

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Unreserved Minutes of a Special Meeting held by 'Teams' on
Friday 15 January 2021

Present:

Gary Dixon (Chair)

Janet Arthur	Alison Goodall
Huw Barton	Martin Hindle
Craig Brown*	Ian Johnson
Edmund Burke	Azam Mamujee*
Nishan Canagarajah	Andrew Morgan
Martin Cullen*	Mia Nembhard
Sophie Dale-Black	Vijay Sharma
Sandra Dudley	Richard Tapp
Cathy Ellis	Carole Thorogood
Stephen Garrett	

In attendance: Neil Cox (Assistant Council Secretary); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Paul Gowdrige (Director of Finance); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Kerry Law (Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Operating Officer); Emma Stevens (Director of Human Resources) and Graham Wynn (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education).

Apologies for absence were received from Mehmooda Duke.

*Not present at the conclusion of item 21/M8

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

21/M4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of personal interest in any of the items dealt with under the Unreserved Business section of this meeting.

21/M5 **CONGRATULATIONS**

Council recorded its congratulations to Janet Arthur, who had been awarded an MBE in recognition of her fundraising support for Leicester Cathedral; and to Geoff Green, for his substantive appointment as the University's Registrar and Secretary.

21/M6 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the unreserved minutes of the virtual meeting held on 25 November 2020. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

21/M7 **COVID-19 OPERATIONAL UPDATE**

Council received a comprehensive update from senior management on the University's latest operational response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in the context of the third national lockdown.

Council noted that there was currently a bare minimum of activity on campus, with face-to-face teaching restricted to a small number of exempted courses and the

majority of students advised that face-to-face teaching would not commence before 22 February at the earliest, depending on the outcome of the government's next scheduled review of the national restrictions. Staff access to campus was restricted to essential staff only (for business critical operations, necessary teaching and support, and priority research), and a reduced number of buildings were currently open.

The COVID Oversight Group was focussing on co-ordinating support and engagement plans for the various groups and types of students, depending on their backgrounds and current circumstances, and was mindful of the need to ensure that the specific needs of PGR students were not overlooked. The Registrar and Secretary and the President of the Students' Union were in regular dialogue to try to ensure that communications with students were as effective and supportive as possible.

Council was pleased to note that although the number of reported COVID cases remained relatively low amongst both staff and students, the University was still making every effort to provide appropriate support and reassurance to both groups, including on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of the pandemic.

With regard to the ongoing national debate about accommodation fee rebates, the University had made a commitment that these would be provided to students living in its own halls of residence. The level of rebate would be calculated in March, once the full impact of the third national lockdown was clearer. **Council acknowledged** that the University's response would need to be consistent with that of other comparator institutions, as well as with Government advice, and it would need to be fair to all groups of students, who were living in very different accommodation settings with varying contractual agreements.

21/M8

SHAPING FOR EXCELLENCE

Council received a detailed update from the President and Vice-Chancellor on the strategic background, scale and impact of cases for change, which had been developed over the last few months, for the restructuring of a number of the University's academic and professional services units. This followed the University's announcement on 13 October 2020 that it would undertake pre-change engagement with specific groups of staff to help inform the future strategic direction for their area, which could include some work being reduced, or ceasing altogether, in certain areas.

The President and Vice-Chancellor emphasized that to remain as a leading research-intensive institution the University needed to refocus its efforts and build on its core strengths. This would require suitable investments to be made in people and infrastructure, to sustain and build upon world-leading research and to deliver an exceptional student experience. **Council acknowledged** that in order to do this it would be necessary to make some difficult decisions and to stop activity in some areas, whilst retaining the comprehensive delivery of core degree programmes. The proposals for change were being made to underpin the University's long-term strategy - they were not in response to the current year's challenging financial position - to strengthen its position and to avoid further, larger changes in the future.

Council was informed that pre-change engagement meetings had therefore taken place during October-November 2020 with staff in each affected area (342 staff in total) to share the drivers for the proposed changes. HR staff and Trade Union representatives also attended these meetings, which were designed to ensure that people had the opportunity to ask questions about the drivers for change and to discuss them in more detail. Feedback had then been provided by staff, individually or

collectively, in meetings and workshops, via surveys and in writing. All feedback had been carefully reviewed and considered and the resulting proposals for change had been developed with the relevant leadership teams.

Council noted that the changes proposed as a result of this phase of engagement affected 5 academic schools/departments and three themed areas within the professional services. 145 people were at risk of redundancy and a possible net reduction of approximately 60 posts was anticipated, subject to Council's approval of a redundancy consultation programme (see under (a) below) and the outcome of the subsequent selection and consultation processes.

Council welcomed the open and transparent approach that had been adopted so far, including the identification and mitigation of the associated risks – any potential impacts on the student experience would be managed carefully - and emphasized the need for ongoing appropriate and effective communication with staff and student groups.

At the conclusion of its detailed consideration of the information presented for this item of business Council:

- a. **approved**, by an overwhelming majority, the commencement of a redundancy consultation programme, and ratified its support for compulsory redundancies to be made where required by confirmed cases for change;
- b. **noted** that the redundancy programme referred to above would constitute a reportable event to the OfS;
- c. **noted** the governance role of Council in subsequent stages of the Shaping for Excellence programme.

21/M9 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council noted the dates and times of remaining scheduled meetings and an Awayday in 2020-21, all to commence at 4.00pm unless stated otherwise:

Tuesday 2 March 2021 - Special meeting, one hour only, to commence at 4.30pm
Wednesday 17 March 2021 - Ordinary meeting
Monday 10 May 2021 - Ordinary meeting
Tuesday 8 June 2021 - Council/Executive Board Awayday, from 9.30am-4.30pm
Tuesday 6 July 2021 - Ordinary meeting

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting: 1 hour and 35 minutes