amendment. Council offered their thanks and appreciation for the excellent work in this regard.

### \*59. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS: ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATION

This minute is confidential and attached on a separate sheet.

### 60. USS PENSIONS

Received

an update from the Chief Resource Officer in respect of the latest information about the USS valuation. (Attached were confidential documents received on 3 March from UUK and USS. These would provide useful background. A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D040)

Noted that overall contribution increases were projected in the of 42% - 56% range (assuming 1/3, 2/3 split of employee and employer) this would be a cost to the University of between £9m to £17m. Treasurer noted that the 3 yearly valuations do lead to massive swings. UEA does not have power to consider this individually, we act as a collective with UUK representing employers at the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). Council noted that this was a major problem for all universities in USS.

It was confirmed that the new Group Personal Pension Plan for all new starters below Grade 7 had commenced on 1 January 2021. All Academic and Academic Related Staff (Grade 7 and above) must be enrolled in USS and this is a condition of our membership of the scheme.

Council are encouraged to attend the pensions education sessions run by ISIO (formerly KPMG) and would be sent invites. There would be a further pensions discussion at the May meeting. **ACTION: CRO**

### 61. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received and considered

- (1) Latest financial forecast (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D041)
- (2) A report from Finance Committee held on 4th March 2021 (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D042)

Mark Davies queried re: rent rebate. CRO indicated that we are in the more generous area of the pack of institutions like ourselves. But this was one of the scenarios we had modelled for. However, on the positive side it would appear that more students are in accommodation than we had modelled, and the financial impact would therefore be lower.



The Treasurer indicated that there was little scope for further rebates v banking covenants and the CRO confirmed that there were no plans to make any additional payments.

Dir FIN indicated that there had been a further improvement of £1.5m reported at the end of February reducing the forecast deficit to £15m. This increases headroom to £5.8m and banking covenants remain satisfied.

VC indicated that we anticipate having a vibrant campus across the summer with the additional four weeks (at no charge) that had been offered to all students with 39 week contracts. Students are currently anticipated to come back for face to face teaching after Easter. No call for a rent rebate at the moment. ET's focus was on the provision for good high-quality teaching.

The Treasurer offered his thanks to ET and Ian and Jason for making the financial mitigations.

On the CDP, the Building 3 concerns and the risks were noted.

Council may wish us to consider refinancing in future as there are better rates available.

Admissions picture going forward – scenarios have been modelled. Our aim is to make our targets but others have been modelled. PVC ACAD outlined that Applicant days and virtual applicant days are going ahead. Working closely with Data HE to provide useful intelligence on growth areas, grounds for optimism.

New Global strategy.

We hit 70% of international student this year, with Feb starters, despite everything. There is a sense of optimism about next year.

In the finance report, EIB has been difficult to work with but we have finally reached agreement on the covenant position thanks to huge investment of time by the Director of Finance.

## 62. REF2021 SUBMISSION

Received

a confidential update on the REF2021 submission from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D047)

Council noted that this was an excellent paper and a very impressive body of work. PVC RI noted that the submission had grown. In REF2014 we could be selective, this time all staff have to be submitted – but we have also grown as a university. Impact case studies numbers are decided by an algorithm. Results will be published next year and will be by unit and overall. Some areas have grown significantly, some slight contractions. When considering future student number growth, it will be important to factor in the impact on research as the areas where we can grow student numbers do not always match with areas of research strength. This can be managed through appropriate targeting of funding. Submission date was in two weeks. Extension requests submitted where appropriate.

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Council offered thanks to all staff across the university for an immense effort and to all staff in RIN for their coordination.

VC mentioned the Data HE intelligence and how this can be used to help UEA build a strategise a good plan for growth in our dual excellence mission.

### 63. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT TO COUNCIL

Received and considered

a report from the Interim Director of Safety Services (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D043)

CRO outlined that there had been no known on-campus transmissions of Covid (outside residential areas). New structure of University Safety Services will be brought to ET in April. Interim director took over a year ago and she has worked very hard and effectively during this time.

Steven Blease indicated that he had not received papers, which were emailed out late. He queried whether there was a strategic plan for safety services and it was confirmed that this is part of our response to the recent internal audit but has been delayed by responding to the pandemic. Chair encouraged members to follow up with CRO.

**ACTION: CRO/all**

### 64. SAFEGUARDING POLICY<sup>15</sup>

Approved

the University's revised Safeguarding Policy. This was approved and recommended to Council by Senate on 24 February 2020. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D045)

### 65. ITEMS FOR REPORT

Received

the following Item for Report.

1. Sealings

(A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. COU20D046)

### 66. DATES OF MEETINGS

Reported

1. that the date of the next Council meeting is:

- Monday 10 May 2021, 9:30. This will be a normal meeting, finishing at 14:00.

2. that the dates of future Council meetings in 2020-2021 are:
  - Monday 28 June 2021, 9:30. This is planned to be a Strategy Day and will finish at 17:30. It is anticipated that this meeting will take place face-to-face subject to any legislative restrictions.
3. that the dates of Council meetings in the next academic year of 2021-2022 are:
  - Monday 4 October 2021, 9:30
  - Monday 29 November 2021 (Council Strategy Day, including Council meeting, 9:30-17:30)
  - Monday 24 January 2022, 9:30
  - Monday 14 March 2022, 9:30
  - Monday 9 May 2022 (Council Strategy Day, including Council meeting, 9:30-17:30)
  - Monday 27 June 2022

**\*\*67. AUDIT COMMITTEE**

This minute is confidential and reserved and has been sent out to Council Members only.