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UNIVERSITY OF KENT

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 Hybrid meeting: Darwin Boardroom & MS Teams

Present: The Chair of Council, Mark Preston; The Deputy Chair of Council and Chair of Finance & Resources Committee, Andrew Newell; The Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Karen Cox; Lay members Dame Ursula Brennan; Michael Crick; Dr Mark Downs; Mayuri Lakhani; Kim Lowe; Gabriel MacGregor; Dr Sam Parrett; Dan Cook; Sarah Dance; Paul Pugh; Graham Razez; Thomas Hyner; Ben Bradley, Vice President Postgraduate Experience; Zaid Mahmood, President Kent Union; Josh Brooker, Student Representative; Alex Perkins, Non-Academic Staff Representative; Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura, Deputy Vice Chancellor Strategy and Performance (S&P); Professor Richard Reece, Deputy Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience (ESE); Dr Balihar Sanghera, Academic Staff Representative; Chris Barron, Non-Academic Staff Representative; Representative.

In attendance: Chief Financial Officer (Jane Higham); Financial Sustainability Director (Peter Pentecost); Caroline Pover, James Berkley and Lenny Brown (EY-P); Sarah Seed and Neil Smyth (Mills & Reeve); Martin Atkinson, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Director of Governance and Assurance (Secretary to the Council) (Dr Sinéad Critchley); Assistant Director (Governance) (Sarah Megson); Head of Secretariat (Lanre Folarin); and Dr Claire Peppiatt-Wildman, PVC Size and Shape; Martin Atkinson, Director of HR and Organisational Development; and Susie Palmer-Trew for agenda item 12 only.

Apologies for absence: Lay member Xian Chan; Professor Shane Weller, Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation (R&I).

5702 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

- a. The Chair welcomed both members and professional advisors, and commended them for their unstinting support to the University despite the need to operate within tight timelines and under the pressure of increasing demands.

[minute confidential to Council]

- b. Declaration of interest was made by all University staff present with respect to agenda item 8.

5703 MINUTES

Paper C2023-063, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2023 were approved.

5704 MATTERS ARISING

The Action Log, **Paper C2023-064** was noted and items 5695, 5651, 5676, 5644, 5617 and 5580 were closed as recommended.

5705 VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Vice Chancellor presented updates on the following which were **noted** by Council.

a. Internal Context

- The VC noted her appreciation for the Executive Group on work done so far regarding the refinancing, funding and transformation and noted that internal context updates would be provided during the presentation of other agenda items.

b. External Context

- The VC highlighted the Universities UK commissioned PWC report on the financial sustainability challenges of the higher education sector and how the independent review has led to extensive news coverage of issues such as, the state of funding in the UK HE Sector.

[minute confidential to Council]

- Reference was made to the Horizon scandal and the Council was assured that the University does not have any contractual relationship with Fujitsu.

Action: *Secretariat to circulate the contact details of the Head of Communications, and Manager for News and Press to Council members*

c. OfS Update

- The VC presented an update as in Paper **C2023-065** this update was noted by Council.

[minute confidential to Council]

5706 REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (CFO)

The CFO reported on the University's financial performance against budget from year to date, the status of the annual review and financial statements, **Paper C2023/066**, and noted by Council:

[minute confidential to Council]

5707 REFINANCING AND FUNDING UPDATES

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO), the Director of Financial Sustainability, and Caroline Pover (EY-P) provided an update, Paper **C2023-067**.

[minute confidential to Council]

Kim Lowe left the meeting at 12:00hrs, Dan Cook left at 12:52hrs; Tom Hyner left at 13:09hrs; Gabriel MacGregor and Graham Razey left at 13:20hrs; and Mayuri Lakhani left at 13:22hrs.

Josh Brooker joined the meeting at 14:00hrs

5708 PENSION SCHEME CONSIDERATIONS / UPDATES

Council noted **Papers C2023-068** and **C2023-069**.

[minute confidential to Council]

5709 TRUSTEES' DUTIES

Council **noted** Paper **C2023-070**.

[minute confidential to Council]

5710 APPROVALS

The CFO and the Director of Financial Sustainability presented the transaction documentation for approval.

Council **approved** the following:

- a. **C2023-071**
- b. **C2023-072**

c. C2023-073

d. C2023-074

[minute confidential to Council]

Caroline Pover, James Berkley, Lenny Brown, Sarah Seed, Neil Smyth and Jane Higham left the meeting at 14:40hrs

Claire Peppiatt-Wildman, Susie Palmer-Trew, and Martin Atkinson joined at 14:45hrs for the report on strategic plan and current performance

5711 STRATEGIC PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

The Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor (S&P) and Claire Peppiatt-Wildman presented the following updates on Kent 2030 to Council, including Papers **C2023-075a** and **C2023-075b**.

a. Kent 2030 Update

There has been extensive engagement across the student and staff bodies of the university regarding the proposed plan and feedback from these engagements have informed ongoing development/clarification of the initiative to pave way for smooth implementation, in due course.

b. Proposed Academic Size and Shape - C2023/075a

In furtherance of the proposed academic size and shape review, certain strategic subjects/ research areas have been identified by the K2030 team through feedback from staff and students, and a review of sector reports and trends, as fitting to be the focus of the University's course offerings going forward.

[minute confidential to Council]

It was noted that the growth subjects currently account for 43% of enrolments with a potential to grow to 50% by 2027/28. Thus, it was recommended that these courses along with the core subjects which reflect the University's strengths, should be retained, with their delivery modified for efficiency. Other subjects recommended for closure/withdrawal were noted to have accounted for less than 8% of enrolments.

Regardless, it was emphasised that none of these subjects will be outrightly closed as there will be further assessment undertaken in order to provide some of the courses via other Divisions or Schools, etc. However, this will have a direct impact on the academic workforce. As such, Council was requested to delegate authority to a Council Redundancy Review Committee (CRC) to consider the workforce impacts.

Through discussion, Council **noted** that:

- The efforts were geared towards providing market driven, skills-based courses which appeal to both students and employers in a bid to improve revenue, whilst managing budget.
- Only about 12% of the University's course portfolio is being proposed for closure while the bulk of the courses, such as health and social care, will be remodelled and optimised for more efficient delivery (e.g. through sector partnerships with

universities like, CCCU) and alignment with the market. The courses were so categorised based on data on their previous performance, funding opportunities, suitability for intercalated studies, etc.

- The impact on staff will be minimised and the University will encourage redeployments, voluntary severance scheme (as needed), and other measures with compulsory redundancy being the last option.
- The impact on students will also be minimised as Directors of Divisions will be encouraged to support teach out of students studying the courses recommended for closure.
- On whether there is a potential of certain courses returning in the future, it was noted that the University will need to make a data-based decision that prioritises its continued existence and once the decision is made, focus on those subjects for the next 3 to 5 years.
- Reputational risk was highlighted as an important consideration during relevant deliberations, with issues such as the University's history, and its relationship with institutions like Anglican church (Lambeth Conference) noted in light of recommendations of the closure subjects like religious studies, journalism, and music/arts.
- The University has had a very low record of part-time enrolments, and rather thrives in the enrolment of full-time, on-campus students.
- There will be further consultation throughout the University on the specific subject areas presented to Council before a decision is made, in line with the University's obligations to staff, students and other stakeholders.
- The University must remain aware of the impact of the Kent 2030 initiatives on staff morale and in this case, there will be need to assure Staff at Medway that they are being considered in the University strategy.

Council **noted** the Academic Size and Shape proposal and **approved** delegated authority for the Council Redundancy Review Committee (CRC) to approve the implementation of the proposal and manage the approach and people impact in line with the Organisational Change Policy.

c. Target Operating Model - C2023/075b

An early iteration of the target operating model (TOM) recommended for adoption upon implementation of the new academic size and shape for the University was presented and **noted** by Council.

The TOM essentially proposes a school-centred model with the core business of the University being supported by a number of student-facing and back-office functions. The aim is to address challenges such as too many organisational elements, complex decision making involving a large number of stakeholders, large Executive Group, unclear accountability, too much overhead.

Through discussion, Council **noted** and **agreed** that:

- the underlying principles behind the proposed structure should be highlighted as well as the lessons learned from previous restructuring.
- The TOM is within the remit of the Executive Group and need not be presented to Council during the design phase. It was also noted that the TOM is key to the smooth implementation of Kent 2030.

ITEMS BELOW THE LINE

5712 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council noted the following dates for forthcoming meetings in the academic session 2023/24:

- Tuesday, 30 January 2024, 2-5pm
- Tuesday, 27 February 2024, 2-5pm
- Friday, 22 March 2024, 2-5pm (Medway campus)
- Friday, 17 May 2024, 2-5pm
- Friday, 28 June 2024, 2-5pm

5713 EXTENSION OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO COUNCIL SUB-GROUP – C2023-076

Council **approved** the extension of the delegated authority of the Sub Group of Council (which expired 31 December 2023) through to the conclusion of financial negotiations and the signing of the annual accounts.

5714 PROCEEDINGS OF COUNCIL SUB GROUP MEETINGS FROM 4 DECEMBER 2023 TO 9 JANUARY 2024 - C2023-077

Council **noted** the proceedings of the Council sub-group.

5715 EXTENSION TO TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL STANDING ORDER 3 (XIV) - C2023/078

Council **noted** and **approved** the extension of the suspension of Order 3(XIV) until 1 February 2024 thus allowing late submission of reports in view of the pressures from ongoing financial negotiations and audit.

Council further **directed** that regardless of the extension, late meeting papers must be published on Diligent no less than 24 hours before the next meeting.

5716 MINUTES OF REMUNERATION COMMITTEE OF 9 JANUARY 2024 – C2023-079
Council **noted** the minutes.

5717 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE OF 15 DECEMBER 2023 – C2023-080
Council **noted** the minutes.

5718 MINUTES OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF 15 DECEMBER 2023 – C2023-081

Council **noted** the minutes.

5719 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Paul Pugh, on behalf of other Council members, expressed appreciation towards members of the Council sub-group for their additional efforts in driving engagement with the various stakeholders in order to meet the University's objectives.

There being no other business, the Chair thanked all Council members for their time.

[minute confidential to Council]

Notes

1. Papers

Copies are available on the Council e-board portal (Diligent Boards) or on request from the Secretary. Approved Minutes and many of the papers are published on the University SharePoint site at <https://livekentac.sharepoint.com/sites/council>.

2. Queries

Any queries should be addressed to Dr Sinead Critchley, Director of Governance and Assurance (Secretary to Council), (email: S.Critchley-2002@kent.ac.uk).