



University of Exeter

COUNCIL

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – DRAFT FOR REVIEW

11 July 2024

11am-4.25pm

Pearson Teaching Room, Building: One and online via Microsoft Teams

NB text in BLACK for publication; text in BLUE has been redacted for publication

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Attendees:**MEMBERS PRESENT**

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Quentin Woodley | Pro-Chancellor and Chair |
| Professor Lisa Roberts | President and Vice-Chancellor |
| Professor Tim Quine | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) |
| Professor Dan Charman | Senior Vice-President and Provost |
| Richard Atkins | Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council |
| Sally Cabrini | Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor (<i>online</i>) |

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| Damaris Anderson-Supple Member | Independent |
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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nicholas Cheffings | Independent Member |
| Andrew Greenway | Independent Member |
| Karime Hassan | Independent Member |
| Professor Malcom Skingle | Independent Member |
| Alison Reed | Independent Member |
| Tim Weller | Independent Member (<i>online</i>) |
| Glenn Woodcock | Independent Member |
| Sarah Matthews-DeMers | Independent Member |

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Professor Barrie Cooper | Senate Representative |
| Professor Sue Prince | Senate Representative |
| Professor Karen Knapp | Senate Representative |

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| Connie Chilcott | President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union |
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SECRETARY

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| Mike Shore-Nye | Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary |
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APOLOGIES

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| Salam Katbi | Independent Member |
| Shades Chaudhary | Professional Services Representative |
| Alex Stanley | Education Officer and Representative of the Exeter Students' Guild |

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

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| Dave Stacey | Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services |
| Alison Chambers | Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students |
| Imelda Rogers | Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources (<i>online</i>) |
| Dr Jeremy Diaper | Assistant Director, Governance (<i>minutes</i>) |

IN ATTENDANCE AS OBSERVERS AND JOINING COUNCIL ON 1 AUGUST 2024

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| Alex Martin | Newly elected President for Students' Guild (AY 2024-25) |
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IN ATTENDANCE**Minute Item 123 – Global Advancement: Philanthropic Funding Update**

Shaun Curtis

Director of Global Advancement

Minute Item 124 – Research Update

Professor Krasi Tsaneva-Atanasova Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact)

Minute Item 126 – Admissions 2024: Forecasts, Confirmation & Clearing Plans

Professor Richard Follet Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement

116. Chair’s Welcome and Declarations of Interest

116.1 the Chair welcomed Council members to the meeting and invited any declarations of interest. Declarations of interest were received in relation to the following items on the agenda:

116.1.1 Barrie Cooper declared an interest in relation to the Enabling Strategy 2030 agenda item (Minute Item 125) in light of his conflict of interest as Policy Officer, Negotiator and Representative at the University of Exeter’s University and College Union (UCU) branch;

116.1.2 Glenn Woodcock declared an interest in relation to the Heat Supply Decarbonisation: Outline Business Case (Minute Item 134) on the basis that he was Chairman and Shareholder of the consultancy firm ‘Global City Futures’, who were currently a client of the University and advising on the procurement process for this project;

116.2 the Chair confirmed that these conflicts of interest had been identified in advance of the meeting and it had been agreed that Barrie Cooper and Glenn Woodcock would be asked to absent themselves from these agenda items to ensure that these conflicts of interest were managed appropriately;

116.3 the Chair welcomed Alex Martin (newly elected President of the Students’ Guild) who was attending as an observer prior to joining Council from 1 August 2024;

116.4 the Chair welcomed Tim Weller and Imelda Rogers to the meeting (who joined via Microsoft Teams) and noted that Sally Cabrini would also be joining the meeting online at approximately 12.30pm. It was affirmed that Council meetings would continue to be held on an in-person basis, but that members may be permitted to join online in prior agreement with the Chair in exceptional circumstances, including in instances where there was an unforeseen illness or a pre-existing diary commitment prior to them joining Council.

117. Minutes from the Meetings held on 22 May and 23 May 2024 (CNL/156/23-24, CNL/156a/23-24, CNL/157/23-24, CNL/157a/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

117.1 the minutes of the meetings of 22 and 23 May 2024 were **APPROVED**, subject to minor amendments to remove the duplication in minute 101.1 and 101.2.

118. Action Log (CNL/158/23-24 and CNL/158a/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

118.1 Council received the Action Log for information which had been updated to incorporate the most recent actions from the Council meetings in May 2024. The current status of the actions were noted;

118.2 in relation to action 14/2023-24 it was noted that Council had not yet received a further update on the enhanced digital solutions that would be utilised to minimise the potential for additional administrative workload on staff as a result of the reduction in resource following the Voluntary Severance Scheme;

118.3 as part of the delivery of the Voluntary Severance Scheme a key area of focus had been on business continuity to anticipate potential risks and ensure pro-active mitigations were in place to minimize the impact on workload;

118.4 it was noted that a further update on enhanced digital solutions had been deferred to Academic Year 2024/25 to enable input and contribution from the newly appointed Director of Digital Transformation who had recently joined the University in June 2024.

ACTION: that an update on enhanced digital solutions would be scheduled for Council in the Academic Year 2024/25 to provide assurance on the implementation of mechanisms for enabling digital efficiencies and accelerating new ways of working to reduce cost and minimize additional workload.

119. Verbal Update on Business Schedule for the Academic Year 2024-25

119.1 the Chair advised that the Council Business Schedule for the Academic Year 2024-25 was in the process of development and would be finalised over the summer to ensure alignment with the newly constituted Council committees;

119.2 that consideration would be given to ensuring sufficient time for strategic discussion on the following topics: enhancing QS League Table Rankings; Teaching Space, Estates Utilisation, and approach to timetabling and allocation of space; Curriculum for Change; National Student Survey (NSS) Results and continuous improvement plans; Research Income Performance and Future Pipeline; Enabling Strategy 2030 and the Voluntary Severance Scheme.

120. Chair's Business and Matters Arising

120.1 the Chair provided an update on the following Matters Arising:

a) Appointments of Dean for Taught Students, Dean for Professional Education and Dean for Online and Postgraduate Taught Students

120.1.1 further to the earlier email correspondence to Council, a competitive selection process led by the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) had been undertaken and the following appointments had been endorsed by Senate (19 June 2024):

120.1.2 the appointment of Professor Beverley Hawkins as Dean for Taught Students, who had been Associate Dean for Education in the Business School since 2021 having previously held a number of leadership roles across the University;

120.1.3 the appointment of Professor Rachael Johnstone and Dr Stuart Robinson as Dean for Professional Education on a job share basis. Professor Johnston was currently Associate Dean for Taught Students & Director for the Centre for Degree Apprenticeships and Dr Robinson was currently Associate Dean for Business Engagement, Innovation and Professional Education in the Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy and Senior Lecturer in

Management;

120.1.4 the appointment of Heather Haseley (currently Director of Education Innovation) and Daryl Wilkerson (currently Associate Dean for Education, Medical School) as Dean for Online and Postgraduate Education on a job share basis for an interim period of 12 months.
An external recruitment process for the substantive role would be launched in the autumn.

APPROVED: the appointment of the Dean for Taught Students, the Dean for Professional Education (on a job share basis) and the interim appointment of the Dean for Online and Postgraduate Education (on a job share basis) from 1st August 2024

121. President and Vice-Chancellor's Report (CNL/159/23-24 Confidential)

121.1 following the outcome of the 2024 General Election a new suite of ministers had been announced as part of the new Labour UK Government, including:

121.1.1 Bridget Phillipson (Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities);

121.1.2 Jacqui Smith (Minister for Skills, Further and Higher Education in the Department of Education);

121.1.3 Peter Kyle (Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology)

121.1.4 the President and Vice-Chancellor had written to all of the aforementioned newly elected Labour Ministers as well as the new regional Members of Parliament to congratulate them on their appointment and invite them to visit the University;

121.1.5 Lord James Wharton had resigned as the Chair of the Office for Students. The Department of Education had advised that the process to appoint an interim chair was currently underway, with a permanent replacement due to be announced in due course;

Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

121.4 the College Principal of Petroc had stood down after five years. The College had appointed Kurt Hintz as interim Principal and Chief Executive effective from 19 August 2024. Petroc had also recently renamed its degree-level provision and unveiled the University Centre for Northern Devon;

121.5 the University would continue to maintain strong partnerships with local colleges via the University of Exeter Education Partners Programme, which offered opportunities for schools or colleges to form a partnership with the University;

121.6 the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) was invited to provide an update on the headline results from the National Student Survey 2024. A presentation was tabled (CNL/160/23-24 Confidential) which has been filed with the record of the meeting:

121.6.1 the National Student Survey (NSS) was managed by the OfS on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies and surveyed all final year university students, including: Undergraduate (87%), integrated masters (10%) and Degree Apprenticeships (3%). The survey was run between 11 January and 30 April 2024 and gathered opinions from students on the quality of their courses throughout their University degree, but responses were often informed

by recent experiences during the survey period;

- 121.6.2 the NSS results were intended to help inform prospective student choices, provide data to support Universities and Colleges to improve the student experience and support public accountability;
- 121.6.3 that the students completing the survey were predominantly the 2021/22 cohort whose educational experience had been impacted by Teacher Assessed Grades, the Covid-19 pandemic and Industrial Action;
- 121.6.4 as the University's survey response rate was 72.6% (up from 69.3% in the previous year) the results presented reliable data which provided an invaluable mechanism for development of a detailed understanding of the current strengths and areas for continued enhancement of education;
- 121.6.5 the University's KPI score for student satisfaction was 80.3%. Whilst this represented a difference of just 0.6% from 80.9% in 2023, it had nevertheless led to a drop in ranking against the sector, comparator group and within the Russell Group;
- 121.6.6 the NSS results data was used in TEF and league table metrics, but there was no separate NSS league table ranking. Based on the absolute value, the NSS results placed the University 83rd in the sector (down 36 places from 47th in 2023), 8th in the University competitor group (down 2 places from 6th in 2023) and 9th in the Russell Group (down 5 places from 4th in 2023);
- 121.6.7 in relation to the headline results, Council noted that there had been an improvement in mental wellbeing services (+3.1%), which was partly attributable to enhanced student communications regarding the availability of mental health support and signposting to wellbeing services. It was noted that the most disappointing outcome had been in relation to Assessment and Feedback (-2.5%) which would be a continued area of focus;
- 121.6.8 in relation to specific Departments and Faculties, Council noted areas that had improved their KPI score across the Faculties, including Drama (+7.9%), Geography (+4.2%) and Law (+0.5%). It was noted that whilst there had been a material improvement in performance in Nursing (+18.4%) this was still below the national median;
- 121.6.9 the University would be focusing on areas below the benchmark to improve performance, including learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support and learning resources. Other key areas of focus included: high-level scrutiny of Teaching Excellence Assessment Plans; embedding elements of best practice in high-performing Departments more widely across the institution (especially in Departments that were delivering teaching efficiently to large cohorts and still managing to foster a sense of belonging amongst the student population); identifying any systemic variation across student hubs that needed further investigation; exploring opportunities to enhance Learning including via Curriculum for Change Assessment Design Principles;
- 121.7. the following was also noted in discussion:
- 121.7.1 last year the NSS results for Degree Apprenticeships had been generally more positive than for 3 year undergraduate degrees and integrated masters, but as there was a smaller proportion of Degree Apprenticeships small changes resulted in larger fluctuations in overall scores. Further analysis would be undertaken to understand the

changes in Degree Apprenticeship results in greater levels of detail and to ascertain if this pertained to the University or employer partners;

121.7.2 whilst it was recognised that there had only been a small 0.6 percentage change in comparison to last year, it was affirmed that the National Student Survey results provided a substantive set of rich information relating to the student experience, including free-text data and that it would be important to undertake detailed statistical analysis to develop a thorough understanding of areas requiring action;

121.7.3 it would be important to maintain an institution-wide focus on improving Assessment and Feedback and to develop a deep-seated understanding of the free-text comments, including potential impact of the transition to ELE (Exeter Learning Environment) 2 and the lessons learned from the implementation of this new software; and identifying Where negative feedback had resulted from technological or procedural issues;

121.7.4 notwithstanding the complexities in relation to timetabling allocation, it would be important to identify opportunities to minimize the impact of timetabling on the final year experience. The Curriculum for Change programme would help to minimize the unique number of module combinations and help to create a more coherent and consistent experience for all students.

122. Reports from the Student Representatives of the Exeter Guild and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union (CNL/161/24-25, CNL/161a/24-25 and CNL/162/24-25 Open)

122.1 Council noted the report outlining key areas of ongoing and new work that the Guild was undertaking in relation to Academic Representation and Student Voice; Events; Campaigns and Activism; Housing; Wellbeing; Climate; Cost of Living;

122.2 a report was also received from Alex Stanley (Student Representative of the Exeter Guild) who had sent their apologies in advance and submitted a pre-recorded video in their absence;

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123. Global Advancement: Philanthropic Fundraising Update (CNL/163/24-25 Confidential)

The Chair welcomed Shaun Curtis (Director of Global Advancement) to the meeting.

123.1 the University was in the planning phase of a new philanthropic campaign to help support the ambitions of all three Faculties in the areas of teaching, research and capital development and all other aspects of student life, including scholarships and Widening Participation;

123.2 the new philanthropic campaign would be the third in Exeter's recent history and significantly larger in scale and ambition than the previous campaigns;

123.3 in relation to wider trends in UK HE philanthropy, the latest Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Insights Survey highlighted that Exeter was one of only 12 Russell Group institutions to raise over £20m. Excluding Oxbridge, only 3 HE institutions had secured Individual gifts of over £15m over the last three years, including: Exeter, King's College London, and Edinburgh;

123.4 the University's philanthropic campaign was overseen by an Advancement Delivery Advisory Board, alongside a Fundraising Board chaired by Gerry Brown and Alumni Network Group

chaired by Steve Edge. It was noted that there were also a wide-ranging series of additional alumni groups established to help ensure widespread engagement with the alumni community, including female graduates, sport, China and the Business School;

123.5 the following was noted in relation to the due diligence process and procedures for the solicitation and acceptance of philanthropic gifts;

123.5.1 that it was important to ensure that there were robust procedures and processes in place to ensure that the University continued to adhere to ethical gift acceptance and fundraising practice, including assurances surrounding the origins of the gifts, donors and management of associated risks;

123.5.2 Council were provided with assurance that detailed due diligence processes were undertaken on prospective philanthropic gifts and donations by the Prospect Research Team. Any potentially contentious donations that might be deemed to damage the University's reputation were escalated to the University Executive Board to decide on whether to progress further. It was noted that there were instances when UEB had decided not to accept specific donations or proceed with engagement further on basis of potential reputational risks associated;

123.5.3 it was noted that the partnership principles, which had previously been approved by Council, were utilised as the overarching framework to inform decision making and identify specific criteria to consider and review. A detailed due diligence policy was also utilised to ensure there were robust processes and procedures in place. It was noted that it would not be appropriate to make publicly available a log of prospective donors or institutions that had not been pursued further as this information was considered commercially sensitive and could also impede the University's ability to secure further philanthropic donations;

123.5.4 University Executive Board had responsibility and oversight for ensuring that there were robust due diligence and assurance processes in place regarding philanthropic gifts and donations. Whilst Council would continue to receive an annual report on philanthropic fundraising and assurance on the overarching procedures in place, it would not be appropriate to consider operational detail regarding any specific gifts or donors that had not been pursued further;

123.5.5 that across the entire Higher Education sector, less than 1% of alumni had provided philanthropic donations to their alma mater in the previous year, with the University's average only slightly higher at 1.57%. This emphasized the importance of expanding the philanthropic approach to fundraising beyond the traditional alumni community and to develop a strategic approach to encourage donations more widely from potential donors;

123.5.6 in order to achieve the long-term ambitions of the University it would be important to ensure that philanthropic donations were strategically aligned with delivery of Strategy 2030 and the creation of a greener, healthier and fairer society;

Closed Minute – Confidential

ACTION: that an annual Global Advancement assurance report and philanthropic fundraising update would be incorporated within the annual Council schedule of business;

ACTION: that it would be important to ensure the Philanthropic fundraising campaign remained

aligned with the strategic ambitions of 2030 and that future reports would show clearer alignment with the institutional purpose to utilise the power of education and research to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.

The Chair thanked Shaun Curtis (Director of Global Advancement) for his contribution to the meeting and invited him to leave.

124. Research Update (CNL/164/24-25 Confidential)

The Chair welcomed Professor Krasi Tsaneva-Atansova (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Impact) to the meeting.

- 124.1 Council received an update on the principal activities that were furthering the strategic priorities to build academic critical mass and catalyse further improvements in research performance and reputation. It was noted that the latest sector benchmarking data for for 2022/23 showed ongoing improvements in our research income per FTE, which had resulted in improving the ranking to 19th within the 24 Russell Group Universities and retaining our ranking of 20th for research income;
- 124.2 the University had secured 36% growth in research income since 2018/19, which was the highest percentage growth in research income within the Russell Group in the last five years. Exeter had also achieved 18% percentage improvement in income per Education and Research FTE since 2018/19, which was the third highest growth behind Leeds (19%) and Birmingham (27%);
- 124.3 whilst the University's research performance in the Russell Group continued to steadily improve and remained on an upwards trajectory, there nevertheless remained areas where the University had not been successful. It was noted that the University had not been able to secure Doctoral Training Provision, which would be needed to ensure continued improvements to postgraduate research skills and to help increase the number of PGR students per FTE.

Closed Minute – Confidential

The Chair thanked Professor Krasi Tsaneva-Atansova (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Impact) for her contribution to the meeting and invited them to leave.

125. Enabling Strategy 2030 (CNL/165/24-25 Confidential)

Barrie Cooper absented himself from discussion in relation to the agenda item on Enabling Strategy 2030 in light of his conflict of interest as Policy Officer, Negotiator and Representative at the University of Exeter's University and College Union (UCU) branch;

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- 125.2 a presentation on Enabling Strategy 2030 (CNL/165/24-25) was tabled and has been filed with the record of the meeting;
- 125.3 Council noted that the decision to make the Exeter Release Scheme (TERS) available to academic and professional services colleagues had been critical to enhance the institutions financial resilience, deliver staff cost savings and support change in size and shape planning aligned with Strategy 2030;
- 125.4 throughout the TERS process constructive engagement and continued dialogue had been

maintained with staff and students, including all Departments, Faculties and Professional Services Divisions; Senate; the Senior Leaders' Forum; Trade Unions and the Guild and Students' Union;

125.5 a series of decision-making principles had been agreed to ensure applications were only supported if the departure of an employee was in the strategic financial and operational interests of the institution and did not negatively impact on REF or research income performance, recruitment and admissions, or delivery of student experience outcomes. Protecting the ongoing workload and wellbeing of colleagues had also been a key consideration when deciding on the outcomes of each case;

125.6 TERS was an entirely voluntary scheme and all applicants would be informed of outcomes on 11 July 2024. Managers would then be informed of the acceptance of TERS offers on 5 August 2024 and commence arrangements to release staff, with the final day of employment for the majority of applicants being on 30 August 2024, unless an alternative leaving date was required to enable work to be completed before their departure;

125.7 support would continue to be provided to staff leaving the University via the TERS scheme, with access to outplacement support, legal advice and a dedicated HR TERS team;

Closed Minute – Confidential and Commercial in Confidence

126. Admissions Update 2024: Forecasts, Confirmation and Clearing Plans (CNL/166/24-25 Confidential)

The Chair invited Barrie Cooper to rejoin the meeting having absented himself from the previous agenda item as a result of a conflict of Interest.

The Chair welcomed Professor Richard Follett (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement) to the meeting.

126.1 Council noted the admissions report which provided an update on the current trajectory for undergraduate and postgraduate taught admissions for 2024 entry in the context of current forecasts;

126.2 the admissions forecasts (excluding Degree Apprenticeships and online) had been revised down since the last report to Council to take into account ongoing sector and political volatility and to account for ongoing fluctuations in no-show and withdrawal rates;

126.3 based on the current trajectory for campus-based taught admissions, the University was scheduled to meet its Undergraduate home target and secure c. 77% of Undergraduate international Year 1, which would represent the largest ever undergraduate international intake in September 2024 and outperform the undergraduate competitor set and wider HE sector;

126.4 Degree Apprenticeship and Online recruitment was set to exceed the target for Academic Year 2024-25;

126.5 that the postgraduate international market remained volatile at the University and across the wider UK sector;

Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

The Chair thanked Professor Richard Follett (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement) for his contribution to the meeting and invited him to leave.

127. Final Financial Forecast 2023/24 (CNL/166/24-25 Confidential)

- 127.1 the final financial forecast had been prepared in June 2024 based on actual results to the end of May 2024;
- 127.2 the operating surplus (EBIT) was currently forecast as £17.4m (2.7% of turnover), which was £5.4m higher than the revised budget. This reflected an improvement of £4m from the third forecast in March 2024;
- 127.3 the University's cash balances were projected to stand at £201m as at 31 July 2024;
- 127.4 the improved financial performance had partly resulted from a £2.8m increase in forecast Teaching income, including from Degree Apprenticeships and a final review of tuition fee waivers and discount. It was noted that Degree Apprenticeship had continued on a growth trajectory and were expected to amount to c. £20m in 2024-25;
- 127.5 as a result of the late improvement, the forecast degree apprenticeship income would be revised for future years. Further horizon scanning and scenario planning would be undertaken in due course to consider the wider implications of the government's potential reform of the Apprenticeship levy, the impact on Degree Apprenticeships and funding, and opportunities to expand the international offering of Degree Apprenticeships;
- 127.6 it was noted that the marked improvement from the third forecast had also resulted from good budget management and cost controls, including containment of staff costs.

128. Budget 2024-25 and Later Year Plans (CNL/167/24-25 Confidential)

- 128.1 as a result of the challenging financial context in which the University was operating, the Final Budget 2024-25 and Later Year Plans proposed a 1% operating surplus next year against the 2% envisaged within the 5-Year Plan;
- 128.2 the Budget position was based on the current best estimate of 2024-25 admissions and revised assumptions since May 2024, including anticipated consequences of the downturn in international student recruitment and mitigations, workforce planning and other initiatives required to secure a sustainable budget;
- 128.3 the affordability of the planned level of capital funding and expenditure available would be dependant on financial improvement driven by the proposed mitigations being achieved in full, delivery of new-income generating activities and other initiatives;
- 128.4 all lending and USS covenants had been assessed and complied with over the planning period and there was very limited risk of a USS covenant breach;

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129. Sustainability Data 2022/23 (CNL/168a/24-25 Confidential)

- 129.1 the Chief Financial Officer tabled a brief update on 2022/23 Sustainability data and noted that the University currently reported c. 30 sustainability metrics involving over 35 data sources with multiple calculation methodologies;

- 129.2 it was highlighted that there had been several discrepancies identified in the data utilised for internal and external reporting. The causes had been investigated to ensure there was a clear plan in place to improve data quality and ensure appropriate steps had been taken to correct data within existing submissions and reports;
- 129.3 PwC had been commissioned to undertake independent assurance of environmental sustainability data to provide internal and external confidence in our reported figures, review progress towards institutional targets and identify areas for improvement. An update would be provided to Audit and Risk Committee in Term 1 in the Academic Year 2024-25;
- 129.4 Council were presented with a high-level overview of the sustainability data discrepancies (which has been filed with the record of the meeting). It was noted that plans were in place to improve the quality of the sustainability data and minimise the risk of publishing incorrect sustainability data in future. Assurances were also provided that accurate data for 2023/24 data could be produced for the next reporting cycle;

Closed Minute – Confidential

130. Risk Report 3: 2023/24 (including Horizon Scanning) (CNL/169/24-25 Confidential)

- 130.1 the final risk report of the 2023/24 risk management cycle incorporated revised content and an enhanced format and presentation, which had been updated in response to recent feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee and separate consultation and discussion with the current and incoming Chair of the Committee;
- 130.2 Council welcomed the significant improvement in the new risk report and affirmed that it presented information in a more easily assimilable format which included: an overview of the highest risks on the corporate risk register; new or peripheral risks (which were lower risk but may be of interest to the committee) and the movement of key corporate risks (scored high or very high over the past four reporting periods);
- 130.3 Council noted the following:
- 130.3.1 that there was one newly registered risk pertaining to Business Continuity and the TERS process which was rated low in light of the continued institutional focus;
- 130.3.2 the reduction in the risk score for Information Security from Very High to High in line with the target action plan;
- 130.3.3 two risks had increased in score likelihood while remaining in the same risk scoring range: CR 54 International UG recruitment (Moderate) and CR25 Balancing Freedom of Speech and Duty of Care (High);
- 130.3.4 that CR35 (failure to deliver on the net zero carbon commitment) was currently rated high. Council would be returning to a detailed assessment of the Net zero strategy in the forthcoming Academic Year 2024-25;
- 130.3.5 Council noted the following:
- 130.3.5.1 that consideration should also be given to whether there was an increasing risk surrounding the recruitment and retention of high-calibre staff into the University at a

time of significant financial challenges. It was recognised that there were a number of mechanisms currently being utilised to help retain staff, including developmental opportunities and secondments. The Exeter Future Leaders Programme had been launched by the Vice-Chancellor in 2024 to help foster, nurture and develop the University's internal talent pool and to provide them with the skills and confidence to progress into executive leadership roles;

131. Audit and Risk Committee: Verbal Chair's Update

131.1 the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee provided a brief update on key issues discussed at the most recent meeting on 28 June 2024 as follows:

131.1.1. as part of the onboarding for the incoming Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, a meeting had been arranged with the Divisional Director of IT Services to provide a detailed understanding of the University's Cyber Security Strategy and roadmap along with insight of wider HE sector risks;

131.1.2. in relation to data security risks, the committee had recognised it would be important to instil a culture change amongst the academic community to ensure a more robust and rigorous approach to categorising data and data storage, as well as ensuring clear institutional awareness of where all confidential and personally sensitive data was located;

131.1.3 good progress had been made in delivering the 2023/24 internal audit plan and reports on the HR Culture Conversation Survey and Student Welfare were discussed. The Committee had commended in particular the robust institutional approach and significant amount of work completed following the external review into Student Mental Health and Wellbeing, especially in response to the Action Plan, Coroner's Report and Delivery Plan. The proactive approach being adopted to communicating with parents and diplomatically managing expectations at an early stage surrounding the University's legal responsibilities and levels of institutional wellbeing support that could be provided was also welcomed;

131.1.4. that the final draft of the internal audit schedule for the Academic Year 2024/25 had been approved, subject to final consultation undertaken between PwC, the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary and Chief Financial Officer. The draft of the internal audit schedule was provided in Part II for information and the following points were foregrounded:

- a) an internal audit of the Curriculum for Change programme would be incorporated towards the end of the 2024/25 Audit Plan, rather than in 2025/26 as previously planned;
- b) an internal audit would be undertaken on Transnational Education, with a specific focus on design controls in relation to how partners are identified and contracted, and how arrangements were monitored and reported on;
- c) in relation to Artificial Intelligence it was agreed that it would be premature to undertake an internal audit in 2024/25 at this stage;
- d) in light of aforementioned concerns surrounding data security risks, it was agreed that this would be incorporated as part of the IT Third Parties audit;
- e) research cost recovery would be considered within the audit of HESA data return, as Research England requirements specified an internal audit had to be undertaken on this every 5 years;

131.1.5. the Committee had confirmed the risk 'deep dive' programme for the Academic Year 2024-25 and held its first 'deep dive' sessions on key corporate risks relating to research (CR12

and CR15);

131.1.6. the Committee noted in discussion that it would be important to retain an institutional focus on pedagogical risks in relation to the use of Generative AI and the importance of developing a clear institutional policy for staff and students in relation to mitigate risks in relation to data protection and commercial sensitivity. It was noted that Senate would be undertaking a deep dive on Generative AI in the Academic Year 2024-25;

131.1.7. on behalf of Council, the incoming Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and Chair of Council extended a sincere thanks to the outgoing chair, Nicholas Cheffings, for his exceptional contribution to the committee and work undertaken as Chair to help ensure continued enhancements in effectiveness;

AGREED: that the final Audit and Risk Committee deep dive programme for the Academic Year 2024-25 would be uploaded to the Council 'Knowledge Area' for ease of reference and information.

132. Duckes Meadow Changing Facility Development: Outline Business Case (CNL/170/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

132.1.1 the Duckes Meadow Playing Pitches were primarily used for the wider student body and local community. It currently provided sports facilities for the majority of University of Exeter students, with more than c. 2,000 students participating on the 16 sports pitches and hosting approximately 540 visiting teams per season;

132.1.2 the changing facilities at Duckes Meadow were not currently considered fit for purpose and did not provide sufficiently high-quality facilities for students. The suboptimal standard of changing provision had continued to deteriorate and as a result the University was unable to expand the sport offering to the wider student demographic or local community;

132.1.3 as the University was a top 5 sporting institution and currently offered one of the most extensive programmes for competitive University sport, it was agreed the University should provide high-quality and EDI compliant changing facilities for a diverse student population. The investment had been identified as a key priority within the University Sport and Physical Activity Strategy to enhance the student experience;

132.1.4 the proposed investment in the Duckes Meadow Changing Facility Development would reduce the backlog maintenance (which was currently in excess of c. £650k) and enable revenue savings as the new facilities would be energy efficient, cheaper and easier to clean and maintain;

Confidential Minute – Closed

APPROVED: the Outline Business Case for Duckes Meadow Changing Facilities Development;

APPROVED: the draw down of £650k placemarked capital funds to develop the Changing Facilities design to RIBA Stage 4 and Full Business Case.

133. Engineering Phase 1: Outline Business Case (CNL/171/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

133.1 Engineering represented a significant strategic opportunity for STEM growth at the University, across both education and research. In light of the challenging sector-wide

financial context it was critical to deliver Engineering Phase 1 as quickly as possible to secure additional student numbers and research growth, but a highly-competitive and ambitious plan would continue to be developed in later phases once strong student number growth had been demonstrated;

133.2 REF 2021 had highlighted the small size of Exeter Engineering (78.6 FTE), with a ranking of 35th out of 84 submissions on academic FTE returned. However, the REF Outputs category had emphasized Engineering's strong potential, with the University 12th out of 84 submissions for 4* outputs. An increase in academic FTE and estate and facilities enhancements would enable the development of a critical mass to achieve mass student growth, research growth and ensure a strong financial margin was achieved;

133.3 Engineering was a key area where the University could deliver teaching efficiently, create economies of scale and secure a good overall cost recovery on teaching;

Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

APPROVED: the Outline Business Case for Capital Developments for of Exeter Engineering 2030, including the approval of initial drawdown funding of £514k.

134. Heat Supply Decarbonisation: Outline Business Case (CNL/172/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

Glenn Woodcock absented himself from discussion in relation to the agenda item on the Heat Supply Decarbonisation light of his conflict of interest as the Chairman and Shareholder of the consultancy firm 'Global City Futures' who were currently acting as a client of the University and advising on the procurement process for this project;

134.1 the Heat Supply Decarbonisation project was designed to replace fossil fuel derived heat supply with a low to net zero carbon technology across the University owned and operated buildings on the Exeter Campuses and was alignment with the University's published net zero carbon emission targets and the UK government's strategy to phase out gas boilers from 2035;

134.2 the proposal to work with Exeter City-wide heat network stakeholders was based on the opportunity offered by 1Energy to benefit from c. £42m of government grant funding, facilitating lower heat network connection and heat supply costs verses alternative methods that would not benefit from this funding;

134.3 deciding between offtaking from a University only or City-wide heat network was not possible at Outline Business Case stage as a procurement exercise was outstanding, grant funding opportunities were not yet confirmed, and a University based heat network programme cost was still under development;

134.4 that following commencement of work in July 2024 on RIBA Stage 2 and 3 level heating system modification designs for identified buildings to be heat network ready, a holistic estate level basis of design would be produced and provide more cost certainty and clarification surrounding legal and procurement positions;

134.5 in discussion: that it would be more challenging to pursue the city-wide heat network without government grant funding; that there would be a high social value to a city-wide network as it would coordinate multiple parties to achieve Net Zero using local environment sources and align within the University's commitment to sustainability and leading meaningful action against the climate crisis;

Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

AGREED: to select a heat network as the preferred delivery pathway and continue both Exeter City-wide and University only heat network options;

AGREED: to discount options to implement a building-by-building strategy to install Air Source Heat Pumps or other unproven technology;

AGREED: to commit £535k of approved placemaker revenue funding for further feasibility work to develop designs, assess technical and financial viability and progress to Full Business Case in 2025.

135. Student Information System (SIS) Optimisation – Operational Excellence Programme Business Case (CNL/173/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

The Chair invited Glenn Woodcock to rejoin the meeting having absented himself from the previous agenda item as a result of a conflict of Interest.

135.1 the SIS Optimisation Operational Excellence Programme would enable the University to maintain the University's sector leading position for delivery of teaching excellence and further enhance the student experience by providing the underpinning digital capability to support enhanced operational efficiency, curriculum transformation, evolution of data analytics, and further education portfolio diversification;

135.2 the current Student Information System (SIS) was 25 years old and constraining ability to deliver a number of strategic ambitions, including student number growth and expansion of online programmes and degree apprenticeships;

135.3 the Student Optimisation Operational Excellence Programme would deliver a range of digital enhancements, including a curriculum management system, a digital mechanism for module selection and change, and a customer relationship management system to support student enquiries and case management. By improving operational efficiency the programme would deliver an estimated £0.48 per annum cost reduction and £2.21m cost avoidance based on projected student growth by 2030;

135.4 the following was noted in discussion:

135.4.1 that it would be important to approach the SIS Optimisation Operational Excellence Programme as a strategic business change project to ensure successful implementation across the wider University;

135.4.2 the work undertaken to date to create the programme foundations and the dependency between the SIS Cloud migration and optimisation of SIS functionality;

135.4.3 the development of an in-house system had been considered but had been discounted as a viable option as it would cost in excess of £100m and present significant risks.

APPROVED: the place-marker of £7.22m funding to support programme delivery (£4.81m capital and £2.41m revenue).

136. Update on Council Independent Member Recruitment Processes for the Academic Year 2024-

25 (CNL/174/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

- 136.1 Nominations Committee agreed in November 2023 that a recruitment search for an Independent Member of Council (Class II) to join Council on 1st August 2024 would be progressed and that the Executive Search and Recruitment Consultant Odgers Berndtson would be re-engaged to assist with the search based on their successful track-record of supporting the recruitment of high-calibre Independent members onto Council;
- 136.2 a robust recruitment process had been undertaken as outlined in the paper to identify an individual with the requisite expertise in Teaching, Education, Learning and Student Experience. Due diligence and background checks had been completed in alignment with the standard processes for Independent Council member recruitment;
- 136.3 Nominations Committee had unanimously endorsed the recommended appointment of Rebecca Boomer-Clark as a Class II Independent Member of Council on the basis of her extensive knowledge and experience in education, which included her current role as CEO of one of the largest multi-academy trusts in England; significant experience in the national policy landscape; and an active presence on national advisory boards. It was also noted that she had prior experience as a Non-Executive Director and the time, capacity and commitment to fully contribute as an Independent Council member;
- 136.4 as previously reported to Council, Nominations Committee had continued to explore the possibility of a member of the NHS Royal Devon Board of Directors with senior medical expertise joining University Council as part of a reciprocal with the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust;
- 136.5 the proposal for Professor Adrian Harris (Chief Medical Officer) to attend Council as a standing attendee and observer in the Academic Year 2024-25, prior to his formal appointment as an Independent (Class II) member of Council in the Academic Year 2025-26, had been unanimously endorsed and supported by Nominations Committee, subject to a recruitment process being progressed over the summer as detailed in the paper;

APPROVED: the appointment of Rebecca Boomer-Clark as Independent Council Member (Class II) for a first term of office from 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027;

APPROVED: the proposal to complete the process for nominating Professor Adrian Harris (Chief Medical Officer) as a standing attendee and observer at Council in the Academic Year 2024-25, prior to his formal appointment as an Independent Class II member of Council in Academic Year 2025-26, as part of a reciprocal relationship with the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust;

AGREED: that further consideration would be given to determining which University Executive Board member would serve on the board of the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust;

AGREED: that delegated authority would be provided to a sub-set of Nominations Committee to meet with Professor Adrian Harris (Chief Medical Officer) over the summer and to conclude the recruitment process;

Secretary's Note: *Following endorsement by Nominations Committee (1 July 2024) and approval by Council (11 July 2024), a recruitment process was subsequently undertaken over the summer which*

resulted in unanimous and resounding support for Professor Adrian Harris's appointment to Council. In addition to the background and due diligence checks undertaken, a series of meetings were scheduled for Professor Harris to meet on an individual 1-2-1 basis with a sub-set of Nominations Committee, including each of the Pro-Chancellors and the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary. Following these meetings, a sub-set of Nominations Committee met to confirm their strong and unanimous support for the appointment of Professor Adrian Harris and agreed that he would further strengthen the knowledge, skills and experience across Council through his extensive medical expertise. As part of the recruitment process it was also confirmed that Professor Harris had sufficient time to commit to the role and had the strong support from the Chief Executive Officer (Royal NHS Devon) to undertake the requirements of the role of Independent Council Member.

An email was circulated to Nominations Committee and Council in September 2024 to notify members that the recruitment process had formally concluded and to confirm that Professor Adrian Harris (Chief Medical Officer, Royal NHS Devon) would join and actively contribute to Council meetings as an observer and standing attendee from the Academic Year 2024-25, prior to formally being appointed as a Class II Independent Member of Council in the Academic Year 2025-26 (when the next vacancies for Independent Council memberships would emerge).

It was also confirmed that a Secretary's Note would be included in the formal minutes from the Council meeting on 11 July to formally record that the approval of the appointment had been finalised by Nominations Committee and Council via email.

137. Council Membership Academic Year 2024-25 (CNL/175/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

137.1 in relation to Council Membership the following was noted as detailed in the paper:

137.1.1 the membership of Council for the forthcoming academic year 2024-25;

137.1.2 the members who were due to retire from Council at the end of the current academic year 2023-24;

137.1.3 the members whose term of office was scheduled to end on 31st July 2024 at the end of the current academic year 2024-25;

137.2 in relation to Council Committees in the Academic Year 2024-25:

137.2.1 that the Chair of Council had individually met with each Independent Member of Council to discuss and consider the proposed Independent membership of Council Committees

137.2.2 the recommended Independent membership of Council Committees for the Academic Year 2024-25 had been formally endorsed by Nominations Committee on 1 July 2024;

137.2.3 that the formal UEB membership and approach to inviting standing attendees to Council Committees would be discussed and agreed by the Chair of Council and President and Vice-Chancellor in consultation with the Chairs of committees and relevant UEB leads over the summer.

APPROVED: the recommended Independent membership of Council Committees for the Academic Year 2024-25.

138. Annual Trust Reports 2022/23 and Nominations for Trusts (CNL/176/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

138.1 further to endorsement by Nominations Committee on 1 July 2024, Council approved the recommendation to appoint the following University Trustees:

138.1.1 the appointment of Pamela Freeman (Devon Educational Trust) for an additional term of office from 16 July 2024 – 16 July 2027);

138.1.2 Professor Dave Hosken (Camborne School of Mines Trust) for an additional term of office from 16 April 2024 – 16 July 2027);

138.2 no nominations had been able to be identified to represent the University on the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust but potential candidates would continue to be explored;

138.3 Council noted the Annual Trust Reports which had been received for information within Part II of the Council Papers, including:

138.3.1 St Luke’s College Foundation Report of the Trustees 2022/23 and Financial Statements for the year end 31 July 2023;

138.3.2 Camborne School of Mines Trust Trustees Report 2022-23.

139. Terms of Reference: Council Committees Academic Year 2024-25 (CNL/177/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

139.1 following approval of the recommendations of the Council Assurance Review in April 2024 and the decision to formally constitute a series of new Council Committees, the draft Terms of Reference for the 3 new Council Committees and existing committees with an expanded remit (eg Governance and Nominations Committee) were uploaded to the Council Knowledge Area on 31 May 2024 for comment and feedback;

139.2 the Terms of Reference for other Council Committees (including Audit and Risk Committee, Remuneration Committee and the Council Standing Committee) would be reviewed in consultation with the Chairs of Committees over the summer 2024. Following initial review and endorsement by the committees, the Terms of Reference would be subsequently presented to Governance and Nominations Committee for endorsement prior to final approval by Council.

APPROVED: the Terms of Reference for the following Council Committees: Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee; Finance and Investment Committee; Governance and Nominations Committee; Research and Innovation Committee.

140. Part II – Items brought forward for discussion

140.1 in advance of the Council meeting a request was received for Council to discuss the paper on Honorary Graduate Nominations Approval for 2025 Ceremonies. Council noted concerns surrounding the current gender balance of nominations for 2025 (13 female vs 32 male honorary nominees) and the fact the ratio had worsened in comparison to last year.

140.2 Council noted that the list of honorary graduation nominations represented the list of

individuals who were nominated by the wider community and subsequently determined to have met the criteria for recognition via the award of an honorary degree. The list therefore represented the overall pool of potential Honorary Graduates, but not all who had met the criteria would necessarily be offered an award in 2025, and there was the option to offer awards to an equal number of female and male nominees;

140.3 during the course of the selection process, the panel had requested additional nominations from particular types of nominee who were considered to be under-represented, including in STEMM disciplines;

140.4 to strengthen the processes for the next round of Nominations, further work would be undertaken with the EDI team and in close consultation with the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Culture), who would be invited to join the selection panel and to assist in the development of an EDI report to inform enhancements to the selection process;

140.5 Council actively encouraged the enhanced focus on improving the diversity of nominations and also proposed the following suggestions to further improve the process:

140.6.1 including a bespoke equity, diversity and inclusion statement in communications to highlight that diverse nominations were particularly welcomed;

140.6.2 considering more innovative ways of raising awareness of the Honorary Graduates Nominations process, including: promoting Nominations in association with international women's day and other relevant events; collaborating with the Guild and Students' Union and other staff/student societies and networks to raise awareness amongst the wider University community of the Nominations process;

140.6.3 proactively engaging with student societies to identify any strong candidates who may have been engaged in career pathway events or other sessions;

140.6.4 reviewing the possibility of adopting a phased approach for contacting nominees to ensure a focus on approaching diverse candidates (including BAME and female) in the first instance.

AGREED: to approve the nominations of the individuals recommended to receive Honorary degrees during the 2025 ceremonies;

AGREED: that further work would be undertaken to enhance the diversity of nominations for Honorary degrees and that additional assurance on progress and steps undertaken to improve the process would be provided in the next report presented to Council in July 2025.

141. Part II – Items (For Decision) approved by Council

141.1 the Chair confirmed that the following papers had been approved by Council within Part II (For Decision):

141.1.1 Council New Member Induction Programme Academic Year 2024-25 (CNL/180/23-24)

141.1.2 Council Buddying Scheme Academic Year 2024-25 (CNL/181/23-24)

142. Part II – Items (For Information)

142.1: the following items were received by Council for information:

142.1.1 Register of Interests (CNL/179/23-24 and CNL/179a/23-24)

142.1.2 St Luke's College Foundation – Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements (CNL/176a/23-24)

142.1.3 Capital Approvals Annual Assurance Update (CNL/182/23-24)

142.1.4 Internal Audit Plan (CNL/183/23-24)

143. Chair's Closing Remarks

143.1 on behalf of Council, the Chair extended thanks to outgoing member Barrier Cooper for his contribution to Council during his term of office.