

Council Minutes: 24 January 2025

PRESENT: Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt (Pro-Chancellor) (in the Chair); Professor Andy Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Tania Baumann (lay member); Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears (lay member); Alun Branigan (lay member); Hanah Burgess (lay member); Anthony Carey (lay member); Adrian Jonas (lay member); Claire Leitch (Senate representative); Professor Rebecca Lingwood (Deputy Vice-Chancellor); Alison Mullan (Senate representative); Marcia Reid Fotheringham (lay member) (*from item 12*); Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone (Senate representative); Maureen Whilby (lay member).

IN ATTENDANCE: Jill Gallard (Observer; incoming member); Claire Geddes (Committee Clerk); Paul Morris (Director of Capital Development and Estate Operations) (*for item 11*); Professor Ed Simpson (Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) (*for item 10*); Dr Sarah Sweeney (Head of Student Support and Wellbeing) (*for item 14*); Dr Martin Walker (Head of Social Mobility and Student Success) (*for item 13*).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cerys Evans (Students' Union President); Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) and Secretary); Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance); Harrison Stewart (student Council member).

INTRODUCTION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Council noted the apologies.
- 1.2 The Chair expressed sadness at the untimely loss of Paul Boustead, (previously University Director of People and Organisational Effectiveness). On behalf of Council, he offered condolences to Paul's family and appreciation for all of his contributions to the University.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed and introduced Jill Gallard, incoming Council lay member from 1 February 2025, who was observing the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 22 NOVEMBER 2024

PAPER A

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4. MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***

4.2 **Item 19: Freedom of Speech:** Council noted the Government's decision to reactivate the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, with some key provisions of the legislation to be brought into force. Therefore, the Executive would consider any revisions required to the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech approved by Council in November 2024, in light of this.

4.3 **New Vice-Chancellor Search:** The Pro-Chancellor provided an update as to the progress with the search for a new Vice-Chancellor with shortlisting expected mid-February 2025. He highlighted that there was an encouraging list of quality candidates from a range of backgrounds.

5. **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE AND QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE** **ORAL UPDATE**

5.1 Council noted a written report from the Executive circulated to Council on 17 January 2025. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the following.

- (i) The Executive's overarching focus on the LU Future portfolio.
- (ii) The Government's review of its New Hospital Programme with a new facility for the Lancaster Royal Infirmary pushed back to 2035-37. It was noted that this clarity of timeframe enabled the University to give due consideration to the development of the Health Innovation Campus adjacent to the earmarked hospital site.
- (iii) ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***
- (iv) The consequences for the University of the OfS's 19 December 2024 decision to approve the name change of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to the University of Lancashire, and the latter's subsequent actions in relation to its marketing and nomenclature.

Council expressed its deep concern regarding the situation: UCLan's subsequent actions and the confusion arising from changes, both within and outside of the Higher Education Sector. Members noted the actions being taken by the Pro-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and discussed the range of further informal and formal measures open to the University. Members requested to be kept abreast of the issue.

5.2 Members discussed the state of relations between the UK and China, the consequences for the Higher Education Sector and the outlook since the Chancellor's recent ministerial visit to the country.

5.3 Council noted the report.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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| 6. | LU FUTURE UPDATE
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| 7. | ORAL UPDATE FROM THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (FGPC) MEETING OF 24 JANUARY 2025 | ORAL UPDATE |
| 7.1 | The Chair advised that to enable effective discussion, this report would be considered under item 8. | |
| 8. | FINANCIAL FORECAST SCENARIOS INCLUDING STRESS TESTING
<i>Restricted and Commercial in Confidence</i> | PAPER B |
| 9. | POTENTIAL PROPOSAL FOR ENACTMENT
<i>Restricted and Commercial in Confidence</i> | PAPER C |
| 10. | FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (FASS): ENVISION | PAPER D |
| 10.1 | The Executive Dean of FASS provided a summary of the Envision proposals and the rationale for change. He emphasised the consultative approach taken in Envision's development and the cultural change required to deliver the project, the evaluation conducted, and that disciplines would be at the forefront of the Faculty. | |
| 10.2 | Members noted Senate's recommendation to approve in principle the elements of the proposals reserved as matters for Council decision. Council's Senate representatives confirmed Senate had robustly tested the proposals. | |
| 10.3 | Council discussed the proposals and confirmed its support for the approach, which it viewed as clear and coherent. Members queried the implications of the changes for the other faculties and advised further consideration to be given more generally to the outward presentation of the faculties and their underlying structures. The breadth of arrangements and nomenclature was potentially confusing for potential students and external stakeholders. | |
| 10.4 | Council sought and received assurance regarding the renaming of the Law School and that it would not negatively impact reputation and Envision's alignment with LU Future, noting the project was the Faculty's contribution to meeting the management challenge. The strategic and outward facing nature of the new Heads of School roles was noted by members. | |
| 10.5 | Council <u>approved</u> in principle the establishment of the School of Social Sciences and the School of Arts and the disestablishment of Departments within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, noting the revised distribution of clustered disciplines within the new and existing Schools. | |
| 10.6 | Council <u>confirmed</u> that the Chair of Council would have delegated authority for final approval of Envision changes as set out in the paper by Chair's action, on the recommendation of the Chair of Senate, for implementation from 1 August 2025. | |

11. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE **PAPER E**
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12. COUNCIL BIENNIAL RISK REGISTER REVIEW **PAPER F**
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13. WIDENING PARTICIPATION (WP): ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24 **PAPER G**

13.1 Council received and discussed a paper from the Head of Social Mobility and Success, regarding the University's Widening Participation strategy, initiatives, and performance over 2023/24. He reported the University's recent acceptance as a partner in a Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) project, to inform Government on an effect theory of change for access into higher education. Members noted this was expected to enable the University to build further expertise and refine its approach.

13.2 Council commended the work and commented on: the opportunities to better publicise the University's WP success; learning to be taken from UA92's delivery model; the importance of a systematic approach to measuring impact; and where and how activity could be scaled up.

13.3 Planned initiatives to improve black students' experience were welcomed however members challenged the University's performance relating to black students and awarding gap and whether there was sufficient understanding of the factors causing it. In response, the Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the gap frustratingly remaining a perennial sector-wide issue, which it did not appear was solved by additional resource. He emphasised the role of the Curriculum Transformation Programme and inclusive design of teaching and assessment in closing awarding gaps.

13.3 Council noted the report.

14. STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2023-24 **PAPER H**

14.1 The Head of Student Support and Wellbeing presented a paper to provide assurance to Council regarding the University's student mental health support through the Student Mental Health Service (SMHS) over the academic year 2023-24. She drew attention to the holistic approach to mental health being taken within the University key trends in service demand, enhancements to the service and positive student feedback. She highlighted the importance of effective partnerships in both meeting demand and ensuring appropriate delineation of boundaries and responsibilities across service providers.

14.2 Council welcomed the report and sought assurance that the service was adequately resourced to manage demand including from students with complex needs. It was confirmed that changes to the SMHS service delivery model (single session provision) had ensured that there was sufficient support, with the value of recent investments in systems and partnerships being maximised.

- 14.3 Assurance was sought in relation to the University's management of students of serious concern and serious incidents. Members noted the University's participation in a number of Higher Education sector initiatives, proactive work through student induction and engagement monitoring mechanisms and its approach to and application of learning from serious incident reviews.
- 14.4 Members expressed concern regarding the continued pressures on relevant NHS Services within the North Lancashire and South Cumbria area and the increased prevalence of health-related issues reported by young people particularly since the covid pandemic.
- 14.5 Council noted the report and commended the wider SMHS team for its important work.

*** ITEMS NOT FOR DISCUSSION UNLESS REQUESTED IN ADVANCE TO THE CHAIR**

15.* STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT: JANUARY 2025 PAPER 1

- 15.1 Council noted the Students' Union President's report and the updates it provided on students' engagement with Students' Union activity.

16.* NATIONAL PAY BARGAINING 2025-2026 PAPER 2

- 16.1 As set out in the University's Charter and Statutes, Council approved the University's participation in national pay bargaining for 2025-26.

17.* COUNCIL DIVERSITY MONITORING ANNUAL REPORT 2024 PAPER 3

- 17.1 Members noted its annual Diversity Monitoring Report 2024 whose analysis would be used to inform Nominations Committee's considerations in the future search for lay members.
- 17.2 Council approved the publication of a summary of the report on its Council webpages.

18.* TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE: PROPOSED CHANGES PAPER 4

- 18.1 Council approved the delegation of an additional responsibility to its Estates Committee through changes to its terms of reference, as recommended by the Estates Committee's meeting of 7 January 2025.

19.* NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE PAPER 5

- 19.1 On the recommendation of its Nominations Committee, Council approved the reappointment of Maureen Whilby for a second term of office as a lay member of Council until 28 February 2028, with committee memberships to run concurrently with this term.

20.* SENIOR APPOINTMENTS PAPER 6

20.1 On the recommendation of Senate, Council approved the following senior appointments:

- the extension of the appointment of Professor Malcolm Joyce as interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) until 31 December 2025; and
- the appointment of Professor Phil Barker as Interim Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology from 1 June to 31 December 2025.

21.* CHAIR'S ACTION PAPER 7

21.1 Council noted the actions taken by the Chair in relation to final approval for changes to the governance oversight of redundancies.

22.* WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS PAPER 8

22.1 Council noted the written reports of the following meetings.

- Audit Committee, meeting of 13 January 2025
- Estates Committee, meeting of 7 January 2025
- Student and Experience Committee, meeting of 14 October 2024

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

24. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS PAPER I

24.1 Council noted the Forward Schedule.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

25.1 There was no further business discussed at the meeting.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

26.1 The next meeting will be held from 09:00 on Friday 21 March 2024 in the Training Suites 1, 2, and 3, POE Building.