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LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 23rd November 2022

PRESENT: Revd Canon Peter Winn (in the Chair), Mrs Jane Beever (Vice-Chair), Revd Canon Chris Fallon, Dr Penny Haughan, Fr Chris McCoy, Ms Lesley Martin-Wright, Dr Arthur Naylor, Mr John Norbury, Professor Gerald Pillay, Ms Paula Raper, Ms Deborah Shackleton, Mrs Maggie Swinson, HH Judge Graham Wood KC (13 members)

By invitation: Mr Derrick Dykins (Clerk to Council)

No Conflicts of Interest were reported. Mrs Swinson noted that the online Register of Interests form was not allowing for a return facility to allow separate entries.

Action: Mr Dykins to discuss with IT services

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Mr Tim Alderman, Ms Ann Marie Costello, Very Revd Dr Sue Jones, Ms Erin Meharry, Revd Canon Professor Kenneth Newport, Mr Ultan Russell and Professor Caroline Wakefield,

2. **Minutes of previous meetings**

The minutes of the meetings held on 5th July 2022 and 21st September 2022 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

3. **Matters Arising**

Members had received the Chaplaincy Report for information. It was agreed that the report could be more substantial and discursive. Fr McCoy said he would discuss this further at the next meeting.

Following on from the presentation she did at the Reflective Meeting in September, Dr Haughan gave an update on the University's TEF submission, the Access and Participation Plan (APP) and the NSS. She confirmed that the University had now received the full data sets which were similar to those expected. However, the OfS are expected to make further changes to the APP next April. She said that the deadline for the University's TEF submission is 23rd January 2023; the submission will need to be approved by both Senate and University Council so extraordinary Zoom meetings will be set up in January to facilitate this. The University is working hard to achieve a Gold TEF award but the manner in which metrics are being used this time suggests that this will be a challenge. The non-continuation rate (that is, undergraduate students moving between years) was disappointing, and this will impact on the submission. The data is being analysed so that in future, strategies to mitigate against the non-continuation rate will be prioritised. Prior to the pandemic, continuation rates were not an issue, but the school experience due to Covid has left some students less resilient. Dr Haughan said she would provide more details at the next Council meeting.

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Dr Haughan noted that the question set for the National Student Survey (NSS) has also been changed for 2023.

Professor Pillay said that student recruitment had increased this year, but this was at odds with the APP and the general levelling up agenda. He also noted that part of the change in rules for the TEF mean that approximately 60% of the data used concerns graduate employability rather than teaching excellence. Dr Haughan said that the Careers Service at the University were working hard to improve the University's performance.

4. Vice-Chancellor's Notes to Council

Members had received the Vice Chancellor's Notes to Council which were presented by Professor Pillay at what was his last University Council meeting before his retirement. He highlighted the industrial action being taken by the two unions, noting that whilst a small number of universities may be able to afford an increase, approximately a third are in deficit which means that generous increases are not possible. Although the University is in a stronger position financially than most, collective bargaining means that those universities who are struggling will not be able to afford an increase, particularly given the freeze on the main student fee, now worth below £7,700 from the original £9,250. Mrs Swinson said that the Staffing Committee had been reflecting widely on the strike action and she had been encouraged that the University was using strategies learnt during Covid to mitigate against strike action.

5. KPIs

Members had received the KPIs for information. Professor Pillay said that most indicators were maintained but could be improved with better retention. Sickness rates are high due to Covid. He said that the University was trying to address the cost of living crisis for students by dedicating a web page to tips and links for cheaper food and household items, and increasing the Student Hardship Fund. Postgraduate Research Students were in decline, which appears to be a result of the pandemic when many had interrupted their studies. International student numbers have risen. For Postgraduate Taught students, international students have kept numbers constant, but it appears that the decline in home students will be in relation to the debt they will have accumulated during their undergraduate degree added to the cost of living increase. Residential accommodation is almost at capacity and includes use by international students but again there is a trend for home students to stay at home. Members acknowledged that there was aggressive marketing for private student accommodation in the city.

6. Clerk's Business:

(i) Register of Interests:

Mr Dykins reminded members that they could complete the Register online if they had not already done so.

(ii) Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) and Composition:

Members had received the ToR for information. Mr Dykins noted that there are vacancies on the Staffing Committee and the Standing Committee on Research Ethics. It was suggested that Mission & Values report to Staffing Committee.

Action: Mr Dykins to discuss a suitable replacement for both committees

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(iii) Prevent Annual Report:

Members had received the Report. Ms Dykins noted that there had been only one cause for concern but this had not required formal reporting. There has been refresher training for staff, and the dedicated part of the University website for information relating to Prevent had been updated recently.

Members **APPROVED** the Prevent Annual Report.

(iv) Anti-Bribery Training:

Mr Dykins reminded members that the training will take place via Zoom on 24th November at 4 pm.

(v) Sexual Misconduct:

Dr Haughan updated members on progress with the working group; the group has reviewed documentation from UUK and has produced an action plan, which is currently being implemented.

7. Senate

- (i) Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2022, which were presented by Professor Pillay in his capacity as Chair of Senate.
- (ii) Members had received for information the Annual Report on Student Complaints, Appeals and Discipline. Mr Dykins noted that this encompassed Academic Appeals and highlighted the amount of work that went into ensuring that all such student matters were taken seriously. Sexual misconduct cases were now disaggregated from other disciplinary issues as per guidance from the OfS.
- (iii) Members had received for information the Student Protection Plan. This was similar to the one received last year and is a requirement so students are aware of what measures are in place to protect them should a risk to the continuation of their studies arise.
- (iv) Members had received the Degree Outcomes Statement.

Members **APPROVED** the Degree Outcomes Statement.

8. Finance and General Purposes Committee

(i) Minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2022 which were presented by Mr Norbury as Chair.

(ii) Financial Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st July 2022

Members had received the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2022. Mr Norbury noted that the final version had been delayed, but that apart from one adjustment there was nothing unexpected in the statements as

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forecasts had been received throughout the year. Income increased to £58m from 55m last year; expenses have risen meaning the surplus is less than last year though it is still adequate. The FRS 107 pension adjustment is higher than budgeted for due to higher appreciation, and this had subsumed the contingency which had been set aside. However, the final 6.7% surplus is satisfactory particularly given that interest rates have risen gradually over the year. The increase in interest rates may be a helpful trend for pension funds. Mr Norbury explained that pensions are included on the income account as the auditors assess the ongoing liability at the start of year. Bank loans are down due to regular payments being made combined with clearing off short-term loans. There remains an HP arrangement with Hopkins hall which runs to 2038.

The Report and Accounts were **FORMALLY ADOPTED** by Council.

(iii) Financial Regulations

Members had received the revised Financial Regulations.

Members **APPROVED** the revised Financial Regulations paper.

9. Audit and Risk Management

(i) Minutes of the meetings of Audit Committee held on 7th September and 3rd November 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meetings held on 7th September and 3rd November 2022 which were presented by the Chair, Dr Naylor. He highlighted a constructive discussion that was had in November with RSM so that both sides could understand specifics that were being looked for in audits going forward. He said that the success of the ITT accreditation meant that the University had a great deal of work to do to meet the requirements of the accreditation, and the Committee was monitoring the situation closely, particularly as some deadlines had needed to be revised. The new Dean of Education, Professor Cate Carroll-Meehan had attended the meeting in November and members had been reassured that she had quickly appraised the situation and was implementing the action plan.

The Psychology report was largely positive but raised questions about documentation. Dr Haughan said that it had been frustrating as RSM had not probed the correct areas properly and going forward, care would be taken to ensure the auditors' approach was correct. There had also been an advisory report on Staff Mental Health and the Committee felt that the University's response should demonstrate a greater priority in this area. Ms Beecroft had already acted upon the Report and had provided a strong response and action plan. It was agreed that this should be followed up via the Staffing Committee.

(ii) External Auditors' Management Letter on the Accounts

Members had received the Management Letter from the University's external auditors.

Members **APPROVED** the External Auditors' Management Letter on the Accounts.

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(iii) Representation Letter

Members had received the Representation Letter to the External Auditors which confirmed that Council has fulfilled its responsibilities.

Members **APPROVED** the Representation Letter.

(iv) Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service 2021-22

Members had received the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service. Dr Naylor noted that the overall opinion is that the University has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance, internal control and economy, efficiency and effectiveness. However, the Report suggested that further enhancements to processes had been identified.

The Annual Report of the Internal Audit Service was unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

(v) Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2021-22

Members had received the Annual Report of the Audit Committee which summarised the work over the academic year 2021/23. Dr Naylor noted that the Report demonstrated that the Committee had fulfilled its obligations.

The Annual Report of the Audit Committee was unanimously **APPROVED** by Council.

(vi) Modern Slavery Statement

Members had received the Modern Slavery Statement for the last financial year.

Members **APPROVED** the Modern Slavery Statement.

10. Staffing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2022 which were presented by the Chair of the Committee, Mrs Swinson. On the promotion process from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, she said that those who were not successful received feedback from Dr Haughan. Monitoring of the balance between male and female staff was taking place, and Dr Haughan noted that during the past year she had been convening meetings of a group to look at Women in Leadership and she had produced a report and recommendations about promoting and looking at barriers to promotion.

Action: Mr Dykins to circulate the report and include on the agenda for the next Council meeting

11. Council Standing Committee on Health and Safety

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(i) Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2021 which were presented by Fr Fallon. He noted that a small change had been made to the ToR to receive reports from the Health & Safety Consultative Committee. Members had been reviewing the Staff Wellbeing Report, and he noted that on strike action, Unison (the union representing non-academic staff) had previously allowed life and limb cover, but did not do so for the most recent strikes. However, the Committee were satisfied by measures put in place for other staff to cover essential areas so the safety of students was not compromised. For UCU (the academic staff union) there had been much debate on workloads but this had finally been resolved.

On Covid, the University is carefully monitoring the situation. Even though daily monitoring has ceased, the University is monitoring staff cases to help alert any serious outbreak. Processes are in place to reintroduce measures if required.

Student mental health was of concern, with a 70% increase in student self-harm incidents and Mr Ryan (Head of Student Development and Wellbeing) would be attending the next meeting to brief on strategies. Dr Haughan said that a number of occurrences in Halls had been attended by SRTs but not all incidents would be reported due to the secretive nature of the act. Many students are finding they are not coping with being away from home, but there is a good referral system and wherever possible, matters are picked up by a Senior Resident Tutor (SRT) and seen by Mr Ryan's team the next day. Ms Beever noted that this was a pattern in schools which was a concern as CAMHS currently has an 18-month waiting list. Members of the Standing Committee felt that Ms Susan Haines (the Director of Student Life) should attend their committee to report on such matters. When asked about the involvement of next-of-kin, Dr Haughan said that all students are asked at registration if the University can contact their family in case of emergency, and most do so. Ms Raper commented that her School is often contacted by worried parents but that GDPR means that permission from the student must be obtained before this can be done.

Action: Mr Dykins to arrange for Ms Haines to be invited to future Standing Committee meetings

(ii) Annual Report and Action plan 2022-23

Members had received the Annual Report and Action Plan for information. It was noted that the final table did not contain any performance indicators, but as the current Health & Safety Officer is leaving, the new appointee should set the indicators in future.

12. Students' Union (SU)

(i) President's Report

Members had received the Report. Ms Meharry had sent her apologies, and noted that, taking their media sales in-house has proven beneficial with over £10k already being accrued. In addition, all part-time student representatives have now been trained and there will be a meeting of their Executive Council in due course. She had had several meetings with over 15 northern Student Unions regarding

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the Cost of Living Crisis to see how the Hope SU can contribute and implement ideas within Hope.

(ii) Financial Statements for year ended 31st July 2022

These had been delayed as the Independent Examination has yet to take place. It is scheduled for 30th November and the Statements will be received at the next Council meeting

13. Senior Remuneration Committee Report

Dr Haughan and Professor Pillay left the meeting for this item.

Members had received the Report from the Senior Remuneration Committee for the Senior Team. The report was presented by the Vice Chair of Council who chaired the Panel. She said that the report ensured that there was accountability and governance in relation to this area.

Ms Beever said that, bearing in mind the current financial situation it was agreed that there would be no cost of living adjustment to senior staff salaries, though Professor Nagar would receive his second and final increment. For the appointment of Professor Ozanne, her package had been agreed by the Committee and negotiated via the Director of Personnel. She noted the agreed increments in salary and the temporary increase in Dr Haughan's salary as interim Vice Chancellor for January and February 2023.

14. Extraordinary Meeting of Council 24th October 2022

Members had received the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council in October which was convened to ratify the process for, and appointment of, the new Vice Chancellor. Members formally thanked Canon Winn for his leadership throughout the process.

15. Any Other Business

(i) President's Report

Members had received the proposal to appoint Revd Geoff Felton to Council as the Nominee of the Churches Together in the Merseyside Region.

Members **APPROVED** Revd Geoff Felton's appointment to Council.

(ii) Naming of the IQ Building

Members suggested that the IQ building (currently under construction) be renamed, as the proposed title did not fit in with the convention of naming buildings after significant contributors to the University. It was agreed that Mr Dykins would explore the possibility of renaming the building to include Gerald Pillay in the title.

16. Dates for Future Meetings: can be found [here](#)