

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020**  
*(Conducted Via Teams)*

**Present:** Canon Dr J. Turnbull (*President*), Mr F. Ball, Mrs C. Bond, Dr D. Briggs, Professor M. Clinton, Sir Neil Cossons, Dr M. David, Mr I. Davies, Associate Prof. M. Degg, Professor C. Forsdick, Mrs J. France-Hayhurst, Mr N. Jenkins, Ms E. Lewis (*CSU President*), Mr G. Reay, Professor E. Simmons (*Vice Chancellor*), The Very Revd Dr T. Stratford, Associate Prof G. Southall, Professor A. Sutton and Mrs S. Verity.

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Ms K. Howell, Dr A. Seeney, The Rt Revd K. Sinclair and Dr L. Smith.

**In attendance:** Mr A. Lee (*University Secretary*), Professor C. Haslam (*Senior PVC, Academic*), Mr R. Waddington (*PVC Resources & Chief Financial Officer*), Mr A.J. Parker (*Committee Secretary*) and Mr S. Lancaster (*Nous Group, item 7(b) only*).

	ACTION
<p><b>3210 DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>No interests were declared.</p>	
<p><b>3211 ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP</b></p> <p>(a) It was noted that this would be the last meeting for Mr Ian Davies. The President thanked Mr Davies for his contribution to the University Council during his term of office.</p> <p>It was also noted that this would be last meeting for Associate Professor Garfield Southall and Professor Anna Sutton who would both shortly retire from the University. The President thanked both for their contributions to the University Council and the wider University during their many years of dedicated service and wished them well for the future.</p> <p>(b) It was noted with pleasure that Ms Eleanor Lewis had been re-elected as Student Union President for 2020-21.</p> <p>(c) Other membership items would be dealt with in the Minutes of the Nominations &amp; Governance Review Committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020.</p>	
<p><b>3212 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting of the University Council held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 were received and approved.</p>	

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## 3213 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

**3197 Vice-Chancellor's Report:** it was noted that any matters arising from the March 2020 meeting would be addressed in the Vice-Chancellor's Report to this meeting (*see minute 3214*).

**3198 Major Initiatives (b) University Centre Shrewsbury:** the University had recently received approval from the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) for delivery of the Bachelor of Nursing programme at University Centre Shrewsbury.

**3198 Major Initiatives (c) Thornton Science Park:** confirmation had been received that the University would be required to cease educational use of the Thornton Science Park by 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, although research and commercial activity would continue at the site. Plans were being developed for a new build on the Parkgate campus. The University had not pursued a possible appeal against the decision. Partial costs had been awarded against the University. These had not yet been quantified, but professional advice had been obtained as to the appropriate accounting provision to be made.

## 3214 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

The Vice-Chancellor's Report was received and discussed, focussing on the following matters:

### 1) Return to Campus

A Business Continuity group comprised of SLT members continued to meet weekly and manage the return to campus and Covid-19 related matters. The University was following available guidance, much of which had been synthesised into a helpful framework by Eversheds Sutherland which formed the basis for the group's discussions. These meetings were attended fortnightly by the President of Council and staff union representatives.

It was expected that the return to campus for many staff would commence gradually from 1<sup>st</sup> August, although all managers were reviewing the optimal pattern of work for staff as it was anticipated that for many parts of the University a 60/40 campus/home split would become the norm. In order to support this, additional laptops and furniture would be purchased and the homeworking policy updated.

### 2) Financial Summary

The University faced financial challenges in the coming years and investment would be required to support the new Strategic Plan and planned growth in targeted areas. Further details would be provided by the CFO (*see minute 3217 (a) (iv)*).

## 3214 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

### 3) Student Recruitment 2020/21

a) Undergraduate: UCAS applications at the start of lockdown showed a decline of almost 10% when compared to the previous year. This had improved to date and was currently -7.1%. There were encouraging signs for subjects which would feature highly in the new Strategic Plan; health and subjects allied to medicine had seen a 22% increase in applications, much larger than the 8% increase for competitors or the sector. Uncertainty at Thornton had adversely impacted numbers for Physical Sciences, Engineering and Computer Science which had seen modest growth in applications nationally and amongst competitors. A targeted communications campaign aimed to reassure students of the University's commitment to this provision.

The UCAS cycle had been disrupted by Covid-19 and, following a ministerial intervention, students were given an additional month to make firm choices. The Clearing process commenced on 6<sup>th</sup> July and the University's 'Clearing Campaign' communications aimed to instil confidence and used the strapline 'we've got September sorted'. Whilst there had been reduced undergraduate applications and thus reduced offers, firm acceptances for September 2020 had increased overall by 3.9% compared with last year. The undergraduate conversion rate had increased from 17.6% to 19.8% and the institutional conversion rate from 20.2% to 22.5%. There had been a marginal decrease in postgraduate applications, although firm acceptances had increased by 11%.

b) International: Application figures remain encouraging despite difficulties with visa approval systems, and the number of deposits paid to date was more than double last year. Departments were in the process of confirming the size and scope of the January 2021 intake and, for several programmes, a May 2021 intake was also under consideration.

### 4) Rationalisation of the portfolio

The process of rationalising the portfolio continued with the cessation of recruitment to business and media courses at Warrington. The decision had also been taken to move Media and Performance from Warrington to the Kingsway campus. Recruitment to the BA (Hons) English programme at UCS had also been closed for new entrants from 2020. To date some 160 options had also been stopped, improving efficiencies and easing pressure on the timetable.

**5) Staffing Matters**

Professor Anna Sutton would hand over responsibility for UCS to Professor Paul Johnson on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and would continue to oversee Student Futures until her retirement on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Recruitment processes for a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, PVC (Student Experience) and Dean of Science & Engineering would be initiated.

**6) Student Satisfaction**

The results of the National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 would be released on 15<sup>th</sup> July and would be communicated to the University Council.

**7) Estates**

Shrewsbury: There has been no progress in consideration of any further sites. Discussions with Shropshire Council had not yet resulted in a final version of the Partnership Agreement but it was intended that this would be concluded by September 2020, for discussion at Planning & Resources Committee.

**8) Strategy Development**

It was noted that numerous strategy events with students, staff, alumni and external stakeholders had been held since the launch of the strategy development with the University Council on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The outcome of these events had provided a focus and development on the notion of the 'Citizen Student'. Simon Lancaster (Nous Group) gave a PowerPoint presentation and facilitated discussion on the key elements of the emerging strategy which envisaged students obtaining a personalised, purposeful, premium student experience. The new Strategy would focus on: 'student experience', 'our region', 'citizenship', 'curriculum' and 'research', with a clear requirement to evidence performance and claims made in order to demonstrate added value.

A detailed and wide ranging discussion took place on the new Strategy and in particular on two key questions:

- 1) What does the University do less of in order to achieve the new Strategy?
- 2) What gaps/barriers are there to implementation of the Strategy?

The University Council were encouraged by progress to date and in particular the notion of the 'Citizen Student' and its resonance with the institution's existing Mission and the strong feeling of belonging and identity. The creation of student-focussed centres in Warrington, Shrewsbury, Leighton, Birkenhead and Reaseheath was welcomed. Such centres would not aim to replicate the full campus offer but instead would focus on 'professional courses' and targeted postgraduate and apprenticeship provision. The need to rationalise existing provision in

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**3214 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)**

order to improve the student experience and improve league table performance was also acknowledged.

Members recognised that cultural change would be required to implement the new Strategy and key to this would be the need to ensure the right staff were appointed to the right roles and that appropriate training and support was provided. It was acknowledged that the challenges of Covid-19 had exerted significant pressure on staff and as such there would be a soft launch of the Strategy in September with on-going review and refinement during 2020/21.

IT WAS RESOLVED to endorse progress to date and agreed that there would be an extraordinary meeting of the University Council on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 2pm in order to approve the Strategy.

**3215 MAJOR INITIATIVES****(a) Medicine**

Professor Haslam highlighted that a draft of the University's GMC Stage 3 application was currently being reviewed internally with input from the proposed sponsoring institution. Submission was anticipated during the autumn term, with a possible scrutiny visit from the GMC anticipated in early 2021.

Negotiations continued with the proposed sponsoring institution, especially in relation to the fee level sought and the duration of contract. Once these negotiations had been concluded a new financial plan would be developed. Members noted that the University would incur costs with the sponsoring institution in 2019/20 in order to obtain the necessary curriculum details and other support for the GMC application. Discussions also continued with potential benefactors to support the cost of a new building. The University remained hopeful that it would be in a position to commence delivery of degrees in medicine in late 2021 or early 2022.

**(b) Warrington**

The Secretary reported that Cushman & Wakefield (C&W) had been appointed as the Strategic Property Adviser for the Warrington Project and progress to date was noted. The University was targeting the start of the academic year 2021/22 for completion. C&W would issue their final report by 24<sup>th</sup> August and had allocated the period 25<sup>th</sup> August to Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September for University decision making.

IT WAS RESOLVED:

- (1) that this matter would be considered at the extraordinary meeting of the University Council to be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 2pm;
- (2) that the report submitted in support of this agenda item be treated as confidential.

## 3216 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Professor Haslam presented an analysis of the Complete University Guide League Table 2021 and highlighted that the University had risen 7 places to 94<sup>th</sup> out of 130 institutions. Whilst there were areas of relative strength, key areas for improvement continued to be 'entry standards', 'graduate prospects', 'good honours' and 'degree completion'. Further work would be required across the institution in order to improve the student experience and to add value to student attainment. The results of the NSS 2020 would be published on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

## 3217 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

### (a) Planning & Resources Committee

The Executive Summary, including the advice and recommendations, of the Planning & Resources Committee meetings held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020 was received and discussed.

The University Council noted the following main items:

(i) Student Recruitment 2020/21 (minutes 51/20, 5<sup>th</sup> May and 71/20, 11<sup>th</sup> June)

The current position is summarised in the Vice-Chancellor's report (minute 3214 (3)). Members were keenly aware that even achieving the forecast 2,500 number would not result in a surplus for 2020/21 without additional income and/or cost saving.

(ii) Chester Students' Union (minutes 50/20, 5<sup>th</sup> May and 70/20, 11<sup>th</sup> June)

The Committee welcomed the on-going student support provided by the CSU during Covid-19 and the enhanced collaboration between the CSU and University during this period.

The CSU remained on target to achieve a surplus for 2019/20 of £62,000. A cautious approach had been taken due to the uncertainty surrounding the impact of Covid-19 but nevertheless the budget for 2020-21 sought to continue to improve reserves and projected a surplus of some £5K for the year. The Committee continued to assess the return on investment and value provided by the CSU.

(iii) Strategic Projects (minute 51/20, 52/20 & 57/20 5<sup>th</sup> May and 71/20, 72/20 78/20, 11<sup>th</sup> June)

Matters relating to the Warrington Campus, Thornton Science Park, University Centre Shrewsbury and the Medicine initiative had been reported within the Vice-Chancellor's Report (minute 3214) and under Major Initiatives (minute 3215).

(a) **Planning & Resources Committee (Continued)**

(iv) Budget 2020/21 and Financial Forecast

Mr Waddington presented the 2020-21 Budget and Financial Forecast together with an additional Covid-19 supplementary paper. The budget for 2020-21 had been finalised and a deficit of £8.8M was forecast, with future years indicating a reducing deficit before the University moved into surplus in 2023-24. The forecast took into account the need to increase student recruitment and reduce costs alongside the need to implement the new Strategic Plan and the required investment to deliver it. Cash was sufficient to support this course and the plan would be under constant review and amended as necessary. The most significant risk for the University remained student recruitment in 2020/21 and the Committee noted the measures being undertaken in order to ensure optimum recruitment.

A detailed discussion took place on the budget and financial forecasts and the additional sensitivity analysis which modelled the potential impacts of Covid-19 and the position should recruitment levels be worse than projected, all of which would lengthen the period of deficit.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Budget 2020/21 and provisionally approve the Financial Forecasts. The Financial Forecasts would be submitted to the autumn meeting prior to submission to the OfS in December 2020.

(v) Management Accounts, May 2020

The Management Accounts to May 2020 were received and discussed. The deficit for 2019/20 remained in the region of £5.1M, although as expenditure continued to slow this position might improve slightly in the coming weeks.

(vi) Academic Governance (*minute 54/20 5<sup>th</sup> May and 76/20 11<sup>th</sup> June*)

The Committee approved enhanced reporting and oversight arrangements in respect of academic governance and received quinquennial review reports and action plans for Student Futures and Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions.

(vii) Student Welfare, Safeguarding and Mental Health (*minute 77/20, 11<sup>th</sup> June*)

Prevent: The OfS has published its response to the University's 2018/19 annual report and confirmed that the University demonstrated due regard to the Prevent duty and was not

**(a) Planning & Resources Committee (Continued)**

regarded as at higher risk of non-compliance in the future, with no further action required.

Consultation with the University's Regional Prevent Coordinator continued and modification to the University's documentation and practice would be made as a result of the latest consultation. In particular, risk assessments would be undertaken by site and a Prevent Steering Group would be established to ensure that responsibility for Prevent is shared. Further training will be undertaken across the University and would extend to the University Council.

**(viii) Subsidiaries Companies Update**

The University Secretary presented. It was highlighted that in respect of the proposed Joint Venture the University's advisers continued negotiations with Shell, Essar and others regarding release of overage covenants and easing of title restrictions before the OJEU process commenced.

The University Secretary also presented an outline proposal to reconstitute the membership of the Board of Directors of Thornton Research Properties Ltd (TRP) to reflect University Council membership, rather than a majority who were not employed by or members of the University Council. It was felt that such a change would be more suited to the next stage of the development of the University and TRP Ltd activity at Thornton.

IT WAS RESOLVED to nominate Meredydd David, Francis Ball, Nick Jenkins and Sandra Verity as directors of TRP Ltd and accept the resignations of the existing directors, other than the Vice-Chancellor, with thanks for their service.

**(ix) Revisions to Bank Facilities**

Mr Waddington explained that, as a consequence of the University's anticipated deficit, bank covenants would be breached in 2020 and as such covenant waivers would be required. Positive discussions had been held with lenders. Santander had agreed to waive covenants for 2020 but would review future years in the autumn once student recruitment was clearer.

Amendment proposals had been received from both Barclays and Lloyds TSB.

Barclays: Indicative terms dated 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 were received and discussed. Mr Waddington explained the cost of revised terms and also confirmed that further discussion would be held in order to clarify provisions relating to debt servicing costs.



## 3217 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)

### (a) Planning & Resources Committee (Continued)

Once agreed, details would be provided to the University Council for approval.

Lloyds: An amendment letter from Lloyds was received and discussed.

IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:

1. the facility amendment letter addressed to the University produced to the meeting from Lloyds Bank plc (the 'Amendment Letter') relating to an original facility of £10,000,000 the subject of a facility letter originally dated 17th December 2009 accepted by the University on 18th December 2009 between (1) the University as borrower and (2) Lloyds Bank plc as amended from time to time (the 'Original Facility Letter') be approved including the terms of, and transactions contemplated by it be approved and accepted and that the Original Facility Letter should be amended in accordance with the Facility Amendment Letter and that the University deliver and perform the Amendment Letter; and
2. the Vice-Chancellor be authorised to sign the Amendment Letter on behalf of the University as borrower; and
3. the Vice-Chancellor be authorised to sign and/or despatch all documents and notices to be signed and/or despatched by the University under or in connection with the Amendment Letter.

### (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee

The Executive Summary, including the advice and recommendations, of the Audit & Risk Management Committee meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was received.

The University Council noted the following main items:

#### (i) Risk Management (minute 27/20)

The Committee reviewed the Risk Register which had been updated to reflect the impact of Covid-19. As a consequence, three additional risks (F1, O2 and O7) now exceeded the risk appetite, with risk F2 remaining outside the risk appetite. Discussion focussed on these risks and, in particular, on the additional measures the University was implementing in order to manage and mitigate the impact of these risks. The need to improve student recruitment remained the key risk for the University. The Committee recommend approval of the Risk Register to the University Council.

## 3217 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)

### (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee (Continued)

#### (ii) Internal Audit Reports, RSM (minute 28/20)

RSM confirmed that the audit programme for 2019/20 had been completed in line with the audit plan. Five audit review reports had been undertaken. The Committee benefited from input on a review of 'ISO 27001 Information Security' from the PVC Operations and Chief Information Officer and Director of Learning & Information Services, and also the PVC (Enhancement) on a review of 'Apprenticeships – Mock Funding Review'. The Committee continue to challenge management where recommendations were not fully implemented within agreed timescales.

#### (iii) The Internal Audit Strategy 2016/17 – 2021/22 (minute 29/20)

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2020/21. Updates were made in view of the importance of 'Student Retention', which was brought into the 2020/21 audit cycle and combined with a review of Academic Quality processes. The number of audit days was 75 and the fee level £\*\*\*\*. The Internal Audit Strategy is recommended to the University Council for approval.

#### (iv) External Auditors Audit Plan & Strategy for the Year Ended 31st July 2020 (minute 31/20)

The Committee considered the External Auditors Audit Plan & Strategy for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020. The Plan referenced the impact of Covid-19 on matters such as going concern and, consequently, there would be additional challenge on management assumption associated particularly with pensions and valuations. It was also noted that the OfS had requested for the first time that a disclosure be included in the financial statements to set out the level of investment made on widening participation activities.

The audit fee for the year was noted and the Committee continue to monitor any proposed variations. The External Auditors Audit Plan & Strategy for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 is recommended to the University Council for approval.

#### (v) Review of Policies (minute 33/20)

The following policies were recommended for approval:

- a) Financial Regulations.
- b) Procurement Policy.
- c) Anti-Bribery Policy.
- d) Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy).

**(b) Audit & Risk Management Committee (Continued)**

(vi) Office for Students, Conditions of Registration Checklist (minute 35/20)

The Committee continued to monitor compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration and noted that the OfS had temporarily relaxed 'reportable events' requirements due to Covid-19 circumstances.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the following:

- i) Risk Register
- ii) Financial Regulations
- iii) Procurement Policy
- iv) Anti-Bribery Policy
- v) Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy
- vi) The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2020/21
- vii) The External Auditors Audit Plan & Strategy for the Year Ended 31st July 2020

**(c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee**

The Executive Summary, including the advice and recommendations, of the Nominations & Governance Review Committee meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020 was received.

The University Council noted the following main items:

(i) Constitutional Matters (minute 40/20)

The Committee considered the revised draft CUC HE Code of Governance and supporting Handbook. Final approval had been delayed due to Covid-19, but was due at the CUC Board meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Extensions were proposed to the 'fit and proper persons' test and declaration templates provided. The Committee welcomed the clarity that the templates provided but agreed that judgment may be necessary, if the final edition permits, about disclosures by members.

Once the Code and Handbook have been approved a training session on the new governance arrangements will be held.

- (ii) Instrument and Articles of Government: As a result of certain provisions of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 the Privy Council (PC) had advised that their approval of the University's governance arrangements ceased from 1st August 2019, and that the formal approval of these arrangements was now a matter for the University itself to take forward. The PC has suggested minor technical amendments to the Instrument and

**(c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee (Continued)**

Articles and the Committee agreed that it was appropriate to consider other amendments.

A print of the proposed amended Instrument and Articles with proposed amendments colour coded was discussed, the key points being as follows:

Green: the Privy Council's technical amendments, typographical and consequential amendments and matters of style

Red: significant changes, chiefly the removal of the following requirements:

- for the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to be an ex officio Foundation Member (s/he may attend meetings if the Council so requires) and consequential reduction in the number of members from 25 to 23 by reduction in the number of non-Foundation Members by one; and
- for the Student Union President to withdraw from consideration of conditions of service, appointment and promotion of members of staff (typically the appointment of senior staff and senior staff pay).

Amber: neither technical, nor of the potential importance of the significant changes above.

(iii) Making payments to University Council members: Charity Commission guidance on 'Trustee Expenses and Payments' had been sought and, whilst payments were permitted, these were restricted chiefly to expenses. The guidance provided little support for authority to make more extensive payments generally.

(iv) Review of University Council Membership: Consideration was given to existing and forthcoming vacancies and possible re-appointments in the light of the current skills mix. It was noted that two vacancies currently existed and with regard to a second representative from Reaseheath College, it had recently been agreed that each institution will in future nominate only one person to the other's governing body, although the College would be permitted to name a second delegate who may attend University Council meetings as an observer. It was further noted that Bishop Mark Tanner had been appointed as the new Bishop of Chester.

(v) Review of University Council Committees: The Committee reviewed existing membership and possible changes. A new HE Audit Committee Code of Practice has been issued by CUC and a review against existing practice. Further review would be undertaken by the Audit & Risk Management Committee.

(c) **Nominations & Governance Review Committee (Continued)**

Recommendations are detailed below.

- (vi) Governor Development & External Governance Review:  
AdvanceHE would be engaged to undertake a governor development training programme and be approached for a proposal to undertake a governance review during 2021.

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) To amend the Instrument and Articles of Government. The amendments shall take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, save that the composition of the membership of the Council shall accord with paragraph 3 of the amended Instrument of Government as soon as may be but without any member of the Council being required to retire early from office by reason of the number of members in any category being temporarily exceeded.
- (2) To appoint the following to fill current vacancies, subject to compliance with the CUC Code 'fit and proper person' test:
  - (i) Steven Broomhead as a non-foundation member from 1st September 2020;
  - (ii) Razia Daniels as a non-foundation member from 1st September 2020.
- (3) To reappoint the following, subject to compliance with the CUC Code 'fit and proper person' test:
  - (i) Professor Charles Forsdick as a foundation member from 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2023.
  - (ii) Mr Nick Jenkins as a foundation member from 1st December 2020 to 30th November 2023.
- (4) Audit & Risk Management Committee:
  - (i) To appoint Mrs Cathy Bond as Chair of the Committee from 1st September 2020.
  - (ii) To review membership of the Committee in the autumn term, the current membership of three members and one professional adviser being sufficient in the short term.
  - (iii) To review the Committee's terms of reference in the light of the new CUC HE Audit Committee Code of Practice.
- (5) Nominations & Governance Review Committee:

To appoint Sir Neil Cossons and The Very Reverend Dr Tim Stratford from 1st September 2020.

(c) **Nominations & Governance Review Committee (Continued)**

(6) Planning & Resources Committee:

To appoint Mr Francis Ball from 1st September 2020.

(7) Promotions Committee:

To disestablish the requirement for University Council representation on the Committee.

(8) University Mission Committee:

To include the President or a student member of the newly formed Islamic Society as a member of the Committee.

(d) **Human Resources Committee**

The Executive Summary, including the advice and recommendations, of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was received.

The University Council noted the following main items:

(i) Staff Sickness Absence Report 2018/19 (minute 25/20)

Data on Staff Sickness Absence was presented and gave greater insight on the two chief reasons for/categories of sickness absence: 'Mental Health' and 'Operation'. Key findings included:

- mental health sickness absence accounted for the highest proportion of absences (working days lost) over the last 5 years, both at the University and across the HE sector;
- during the period the sector had seen an annual increase in the proportion of total absence attributable to mental health of roughly 1.2%, rising from 20.7% in 2014/15 to 25.6% in 2018/19. With the exception of a spike in 2016/17, a similar pattern had been experienced at the University, rising from 16.7% to 29.0%;
- the Faculty of Health and Social Care (590), Faculty of Social Science (459.5) and Hospitality and Residential Services (402) accounted for the greatest number of working days lost due to mental health. Further work with the Faculty of Health & Social Care will seek to understand its data and to remind staff of the support mechanisms available;
- the University continued with its implementation of the 'Healthy University Strategy' and numerous initiatives and approaches to support staff and students.

(ii) Staff Survey (minute 27/20)

Monitoring of the staff survey action plan continues and in particular on the key areas of concern raised by staff being 'strategic direction' and 'SMT communication'. Strategic direction was being addressed via the numerous consultation

**(d) Human Resources Committee (Continued)**

events on the new Strategic Plan. SMT communication had been greatly enhanced by the weekly 'From the VC' e-mails, together with the live on-line VC Q&A sessions.

(iii) Capability Policy & Procedure (*minute 28/20*)

Following detailed consultation with both UCU and Unison the Capability Policy & Procedure had been updated and provided clearer guidance. The Committee recommend its approval to the University Council.

(iv) Coronavirus Update (*minute 29/20*)

The Committee received a detailed update on measures implemented by the University in response to the Coronavirus.

(v) Health, Safety & Environment Matters (*minute 30/20*)

(i) Work associated with fire safety, water safety, asbestos management and statutory compliance inspections continued so far as is practicably safe in current circumstances. Health & Safety Advisory Services form part of the University's COVID-19 Task Force and have prepared a number of procedural documents to operate during this period.

(ii) A central risk assessment repository had been created in which to locate risk assessments. Follow-up work on the H&S Governance audit had been undertaken by the University's internal auditors (RSM). Of the five recommendations made, three had been fully implemented and two partially implemented, both of which had been downgraded from 'medium' to 'low' due to the progress made.

(iii) The following University's Safety Standards were approved by the Health, Safety & Environment Committee:

- a) Level 2 - Part 1: University Standard for Health and Safety Management Activity General Risk Assessment;
- b) Level 2 - Part 3: University Standard for the Management of Adverse Events Building Evacuation - Toolkit for the Provision of Additional Support / Point of Emergency Assistance and preparation of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Capability Policy & Procedure.

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**(e) University Mission Committee**

The Executive Summary, including the advice and recommendations, of the University Mission Committee meeting held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was received.

The University Council noted the following main items:

(i) Faith in Higher Education: A Church of England Vision (*minute 19/20*)

The Faith in Higher Education Report was received and discussed. The Committee acknowledged that a draft of the report had provided the focus of discussions held at the Colloquium hosted by the University in June 2019. The Committee welcomed the report and its overarching vision of a humane education, inspired by wisdom, community, virtue and the common good in which religion, faith and spirituality take a central role and provide a vision of hope. The impact of the coronavirus had created a sense of a redistribution of respect within society, through such acts as the weekly ‘clap for carers’ and an increased emphasis on the importance and reliance on careers of service. It was felt that this societal ‘re-thinking’ of value provided an opportunity for the University whose foundational values had been developed on the promotion of careers of service.

Further reflection would be undertaken on the report and two meetings had been held by a small working group which sought to translate the key messages into practice. It was felt the report could contribute to the development of the new Strategic Plan.

(ii) Dean of Chapel’s Report (*minute 20/20*)

Chaplaincy had moved swiftly to the provision of virtual services through media such as Zoom and Facebook Live. Wednesday services had proved particularly popular, with increased attendance from a wider range of staff, students and alumni. Work was also being undertaken with the AV department to develop a suitable solution, post-coronavirus, which would facilitate both physical and virtual attendance in the Chapel.

Review of University Faith Spaces/Quiet Rooms: Discussions continued with the Facilities Department concerning required refurbishment work and possible relocation of some faith spaces/quiet rooms.

(iii) Corporate Social Responsibility (*minute 21/20*)

As part of the development of the Strategic Plan the current CSR policy will be reviewed and updated. The University would also seek to implement the appropriate UN sustainable development goals.

The SMT had agreed that the University’s Fairtrade accreditation would be renewed and the renewal fee paid.



## **3217 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES (CONTINUED)**

### **(e) University Mission Committee (Continued)**

#### **(iv) Chester TWIN (*minute 22/20*)**

Chester TWIN has been dissolved as a charity and removed from the register with the Charity Commission. Remaining funds have been transferred to the University and the new University Mission Fund (UMF) established.

## **3218 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The Student Union President's Report was received and discussed. Of particular note was the on-going engagement activities and campaigns. During May 2020 the CSU had launched its 'Student Union Survey' with over 1000 responses received to date. Data from the survey would be utilised to inform the development of the new CSU Strategic Plan and had assisted with the creation of the CSU Operating Plan 2020/21 which had recently been concluded and a copy of which would be distributed to all University Council members. Mental Health Awareness week had also been supported, the theme of which was 'kindness', with a particular focus on Covid-19 and completing assignments.

Society Awards and the 1839 Awards had been held virtually. A live Q&A session with the Vice-Chancellor had been held with some 800 views to date. Both the Vice-Chancellor and President of Council had also attended a recent Student Council session which sought to gain student input into the University's new Strategic Plan and also feedback on the blended learning approach that would be adopted for 2020/21. Induction and handover preparations continued for the new sabbatical officers.

## **3219 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (a) Planning & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020
- (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- (c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- (d) Human Resources Committee held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- (e) University Mission Committee held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- (f) Senate held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## **3220 STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**

A summary report of the Strategic Planning Session held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 was received and noted.

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**3221 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS)**

The following were received:

- (a) an up-dated list of OfS publications
- (b) the OfS letter dated 25th March 2020 and guidance on regulatory requirements during the coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic
- (c) the OfS guidance for providers about reportable events during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

**3222 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2020**

The responses to the Institutional Self-Assessment 2020 were received and would help inform the one-to-one sessions that the President and Deputy President would undertake with all Members.

It was noted that meetings conducted via Teams have greatly assisted attendance. Members particularly welcomed the invitation to attend meetings of the Planning & Resources Committee in an 'observer' capacity and it was agreed that this would be extended to all Committees of the University Council.

**3223 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of any other business.

**3224 DATES OF OTHER UNIVERSITY EVENTS**

The dates of Graduation Ceremonies, Open Days, Open Evenings and University Council meetings were noted.

**3225 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

*Next meeting: Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020, 2.00pm*

**Future meetings – all 9.30 am:**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021