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LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING: 13th April 2021

PRESENT: Revd Canon Peter Winn (in the Chair), Mr Charles Mills (Vice-Chair), Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson, Mrs Jane Beever, Ms J Ellis, Revd Canon Chris Fallon, Dr P Haughan, Very Revd Dr S Jones, Fr Chris McCoy, Dr Arthur Naylor, Revd Canon Professor Kenneth Newport, Mr John Norbury, Fr Michael O'Dowd, Mr H Pearce, Professor Gerald Pillay, Ms P Raper, Mr Ultan Russell, Mrs Maggie Swinson, Dr C Wakefield, HH Judge Graham Wood QC

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 Bishop Paul Bayes, Cllr Jane Corbett and Dr Simon Hulme

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2020 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

3. **Matters Arising**

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

4. **Vice-Chancellor's Notes to Council including the Higher Education Policy Landscape**

Members had received the Vice Chancellor's Notes to Council and an overview document regarding the HE Policy Landscape. Both were presented by Professor Pillay. He noted that his main concern was seeing out the year in the best possible way to finish on as positive a note as possible for students. He commended the efforts of staff in working creatively to manage online delivery, but said that any return to campus would be managed with health and safety matters to the forefront. He said that he is aiming for a nuanced and gradual approach to staff returning to work.

The Government's Roadmap is proving helpful but so far the HE Minister has yet to confirm arrangements for HEIs. Unlike many universities whose terms finish earlier, it is looking as though Hope will have four weeks of some face-to-face teaching. Dr Haughan reassured council that there were no Covid cases on campus at the moment and that examinations had moved online and this would not change regardless of the situation over the next few weeks.

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5. Office for Students: Letter from OfS 14th Jan 2021

Members has received for information the January letter from the OfS. Dr Haughan explained this was a directive from the OfS to make sure students are being treated fairly in terms of information given them and the support they receive. The OfS requires assurance from Council that it has received formal reports regarding an audit of its provision. The audit is currently being done by Dr Haughan and Ms Gittins to make sure that everything is being covered and this is being developed into an action plan. So far, there is one issue of concern which is being actioned but the vast majority of delivery has been appropriate.

6. University Council Effectiveness Review Group (CERG)

(i) CERG Action Plan

Members had received the Action Plan which was provided to show progress on actions. It was noted that the next review of effectiveness would take place in 2022 and outside assistance may be needed. This will be discussed at the next CERG meeting.

(ii) Scheme of Delegation

Members had received the Scheme of Delegation which outlines the authority for the University's major organisational responsibilities based on constitutional and regulatory documents and to indicate delegation of these responsibilities where these have been approved.

Members **APPROVED** the Scheme of Delegation

(iii) Statement of Primary Responsibilities

Members had received the Statement of Primary Responsibilities for Members of Council which serves to remind members of their responsibilities.

Members **APPROVED** the Statement of Primary Responsibilities

7. Senate

(i) Minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2021

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2021, which were presented by Professor Pillay in his capacity as Chair of Senate.

(ii) Hope Charter

Members had received the Hope Charter which is the commitment that the University makes to its students. It will be amended for the next academic year with minor cosmetic changes. Dr Haughan reported that colleagues and the Students' Union are happy with the content of the Charter. It was suggested that this could be the subject of an audit.

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Members **APPROVED** the Hope Charter

(iii) Dignity at Work and Study Policy

Members had received the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. Professor Pillay explained that this is an existing policy which was originally intended to apply to staff, though has now been extended to include students. It reaffirms the University's commitment to a fair work place. Members thanked Ms Gittins for the work done on the document. Ms Gittins noted that the University has been working on a separate policy for sexual violence and misconduct for some time, and over the coming weeks key staff will have extensive training so they are prepared and have tools to investigate such matters. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Members **APPROVED** the Dignity at Work and Study Policy

(iv) Anti-Semitism Statement

Members had received the University's proposed Anti-Semitism Statement. This has become a requirement for universities in the UK, and the Vice Chancellor explained the process Hope University has undertaken to arrive at the statement. He noted that the IHRA definition was widely published but adopting this was problematic due to its vagueness; the accompanying case studies were also problematic as they precluded any criticism of the government of Israel. This had been discussed in detail and advice had been taken from Professor Newport. Senate proposed accepting the definition but without reference to the case studies, and with caveats regarding the government of Israel. If approved, this will be published on the University's website.

Members **APPROVED** the Anti-Semitism Statement

8. Audit and Risk Management

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2021 which were presented by the Chair, Dr Naylor. He noted that the internal audit report reviewing data quality gave substantial assurance. The report on cybersecurity prompted a request to change the order of testing by the Committee and there was a prompt response from USET to facilitate this.

The Committee had spent some time considering the relationship between the Students' Union (SU) and the University, particularly around risk in the governance of the SU and the role of its trustees. He commended the SU President's Report from Mr Pearce (item 13) as the SU has listened to the University's concerns and carefully managed the transition to a new board of trustees and is in the process of finalising incorporation. Dr Haughan commended the diligence of the current sabbatical officers.

Dr Naylor drew members' attention to the matter under Reserved Business. The University had been looking at significant increases in the cost of external audit services from KPMG and had requested a tendering process. It became clear during this process that the market has changed significantly and that additional requirements, particularly in the areas of *going concern*, OfS regulatory requirements and the impact of pension schemes means that most companies are choosing not to tender for university audit work. Ms Beecroft had advised that other HEIs are facing similar challenges and that this is likely to be an issue for some time. Mrs Swinson said that going concern is now

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creating anxiety and risk in many sectors due to the pandemic. Consequently, only one response was tendered, and this was from KPMG. Consequently, the University has agreed to a 3-year contract.

Council **APPROVED** the appointment of KPMG for a further three years.

9. Finance and General Purposes Committee

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2021 which were presented by Mr Norbury as Chair. He noted that this meeting had taken place ahead of the March reforecast, but in future this meeting will be scheduled after the reforecast. He said that the healthy student recruitment had meant that the surplus, which had originally been predicted at £1.6m, was now £2.7m. Mr Norbury noted that the Vice Chancellor was looking into the possibility of an investment portfolio for the University.

10. Staffing Committee

- (i) Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2021 and Report from Chair of Staffing Committee

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2021 which were present by the Chair of the Committee, Ms Swinson, who also provided a summary report. Professor Newport said that work on the academic workload model was nearing completion. Mrs Swinson thanked Professor Newport for all the work he had done on this, acknowledging that a great deal of time and effort and been put into consulting with UCU.

- (ii) Domestic Abuse Policy

Members had received the Domestic Abuse Policy. Dr Haughan advised that the University was in the process of doing a version for students.

Members **APPROVED** the Domestic Abuse Policy.

11. Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety

Members had received the minutes for information of the meeting held on 3rd March 2021 which were presented by the Chair, Fr Chris Fallon. He noted that the pandemic had driven much of the work in this area. He commended University staff for the extensive care that had been taken in ensuring the health and safety of all staff and students had been prioritised and carefully planned, and had been externally and internally audited. The rent rebate offer for residential students had had a cost, but had had dramatic effect in reducing the risks of infection but drastically reducing the number of students on campus. He advised that an additional member of the Committee would be recruited shortly.

12. Nominations Committee

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2021 which were presented by Canon Winn. He noted that Mr Mills would be stepping down from Council this summer and thanked him for his many years of service to the University. He advised that Mrs Beever would be taking over the role of Vice Chair. In addition, to the new members advised in the minutes, Canon Winn also reported that Ms Lesley Martin-Wright had been

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recruited to serve on Council as a nominee of Warrington Training College. Ms Martin-Wright is the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce in Knowsley and is an active lay member of her parish church. The Vice Chancellor advised that one of the new members Dr Edwin Djabatey, who had been nominated on behalf of University Council, was known to him and had been a very senior doctor in the Woman's Hospital in Liverpool. Dr Djabatey's background meant that he would make a suitable member of the Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety and might be co-opted to the Committee in advance of his full Council membership in September. Members requested a profile of all new members.

Action: Mr Dykins to provide profiles of all new members of the next Council meeting

Members **APPROVED** the above appointments.

13. Students' Union

Members had received the President's Report which was present by Mr Pearce. Following on from previous discussions under item 8, the Charity Commission had to investigate a complaint made by previous trustees. Their investigation had been concluded with no further action. Interim trustees have been appointed to allow more time to be taken recruiting a permanent Board. This has allowed the SU to go through an external agency for recruitment and this has produced a very good response. This has created an increase in costs by using an agency. At the next Council meeting Mr Pearce will be in a position to present the SU plan for the next five years. Three sabbatical officers were successfully recruited but, for personal reasons the President-elect has had to step down creating a need for a by-election at the end of this month. In terms of incorporation, a draft constitution has been written with a new Charity proposal. This means that the SU Will be able to review certain jobs and contracts within the Union.

Responding to a question about the experience of students during the pandemic, Mr Pearce notes that next week is the annual Hope star awards organised by the SU. Although it will be a very different event this year, the nominations that have been put forward suggest that the community spirit has remained.

The Vice Chancellor on behalf of the University thanked Mr Pearce for the excellent work of the SU. Dr Haughan echoed this, noting the strength in leadership.