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LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL THURSDAY 11th April 2019

PRESENT:

Revd Canon Peter Winn (in the Chair), Mr Charles Mills (Vice-Chair), Mrs Jane Beever, Dr John Bennett, Sr Dr Mary Charles-Murray SND, Mr Feidhelm Doolin, Revd Canon Chris Fallon, Dr Joan McClelland, Fr Chris McCoy, Sr Maureen McKnight SND, Dr Arthur Naylor, Revd Canon Professor Kenneth Newport, Mr John Norbury, Professor Gerald Pillay, Mrs Diane Shaw, Mrs Maggie Swinson, HH Judge Graham Wood QC (17 members)

By invitation:

Ms Laura Gittins (Clerk to Council)
Mr Derrick Dykins (Company Secretary)

No Conflicts of Interest were reported.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson, Rt Revd Paul Bayes (Bishop of Liverpool), Cllr Jane Corbett, Mr Mike Gilbertson, Dr Simon Hulme, Dr Sonja Tiernan. Mr Ultan Russell and Professor Ian Vandewalle.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2018 were **APPROVED** as a correct record, subject to changing the abstention to a vote against the Tuition Fees 2019 (actum 8v).

3. **Matter Arising from those minutes**

There were no matters arising that were not included elsewhere on the agenda.

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

Members had received the Vice Chancellor's Notes to Council, plus a number of supplementary articles which gave background to financial challenges facing the sector. He highlighted the two inaugural lectures that had recently taken place, and the work being done to commemorate the founding of the University 175 years ago, which included an honorary award for past alumni who had graduated when a Bachelor's award had not been available.

He drew members' attention to the current climate that is challenging all HE providers, particularly the possible outcomes from the delayed Augar Review, one of which could be the lowering of tuition fees without a commensurate grant to make up the shortfall.

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Demographic changes place an additional threat to the financial viability of some HEIs, as does today's announcement that the government were excluding HEIs from receiving funding for employers' contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. In the long term, demographics are expected to improve gradually over the next ten years, and certain University initiatives should help to mitigate against the drop in numbers currently being seen in the sector. He noted that the move to students paying their own fees had made no impact on study behaviour, and said that it was important that the University maintained its entry standards.

Professor Pillay noted that the integrated curriculum, while being completely imbedded in all subjects, had prompted further refinements to progression regulations. Dr McClelland asked whether the new algorithm to aid retention would be applied to the current cohort and it was confirmed that it would be.

Dr Naylor expected that student choice would be gradually be affected by the funding regime, particularly with the introduction of the graduate apprenticeship scheme.

Mr Norbury noted that income is referenced in the supplementary articles but that tuition fees did not always represent a main source of income for some HEIs. Professor Pillay said that this was related to research income, the lion's share of which went to a very small group of universities. He noted that unlike Hope, many universities were in deficit, including some of those in the Russell Group. Fr McCoy said that it was important that students progress and are retained through to graduation. He felt that the University should be commended for the support structure it has developed to ensure that students have every opportunity to achieve this.

Professor Pillay advised that the OfS had written to the Chair of Council over their concerns that HEIs were overestimating targets for the next academic year, urging governing bodies to review their finances in this light. He noted that the University always took a prudent approach to its financial projections rather than exaggerating targets. However, a full response to the document would be received by Finance and General Purposes Committee next term, and then reported to University Council.

5. University Council Effectiveness Report

Members had received the Council Effectiveness Report and commended Ms Gittins for compiling such an easily readable and concise summary of the outcomes from the survey. Ms Gittins said that the next stage was for the recommendations to be converted into an action plan.

The 17 recommendations in the report were unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

The Chair focussed on recommendation 6 asking members for topics for the annual reflective meeting, and how the meeting could be structure to be more effective. One suggestion was that it could be used for induction talks; another member suggested having student-led presentations to better understand the student experience. Tackling issues around student loneliness was also suggested.

Action: Members to contact the Chair directly with any suggestions for topics and modus operandi for the meeting

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6. Senate

(i) Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2019

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2019, which were presented by Professor Pillay in his capacity as Chair.

(ii) The Hope Charter

Members had received the revised Hope Charter.

The Hope Charter was unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

7. Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes of 14th March 2019

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2019 which were presented by Mr Norbury as Chair. He reaffirmed his comments on prudent forecasting in relation to the Vice Chancellor's notes, highlighting that the current surplus target had increased from £1.55m to £2.1m despite the difficult financial climate.

He acknowledged that forecasting for the next financial year would be difficult due to the climate of uncertainty, as discussed by the Vice Chancellor (item 4). He also echoed comments on the 7.2% increase to the Teachers' Pension Scheme for the next financial year. Dr Naylor noted that there was already a number of HEIs rolling out voluntary severance schemes and queried whether this may be something the University has to consider. The Vice Chancellor said that non-staff costs had already been cut drastically through natural wastage but that he would protect as far as he could the academic posts at the University.

There had been no further developments in the purchase of 2 Islington Square due to technicalities relating to ownership. On student debt, the Committee had recommend that post-judgement debt enforcement might be delayed owing to potential adverse reputational impact. As it amounted to a relatively small sum at £100k, Council **AGREED** that any decision on enforcement be delayed until next year.

Mr Norbury commended the management of Student Union finances, which had a deficit of approximately £1.3k.

8. Audit and Risk Management

Minutes of the meeting of Audit Committee 25th March 2019

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2019, which were presented by the Chair, Mr Charles Mills. With regard to the internal audit report on the income generation/strategic growth plan, Professor Pillay explained that setting targets

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was not appropriate in this context. Judge Wood had queried the increase in fees of the external audit and was advised that these were agreed in advance and a breakdown of costs was requested from KPMG and provided.

9. **Staffing Committee**

Minutes of the meeting of Staffing Committee held on 7th March 2019

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2019 which were presented by the Chair, Mrs Swinson. She noted that the issue of pension contributions and realignment of faculties had been discussed. The implications of Brexit scenarios, pay negotiations and potential industrial action were also highlighted, though there was very little development on these. The implications of Brexit and the Gender Pay Gap were discussed. Mrs Swinson noted the data did not allow for a narrative, which would explain how the value-driven direct employment strategy (rather than agency work) which included students as well as general ancillary staff, negatively impacted on the University's data.

10. **Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety**

Minutes of the meeting of Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety 5th March 2019

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2019 which were presented by the Chair, Sr Charles-Murray. She noted the Fire Safety Annual Performance Report which highlighted issues with alarm activation, mainly due to cooking and the use of aerosols. The fire in Hopkins Hall had further highlighted the need for an increase in engagement with students, which next year will include an instruction video as part of their induction. Viewing the video will be a requirement before students are issued with keys to their rooms. Improving accessibility at Caerdeon for disabled students was ongoing.

Sr Charles-Murray noted the success of the recent drill to test the Major Incident Plan which had been devised as a reported explosion in the EDEN building. The exercise had led to a number of improvements to systems. Sr Charles-Murray commended the work of Ms McManniman in setting up the drill.

11. **Nominations Committee**

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2019 which were presented by the Chair, Canon Winn. Canon Winn noted that the conflict of interest which had been preventing Mr Russell from remaining a member of University Council would be resolved shortly and Mr Russell would be able to take his place as a member of Council. He advised that, as Lord Guthrie's term as Chancellor had now ended, the Committee were actively searching for a replacement and hoped to have more information by the next University Council meeting.

12. **Students' Union (SU) President's Report**

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Members had received the President's Report. Professor Pillay thanked the President for resolving the issue with trustees for the Students' Union. The sporting achievements of the SU groups were also commended. Mrs Swinson noted current issues with the solvency of the National Union of Students, though it was not clear what the consequences of disaffiliation would be.