

**Minutes of the Cardiff University Council meeting held on 16 February 2023 at 9:00 in the Board Room, spark I sbarc Building.**

**Present:** Patrick Younge (Chair), Vice-Chancellor, Angie Flores Acuna, Professor Rudolf Allemann, Paul Baston, Gina Dunn [from minute 2104], Judith Fabian, Professor Dame Janet Finch, Michael Hampson, Christopher Jones, Jan Juillerat, Jeremy Lewis, Dr Joanna Newman, Suzanne Rankin, John Shakeshaft, Dr Pretty Sagoo, Professor Damian Walford Davies, Jennifer Wood, Agnes Xavier-Phillips.

**Attendees:** Katy Dale [Minute taker], Millicent Ele, Rashi Jain, Sian Marshall, Susan Midha [Minute 2112], Claire Morgan, Claire Sanders, Darren Xiberras and Professor Roger Whitaker.

**2101 Welcome and preliminaries**

All were welcomed to the meeting.

**2102 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor Rachel Ashworth, Professor Marc Buehner and David Selway. The meeting was confirmed as quorate.

**2103 Declarations of interest**

The Chair reminded the committee members of their duty to disclose any potential conflicts of interest. No declarations of interest were noted.

**2104 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 November 2022 (22/385C) and the Special Council meeting held on 27 January 2023 (22/397HC) were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were approved to be signed by the Chair.

**2105 Matters arising**

Received and noted paper 22/381, 'Matters Arising'. The Chair spoke to this item.

**2106 Items from the Chair**

Received paper 22/384C, 'Report of Chair's Action Since the Last Meeting'. The Chair spoke to this item.

Noted

2106.1 that the Chair had approved amendments to the Annual Report and Financial Statements, the Annual Quality Report 2021-22 and the Bicameral Review Task and Finish Group Membership and Terms of Reference via Chair's Action;

2106.2 that in relation to the Bicameral Review Task and Finish Group paper (paper number 22/378 which was included on Director's Desk for information), the ballot for the Senate member had now closed and Professor Rachel Ashworth had been confirmed as appointed;

- 2106.3 that the Vice-Chancellor elect had accepted the appointment;
- 2106.4 that Council members were advised of Varsity on 26 April 2023 and Graduation week 17-21 July 2023; Council members were asked to note the date and further information would follow;
- 2106.5 that the Chair had met individually with Council members to feedback on performance, support and development; the term “appraisal” was not preferred given no pay or reward was determined from these meetings.

### **2107 Vice-Chancellor’s Report to Council**

Received and considered paper 22/408C, ‘Vice-Chancellor’s Report to Council. The Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2107.1 [Redacted]
- 2107.2 a Town Hall meeting had been held with staff and had been a good opportunity to ask questions;
- 2107.3 [Redacted]
- 2107.4 [Redacted]
- 2107.5 that student application and offer numbers were positive;
- 2107.6 that research grants and contract figures were good and there had been a record rise in pipeline awards; information on the research culture survey would be shared as part of the Development Day following the meeting;
- 2107.7 that scholarships were used strategically in relation to international student recruitment; a further update on international student recruitment would be provided later in the meeting and in the Development Day;
- 2107.8 that there had been concerns raised in relation to a change to the bursary scheme which allowed students to spend part of their bursary via a portal on technology, books etc.; this is as students had often required the money for other purposes (e.g. rent) and the change had been introduced when the majority of bursaries had been spent; the University had withdrawn the change and would continue to consult.

### **2108 KPI Update Report**

Received and considered paper 22/336C, ‘KPI Update Report.’ The Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2108.1 [Redacted]
- 2108.2 that the target to achieve carbon net zero by 2030 would require offsetting to be met; the University was working with an external partner to cost this activity and identify quick wins for 2023/24; the University was also reviewing funding streams for activities in this area and recruiting staff to map activities; Council requested site of this plan, including costs and percentage of offsetting;

- 2108.3 that the University had policies in place in relation to green fuels (e.g. biomass) and were working with Welsh Government on definitions of “green energy”;
- 2108.4 that a discussion on the usefulness of and basis for KPIs would be held with the incoming Vice-Chancellor;
- 2108.5 that it would be of benefit to tie KPI 13 (EBIDA) to the annual budget;
- 2108.6 that a staff survey was being developed and would be issued in the Spring.
- Resolved
- 2108.7 for the carbon net zero and offsetting plan to be shared with Council once developed;
- 2108.8 for a review of the KPIs and their presentation to be held once the new Vice-Chancellor was in post;
- 2108.9 to include reference and achievement of the EBIDA KPI within the annual budget paper.
- 2109 Estates Strategy**
- Received and considered paper 22/347CR, ‘Transitional Estates Strategy 2023-2025.’ The Deputy Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.
- Noted
- 2109.1 that the paper had been reviewed by UEB and Finance and Resources Committee and feedback had been included in the paper;
- 2109.2 that this document had been developed for the interim year 2023-24, due to the Estate Masterplan ending and the new Vice-Chancellor taking up office;
- 2109.3 that emphasis was on the estate as an enabler of institutional strategy, not a passive resource; the document reflected the financial, strategic and environmental context and looked to move away from large scale capital projects to harness the legacy estate;
- 2109.4 that the paper considered the following contextual factors:
- real budgetary pressures
  - climate emergency
  - new ways of working
  - connectedness of the University’s digital infrastructure
  - new ways to deliver teaching
  - the need to consolidate the estate in line with the Estates Masterplan and ensuring a balance of freehold and leasehold
  - benchmarking with comparator institutions
  - a need to monitor space utilisation in a better way
  - 3-year student number planning
  - new institutional strategy and new Vice-Chancellor
  - location of new hospital;
- 2109.5 that the Integrated Planning Process would be central to work in this area and to ensure planned, rather than ad-hoc, projects and activities;
- 2109.6 that the transitional strategy aimed to ensure:
- a reduction in space

- delivering estates maintenance projects holistically and strategically
- knowing the estate
- tying the estate to strategy as a delivery mechanism
- enhancing utilisation
- achieving carbon net zero
- improving accessibility;

- 2109.7 that short term objectives included implementation of a space management policy and a reduction in space, delivery of co-ordinated maintenance projects and delivery of the Strategy Equality Plan;
- 2109.8 [Redacted]
- 2109.9 that the strategy was based on current plans for student recruitment numbers (that numbers would not grow and the pool of students would be diversified);
- 2109.10 that the provision of accommodation for students and residences would also be a crucial element of the strategy;
- 2109.11 [Redacted]
- 2109.12 [Redacted]
- 2109.13 comments had been shared in advance by a member which recommended an asset management plan (in line with ISO 55000) was added to the strategy;
- 2109.14 that thought could be given to charging for space and the impact this may have on utilisation;
- 2109.15 that the strategy also required a cultural/behavioural shift (i.e. a sharing of space and desks);
- 2109.16 that there may be opportunities for partnership working;
- 2109.17 that the digital infrastructure would be fundamental to delivering the strategy;
- 2109.18 that the University was reviewing the structure of the Estates team to ensure this would deliver what was needed.

Resolved

- 2109.19 to approve the Transitional Estates Strategy 2023-2025;
- 2109.20 for the Students' Union President and PVC Education and Students to discuss possible enhancement actions and activities for students at Heath Park site.

## **2110 Student Experience**

Received and considered papers 22/382, 'Report from the Students' Union President January 2023' and 22/398, 'NSS Update'. The Students' Union President and Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience spoke to this item.

Noted

Report from Students' Union President

- 2110.1 that there had been a high level of engagement with the Students' Union from students, but they were spending significantly less (c.£600k deficit); discussions were being held in relation to the Block Grant allocation to the Students' Union;
- 2110.2 that there had been a positive response from the University in relation to the cost of living crisis and the Students' Union had put in place a number of events and activities to assist students, along with increasing awareness of the support and funding available for students who were struggling;
- 2110.3 that at the recent AGM, all motions had passed, including "cops off campus"; a Task and Finish group had been established to audit the engagement with the police and this included University representation;
- 2110.4 that a new balcony bar had launched in December and was proving to be popular;
- 2110.5 that nominations for the Spring elections had closed; 57 candidates were nominated, including 5 of the current sabbatical officers; elections would be held in early March;
- 2110.6 that a number of campaigns and events had been held, including the first sober social week which had been very popular; the non-alcohol-based events were noted to be positive and a good way to engage other students;
- 2110.7 that it had been mandated at the recent AGM to support strike action; the sabbatical officers understood this was a national issue and the University had limited impact in decision making and this was being communicated; however, this was a national crisis which impacted a number of sectors; the general feeling was students were supportive but frustrated with disruption to teaching;

#### NSS

- 2110.8 that following review by Internal Audit and Audit and Risk Committee, an Education Performance Oversight Group had been established; the group was reviewing in-year data to see improvements and identify possible areas for further monitoring or action but maintained accountability in the schools and colleges;
- 2110.9 that the NSS for this year had launched and current response rates were good; there were revised questions and the middle answer had been removed, requiring students to answer in the positive or negative; it was therefore expected previously negative areas would worsen, but that positive areas would perform better;
- 2110.10 that a specific group had been established to review the areas of concern within the Business School; there had been a large amount of progress within the Economics subjects but this may not be yet reflected in this year's results;
- 2110.11 that projects now had confirmed measures of success and reporting on lead indicators would follow;
- 2110.12 that pulse surveys would provide some insight into movement in certain areas, but that the impact of measures to NSS results would be seen over a longer time frame; there would also be a likely impact due to strike action;
- 2110.13 that an Annual Enhancement Report had been developed which demonstrated the impact of work undertaken, how it was evaluated and its successes; this would be shared with Council;

- 2110.14 that an internal audit had highlighted a possible increase in the risk of errors in marks, due to limited processes and guidance; work was being undertaken to resolve this, including instructions to schools to review;
- 2110.15 that the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Students' Union President had visited University of West London and identified possible areas of best practice to implement;
- 2110.16 that work was being undertaken to close the feedback loop to students and share good news stories (e.g. through communications to students from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students including specific achievements and news from their school);
- 2110.17 that the NSS did not include PG students and the University undertook its own PGT survey in Spring and during supervision periods.

Resolved

- 2110.18 for Council to receive an update on the actions taken to reduce the risk of an increase in marking errors.

## **2111 Finance Report**

Received and considered paper 22/330C, 'Finance Report.' The Chief Financial Officer spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2111.1 [Redacted]
- 2111.2 [Redacted]
- 2111.3 [Redacted]
- 2111.4 [Redacted]
- 2111.5 that future iterations of the paper would include STIP within the final budget figures;
- 2111.6 [Redacted]
- 2111.7 that investment losses had improved in November and it was hoped these would continue to improve in the January figures;
- 2111.8 [Redacted]
- 2111.9 the current savings on pay costs due to vacancies and the need to manage the costs pressures of increased staff costs in the future;
- 2111.10 [Redacted]

## **2112 Update on Work Relating to Student Suicides**

Received an oral update from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience.

Noted

- 2112.1 that this was an upsetting and challenging item for everyone involved;
- 2112.2 [Redacted]
- 2112.3 [Redacted]
- 2112.4 [Redacted]
- 2112.5 [Redacted]
- 2112.6 [Redacted]
- 2112.7 [Redacted]
- 2112.8 [Redacted]
- 2112.9 [Redacted]
- 2112.10 [Redacted]
- 2112.11 [Redacted]
- 2112.12 [Redacted]

### **2113 Student Recruitment Review**

Received and considered paper 22/389C, 'Student Recruitment Review.' The Pro Vice-Chancellor for International and Student Recruitment and College of Physical Sciences and Engineering spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2113.1 that it was important to note that international students enriched the culture of the University and assisted its success;
- 2113.2 that the funding structure meant the University was dependent on international students, as this was the only area the University could grow its income;
- 2113.3 that there had been a drop in intake of international students for the 22/23 academic year; this was due to a specific issue within the admissions team which had been addressed;
- 2113.4 that the University's international office was smaller than other institutions but was very efficient;
- 2113.5 that the opportunity to discuss international student recruitment was welcomed;
- 2113.6 that the University was looking to grow interest in areas where this was limited, whilst also reducing dependency on China; this involved increased campaigns and working with an incubator firm to improve conversion of applicants; work was also being undertaken in TransNational Education and there had been a lot of interest from liberal arts colleges;
- 2113.7 that recruitment of international students needed to be considered in the context of the student recruitment strategy (i.e. not grow numbers but grow diversity of students);

- 2113.8 that the University was reviewing the time taken to respond to applications as the conversion rate for offers was low;
- 2113.9 that the University received a number of fraudulent applications which were passed to an agency to check;
- 2113.10 that recruitment and admissions were a university wide issue and work was underway with schools to identify areas of growth;
- 2113.11 that PGT Home remained an area where the University could grow; this was challenging as the jobs market became more attractive;
- 2113.12 that strategic partnerships had shifted to centre on research collaboration and enhancing the University's reputation, rather than solely on recruitment of students;
- 2113.13 that there may be opportunities to work with the alumni team to reach out to prospective students;
- 2113.14 that applications from Home UG students was flat due to attrition and competition in the market;
- 2113.15 that the University continued to protect quality in International UG recruitment.

#### **2114 Report from the Redundancy Committee to Council**

Received and considered paper 22/386C, 'Report from Redundancy Committee to Council'. The Director of Human Resources was invited to join the meeting for this item.

Noted

- 2114.1 that the business case centred on a restructure and created new posts alongside a proposed redundancy;
- 2114.2 that the Redundancy Committee was acting within authority delegated by Council in July 2022;
- 2114.3 that a discussion was held on the need for Council to review and approve redundancies; the unions had requested a review of open-ended relevant factor contracts which would also include a review of Statutes and Ordinances; it was also noted that Council review of redundancies provided a sense of security to staff.
- Resolved
- 2114.4 [Redacted]
- 2114.5 for a review of the approval route for redundancies to be undertaken to determine if there was flexibility in Council being required to approve such requests.

The Director of Human Resources left the meeting at the end of this item.

#### **2115 Any Other Business**

Noted there was no other business.



**2116 Items received for approval**

Resolved

- 2116.1 to approve the following papers:  
Paper 22/380 Amendments to the Widening Participation Strategy  
Paper 22/388 Awards and Progress Committee Constitution

**2117 Items received for information**

Noted the following papers:  
Paper 22/387C Report from Senate  
Paper 22/396C Report from Chair of Finance and Resources Committee  
Paper 22/399C Report from Remuneration Committee to Council  
Paper 22/265C Report from Academic Promotions Committee  
Paper 22/383 Sealing Transactions