

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held using Microsoft Teams on Friday 03 July 2020 and commencing at 13.00.

Present:

Mr A McMenemy (Chair)
Ms C Armor
Ms C Bray
Ms R Chakraborty
Ms C Coleman
Prof. Lady R Cooper (to Item 3.7)
Ms A Ferguson
Mr A Grimby
Mr M Jeffries
Ms A Johns
Prof. J Last
Ms H Lindsell
Mr J Smith

Mr I Watson

Mr T Wood

In attendance:

Prof. H Carlisle
Ms N Lanzalaco
Prof. N Powell
Mrs A Robson
Prof. R Sawdon-Smith
Ms A Tubb
Mr D Williams (Clerk)

Apologies:

Ms N Nannar

BACKGROUND

In the light of continuing advice from the government to avoid non-essential travel, the meeting was conducted using Microsoft Teams.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked all members for their continuing support in requesting that he continue as the Chair of the governing body.

A warm welcome was extended to Natalie Lanzalaco, the next President of the Students' Union, who was observing the meeting.

Catherine Bray shared brief details of her background and career to date.

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Council approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2020.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

PART I

3. VICE CHANCELLOR

3.1. Vice Chancellor's statement

The Vice Chancellor (VC) drew members' attention to three matters. Firstly, he wished to thank all who enquired about his personal health and sent their best wishes. He hoped to be able to return to work during autumn 2020. Secondly, he wished to give Council formal notice that he would be relinquishing his post as VC at the end of the 2020/21 academic year. Finally, he noted that the operating context for higher education continues to evolve, with new challenges emerging almost daily. He anticipated turbulent times ahead for the sector.

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On behalf of Council, the Chair offered profound thanks for all the VC had done on behalf of the University, and Council endorsed this with acclamation.

The Council granted the Chair the authority to lead and commence the process of recruiting a new VC, and on acting on its behalf until the next meeting of council.

Chair

The Chair emphasised that the process of recruiting a VC was different to the processes typically used in other sectors of the economy to recruit a new chief executive. Papers setting out a tentative timetable for making an appointment and the associated processes, including establishing an Appointments Committee, would be circulated to members of Council.

Chair

3.2. Acting Vice Chancellor's report

The Acting Vice Chancellor (AVC) highlighted several features of the circulated report.

The Office for Students (OfS) had issued guidance on providing clear information to students joining the University in autumn 2020.

The University continued to work on plans for teaching delivery in 2020/21, but at the same time was looking at longer-term horizons.

Recruitment for 2020/21 remained uncertain. The latest indications were that there were unlikely to be a large number of deferrals nationally. The number of UK entrants to the University's undergraduate and postgraduate courses appeared to be holding-up. The University was in regular communication with applicants.

The OfS had introduced a student number control (SNC) for 2020/21 UK/EU undergraduate entrants. Given the increase in the number of applications to the University and the firm acceptances made prior to the introduction of the SNC (i.e. c+20% year-on-year), remaining within the SNC allocated to the University would be challenging. Acknowledging the recruitment difficulties being experienced by some higher education providers this was a good problem to have.

Across the higher education sector there were widespread rumours about staff redundancies and the closure of courses in a number of institutions.

The University's Graduate Show would take place on-line with the launch of a new Graduate Showcase on 16th July.

Work was ongoing to deliver virtual open days, along with an assessment of how teaching and learning should be delivered by the University in the future. This work was informed by the experience and outcomes from taking courses on-line as a result of Covid-19, but was looking beyond the short-term, at potential long-term changes, and was pedagogy led.

The University had recommenced recruitment to vacant staff posts. Advertised posts had attracted a high number of quality applicants.

During the Covid-19 emergency, close and regular contact had been maintained with the President of the Students' Union. The AVC expressed thanks to the President for her role in working closely with the University to meet and respond to issues raised by students.

Looking ahead, a major unknown was how prepared students would be when entering the University for the academic year (AY) 2021/22. The loss of taught hours due to Covid-19,

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led to were concerns that Year 12 students would enter university less prepared than previous cohorts. To mitigate this concern, the University believed that, during the AY 2020/21, its out-reach activities would be of high importance and would need to be delivered exceptionally well. Given the circumstances, the opportunity to use current students to mentor and support potential applicants was worth considering.

The University was aware of the additional and new demands placed on staff as result of Covid-19. To ensure sufficient time for rest and renewal, staff were encouraged to take their full holiday entitlement. Despite having to adapt to new ways of working at short notice, staff remained very positive and engaged.

On behalf of Council, the Chair thanked the AVC, colleagues in the Senior Management Team (SMT), and staff and students for their positive attitudes and willingness to accommodate the changes to working practices made necessary by Covid-19.

3.3. Prevent Monitoring: ADR and risk assessment scheme

Council noted that the OfS had deemed that the University was “not at higher risk of non-compliance with the Prevent duty.”

3.4. Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025 - Amendment

The proposed changes to the University’s Access and Participation Plan were detailed to Council. Council approved the changes to the Plan and the submission of the amended plan to the OfS.

AVC

3.5. Key performance indicators

Council noted the update to the Key Performance Indicators.

3.6. Significant Risks List

The risk registered is reviewed and updated at least twice a year. The register had been reviewed and substantially amended following Covid-19.

The biggest risk to the University remained sustainability. The risks relating to the information technology infrastructure (IT), estates and staffing had also changed.

Possible adverse impacts arising from the delayed completion of the Duke Street Riverside (DSR) development were discussed. For the student accommodation element of the development the financial risks were binary. If students could not occupy the accommodation for the start of the AY 2021/22, the University would incur a loss of rental income for the year. A delay in the completion of the teaching space would be easier to manage: completion of this element for the start of the academic year was less critical.

An initial decision on the availability of the student accommodation element of DSR for the start of AY 2021/22 would need to be made in the Spring of the 2021 calendar year. At this point, all available student accommodation is posted on the University’s enrolment portal.

Council noted the Risk Register.

3.7. Senate, 17 June 2020

The meeting had nominated James Smith to serve for a further term as the academic staff representative on Council. Sarah Kennedy had been nominated as the professional services staff member to serve on Council. Both James and Sarah were congratulated on their appointments.

The current member of the professional services staff on Council, Colette Coleman, was leaving in the University to take-up a new role. Colette was thanked for her contribution to the work of Council.

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3.8. UKSCQA Degrees Outcomes Statement

The University was required to publish a Degree Outcomes Statement (DOS) on its website.

The DOS was a high-level statement on degree outcomes for the graduating cohort and by specific groups, including gender, age, ethnicity and disability. More detailed data relating to these groups was found in the University's Access and Participation plan. This plan detailed the actions the University was taking to close "gaps" between different groups on entry and attainment.

In response to the recent Black Lives Matter campaigns and to assist further in increasing diversity within the University's staff and student bodies, the University had established a working group called "Change". The group were currently developing a set of proposals to present to SMT.

Council approved the DOS and its posting on the University's website.

AVC

3.9. Annual Report on Research Integrity

Council approved the Annual Report on Research Integrity and its posting on the University's website.

AVC

4. STUDENT MATTERS

4.1. Students' Union Report

The Students' Union priority during the Covid-19 emergency had been to support and help students to manage the new issues they faced.

As a result of Covid-19, the student union awards had gone on-line and none of the planned face-to-face events for students had been able to go ahead. Individual events been placed on-line, postponed or cancelled.

To assist the in-coming President of the Students' Union, the University had agreed to support the employment of the out-going Students' Union President until December 2020.

Council recorded its thanks and appreciation for the work that the Students' Union President had done, and the VC expressed appreciation for the support received during the Covid-19 emergency.

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PART II

5. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS

5.1. Schedule of Governor meetings for the academic year 2020-21

Council's attention was drawn to the dates of the Away Day and of the rescheduled graduation ceremonies. The schedule of meetings was noted.

6. CHAIR'S COMMENTS AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS

6.1. Any other business requests

There were no other business requests.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

7. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

7.1. Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2020.

Ms R Chakraborty agreed to serve as the Deputy Chair of the committee. Minutes of the Nominations Committee were received.

8. REPORTS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

8.1. Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2020.

The Chair of the committee highlighted some of the matters discussed at the meeting. These included the risks around Covid-19; GDPR/Cyber Security; external & internal audit plans; and the annual Health and Safety Report. The Health and Safety Report was very encouraging.

Minutes of the Audit Committee were received.

9. REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.1. Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2020.

The Chair of the committee drew members attention to the changes in the financial forecast. The outturn for the current year was a projected operating surplus of £2.1M. This was some £820k below the surplus forecast in February 2020, and £2.6M below the outturn for 2018/19. The Chair highlighted the reasons for the movements.

Although dated, the KPMG benchmarking data evidenced the University's strong financial position compared to other providers operating in the sector.

The budget proposed for 2020/21 was forecast to lead to an operating surplus of £2.5M.

Council approved the budget for 2020/21.

10. REPORTS FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

10.1. Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020.

The Chair of the committee introduced the Minutes. The committee had commended the Director of Human Resources on the support provided to staff and the improving outcomes achieved by the University's small human resources team.

The committee had discussed in detail what further actions might be taken to improve the diversity of the University's staff and student population.

An assessment of the national pay negotiations indicated that the position was currently one of stale-mate.

Minutes of the Personnel Committee were received.

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11. REPORTS FROM THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

11.1. Remuneration Committee Report.

The report from the Chair of Council and the Chair of the Remuneration Committee was received and noted.

The meeting was concluded at 14.55