

## **COUNCIL – MINUTES**

### **25 September 2020 (via Teams)**

**PRESENT:** Pro-Chancellor, Lord Liddle (in the Chair); Professor A. Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Mr D. Barron (lay member); Professor S. Bradley (Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor); Ms H. Burgess (lay member); Mr A. Carey (lay member); Professor Sir Ian Diamond (lay member); Mrs R. S. Georghiou (lay member); Professor S. C. Guy (Senate representative); Mr I. Johnson (lay member); Professor K. C. Jones (Senate representative); Ms B. T. Morgan (student representative); Ms A. M. Mullan (Senate representative); Baroness Neville-Jones (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Professor E. Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Mr O. Robinson (Students' Union President); His Hon. P. Sycamore (lay member); Mrs V. Young (lay member).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs C. Geddes (Committee Secretary); Mr S. J. Jennings (Director of Strategic Planning and Governance); Ms N. C. Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations)); Mrs S. J. Randall-Paley (Director of Finance) (*attended for item 9*); Rt Hon A. Burt (Observer); Ms M. Reid Fotheringham (Observer)

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Lord Price (lay member).

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the incoming Pro-Chancellor, Rt Hon A. Burt, as an observer to his first meeting of Council.
- 1.2 Council noted apologies for absence.
- 1.3 Council noted the resignation of Mr S. Reynolds as a lay member and recorded its gratitude and thanks for Mr Reynolds' considerable contribution since he joined the Council in July 2014.
- 1.4 The Chair informed the Council of interim arrangements for the Chair of Estates Committee which would see Professor E. Ritchie act as Chair and that Ms M. Reid Fotheringham would now be appointed as a lay member of the Council from 1 October 2020.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES: EXTRAORDINARY MEETING: 8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**PAPER A**

- 3.1 Council approved the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8 September 2020.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

- 4.1 Council noted that a sub-group had been established to consider the latest USS consultation. Mrs V. Young (lay member) was the Chair.
- 4.2 The meeting was advised that the Voluntary Severance Scheme had been launched and was attracting interest.

#### **5. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE AND QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

- 5.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following.
- (i) The activity to prepare campus for the arrival of students, maintain a socially distanced campus and develop further outbreak management plans, including reference to the Department for Education's Tiers of Restriction. Members noted the development of contingency plans for campus operations through to the new year.
- Council noted the continued dialogue with the City and County Councils and Public Health Lancashire in particular, regarding the University's concerns about availability and suitability of testing arrangements.
- (ii) The Office for Students' announcement that it intended to reduce bureaucracy as a regulator and the subsequent announcement regarding a review of the National Student Survey (NSS).
- (iii) The publication of the Sunday Times League Table in which Lancaster had been ranked tenth, meaning it had sustained its top ten position in all domestic league tables. Council noted the pressures on maintaining this position and the significance of the NSS in achieving this.
- (iv) The research awards performance for 2019-20: whilst the relevant KPI measure of research spend had slowed due to reduced activity on campus, total research award values for 2019-20 showed positive growth with total awards likely to be higher than in the two previous years.

#### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **6. PRESIDENT, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION: REPORT PAPER B**

- 6.1 The President of the Students' Union reported on the following.
- (i) His concerns regarding the emergent national picture regarding Covid-19 outbreaks at universities and students' welfare and experience.
- (ii) Some students' concerns regarding the Pro-Chancellor appointment and how the incoming Pro-Chancellor's frank and open response to these was to be welcomed.

- (iii) The near completion of the appointment process for a new interim Chief Executive of the Students' Union.
- (iv) The Students' Union's financial position as presented to Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee and the trustees' intention to preserve staffing and core delivery to enable a swift recovery of service and activity post Covid-19 restrictions being lifted. However, Mr Robinson noted there remained significant pressures around staffing costs and growing demand for advice services.
- (v) Concern regarding the Students' Union's NSS performance, the factors behind this and the measures being undertaken to address this and wider membership engagement issues.

6.2 Council noted the President's report including the financial pressures upon the organisation and was supportive of the actions being taken to address student satisfaction. Council encouraged the Students' Union to consider the relationship with the College JCRs and how they might work together to add value to the student experience and shift opinion on the Students' Union.

**7. BRIEFING ON THE 2020 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) RESULTS** **PAPER C**  
*Restricted and Commercial in Confidence*

**8. SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENT** **PAPER D**  
*Restricted and Confidential*

**9. ORAL UPDATE FROM THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING** **ORAL UPDATE**

9.1 The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Mrs V. Young, reported that the Committee had: discussed the better than projected outturn for 2019-2020; considered it too early to judge likely performance against the 2020-2021 budget regarding student admissions; noted that an updated Standard and Poor's credit rating for the University would soon be available; and noted that the Vice-Chancellor had confirmed EU student tuition fees would rise to the equivalent of overseas students from 2021-2022.

**10. PRO-CHANCELLOR REMUNERATION** **PAPER E**  
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#### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**11. WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS** **PAPER F**

11.1 Council noted the written reports.

## **12. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**PAPER G**

12.1 Council noted the proposed forward schedule of business.

## **13. PRO-CHANCELLOR TRIBUTE**

13.1 The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the Pro-Chancellor and the impact which he had had since becoming Chair of the Council in July 2013. On behalf of the members, staff and students, Professor Schofield thanked Lord Liddle for his dedication and commitment to the long-term future of the University, a period during which it had experienced growth in scale and reputation. The Council noted that an appropriate event at which members could express their gratitude would be held once Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

13.2 The Pro-Chancellor shared highlights of his term in office and thanked fellow Council members, the senior management team and staff for their support.

## **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

14.1 Members noted that the next meeting will be held from 9.00 a.m. on Friday 20 November 2020.