# NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

**COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held in Cavendish House Boardroom, on Friday 22 March 2024, commencing at 10:30am.

## Present:

Mr M Jeffries (Chair) Ms C Armor

Ms R Chakraborty Mr A Grimbly

Mr C Lawrence Prof. S Ofield-Kerr Prof Lady R Cooper Ms C Middleton

Mr R Lee Mr D Dwyer Mr I Watson Mr L Wells Mr T Wilson Mr T Wood Ms G Young

## In attendance:

Ms A Beckett, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience), Academic Registrar and Clerk to the Governors

Prof. H Carlisle, Dean of Creative Education

Prof. L Nixon, Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange

Mr J Smeeth, Chief Operating Officer Mr B Stopher, Deputy Vice Chancellor Ms A Mulcairn, Deputy Clerk

Ms S Steed, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Employability, Item 1 only Mr A Cottam, Managing Director of Students’ Union, Item 5.1 only

## Apologies:

Ms C Bray

Ms A Ferguson Mr K Pink

# CHAIRMAN’S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the governors.

# PRESENTATION ON EMPLOYABILITY

Received: a presentation from Ms S Steed, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Employability, introduced by Tom Wood.

The presentation outlined the context of employability at the University, noting the key principles of the employability strategy and successes of the new Level 5 Diploma in Creative Professional Development.

The Council discussed the external challenges for employability including the cost of living crisis, increase in mental health challenges and occurrence of low pay and unpaid internships.

The Council commended the team for the innovative Profile project which enabled students to understand their own skills profiles and resulted in a sustained improvement in graduate outcomes for the past four years since its launch.

The Council congratulated the team for the successes and endorsed the approach taken by the employability strategy.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING** |
|  | Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023. |
| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** |
|  | There were no new actions to consider. |

**PART 1**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3.** | **ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS** |
| **3.1** | **Approval of Chair Designate**  Council approved the appointment of Cathy Armor as Chair Designate. Ms Armor will take over the role from Mark Jeffries in November 2024. |

**PART 2**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **4.** | **VICE CHANCELLOR** |
| **4.1** | **Vice Chancellor’s Report**  The Vice Chancellor (VC) introduced the report.  Council considered the University Prospectus for 2025-26 which included the new courses and was confident that the portfolio expansion would be an attractive offer for prospective students and would support the University’s strategic recruitment objectives.  The University had received a visit from the Shadow Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, the prospective parliamentary candidate for Norwich North, and the co-founder of Wikipedia. The visit focused on opportunities for investment in creative technologies and the broader creative learning opportunities that Norwich University made possible in the region. |
| **4.2** | **Bank Plain Phase 2 development update** |
|  | The Chief Operating Officer (COO) gave a presentation on the plans for Phase 2 development of Bank Plain.  Council noted that Phase 2 planning was well underway and on track for delivery by January 2025. Phase 3 plan would deliver the reconfiguration of the Banking Hall, Library relocation and the redevelopment of the London Street entrance and main office. It was confident that the plans for the building development would make Bank Plain a core hub for students, boosting student experience and raise the overall profile of the University in the local area.  Council discussed the existing planning permission application and noted its focus on environmental sustainability. |
| **5.** | **STUDENT MATTERS** |
| **5.1** | **Report from the Students’ Union President**  The Students’ Union President introduced the report.  The results of the election for the new Students’ Union (SU) Presidents had  concluded with Daniel Dwyer and Indi Williams being elected for the 2024-25 academic year. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | The SU was focusing on preparing for the General Election by supporting students to register to vote and raising awareness of Voter ID requirements.  The SU was working with a network of other officers to develop the student submission for the Access and Participation Plan, and they had attended events with WonkHE and the Office for Students (OfS) to support this work.  A motion was passed by the Steering Committee of the SU expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people during the ongoing Israel/Palestine conflict in Gaza, and to bolster its work on tackling all forms of racism and discrimination.  Council welcomed A Cottam, who had joined the SU as the first Managing Director and would lead on the development of the SU as an independent charity.  Council noted the new regulatory context for Student Unions with direct OfS oversight of Free Speech provisions coming into force from August 2024.  Council thanked the Managing Director and congratulated the SU for a successful set of elections. |
| **6.** | **ACADEMIC ASSURANCE AND GOVERNANCE** |
| **6.1** | **Academic Board**  Council received the confirmed minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 6 December 2023 and the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024.  Council noted that the Academic Board had debated a motion presented by the Students’ Union in relation to the Israel/Palestine conflict in Gaza, and in particular how the University supported its staff and students to engage with contested issues or political contexts. The University reaffirmed its commitment to providing welfare and wellbeing support to staff and students throughout any international or humanitarian conflicts.  Council considered the upcoming changes in freedom of speech legislation and noted that Council would benefit from a more in-depth presentation on the impact of these changes at a future meeting.  **Clerk** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **7.** | **GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS** |
| **7.1** | **Schedule of Governor Meetings for academic year 2024-25**  Council noted the schedule of governor meetings for 2024-25 academic year. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **PART II** |
| **8.** | **REPORT FROM FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** |
| **8.1** | **Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2024**  The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee introduced the minutes.  Council noted that the Committee had considered the materiality trigger threshold for budget adjustments in response to a recommendation from a |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | recent internal audit. The Committee proposed to set this at 20%; a change to the forecast surplus or deficit of more than this would trigger a revised budget for review by Finance and Resources Committee.  **Agreed**:  Council agreed that the 20% threshold trigger was set at the right level. |
| **8.2** | **Financial Report February 2024 – Executive Summary**  The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee introduced the report.  Council noted that the balance sheet is in a strong position with good liquidity. There had been key investments made to support the planned growth outlined in the University Strategy. The budget forecast indicated a temporary two-year deficit as these investments yielded results. The Committee considered this to be a short-term position which could be offset if necessary through the application of financial measures that had been presented by management.  Council was satisfied that the financial measures set out by management would be effective if required.  Council thanked the Committee and management for returning a strong financial report. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **9.** | **REPORT FROM PEOPLE COMMITTEE** |
| **9.1** | **Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2024** |
|  | The Chair of the People Committee introduced the minutes.  Council noted that the People Strategy had been reviewed and good progress had been made. The Committee would consider the Operational Plan and Key Performance Indicators at its next meeting, which would give more detail to how the strategy would be achieved and measured. The Committee had received a presentation on the student support strategy in line with its renewed focus on student as well as staff matters. |
| **10.** | **REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE** |
| **10.1** | **Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2024** |
|  | The Chair of the Committee introduced the minutes and reflected upon the breadth of areas covered at the last meeting. The matters brought to Council’s attention included:   * The Committee had received a paper confirming compliance with the Competitions and Market Authority’s (CMA) regulations for consumer protection law. * The Committee had received a presentation on IT and infrastructure and Council noted that progress continues to be made in this area including with regard to cyber security. * The Chair noted that two members of the Committee had attended a roundtable event put on by the internal auditors, HW Fisher, which led to productive reflections on the role of AI in higher education. This is an area that will be kept in view. |
| **10.2** | **Academic Assurance Annual Monitoring Outcome**  The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar introduced the report. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Council noted that the academic assurance annual monitoring outcome had been reviewed in depth by the Audit and Risk Committee.  Council noted the relatively low satisfaction of postgraduate taught students in 2022-23 and noted that the new postgraduate framework implemented in 2023-24 would address this. Council requested a future report on developments in postgraduate provision and updated satisfaction scores at the end of this academic year.  **Deputy Vice-Chancellor**  Council noted that the Access and Participation Plan (APP) would address the gaps in areas of attainment and outcomes, through delivering targeted interventions in student success, onboarding, assessment methods and other key areas. The draft APP would be presented to Council before submission.  **Clerk** |
| **11.** | **REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE** |
| **11.1** | **Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 and verbal update on the meeting held on 22 March 2024**  The Committee had met immediately before Council and the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting would go to Council’s meeting in July. |
|  | The Chair of the Nominations Committee gave verbal confirmation that the Committee was recommending to Council that the overall size of the Council should remain at its current number, 20, for 2024/25.  Council approved the renewal for a further term of five members.  Council approved the recommended appointment of members to committee positions. Revised memberships would be circulated to the members of Council.  **Clerk** |
| **12.** | **CHAIRS CLOSING REMARKS** |
|  | The Chair noted that this would be Andy Grimbly’s last meeting as a Governor, following the end of his final term. On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Andy for his hard work in his time as a Governor and remarked on his ability to offer strategic and accessible advice whilst maintaining grace and humour on the Board. The Vice-Chancellor presented Andy with a gift on behalf of the governing body and wished him luck with all future endeavours. |
| **13.** | **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** |
|  | The next meeting of Council would take place on 5 July 2024. This would include the annual Away Day (moved from October). |