

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 08 DECEMBER 2023

Present: Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Angela Adimora, Simeon Anyalemechi, Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Professor Nic Beech, John Bland, Dr Tony Coombs, Cllr Phil Cusack, Stephen Gleave, Philip Green, Merlyn Lowther, Professor Peter McDermott, Ian Moston [until COU.23.114], Micheal Omoniyi [until COU.23.107], Cllr Theresa Pepper, Alan Roff [via Microsoft Teams], Claire Sproston, Helen Taylor, Anuoluwapo Ubikitan, Professor Katherine Yates, and Dr Elsa Zekeng.

Apologies: Sara Das, Ben Gallop, and Sam Plant.

In attendance: Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Finance), Emma French (Executive Director of Governance and Assurance & University Secretary), Jackie Njoroge (Director of Strategy), and Elaine Pateman Salt (committee secretary).

By invitation: Elena Adams (Student), Simi Adebayo (Student), Fatma Ahmed (Student), Dr Sam Grogan (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience, via Microsoft Teams), Claire Hamshire (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience), and Ed Moloney (Chief Executive, University of Salford Students' Union) [COU.23.103].

COU.23.96 WELCOME

Noted: that Professor Peter McDermott was welcomed to his first meeting, as the newly appointed member from the Senate.

COU.23.97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Noted: that no new declarations pertaining to the agenda were declared.

COU.23.98 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2023 (COU/23/72), subject to minute reference COU.23.84 noted ii) being clarified to reflect the attending student's lived experience more accurately and to read *'that the University worked hard to ensure extensive pre-arrival communications were made with new students, including access to the Umii networking app, but acknowledged this had not been the experience of Mr Aljassar'*

COU.23.99 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Reported:

- i) that there were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda;

- ii) that since the publication of the action log, the first action regarding postgraduate research (PGR) student experience [minute reference COU.23.55] had been confirmed as resolved through an annual student self-assessment and feedback form which had been built into SkillsForge, the PGR management software package.

COU.23.100 CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS

Confirmed: that Item 20 (Use of University Seal; COU/23/92) was noted without discussion.

COU.23.101 CHAIR'S ACTION: PREVENT ANNUAL DATA RETURN

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting regarding approval for the Prevent Annual Data Return and Accountability Statement 2022/23 (COU/23/73).

COU.23.102 CHAIR'S ACTION:

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting regarding approval for the transfer of land on Wynne Street to Salford City Council (COU/23/74).

COU.23.103 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Received: (in advance) a video and presentation (COU/23/75) on the theme of 'student engagement' followed by a discussion with students on their personal experiences at the University.

Reported: that the three personal experiences centred on availability and proximity of student accommodation, mental health support for students, and financial challenges arising from cost-of-living pressures.

Noted:

- i) that regarding travel connectivity between campuses, the Chair was to raise the topic of student bus fares with the Mayor of Greater Manchester following the re-regulation of bus services across the city;
- ii) that longer term travel planning might include extension of the tram network;
- iii) that regarding student accommodation, the majority of HE institutions offered halls of residence places to first-year students in the first instance and that the availability of private rental accommodation was a national challenge;
- iv) that the University had resolved legal challenges regarding progressing its student residences and was trying to work at pace to move the project forward, but recognised that building work would inevitably take some time;
- v) that the University engaged where possible with private landlords, and that the Chair had recently raised the matter of private student accommodation in Parliament;
- vi) that the University offered access to a rent guarantor scheme to internal students, but that there was a fee involved for the student;

- vii) that the University was undertaking a pilot whereby software packages could be accessed virtually from any location, and that if successful this should resolve challenges arising from software availability limited to building opening times;
- viii) that the student presenters were confident there were opportunities to feedback to the University, and understood the people and teams that feedback could be provided too;
- ix) the view that it was disappointing to hear about failings in mental health support responses given the work undertaken on referral pathways by the local universities as part of their commitment to the Greater Manchester Universities Student Mental Health Service;
- x) that it was understood there had been a backlog in the service, but that there was now a significantly reduced waiting list;
- xi) that the Sabbatical Officers of the University of Salford Students' Union (USSU) were working on a strategy for supporting student mental health and in alignment with the Mental Health Charter, but were frustrated with the lack of progress and how delivery might be impacting on the student experience;
- xii) the view that this type of support should extend into support for work placements where these happened on programmes;
- xiii) that it was important to the placement process to ensure there were no gaps existing between the teaching experience and the placement experience;
- xiv) that the closing times for buildings, with the exception of the Library, was a known issue to the USSU and the impact on student experience was being discussed with the University;
- xv) that a specific concern for campus security and safety was being addressed;
- xvi) the view that improvement to lighting on campus was a simple solution;
- xvii) the view that greater interactivity on open days might help navigate information and engagement pathways;
- xviii) the view that an opportunity to explore internships would be a welcome introduction for students;
- xix) the view that the mechanism for hearing the feedback from students be considered, to avoid students having to raise new issues directly to Council, and that feedback also could be tracked formally to understand outcomes;
- xx) that financial support provided to students during 2022/23 had included travel bursaries, and that there was support available during 2023/24;
- xxi) that the Chair highlighted the recurring theme of mental health and wellbeing support in the student experience lead items, and summarised the concerns of members regarding expectations versus experience;
- xxii) the additional views that following the dissolution of the Student Experience Committee the student experience lead item had facilitated access to the personal stories and voice of students which was important to all members, but that there was an issue regarding how the Council properly engaged with the information being received;
- xxiii) the view that increasing student numbers made it more challenging for 'front of house' student support from academic colleagues;
- xxiv) that regarding the student voice, a Student Perspective Board had been established this year and that four additional posts had been approved to provide effective resource capacity;
- xxv) that the University worked collaboratively with the USSU regarding student experience;

- xvi) that the video presentation also highlighted the status of the sports facilities;
- xvii) that the Chair thanked the student guests for sharing their personal stories, and for members partaking of the robust and important discussion from which a number of actions were being taken.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted, and:

- i) that the terms of the University's commitment to the Greater Manchester Universities Student Mental Health Service be confirmed;
- ii) that an overview of the current status of the Service be provided;
- iii) that an update session for members on student mental health and wellbeing support be received as soon as possible;
- iv) that Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee be tasked with further reflection on the arrangements for Council to effectively hear and engage with the student experience at its next meeting;
- v) that an update on the progress of refreshed sports facilities [Campus Masterplan] be received.

ACTIONS i);ii);iii): University Secretary

ACTION iv): GNEC

ACTION v): FRC

COU.23.104 **ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

Received: an overview of the University's annual accountability returns requirements under the terms and conditions of funding for Higher Education Institutions, to the Office for Students for the financial year-ending 31 July 2023 (COU/23/76).

Reported: that the data return to the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) had been deferred to January 2024 across the sector due to challenges regarding the Data Futures Programme, however the University had made its submission by the original deadline.

COU.23.105 **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 CLOSED MINUTE**

Received: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2022/23, produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers (COU/23/77).

Reported:

- i) that – *redacted* - ;
- ii) .

Noted:

- i) the – *redacted* -

COU.23.106 **ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT 2022/23**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the annual Health and Safety Committee Report 2022/23 (COU/23/78).

Reported:

- i) that since publication of the Report, only one building assessment remained regarding use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) and that this was due to coincidental asbestos management;
- ii) that no use of RAAC had been found in the estate, subject to this final assessment;
- iii) that sickness absence had been split into long- and short-term absences for this Report in order to better monitor absence data trends;
- iv) that an IA on health and safety was scheduled for later in the year.

Noted:

- i) that – *redacted* -

RESOLVED: that the Health and Safety Committee Report 2022/23 be approved.

COU.23.107 **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, its Annual Report to Council for 2022/23 (COU/23/79).

Reported:

- i) that – *redacted* -

Noted:

- i) the *-redacted* -

RESOLVED: that the Report be approved, and the opinion of ARC be accepted.

COU.23.108 **ANNUAL REMUNERATION REPORT 2022/23**

Received: on the recommendation of Remuneration Committee, the Remuneration Report for 2022/23 (COU/23/80).

Reported:

- i) that an annual report had been a requirement since 2021, and that the Committee had settled on a standard format including approach to senior pay, the Vice-Chancellor's pay and reward, and settlement arrangements;
- ii) that the Committee had approved the Remuneration Committee Policy in 2023 and that consequently this would be included in the next report due.

Noted: that the Chair thanked the Committee.

COU.23.109 **EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS MEMORANDUM AND MANAGEMENT LETTER CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the External Auditor's Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter (COU/23/81).

Reported:

- i) that the draft report of KPMG had been presented to Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) with Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) in attendance, and that the report was subject to approval of the financial statements by the Council;
- ii) that – *redacted* -

Noted: that – *redacted* -

RESOLVED: that the Memorandum and Management Letter be approved for submission to the OfS as part of the annual accountability returns.

COU.23.110 **UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION LETTER CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the University Management Representation Letter (COU/23/82).

Reported: - *redacted* -

RESOLVED: that the Chair be approved to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council.

COU.23.111 **GOING CONCERN CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the evidence for the University's financial statements to be considered on a 'going concern' basis (COU/23/83).

Reported:

- i) that the University's status as a 'going concern' was overseen by FRC;
- ii) that – *redacted* –

Noted:

- i) that – *redacted* -

RESOLVED: that the Report be approved and that the 2023 Financial Statements be considered on the basis of the University being a going concern.

COU.23.112 **INTEGRATED REPORT; AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Integrated Report; Audited Financial Statements for the financial year ending 31 July 2023 (COU/23/84).

Reported:

- i) that the Report had been formally considered by ARC, with FRC in attendance, but that significant input had been provided by the Chairs and members during the development of the Report;
- ii) that – *redacted* -

Noted: - *redacted* -

RESOLVED:

- i) that subject to correction of the errors tabled, the Integrated Report and Financial Statements for the financial year ending 31 July 2023 be approved and submitted to the OfS;
- ii) that the Chair, Vice-Chancellor, and Executive Director of Finance be authorised to sign the Financial Statements on behalf of the Council.

ACTION i): EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

COU.23.113 SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES: SALFORD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LTD CLOSED MINUTE

Considered: - *redacted*-

RESOLVED: - *redacted* -

COU.23.114 SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES: UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD ENTERPRISES LTD CLOSED MINUTE

Considered: - *redacted* -

RESOLVED: - *redacted* -

COU.23.115 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key issues for the University (COU/23/87).

Reported:

- i) that since publication of the Report, the University had been nominated in the Times Higher Education (THE) Awards, and had successfully been awarded a – *redacted* -
- ii) that the relationship with Salford City Council (SCC) continued to flourish;
- iii) that academic vacancies were being 'grouped' to better understand and influence themes for research intensity linked to external partners;

- iv) that SCC was particularly supportive of research culture impacting on social change and social justice in the local community;
- v) that there had been productive discourse with – *redacted* -
- vi) that regarding ULT, it had been decided to re-introduce the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) and Provost to work alongside the academic body, but not to continue with the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO);
- vii) that the Deans of School would report to the DVC and Provost, allowing greater focus for the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic Development on her partnership and international portfolio;
- viii) that it was intended to appoint an external interim DVC and Provost whilst the substantive appointment was recruited;
- ix) that the estates and digital portfolio would be re-aligned to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer;
- x) there would also be some adjustments in titles to reflect the senior officer structure more accurately;
- xi) that the ULT and senior management away day had been a very useful session, and that three shared priorities had been agreed (sponsored by varying Executive Officers)– welfare and wellbeing, mental health support, and equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI);
- xii) that also there would be a specific focus on the undernoted:
 - 1) cohort completion, alongside the work of the USSU on loneliness and belonging;
 - 2) research capacity and outcomes in preparation towards the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise, *-redacted -*
 - 3) employability through connectivity, with the intention that each undergraduate student would have the opportunity for an online international collaboration opportunity, and that this would be a distinctive proposition for the University.

Noted:

- i) the view that a clear academic lead in the DVC and Provost was welcome in the senior structure;
- ii) the view that the open discussion regarding development of policy and people was also welcomed;
- iii) that the student representative thanked the Vice-Chancellor for commending the USSU, and that the National Lottery Community Fund award to provide food in the Union's warm hubs had been confirmed;
- iv) that external recruitment was only for the interim DVC and Provost, and all other appointments would be advertised to both internal and external candidates;
- v) the view that there was a significant opportunity to brand the opportunity arising from research aligned posts;
- vi) that Katherine Yates has also been promoted to Professor in the recent promotional round, and that members' congratulated Professor Yates;
- vii) that securing successful industrial collaboration was a key focus for the leadership team.

COU.23.116 SENATE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the recent meeting from the Chair of the Senate (COU/23/88).

Noted: the view that industrial collaboration was embedded in programme delivery, but that maybe this had not been fully captured in reports to the Council.

COU.23.117 SCHEME OF ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Received: a report of the revised Scheme of Academic Governance (COU/23/89).

Reported:

- i) that the sub-committee structures for the Senate had been amended with the introduction of a new Quality and Standards Committee, and that this would enable the reformed Education and Student Experience Committee to focus on student experience aspects of the teaching and learning;
- ii) that the Senate was participating in external review with Advance HE along with six other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to benchmark academic governance;
- iii) that it was intended to strengthen the assurance relationship between the Senate and the Council, including a joint meeting each year to focus on academic issues.

Noted:

- i) the view that the changes were welcome and that it was important to have an academic standards committee to provide assurance on the discharge of the University's degree awarding powers (DAP);
- ii) the view that regarding the earlier discussion on how the Council might be assured on the student experience, the new structure for the standing committees of the Senate would enable GNEC to have greater focus on how to effect engagement and accountability;
- iii) the view that the nomenclature for committee titles fitted with the University culture, but that it would be useful to understand the purpose of each committee in the organogram presented;
- iv) that it was intended the joint meeting be in a workshop or forum style.

COU.23.118 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (COU/23/90).

COU.23.119 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (COU/23/91).

Reported: that the Committee was actively seeking to fill vacancies in the membership through Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee.

COU.23.120 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Reported: that no other items of business has been notified to the Chair.

Noted: the members thanks to Dr Martin Toner, Governance Officer, who was due to leave the University at the end December, for his contributions to the governing body and the University over his many years' service.

COU.23.121 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted: that the next meeting was scheduled for Friday 12 January 2024.