

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022**

**Present:** Canon Dr J. Turnbull (*President*), Dr M. David (*Deputy Chair*), Professor J. Alcolado, Mrs C. Bond, Dr D. Briggs, Professor S. Broomhead, Mr M. Clinton, Sir Neil Cossons, Councillor R. Daniels, Professor C. Forsdick, Mrs J. France-Hayhurst, Mr N. Jenkins, Professor H. O’Sullivan, Professor E. Simmons (*Vice Chancellor*), The Very Revd Dr T. Stratford, Rt Revd M. Tanner, Dr A. Seeney and Mrs S. Verity.

**Apologies for absence were received from:** Ms K. Howell and Mr J. Rankin (*CSU President*).

**In attendance:** Mr J. Moores (*University Secretary*), Mr R. Waddington (*PVC Resources & Chief Financial Officer*), Mr A.J. Parker (*Committee Secretary*) and Mrs S. Shepheard-Walwyn (*Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor*)

	ACTION
<p><b>3377 DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>Professor Broomhead and Councillor Daniels declared interests in matters pertaining to initiatives at Warrington and Cheshire West &amp; Chester Council respectively.</p>	
<p><b>3378 INSTRUMENT &amp; ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT</b></p> <p>The Secretary spoke to Appendix A which identified proposed amendments to the definition of a qualifying Foundation Council Member. It was highlighted that the proposed amendment had been identified during the recent appointment process for new Council Members, where two of the proposed appointments were members of churches that might be expected would qualify them as Foundation Members but whose churches had not chosen to join membership of Churches Together in Britain &amp; Ireland. The update to the Instrument of Government was proposed as a means of keeping to the intention of the criteria whilst not limiting it to churches of a particular organisation.</p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the amendments to the Instrument &amp; Articles of Government.</p>	
<p><b>3379 MEMBERSHIP</b></p> <p>(a) <u>Election of President (Appendix B1)</u>: One nomination had been received for the position of President of the University Council: Dr Meredydd David.</p> <p>IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to appoint Dr Meredydd David as President of the University Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022.</p> <p>(b) <u>To receive the recommendations from the Nominations &amp; Governance Committee on appointments to University Council (Appendix B2)</u>: The Secretary reported that following a recruitment process facilitated by</p>	

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Nurole, 6 candidates had been interviewed by a sub-group of the Nominations & Governance Review Committee with 3 being recommended for approval.

IT WAS RESOLVED to appoint the following with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022:

- 1) Sara Popplewell (Non- Foundation Member)
- 2) Stephen Dobson (Non-Foundation Member)
- 3) Peter Wallach (Foundation Member)

### **3380 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL**

The minutes of the meeting of the University Council held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 (Appendix C1) and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Appendix C2) were received and approved.

### **3381 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**3363 Vice-Chancellor's Report:** it was noted that matters arising from the November 2021 meeting would be addressed in the Vice-Chancellor's Report to this meeting (*see minute 3382*).

### **3382 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

The Vice-Chancellor's Report (Appendix D) was received and discussed and focussed on the key matters impacting the University.

- (a) **Recruitment 2022/23:** Undergraduate applications to date remained positive and indicated an 8.95% increase on the previous year, with increases across all subject areas and from different geographical regions of the UK. One exception was PGCE numbers which were significantly down and mirrored the national picture. This was attributed to both the effects of the pandemic on the popularity of teaching as a profession and the buoyant years of recruitment that preceded it. Postgraduate taught applications were also encouraging and were up by 8.5% on the previous year. International applications remained strong.
  - (b) **Finance:** The business planning meetings with Faculties/Departments had concluded and work on the budget for 2022-23 continued. It was envisaged that the deficit position would be in the region of £6M. There would be a stepped increase in staffing costs as current vacancies would be filled. It was also highlighted that 2022/23 would see the full year impact of the 1.25% national insurance increase and the first full year impact of Medical School staffing. An annual pay award of 2% had been assumed and an additional 20 members of staff included. Additional capital expenditure had also been allocated in order to support required upgrades to the IT infrastructure. In respect of upside risks, asset
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disposals such as Thornton, Warrington and other residences had not been included within the forecast.

- (c) **Medicine:** Interviews had commenced for the first applicants of the proposed cohort of international students on the MBChB programme due to commence in Autumn 2022. Lobbying continued across the sector and from professional bodies for the Government to fund additional medical places for 2023. There were proposals for the development of a degree apprenticeship route for UK students which could provide an opportunity for the University; the Executive Dean of Medicine was a member of the national implementation group progressing this initiative.
- (d) **Warrington:** An announcement to stakeholders of the proposed disposal of the Padgate site for residential development had been made and would be followed by national advertisement and communication with interested developers by the University's advisers, Cushman & Wakefield, from 8<sup>th</sup> April; a copy of the advert was noted. The Tucker building would be retained by the University in the short term in order to support the Policing provision.

The Time Square premises had been completed with two experience days undertaken to date and a series of additional events planned in order to raise the profile of the relocation into Warrington Town Centre. The refurbishment of Sarah Parker Remond House would be completed by the end of April 2022

- (e) **Science & Engineering Provision/Thornton:** The selection process for an investor partner concluded on 10<sup>th</sup> February, with presentations received from two organisations. The selected investor had begun its due diligence process, intended to lead to completion of its business plan and conclusion of formal legal agreement by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022. A two-day on-site workshop with the investor's staff and consultants had taken place on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.
  - (f) **Safer Streets Initiative:** The University had launched a new campaign to proactively drive home the message that violence against women would not be tolerated. The awareness raising drive would also be supported by the introduction of a network of Sexual Violence Liaison Officers trained to provide a single point of contact for those who had experienced sexual violence. The campaign had been funded as part of the UK Government's national Safer Streets initiative, with the University obtaining £550,000 following a successful bid to the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cheshire. Enhanced lighting and additional CCTV had been installed across University sites in order to help students feel safe. A series of workshops aimed at promoting acceptable behaviours and encouraging healthy relationships would also be delivered alongside staff training. The University Council welcomed
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this important campaign, as part of the University's ongoing commitment to tackle all forms of unacceptable behaviour.

- (g) **Research:** A detailed report had been presented to SET by the PVC (Research and Innovation) analysing the recent history with respect to institutional submissions to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and observations on overall research performance, and the link to strategy. It was highlighted that whilst the volume of research had grown significantly, the quality of research was less positive and research performance when compared to benchmark institutions was lower. There was therefore a need for both a REF Strategy and a Research Strategy, together with enhancements to systems and processes. It was noted that the results of the REF2021 exercise would be made available on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (embargoed) with the full results made publicly available on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Reporting on the results would be via the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee.
  
- (h) **Operational Matters:** The University and College Union (UCU) undertook strike action at 39 institutions in relation to its dispute about pay and working condition on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 with a further 3 days between 28<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022. Participation on these dates by academic staff at Chester had been low, with minimal disruptions to the student experience. Further UCU strike action was also planned between 28<sup>th</sup> March and Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
  
- (i) **Strategic Estate Matters:** Discussions with CWaC regarding future phases of the Northgate development had not progressed and would not be pursued by the University. A wide-ranging discussion took place on an opportunity elsewhere in the City Centre in partnership with the private sector. The site would be suitable for conversion and provide income generation that would be facilitated by third parties. An initial expression of interest would be submitted. The opportunities and risks presented by the proposal were discussed in detail. It was agreed that robust due diligence and financial planning would be necessary in order to ensure the best interests of the University. Further investigation on the proposal would be undertaken by the SET and updates presented to the Planning & Resources Committee.

### 3383 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Mr Jonathan Pritchard (Director of the International Centre) presented and gave an update on the International Student Recruitment Strategy (Appendix E). It was explained that recent changes to Government policy had removed previous barriers and improved the attractiveness of UK HE to the international market. It was noted that in 2020/21 some 605,000 international students were studying at UK HEIs of which 32% came from China.

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These national changes together with the University's efforts had had a positive impact on demand at Chester with applications increasing from 3,915 in 2018/19 to 27,550 in 2021/22, and student numbers increasing from 490 to 1,850 over the same time period. Current recruitment was largely from India, Nigeria and Pakistan with further potential to exploit the Chinese and USA market. The use of 'in-country' agents had improved recruitment and helped reduced the University's carbon footprint.

With forecast continued growth in global outbound student mobility, a strong 'UK offer' by the University would provide a platform with which to maintain and increase student numbers, with 2,500 new full-time international students a realistic target within 2/3 years. Business and Management programmes were the most popular subject areas at Chester although opportunities existed for growth in Engineering, Social Studies and Creative Arts & Design. At present 80% of international student studying at Chester were postgraduate taught and as such growth at undergraduate level was possible, although would require continued institutional buy-in and investment in areas such as student accommodation, student support services and academic delivery.

The University Council thanked Mr Pritchard for his detailed update and congratulated him and colleagues in the International Centre on the success achieved to date.

#### **3384 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The CSU President's report (Appendix F) was received and noted. It was reported that the President was currently attending the NUS national conference.

#### **3385 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

Reports from the Chairs of committees were received and considered on the following meetings of the committees by reference to matters listed in a written summary, with the resolutions or other action shown. The draft minutes of the meetings were included amongst the papers for the meeting of the University Council.

##### **(a) Planning & Resources Committee (Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (Appendix G1).**

The University Council noted the following main items:

The on-going monitoring of the CSU's financial performance which remained on target to achieve the planned deficit position of £15K at year end. The Committee also requested that the CSU review its strategy on increasing 'other income' streams in order to reduce the over reliance on the University's block grant.

Detailed discussion in relation to the disposal of the Padgate campus and possible disposal of Sumner House. The Committee also benefited from an informative presentation by the Health & Safety Manager on the implementation of a safety auditing system.

The following reports were noted:

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- (1) Annual Financial return 2021/22 – 2025/26
  - (2) Management Accounts, February 2022
  - (3) Equality Annual Report 2020/21
  - (4) Subsidiary Company Financial Statements, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) To approve the CSU Code of Practice – Education Act 1994, Section 22 (Students' Union)
- (2) To approve that delegated authority be given to the Planning & Resources Committee in respect of the possible disposal of Sumner House, subject to compliance with the Charities Act, and should such disposal be in the best interests of the University.

**(b) Audit & Risk Management Committee (Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022)**  
(Appendix H1)

The University Council noted the following main items:

Work being undertaken to implement revised risk reporting and in particular action being undertaken in order to enhance cyber risk management; an area the Committee would continue to actively monitor.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the following:

- 1) Risk Register (including Log of Changes)
- 2) To exercise the two-year extension option in the current external audit contract with KPMG to cover the financial years ending 2023 and 2024
- 3) To re-appoint RSM as internal auditors for an initial period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 with an option for the University to extend for up to two further periods of 12 months each, subject to satisfactory performance.

**(c) Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee (Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022)** (Appendix I1, Pack A)

The Executive Summary of the above meeting was received and noted. The focus of the meeting had been on the work undertaken to review and update the University's model for the governance of higher and degree apprenticeships and preparations for the impending Ofsted inspection. Further details were discussed at minute 3386.

**(d) University Mission Committee (Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022)**  
(Appendix J)

The Executive Summary of the above meeting was received and noted.

The Council noted with pleasure the appointment of Reverend Gill Reeve as the new Senior University Chaplain and Dean of Chapel, and

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that the handover process with Reverend Dr Peter Jenner had commenced.

*The Very Reverend Dr Tim Stratford left the meeting at this point.*

### **3386 APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION AND OVERVIEW**

The following were received and discussed:

- (a) Degree Apprenticeships Strategy (Appendix K1)
- (b) Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Report (Appendix K2)
- (c) Quality Improvement Plan (Appendix K3)

Dr Helen Galbraith (PVC, Student Experience) reminded the University Council that whilst the University's primary regulator was the Office for Students (OfS), all apprenticeship provision fell within the remit of Ofsted and was subject to inspection in accordance with their Education Inspection Framework. The University was due an inspection at some point during 2022 and as part of that process a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was required. The SAR had been reviewed by the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee and had been developed with input from across the institution. The University Council agreed with the areas of strength and areas for improvement highlighted. It was reported that in respect of the recently updated mandatory safeguarding training for staff, completion rates had increased and would be updated in the SAR; this training would also be extended to University Council Members. It was also highlighted that national achievement data would be issued shortly and would be incorporated into the SAR if timing permitted. The final document would be approved by the SET and submitted to Ofsted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

It was highlighted that whilst the SAR would be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) would be reviewed and updated on an on-going basis, with termly reporting to the Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee. The University Council welcomed the clarity and vision within the Degree Apprenticeship Strategy and noted that it had been considered in detail by the SET.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Degree Apprenticeship Strategy.

The Council thanked Dr Galbraith for her update on this important area of provision for the University and welcomed the enhancements made at both operational and strategic levels to support degree apprenticeships, and the assurance mechanisms in place.

### **3387 MEASURING COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS**

The Secretary spoke Appendix L which summarised the outcomes of reviews undertaken by each Committee on their own effectiveness and the value they added to the overall working of the University Council. It was agreed that this matter would be given further consideration by the Governance & Nomination Review Committee.

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### **3388 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (a) Planning & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (Appendix M1) and Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (Appendix M2)
- (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Appendix N)
- (c) Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Appendix O)
- (d) University Mission Committee held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 (Appendix P)
- (e) Senate held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (Appendix Q1) and Wednesday 9 March 2022 (Appendix Q2).

### **3389 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS)**

An up-dated list of OfS publications (Appendix R, Pack B) was received and noted. It was reported that the current Director of Regulation at the OfS would serve as interim CEO pending the appointment of a replacement for Nicola Dandridge who would step down on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

### **3390 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of any other business.

### **3391 DATES OF UNIVERSITY EVENTS**

The dates of the remaining Graduation Ceremonies in 2022 were noted which Council members were encouraged to attend, together with dates of Open Days/Open Evenings.

### **3392 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

***Next meeting: Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 9.30am (F2F, CCU103, Churchill House, Queen's Park)***

**Future meetings – 2022/23 commencing 9.30am:**

Dates to be advised.

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