



COUNCIL

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED

23 February 2023, 09:30-12:55 hrs

Master's Suite, Penryn Campus (Cornwall)

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Council Meeting

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MEMBERS PRESENT

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Professor Lisa Roberts	Vice-Chancellor
Sir Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor
Sarah Buck	Pro-Chancellor
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Shades Chaudhary	Professional Services Representative
Graham Cole	Independent Member
Professor Barrie Cooper	Senate Representative
Professor Alex Gerbasi	Senate Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Professor Janice Kay	Provost
Lily Margaroli	President, Exeter Students' Guild
Georgi Griškevičienė	President, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative
Professor Tim Quine	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Malcom Skingle	Independent Member

Glenn Woodcock Independent Member

SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye Registrar and Secretary

MEMBERS APOLOGIES

Lounette Dyer Independent Member

Jo Binding Independent Member

Salam Katbi Independent Member

Amoetsoe Mkwena Independent Member

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Andrew Connolly Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services

Professor Neil Gow, DVC Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact)

Professor Richard Follett Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)

Linda Peka Deputy Registrar

Imelda Rogers Executive Divisional Director of Human Resource

Jo Hamilton Head of Admissions (item 8 only)

Alison Davidson Director of Sport (item 10 only)

Dr Jeremy Diaper Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

ACTIONS:

Reference	Action	Responsible	Deadline
3.7.10	ACTION: University's Senior Leadership team to continue to maintain open dialogue and active engagement with the wider student community on the issue of the Shell partnership.	DVC (Research and Impact) and DVC (Global Engagement)	Next meeting 18/05/2023
3.7.10	ACTION: Schedule a further update on the University's partnership with Shell University for discussion at Council on Thursday 18 May 2023.	DVC (Research and Impact) and DVC (Global Engagement)	Next meeting 18/05/2023
5.3.3	ACTION: Schedule a detailed IT/Digital Strategy update report for Council in July 2023 to provide Council with assurance on the project delivery timeframes and level of expenditure in Academic Year 2022/23;	Registrar and Secretary	06/07/2023
7.3	ACTION: that further updates on the Cost of Living Support provided to students would be included in forthcoming annual reports on Access and Participation;	Chair and Vice-Chancellor Assistant Director, Governance	Academic Year 2023/24
9.4	ACTION: that an update report from the Task and Finish Group would be scheduled for	Registrar and Secretary	October 2023

	Council providing an progress report on the development of the offsetting strategy.		
9.4	ACTION: that following initial consideration of the Strategy 2030 Delivery plan in April 2023, the full multi-year programme of IDM decarbonisation investment proposals would be scheduled for Council at the May and July 2023 meetings;	Registrar and Secretary	Next meeting 18/05/2023
9.4	ACTION: to schedule a further progress update on delivery of the Net Zero 2030 target, the associated financial challenges, and institutional trade-offs, including: consideration of the overall scale of expenditure required, associated capital and revenue costs, the advantages and disadvantages of utilising significant carbon offsetting to meet the 2030 target, the potential reputational risks of failing to meet the agreed target and ways of managing this if necessary;	Registrar and Secretary	06/07/2023
10.5	ACTION: that further legal work would be undertaken through Michelmores and Penryn RFC with a further case brought forward for consideration by Council in July 2023;	Registrar and Secretary	06/07/2023

DECISIONS:

Reference	Action	Paper
2.1	Council APPROVED the minutes from the meeting held on 24 November 2022 and 8 December 2022	
10.5	Council agreed to proceed with further development of the recommended Penryn RFC option (as detailed in section 3 of the paper), but subject to the University clarifying in communications that whilst it was eager to support the project it would only be in a position to do so if appropriate levels of additional funding were also successfully secured by other parties;	CNL/23/12
10.5	Council agreed that further work would be undertaken on reviewing the costs associated with the project;	CNL/23/12
10.5	Council agreed that further legal work would be undertaken through Michelmores and Penryn RFC with a further case brought forward for consideration by Council in July 2023;	CNL/23/12
10.5	Closed Minute.	CNL/23/12
12.3	Council agreed that a tentative Council strategy Away Day would be scheduled in April 2024 and an informed decision on whether to	CNL/23/14

	proceed with the meeting would be made by the Chair of Council nearer the time;	
13.2	Council approved the minor amendments to the Terms of Reference included within Appendix 1 of the Council Nominations Committee November Report..	CNL/23/14

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the Council meeting. Professor Barrie Cooper declared an interest as an officer of the local UCU branch.

2. Minutes from the meeting held on 24 November 2022 and 8 December 2022

2.1 The minutes from the meeting held on 24 November 2022 and 8 December 2022 were **APPROVED** and the action updates were noted.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 the Chair notified members of Council that unfortunately Amoetsoe Mkwena had indicated a wish to retire from Council on the basis that she had recently accepted a new job overseas in Dubai. Council would extend their sincere thanks to Amoetsoe for their service to the University at the final meeting of the Academic Year in July 2023.

3.2 in relation to the TEF Submission (CNL/23/15)

3.2.1 following prior endorsement by the Council Standing Committee on 20 January 2023, Council noted that the TEF submission had been successfully submitted to the Office for Students by the deadline of 24 January 2023;

3.2.2 the Chair extended his sincere thanks on behalf of Council to all staff involved in drafting and reviewing the TEF submission and encouraged members to read the full submission which conveyed the impressive breadth of activities being undertaken to ensure the high-quality student academic experience and learning outcomes continued to be delivered across the University;

3.2.3 Members of Council who had attended the Council Standing Committee on 20 January 2023 confirmed the minutes (CNL/23/03A) as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.3 in relation to the Infrastructure Decarbonisation Masterplan (IDM):

3.3.1 Council noted that a Council Standing Committee meeting had been scheduled on 10 February 2023 to expedite approval of capital expenditure to replace existing gas systems with heat pumps in two projects identified in the first phase of the IDM programme;

3.3.2 Closed Minute.

3.3.3 Members of Council who had attended the Council Standing Committee on 10 February 2023 confirmed the minutes (CNL/23/03B) as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.4 in relation to the Terms of Reference for the Mental Health Independent Review (CNL/23/04)

- 3.4.1 Council noted the Mental Health Independent Review would be chaired by Richard Atkins (Pro-Chancellor), with specialist input from experts across academic, NHS, legal and charity sectors. The review would be informed by lessons learned and best practice from across the sector;
- 3.4.2 a report would be presented to Council in May 2023 with a clear set of recommendations for immediate actions and medium-term improvements to embed best practice;
- 3.4.3 a Delivery Group was also implementing the immediate actions that had emerged from the formal response to the Coroner's letter which had been submitted on 30 December 2022. The University had indicated that it would implement these actions between now and the end of the academic year 2022/23;
- 3.4.4 a Task and Finish Group had been launched to review academic tutoring. The Provost, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Pro-Chancellor would ensure there was close co-ordination and alignment maintained between both projects in light of the clear interrelation and significance of these two projects.

3.5 in relation to an incident that had occurred during a recent Rugby Football Union (RFU) match between Exeter and Cardiff University on 8 February 2023:

Closed Minute

- 3.6 Council had received a letter from members of the University community and the 'climate justice movement' in relation to the University's partnership with Shell;

Closed Minute

ACTION: that the University's Senior Leadership team would continue to maintain open dialogue and active engagement with the wider student community on the issue of the Shell partnership;

ACTION: that a further update on the University's partnership with Shell University would be scheduled for discussion at Council on Thursday 18 May 2023.

4. Vice-Chancellor's Briefing (CNL/23/05)

- 4.1 Council noted the summary report of the Vice-Chancellor's main activities since the last meeting of Council as well as a summary of recent developments at the University and HE sector;
- 4.2 The Office for Students had recently advised that a set of 30-50 volunteer providers would be submitting new Access and Participations Plans in 2023, with most other providers submitting new plans in 2024, which would take effect from the 2025-26 academic year. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) was eager for the University to be one of the volunteer providers, but a paper would be scheduled for UEB to consider the associated risks and advantages;
- 4.3 The government's Independent Review of Prevent had been published, alongside their response and commitments to implement the recommendations. There had been an extremely low number of Prevent referrals from the HE sector, with only 24 cases from providers referred to Channel between August 2016 and July 2017. Council would continue to be updated on further developments;

4.4 the Home Office, Department for Education and Treasury were continuing to debate issues surrounding recruitment of international students, including: the potential reduction to the international post-study work visa to 6 months and restrictions on foreign students bringing dependants with them;

Closed Minute

5. Second Financial Forecast 2022/23 (CNL/23/06)

5.1 The Chief Financial Officer financial provided a verbal update summarising the financial forecast for 2022/23, which was projected to marginally exceed budget targets;

Closed Minute

ACTION: that a detailed IT/Digital Strategy update report would be scheduled for Council in July 2023 providing Council with assurance on the project delivery timeframes and level of expenditure in Academic Year 2022/23;

6. Update on Industrial Actions and National Pay Negotiations

6.1 Council noted a series of key updates on industrial actions and national pay negotiations:

6.1.1 **Closed minute**

6.1.2 **Closed minute**

6.1.3 **Closed minute**

6.1.4 regular communications had been circulated to staff through a range of channels, including all staff talks, bulletins and regular email correspondence. All communications had endeavoured to present the issues in a balanced and factual manner and signposted colleagues to wellbeing resources. A joint text co-created by the Registrar and Secretary, Provost and UCU had also been shared with the wider community highlighting the areas the University were committing to improving to help maintain the collaborative relationship with the local branch;

6.1.5 UCU, the other recognised Trade Unions and UCEA had agreed to further talks mediated by the conciliation service Acas which were intended to address the issues in dispute, including: pay, equality, job insecurity and workloads;

6.1.6 Acas negotiations had commenced on Monday 13 February 2023 and following a series of discussions and progress across a range of issues, UCU and Trade Unions had agreed to pause industrial action across pay, working conditions and USS pension disputes for the next two weeks. Further announcements were expected at the end of next week;

6.1.7 the University's Industrial Action response plan was in the process of being refined and kept under review. A Silver Operation Group (with representation from across Faculties, HR and Communications) continued to meet weekly since September 2022 to ensure there were robust mitigation plans in place. A Gold Operation group had also been stood up since last term to discuss and consider important issues and advise the VC and UEB as required.

6.2 in relation to the next valuation of the USS pension:

- 6.2.1 the latest report on the cost of the USS pension scheme indicated a £5bn technical provisions surplus on 31 December 2022, which was a significant contrast from the £14.1bn deficit at the 31 March 2020 valuation. This enabled a cautious optimism regarding the upcoming triennial valuation on 31 March 2023;
 - 6.2.2 the technical provisions surplus had resulted in part due to an increase in interest rates and rise in gilt yields;
 - 6.2.3 UUK and employers were continuing to work with scheme stakeholders to make progress in other key areas, including low-cost contribution options, governance improvements and conditional indexing. Council recognised it would be important to ensure the next valuation had the appropriate risk profile to enable long term sustainability of the scheme;
- 6.3 in relation to mitigating the impact of industrial action on educational outcomes and learning opportunities:
- 6.3.1 a statement had been developed within the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual (TQA) demonstrating an institutional commitment to students and providing assurance on replacing lost learning opportunities and minimizing the impact on examinations and assessment;
 - 6.3.2 the University was working closely with the Guild and Students' Union to ensure any withheld pay as a result of industrial action was reinvested in the student experience and wellbeing;
 - 6.3.3 further work was also being undertaken to explore how the University can strengthen the signposting and support provided to students who may have experienced disappointing examination results. The Guild and Student's Union had issued joint communication highlighting that their services remained open and that there were a wide range of academic groups and societies for students to be engaged in;

Closed Minute

7. Student President Reports (CNL/23/08 and CNL/23/09)

- 7.1 Council noted the key areas of ongoing work being undertaken by the Exeter Students' Guild and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union along with the other key updates in relation to Student Priorities, Cost of Living, Wellbeing and Support, Belonging and Inclusion; Communications and Engagement;
- 7.2 Council recognised that a key strategic priority would be to review the current levels of support provided to students from lower-economic backgrounds and to work in collaboration with the University to identify further opportunities to enhance this provision through internships, bursary payments or other interventions to ensure the most effective levels of support;
- 7.3 The following points were raised in discussion: that a task and finish group had been established to commence preparations for TEF 2027 and consider students as change makers during their

student journey; the importance of improving the score in the NSS for student voice; that it might be helpful for students to be surveyed at the end of their 3rd term to provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their experiences; that further consideration could be given to aligning communications between the Guild, Student Unions and student engagement teams;

ACTION: that further updates on the Cost of Living Support provided to students would be included in forthcoming annual reports on Access and Participation;

8. Admissions 2023 Entry – Progress Report – Stage 2 (CNL/23/10)

8.1 recruitment was on track to meet targets for Undergraduate home and postgraduate taught International. The University was currently under target for UG International, PGT Home and PGCE, but this was a sector-wide trend;

8.2 targeted action plans had been launched to attract as many new Undergraduate International and PGT applications and convert a higher proportion of offer holders;

Closed Minute

9. Sustainability Report (CNL/23/11)

9.1 the paper set out progress against the University's carbon net zero targets and key initiatives and plans for meeting commitments to lead meaningful action against the climate emergency and ecological crisis;

9.2. the Director of Sustainability was in the process of establishing a Task and Finish Group (chaired by Professor Peter Cox, Professor of Climate System Dynamics), to develop a clear institutional approach to the offsetting strategy and review and consider a range of associated issues, including: estimated costs, approach to purchasing offsets, the verification process and wider issues such as permanence, social justice and biodiversity;

9.3 Council understood that some of the most common offsets were associated with forests, restoration of wetlands and blue carbon, but that the first meeting of the Group was not scheduled to take place until April 2023 and further time was required to develop a clear offsetting strategy;

Closed Minute

ACTION: that a progress report from the Task and Finish Group would be scheduled for Council providing an update on the development of the offsetting strategy.

ACTION: that following initial consideration of the Strategy 2030 Delivery plan in April 2023, the full multi-year programme of IDM decarbonisation investment proposals would be scheduled for Council at the May and July 2023 meetings;

ACTION: to schedule a further progress update on delivery of the Net Zero 2030 target, the associated financial challenges, and institutional trade-offs, including: consideration of the overall scale of expenditure required, associated capital and revenue costs, the advantages and disadvantages of utilising significant carbon offsetting to meet the 2030 target, the potential reputational risks of failing to meet the agreed target and ways of managing this if necessary;

10. Update on Penryn Pitches Project (CNL/23/12)

10.1 Council noted the summary of the options presented and recognised the importance of the project to enhancing the student experience and that it remained a key priority for the Students' Union;

Closed Minute

Council **agreed** to proceed with further development of the recommended Penryn RFC option (as detailed in section 3 of the paper), but subject to the University clarifying in communications that whilst it was eager to support the project it would only be in a position to do so if appropriate levels of additional funding were also successfully secured by other parties;

Council **agreed** that further work would be undertaken on reviewing the costs associated with the project;

ACTION: that further legal work would be undertaken through Michelmores and Penryn RFC with a further case brought forward for consideration by Council in July 2023;

Closed Minute

11. Update from Dual Assurance Leads

11.1 a positive first Dual Assurance meeting for the Global Strategy had been held with new DVC (Global Engagement) several weeks ago which had highlighting the challenges surrounding international student recruitment targets and areas of development;

12. Draft University Terms and Academic Calendar 2023-24

12.1 the Council meeting dates for the Academic Year 2023-24 had been pushed back by 1 week in order to enable a longer gap between UEB and Council meetings and further quality assurance to be undertaken on committee papers;

12.2 in discussion: the Assistant Director (EDI) had been consulted on any religious festivals which may impact on the dates of provisionally scheduled committee meetings; the Draft University Terms and Academic Calendar 2023-24 paper would be circulated to Senate (8 March 2023) for any feedback prior to final approval by Council in April 2023;

Council **agreed** that a tentative Council Away Day would be diarised for April 2024 and an informed decision on whether to proceed with the meeting would be made by the Chair of Council nearer the time.

13. Matters approved in Part II

13.1 Council noted the documentation that had been contained in Part II for Information as detailed on the agenda;

13.2 Professor Tim Quine (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience) had been appointed as an ex-officio member of Council as the next longest serving Deputy Vice-Chancellor, in accordance with Section 17.2 of the University Ordinances;

13.3 Professor Martin Siegert (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Cornwall) had been appointed as a

Trustee of the CSM Board, which had been progressed via Chair's Action and formally accepted by the CSM Board;

Council **approved** the minor amendments to the Terms of Reference included within Appendix 1 of the Council Nominations Committee November Report (CNL/23/14).

14. Chair's Closing Remarks

14.1 a simplified and more concise coversheet would be trialled for Council papers for the remainder of the Academic Year 2022-23. Council were invited to provide feedback to the Chair on this new approach which would be reviewed in July 2023;

14.2 a new approach had also been adopted to incorporate routine items of business requiring Council approval but no substantive discussion within a section of the agenda marked 'Part II – for decision';

14.3 that Nominations Committee had agreed that a review would be undertaken of the current assurances provided to Council, including: assessing the regular/standing papers provided to Council, the mechanism of Dual Assurance, and the appropriate mix of dual assurance roles and Council sub committees.

Council **approved** the minor amendments to the Terms of Reference included within Appendix 1 of the Council Nominations Committee November Report (CNL/23/14) will be taken as approved.