

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held on Friday 24 March 2023, commencing at 1030 in the Conference Suite, 20 Bank Plain, Norwich NR2 4SF.

Present:

Mr M Jeffries (Chair)
 Ms C Armor
 Dr S Bradshaw
 Ms C Bray
 Ms R Chakraborty
 Prof. Lady R Cooper
 Ms A Dolatabadi
 Ms A Ferguson
 Mr A Grimby
 Prof. S Ofield-Kerr
 Mr K Pink
 Mr C Lawrence
 Ms J Simpson
 Mr L Wells
 Mr T Wilson
 Mr T Wood

In attendance:

Prof. L Anderson
 Ms A Beckett
 Prof. H Carlisle
 Ms N Dalkiewicz (Students' Union, Item 4.2 only)
 Mr S Gilmore (North Design, Re-branding presentation only)
 Mr J Leonard, (North Design, Re-branding presentation only)
 Mr J Smeeth
 Mr D Williams (Clerk)

Apologies:

Mr I Watson
 Ms G Young

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Aimee Dolatabadi who was attending Council for the first time.

PRESENTATION ON THE RE-BRANDING STRATEGY

Mr T Wood, introduced the presentation by the re-branding consultants, North Design. Mr Wood outlined the context, including the selection of North Design and their subsequent work in developing the re-branding strategy.

Representations from North Design provided an update to Council on their work to date. The aim of their work was to develop the University's visual identity to support the institution's corporate strategy.

Members of Council endorsed the approach shared by North Design.

The Chair of the Council thanked the representatives from North Design for their presentation.

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Council approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2022.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

PART 1

3. VICE CHANCELLOR

3.1 Vice Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) drew Council's attention to recent developments in relation to Bank Plain and Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE). Good progress in both areas had been made. Progress in one area, reinforced the work in the other area, and vice versa.

Work to refurbish Bank Plain was continuing. Additional space within the building would become useable from September 2023.

Space in the building would also be used for an Exhibition, which would be open to the Public. This would encourage public access to the building.

The significant recent success in gaining new RKE grant funding was noted.

Once work on the Computational Laboratory had been completed, the University would invite representatives of key external stakeholders to view both the laboratory and Bank Plain.

The University was also intending to develop a new communications strategy and associated messaging. This would include the "elevator pitch". The work would be an early priority for the incoming Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment.

The development and submission of bids for funding was placing heavy demands on key members of the senior leadership team. It would be necessary to build the University's infrastructure and capacity to facilitate the development and submission of bids.

Council received the VC's report.

4. STUDENT MATTERS

4.1 Students' Union Report

The President of the Students' Union highlighted some of the matters included in her written report to Council.

The President Elect is Reece Lee. They have been the Disabled Students' Liberation Officer and heavily involved with the work of the Students' Union.

The President and Vice President had both attended the National Students Union (NUS) National Conference.

Other matters drawn to Council attention included work in connection with the student engagement strategy and student forums.

Council received the President's report.

4.2 SU Development Update – Diagnostic Review

The President of the Students' Union presented the findings from the externally facilitated diagnostic review.

The presentation covered the background to the review, its findings and recommendations.

Analysis of the current structure and resourcing suggested the Union was overly-stretched and overly-reliant on the work of the Sabbatical Officers. The review had also highlighted the heavy reliance on the University.

There was a need to enhance the Union's infrastructure and strengthen its independence from the University. This would require the establishment of an advisory board and an enhancement of its procedures, which were currently under-developed. The aim would be to build a sustainable organisation.

To progress matters, the next steps would include making appointments to the advisory board and developing a business plan covering the period 2023-25. The development of the business plan would be supported by the work of an external consultant. The aim was for the business plan to be presented to the Senior Leadership Team in May 2023.

A longer-term aspiration would be for the Students' Union to become a registered charity.

The Chair thanked the President of the Students' Union for their presentation.

The meeting was adjourned to allow members to view progress on the refurbishment of Bank Plain and to take refreshments.

5. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

5.1 Academic Board, 7 December 2022

The Minutes were received and noted.

5.2 Academic Board, 8 March 2023

The Minutes were received and noted.

PART II

6. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS

6.1 Schedule of Governor meetings for academic year 2023-24

The schedule of meetings was noted.

6.2 Arrangements for the Clerk to the Governing Body

The proposed arrangements for the appointment of a Clerk to the governing body following the retirement of the current incumbent in Summer 2023 were considered by Council. It was proposed that the Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Support) and Academic Registrar should become the Clerk to the governing body. The PVC would be supported in the role by the appointment of a Deputy Clerk, who, over time, would be expected to acquire greater responsibilities. The potential for a conflict of interest between the post-holder's membership of the SLT and the role of the clerk was acknowledged. It was felt that this could be managed.

It was agreed that the proposed arrangements would be re-considered should the PVC leave the University's employment. Further, the arrangements should be reviewed 12 months after the implementation of the new clerking arrangements.

Council endorsed the proposed arrangements for the appointment of the next Clerk to the governing body.

6.3 Link Governors

The aim of launching the Link Governor scheme was shared with Council.

To facilitate launch, invitations to those governors and staff involved in the scheme would be circulated by the University.

VC

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

7. REPORT FROM THE PEOPLE COMMITTEE

7.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023

The Chair of the Committee introduced the Minutes. This was the Committee's second meeting since its establishment. The Chair noted that the work programme for the Committee was at an early stage of development.

The request for an updated organigram to be provided to the governing body was noted.

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

8. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

8.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2023

The Chair of Audit introduced the Minutes and drew Council's attention to two matters.

Progress by the University in meeting the UKVI's Compliance Arrangements had been positive.

The Committee had carefully considered matters relating to the IT infrastructure and cyber security. These matters were of concern to the Committee. When compared to the position at the Committee's previous meeting, the Information Technology Services Manager reported positive progress in the provision of additional staff resources and investment in new equipment.

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

9. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2023

The Committee had considered both the outcomes for 2021/22 in relation to the Financial Strategy 2016-2021, and reviewed and approved a new Financial Strategy 2022-27.

The Committee had examined the financial projections for the University, and considered a number of worse-case scenarios that could impact financial outcomes.

There had been a preliminary discussion about possible future areas of capital spending, including student accommodation.

A concern with regard to the possible acquisition of additional student accommodation or the refurbishment of existing accommodation, was how this might impact affordability for students.

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

10. REPORT FROM THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

10.1 Oral report of the meeting held on 24 March 2023

The Committee had met immediately before Council and the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting would come to Council's meeting in July.

10.2 Determination of Council numbers for 2023/24

The Committee was recommending to Council that the overall size of the Council should remain at its current number, 20, for 2023/24. The size of the variable categories would be:

- 13 independent members
- 1 member to the teaching staff nominated by Academic Board
- 2 members elected by the students of the University, one of whom would be the President of the Students' Union
- 3 co-opted members, including one who would be a member of the University's professional services staff nominated by Academic Board and a second an external member with a background in education

In addition, the VC was an ex-officio member of the governing body.

Council approved the determination of Council numbers for 2023/24.

10.3 Appointments and renewals

Council approved the appointment of:

- Ms Clarie Middleton as a co-opted member, whose term would commence on the 3 April 2023.
- Ms Lauren Dilrew as an independent member, whose term would commence on 30 April 2024. Prior to this date, Ms Dilrew would shadow the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, who would be completing their final term of office on 30 April 2024.

Council approved the renewal for a further term of the following members:

- Ms C Bray, Independent Member, 25 March 2023 to 26 March 2026)
- Prof. Lady R Cooper, Co-opted member with a background in education, 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2025
- Mr K Pink to move to the category of Independent member, 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2026
- Mr I Watson, Independent member, 05 October 2023 to 04 October 2026.
- Mr T Wilson, Independent member, 02 October 2023 to 01 October 2026
- Mr T Wood, Independent member, 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2026

11. PRESS

11.1 Press coverage

Council enquired as to whether the University had a press placement strategy. The University was planning to enhance its current communications strategy, and the development of press placement strategy would be an important and early part of this work.

12. CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Research on the sector's governance had confirmed that matters relating to academic governance remained a challenging area for those governors who did not have a background of working in higher education.

In conversations with governors, a number has expressed the desire to offer increased support to the University by making available their specialist knowledge and expertise. While respecting the boundary between governance and management, further consideration would be given to whether there were additional opportunities for governors to support the work of the University.

Several members had asked about training and development opportunities. The Clerk to the governing body would circulate a paper outlining of opportunities for governor training.

Clerk

A programme of activities and presentations for governors, including visits to University departments, for the next 12 months would be developed.

A dinner for governors would be held on the evening prior to the next meeting of the governing body,

13. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 07 July 2023 at 09.30