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LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL: TUESDAY 19th April 2018

PRESENT:

Revd Canon Peter Winn (in the Chair), Mr Charles Mills (Vice-Chair),
Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson, Mrs Jane Beever, Dr John Bennett,
Sr Dr Mary Charles-Murray SND, Cllr Jane Corbett,
Revd Canon Chris Fallon, Mr Mike Gilbertson, Dr Simon Hulme,
Mr Jack Johnson, Dr Joan McClelland, Fr Chris McCoy,
Sr Maureen McKnight SND, Dr Arthur Naylor, Mr John Norbury, Professor
Gerald Pillay, Mr Ultan Russell, Mrs Diane Shaw, Mrs Maggie Swinson,
Dr Sonja Tiernan, Professor Ian Vandewalle (22 members)

By invitation:

Ms Laura Gittins (Clerk to Council)
Mr Derrick Dykins (Company Secretary)
Dr Penny Haughan (for item 5)

No Conflicts of Interest were reported.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Rt Revd Paul Bayes (Bishop of Liverpool) and Judge Graham Wood.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2017 were **APPROVED** as a correct record, subject to the correction in 9b, "*Mr Johnson* suggested that the University consider gender-neutral toilets when the new properties at Creative Campus are configured".

3. **Matter Arising from those minutes**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Vice Chancellor's Notes to Council**

The Vice Chancellor noted that The Office for Students (OfS) and GDPR were a substantive item on the agenda. He drew members' attention to the improvement in the University's graduate employment rates to 83.8% as detailed in the results of the DLHE survey. However, he noted that results were controversial, as location of an institution skews results unfairly in favour of the South East of the country. Additionally, the move by the OfS to provide such information to students does not necessarily correlate the degree chosen to the career path of a student. Cllr Corbett agreed to provide more information on the Mayoral Inclusive Growth Plan for the City of Liverpool.

The development of the University's Creative and Performing Arts programmes at

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Creative Campus will be led by the newly appointed Head of School, Professor Stephen Davismoon. It is hoped that the newly formed School, which brings together cognate disciplines, will gain wider national recognition.

The Vice Chancellor noted that the addition of Carmel College in Knowsley to the Network of Hope would increase the University's involvement in widening participation by providing University level courses in areas where there is no immediate access to an HEI. He said that it was important that the University monitored the balance between its widening participation strategy and the maintenance of high standards. Cllr Corbett noted the difficulties in recruiting from low socio-economic postcodes in Liverpool detailed in the University's Access and Participation Plan. The Vice Chancellor said that although the University was beating its benchmarks in this area, there are a few areas that required further investigation. He advised that he planned to review this area at the University Council Reflective Meeting this October.

The University's work growing international recruitment continues, with the development of joint Masters degrees with universities in the Philippines. It was noted that the British Council in India had requested nominations for a project promoting female leadership in targeted regions, and University partner institutions had been successful in securing funding for three candidates.

Members discussed student recruitment more generally. Dr Naylor noted that the University's drop in student recruitment by only 2% is to be commended given the national demographic decline. He said that the shift in programme popularity could be significant, and queried whether the University had considered the implications for staffing and financial planning. The Vice Chancellor acknowledged the challenge, but said the shift was so far not significant enough to raise concerns over staffing. For example, in the past few years, Education had seen swingeing cuts of 50% due to government directives, but the University has been led by its charter as an educational institution and had managed to keep the Education Faculty buoyant without resorting to a major restructure. The Vice Chancellor said that current government policy towards creative and performing arts in secondary schools was a concern, as it was beginning to stifle recruitment at tertiary level. Mrs Beever confirmed that secondary schools were facing similar issues in balancing curriculum requirements with staffing, particularly around disciplines such as languages.

5. **Clerk's Business: The Office for Students**

Dr Haughan, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Life and Learning, had been invited to brief Council on the newly created Office for Students (OfS). She gave members documentation which gave an overview of OfS objectives and how it will continue to work with established bodies for monitoring quality (QAA) and managing data (HESA). She explained the requirements for registration, how the University would be monitored, and OfS powers to intervene and impose sanctions. She explained that she was working closely with Ms Gittins who was preparing some of the required documentation relating to governance and the Student Protection Plan.

Dr Haughan distributed the University's draft Access and Participation Plan, which would be one element of the documentation. She advised that staff had analysed the current access agreement and identified any gaps with OfS regulations and this formed the basis of the Plan. Dr Haughan asked Council members to contact her directly with any queries or comments.

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Dr Haughan highlighted the shift to focusing on the student as a customer and ensuring that measures such as value for money were made transparent for prospective students. The introduction of the Student Protection Plan and ensuring that the University complied with consumer law were further examples of how the OfS would operate differently to HEFCE. The University has to ensure that it has strategies to ensure students can complete their course should the University stop operating; given the strong financial stability the University currently enjoys, this should not present any issues for the University.

In line with the guidance, the University was producing a self-assessment document on consumer protection which requires the University to submit essential information about its courses and facilities to students before they make a decision to accept an offer. Any subsequent changes to these have to be fair and transparent. This was currently being worked on by a Compliance Working Group, which was reviewing a range of policies.

On Governance, Ms Gittins explained that documentation needed to demonstrate that University Council operated appropriately and effectively with well-documented processes. Members should expect a request from her shortly to sign forms confirming they are “fit and proper” to serve on Council, as this was now a requirement. Other changes will be the introduction of an Annual Report on Equality and Diversity statistics to be received by Council. There will also need to be a Governance Effectiveness Review towards the end of the calendar year and Ms Gittins had already spoken to the Chair about this. The methodology for the review would be discussed at the Council Reflective Meeting in October this year.

Mr Russell asked how students were being included in the drafting of documents. Dr Haughan said that the Students’ Union would have input into the drafts, plus the Student Sounding Board would be consulted.

In her presentation, Ms Gittins went through the key points within the drafts. She explained that ideally members would be presented with the full draft documentation, but that as the framework and registration documentation were released only very recently, work was still ongoing. Due to the tight timescales, it would not be possible to present the final drafts to Council. She therefore requested that members give the Chair authority to sign off the documentation on behalf of University Council.

Mrs Shaw queried whether so much documentation could be completed in such a short timeframe. Dr Haughan was confident that the University would submit on time; if there were any gaps, the University may receive conditional registration which would require the gaps to be filled in an agreed timeframe. Mrs Shaw commended the work of Dr Haughan and Ms Gittins in achieving so much in such a short time.

The request to delegate permission to the Chair and/or Vice-Chair to sign off documentation for OfS registration on behalf of University Council was unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

6. **Senate**

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2018, which were presented by Professor Pillay in his capacity as Chair. There were no matters arising. Ms Gittins advised that reporting of equality and diversity statistics on the student

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population would in future come via Senate to Council.

7. Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes of 15th March 2018

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2018, which were presented by Mr Norbury as Chair. He noted that the University had successfully sourced an advisor with an accounting background to attend the Committee, Ms Jean Ellis. He reported that the reforecast financial report for the current year kept the surplus target at £2.65m (5%), that there were no areas for concern and that the actual surplus is likely to be closer to £3.3m, comparable to last year.

On staffing costs, Cllr Corbett requested that the University review its current policy of paying students less than the living wage as a way of compensating the current gender pay gap. The Vice Chancellor noted that budgeting would mean that fewer students would be employed if the University paid them a living wage. He noted the issue of students at the University from Northern Ireland who, due to the nature of their funding, make up approximately 70% of the claimants to the University's Hardship Fund, while representing only 17% of the student population. Cllr Corbett suggested working with Liverpool City Council to signpost students to their Hardship Fund.

Mr Norbury noted that Student Debt to the University had increased by 1% this year compared to last year. However, he was satisfied that the University was making progress in this area.

Members asked whether current refurbishment plans at Creative Campus would include keeping the façade of Kays' Medical, and whether designs could maintain its links with the local community, particularly its links with the LSPCC. Members also queried parking at the Campus; Professor Vandewalle explained that a regular free bus service between Creative Campus and Hope Park, plus arrangements with Q-Parking helped to alleviate the need for car parking space at the Campus. He also noted that, as the building was listed the University was working with the Conservation Office to maintain its façade.

Mr Norbury noted the request from Barclays Bank to amend their covenants in relation to two current loans from the Bank to allow testing via FRS 102 on one of the loans.

The changes to the existing loan covenants were unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

8. Audit and Risk Management

Minutes of the meeting of Audit Committee 13th March 2018

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2018, which were presented by the Chair, Mr Charles Mills. He noted that overall both internal and external audit suggested University processes were robust and fit-for-purpose.

He drew attention to the two internal audit reports received on Value for Money (Conferencing and Non-Residential Accommodation) and Key Financial Controls which had each identified two management actions.

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Mr Mills also noted comments on gender pay gap reporting, with the University median gender pay gap of 16% skewed by student workers and the University's policy on not outsourcing key services. Members commented that maternity leave returners could also further skew results.

Mr Norbury queried the University's pension assets and liabilities risk due to developments with USS highlighted by the External Auditors. The Vice Chancellor said that whilst this a concern common to all universities and in some respects was outside the control of the University, the Director of Personnel would continue to monitor the situation. The small number of staff who were members of the scheme (35) meant this was not as significant as at other universities.

Mr Mills noted the item on TRAC which gave costings of University activities. It was noted that TRAC(T), specifically costing subject areas, demonstrated a range from £8,365 to £12,629 per student.

Dr Bennett noted the University is aiming for a reduction in administration personnel. The Vice Chancellor said this was a conscious strategy to move resources to the chalk face, noting that benchmarks within the sector were meaningless due to the reliance of most universities on outsourced services.

Dr Naylor asked whether the Risk Register continued to be fit-for-purpose, particularly given the OfS focus on the student as customer. Ms Gittins said that she had recently reviewed the methodology and the registers completed by all Departments in detail to create the Corporate Risk Register which does reflect changes in government policy. The Vice Chancellor said there could be a risk if there were a significant rise in the number of students submitting complaints to the OIA.

9. Staffing Committee

(i) Minutes of the meeting of Staffing Committee held on 8th March 2018

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2018 which were presented by the Chair, Mrs Swinson. She noted that USS members had the option of transferring to the Teachers' Pension Scheme, the University's default scheme for academics, but that only a small number had done so. Mr Norbury noted that if all USS members chose to transfer this would be problematic for the University. The Vice Chancellor said that it was noted on the University's Risk Register.

It was agreed that the University's Gender Pay Gap Report 2017 would be circulated to Council at the next meeting. Canon Winn noted reference to the new Remuneration Code published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC). He advised that the Code was still under consultation but hoped that by the next meeting of University Council, could be reviewed with a view to adopting by the University.

(ii) GDPR

Members had received Ms Gittins paper, which gave a summary of key changes to data protection once GDPR is introduced on 25th May 2018. She explained that the implications for the University were substantial and that she had established a working group tasked with creating an action plan to ensure compliance. Every member of staff would receive training, and overall compliance with GDPR would be the focus of an

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internal advisory audit review in May 2018. Dr Haughan confirmed that communications with applicants had already changed to ensure that they had the applicant's permission to keep contacting them, and she was reviewing the student registration process and how data is stored and used. Sr McKnight asked how permissions were logged; Dr Haughan said that a tick box on e-forms was used.

10. Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety

(i) Minutes of the meeting of Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety 6th March 2018

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held 6th March 2018, which were present by the Chair, Sr Charles-Murray. Sr Charles-Murray noted the prominence being given to student mental health, currently under review by Dr Haughan and her team. The Vice Chancellor advised that nationally this was the most reported issue in terms of student welfare, higher than drug-related issues.

(ii) Major Incident Plan and Staff Guide

Members had received the Major Incident Plan with the associated Staff Guide, both of which had recently been overhauled in line with guidance following recent incidents nationally. Sr Charles-Murray said it provided a detailed structure including clear responsibilities for relevant members of staff. A rehearsal was planned to further test the Plan. Mrs Swinson said that an external body might need to have a copy of the plan, and Dr McClelland noted such a plan would normally include reporting the incident immediately to a specific body.

The Major Incident Plan and associated Staff Guide were unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

11. Students' Union (SU)

President's Report

Members had received the President's Report. Mr Johnson noted that following recent SU elections, which saw a positive turnout of 26.01%, Mr Feidhelm Doolin had been elected President for next year, with Mr Luke Skillbeck as Vice President Education, and Ms Niamh Fearon as Vice Present Welfare and Community. Mr Doolin would be invited to attend the next meeting of Council. Mr Russell asked whether there were any differences in turnout between the two campuses and was told that engagement with elections at Hope Park was higher.

The President noted that the Students' Union had embarked on the Student Engagement Project, starting by recording its interactions with students. Canon Fallon asked whether there were any figures on interactions with students regarding welfare and debt issues; the President agreed to look into this and report back at the next meeting.

Mr Johnson also noted the successes of the various LHSU Sports Teams, including significant wins for the Men's and Women's Gaelic Football Teams. Members congratulated the Student's Union on their successes.

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Dates of future meetings

All meetings begin at 4pm:

- Tuesday 10th July 2018
- Thursday 11th October 2018
- Tuesday 27th November 2018