

Minutes currently confidential to Council

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UNIVERSITY OF KENT

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 November 2024

Hybrid Meeting at Darwin Boardroom, Canterbury Campus and via MS Teams

Present: The Chair of Council, Mark Preston; The Deputy Chair of Council and Chair of Finance & Resources Committee, Andrew Newell; The Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura; Lay members: Dr Mark Downs; Dan Cook; Paul Pugh; Mayuri Lakhani; Victoria Wilson; Graham Razey OBE; Dr Sam Parrett CBE; Sarah Dance; Thomas Hyner. President Kent Union, Lulu Collins; Vice President Postgraduate Experience, Cláudia Moreira; Elected Student Representative, Lewis Sawyer; Deputy Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience (ESE), Professor Richard Reece; Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor Strategy and Performance (S&P), Professor Claire Peppiatt-Wildman; Academic Staff Representatives, Dr Balihar Sanghera, Professor Shujun Li; Non-Academic Staff Representatives, Jahanara Ahmed, Dr Daniel Knox.

In attendance: Chief Financial Officer (Jane Higham); Director of Financial Sustainability, Peter Pentecost; Director of Strategic Planning and Performance, Anita Jackson, Director of Education, William Collier and Head of Careers and Employability, James Corbin (for item 11); Assistant Director of Governance, Sarah Megson (for item 13); Lanre Folarin, Head of Secretariat; Dr Jo Wright, Director of Governance and Assurance (Secretary to the Council).

5882 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

- a. The Chair welcomed new members, Lewis Sawyer, Elected Student Representative and Victoria Wilson, Lay Member and encouraged questions and requests for clarification, as required. The Chair acknowledged the recently concluded graduations ceremony and commended colleagues, including the Chancellor Yolanda Brown OBE and Cláudia Moreira. Additionally, the Chair also noted the sad event recently reported and stated that further details would be provided during the Vice-Chancellor's communications.
- b. The Chair summarized the key items for discussion and approval and highlighted items 18, 19 and 23 for substantive deliberations.
- c. **Disclosure of Interest:** None.
- d. **Recruitment of Lay Members:** Council noted and **approved** paper **2024/040a** Recommendation by the Nominations Committee for the appointment of a new lay member, Julie Kelly.

5883 MINUTES

Paper **C2024/023**, the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2024 were **approved**.

5884 MATTERS ARISING

The Action Log, Paper **C2024/024** was **noted** and items 5871(d)(i-iii), 5863 and 5856.

Thereafter, the Chair noted the approval of the following papers circulated to Council electronically in the intervening period between the last meeting and this: papers **C2024/021 [confidential to Council]** and **C2024/022** (Appointment of Lay Member, Victoria Wilson).

5885 GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW: POST-GER UPDATE

The Director of Governance and Assurance presented paper **C2024/025** Draft Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations received following the governance effectiveness review. It was also noted that recommendation 29 would be presented in the course of the meeting.

Council noted the action plan and enquired if the proposed timeline for the review of Council Constitution (March 2025) was feasible considering the process involved. It was clarified that the intention was to have a reviewed draft by the timeline and thereafter, seek Privy Council approval. Additionally, Council enquired about items 3, 26, 27, 30, 31 in respect of which no timeline or update had been provided and it was clarified that those items had been delegated to the Vice-Chancellor to set the relevant timelines and oversee the resolution thereof.

5886 ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Acting Vice Chancellor welcomed everyone, particularly new members and expressed appreciation for the continued support of Council. The Acting Vice Chancellor then reported that:

a. Internal Updates:

- **[minutes confidential to Council]**
- Council members would be kept updated, but were advised in the interim to direct all enquiries to the press office.

b. External Updates:

- Key highlights from the recent budget were noted including the increase of employers' national insurance contributions, the DfE's budget increase (as relating to primary, secondary and FE) and its knock-on impact in easing the raiding of HE budgets, tuition fee increase, as well as the reduction in the fees for classroom-based foundation years courses.

- Also noted were the key areas of focus highlighted by Bridget Philipson, the new Secretary of State in a letter to Vice Chancellors, which indicated an expectation for HE providers to:
 - Play a stronger role in expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students
 - Make a stronger contribution to economic growth
 - Play a greater civic role in their communities
 - Raise the bar on teaching standards, 'to maintain and improve our world-leading reputation and drive out poor practice; and
 - A sustained efficiency and reform programme – which will include far greater collaboration across the sector
- The OfS Report on Financial Sustainability which had already been circulated with Council members was also noted. The report had called for bold and transformative action from universities in addressing the financial strain being experienced within the sector. It was also noted that work was underway to consider the implications of the forecasts in the report to the University and a white paper was being expected in this regard.
- The strategy paper on post-16 education and the replacement of the Apprenticeship Levy by a Growth and Skills Levy was noted, along with the establishment of a new agency, Skills England, to spearhead this and develop a clear assessment of the country's skills needs. The Vice-Chancellor role on the UUK Skills England advisory board was noted.
- The Green paper on industrial strategy which the University contributed to as part of the Eastern Arc was acknowledged and it was mentioned that EG would discuss the regional implications at its upcoming meeting.
- The University won the "Benefitting Society" Award in the UK Green Gown [Awards](#) in recognition of our work as the world's first Right to Food University. This automatically qualifies the University for entry as a nominee for the International Green Gown Awards.

Council noted the Vice-Chancellor's updates.

5887 REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Chief Financial Officer presented paper **C2024/026** Report on the year-end financial position and Override Agreement. It was noted that the update on [minutes confidential to Council] had been embedded in the CFO's report and as such the previously envisaged separate report via paper **C2025/027** was withdrawn.

The CFO reported on the following:

- i. Update: [minutes confidential to Council].**
- ii. Review and Draft Financial Statements for 2023/24:** An overview of the financial performance for the year and an update on the timeline for approval and submission of the Financial Statements and Annual Financial Return was provided. **[minutes confidential to Council]**. The revised timeline for completion and submission of these Accounts was noted as the end of March 2025.

- iii. **2024/25 Performance:** Performance is currently ahead of YTD budget **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- iv. **Stakeholder Relations Update:** **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- v. **Pay and Pensions:** There are no significant changes on pension schemes but the lower contribution rates in SAUL are now taking effect. Pension schemes have also been notified of the Project. **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

Generally, Council was informed and noted that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council]**
- A separate extraordinary meeting of FRC will be arranged, as necessary.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- OfS has been updated and an extension of the deadline for filing accounts has been requested with a reviewed probable timeline of March ending.
- Council will be advised of any changes to the expected timelines.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

Council discussed an obtained responses to some enquiries, Council also noted that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council][minutes confidential to Council]**
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**

5888 STRATEGIC PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE – Kent 2030

The Acting Vice Chancellor, Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (S&P) presented and Council **noted** the update on Kent 2030, paper **C2024/028**. Council also noted the annexed Closure Report.

Council was informed and **noted** that the Kent 2030 programme was making significant progress delivering key milestones and stabilising a delivery approach that is more closely aligned to BAU processes. It was also reported that two new workstreams have also been developed: Campus Experience and Kent Blueprint. Campus Experience ensures specific student centric outputs are delivered including the improvement of infrastructure like accommodations, teaching spaces, laboratories, etc. The Kent Blueprint is a short programme of work aimed at ensuring we have a benefit led focus to all our activities, achieving the most we can from all of our efforts by simplifying our aims.

The report also highlighted the savings made so far, **[minutes confidential to Council]**, and outlined the programme level risks.

Through discussions and enquiry, Council **noted** that:

- i. A new Director for International Recruitment had been engaged and was working on a strategy plan. Additionally, a paper on how to improve the University's scholarship process was being expected.
- ii. The need for synergy in the efforts of the University and that of respective schools.
- iii. The need to consider the University's profile in the new year with a view to understanding/projecting how we want to be viewed. Kent 2030 should be regarded as an umbrella that underpins several strategies, some of which will work and others which will fall through or change. This understanding should be communicated better to staff and it is expected that the Kent Blueprint workstream will achieve this.

Action: *Share the international recruitment strategy via Diligent reading room (DVC;S&P).*

5889 CHANGE OF VC TITLE FROM “VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT” TO “VICE-CHANCELLOR AND CEO”

The Director of Governance and Assurance presented paper **C2024/029**.

Council considered the recommendation to change the VC's title, particularly in view of its relevance to the ongoing search for a new VC and the current sector challenges and the University's transformative phase. The current title which includes “President” was noted as being more relatable and respected in international interactions. On the other hand, the new title being proposed connotes more of a business tone and could be regarded as more financially inclined and less relatable to the student community, rather than customer-centric as intended. Council considered that within the sector, less than 10 universities have changed their VC titles to “VC and CE” with only 2 changing to “VC and CEO” and in fact, the University of Exeter and University of Warwick had changed back to “VC and President” but with the role now being described as one of a CEO. On the other hand, some members were in support of the name change noting that the University is in the business of education and particularly needs a business-minded executive at this time. Although it was noted that the recruitment process was already underway and the recommendation was coming rather late in the process. It was also noted that the business needs for the role could equally be explained/clarified in the course of the interviews with potential candidates and that being expectedly experienced in UK HE, potential candidates ought to be familiar with the prevailing title of VC and President.

In view of the foregoing, Council agreed to have a rethink about the recommendation for a change of the VC title and that the Chair should share feedback from these deliberations with the recruiting agency, Gatenby Sanderson.

5890 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) AND GRADUATE OUTCOMES - 2024 OUTCOMES AND IMPROVEMENT PLANS' (DEEP-DIVE)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), the Director of Strategic Planning & Performance and the Director of Education presented papers

C2024/030a and **C2024/030b** with reference to the TEF report presented to Council in October 2023.

[minutes confidential to Council][minutes confidential to Council]. The improvement plans were outlined.

Through discussions, Council noted that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council]**

5891 REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL AUDIT

The Chair of Audit Committee presented papers **C2024/031A** Internal Audit Annual Report and **C2024/031B**.

[minutes confidential to Council]

[minutes confidential to Council]

[minutes confidential to Council]

Council approved paper **C2024/031B**.

5892 RESERVED BUSINESS: REVOCATION OF HONORARY DEGREE

The Assistant Director of Governance, presented and Council **noted** and **approved** the recommendations detailed in paper **C2024/032**.

Council **noted** Senate's approval of the removal of the specified Emeritus Professor title and **approved** the revocation of the specified Honorary Degrees as well as the room name removal.

5893 ESTABLISHMENT OF AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR KENT 2030 JOINT ASSURANCE BOARD.

Council noted paper **C2024/035** which was taken as read.

Some members expressed reservation about the viability of the proposed assurance model but were open to proceeding with the model for now, with effectiveness to be reviewed in 6 months. The fundamental nature of assurance

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was emphasised and it was clarified that the Council members to be part of the Board have to be Lay Members. It was also clarified that the CFO or Director of Finance would be included as regular attendees. On whether students representation should be included, it was explained that student representation had already been provided for on the Programme Board.

It was explained that the Board was being set up as an additional mechanism not to detract from the role of the Audit Committee or Council but to provide assurance of the effective implementation of the Kent 2030 strategy.

Following the deliberations, Council **approved** the establishment of the Kent2030 Joint Assurance Board and its Terms of Reference.

Action: *G&A to initiate Council Review of Board in 6 months.*

5894 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair apologised for the meeting overrunning.

5895 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council noted the following dates for forthcoming meetings in the academic session 2024/25 holding at the Darwin Boardroom unless otherwise Indicated:

- Friday 13 December 2024 (2-3:30pm) *on Teams for Rebased Kent 2030 Plan*
- Thursday 23 January 2025 (Strategy Day; 10am-4pm) at *Darwin Conference Suite*
- February 2025 (TBD)
- Friday 21 March 2025 (2-5pm) (*Medway*)
- Friday 16 May 2025 (2-5pm)
- Friday 27 June 2025 (2-5pm)

ITEMS BELOW THE LINE

REPORTS TO APPROVE

The following reports were presented to Council to note or approve.

5896 MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

Council **approved** paper **C2024-033**.

5897 PREVENT DUTY

Council **approved** paper **C2024-034**.

REPORTS TO NOTE

The following reports were presented to Council to note.

5898 TRUSTEE'S DUTIES: CONSIDERATION OF REASONABLE PROSPECTS

Throughout the course of the meeting, Council **noted** Paper **C2024/036 [minutes confidential to Council]**

Council members considered their position and obligations as an exempt charity and **agreed** that the approvals granted were in the best interest of the University, its creditors and other stakeholders.

5899 KENT STUDENT UNION'S Financial Statements (Year Ended 31 July 2024)

Council noted paper **C2024/037** Kent Student Union's Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2024 as recommended by the Finance and Resources Committee.

MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES TO NOTE AND/OR TO APPROVE

5900 MINUTES OF THE PEOPLE COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** paper **C2024/038** Minutes of the meeting of 14 October 2024.

5901 MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (SCAFFE)

Council **noted** paper **C2024/039** Minutes of the meeting of 16 October 2024.

5902 MINUTES OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** and **approved** the recommendations in paper **C2024/040** Minutes of the meeting of 22 October 2024 and paper **C2024/040a** Appointment of New Lay Member.

5903 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** paper **C2024/041** Minute of the meeting of 9 October 2024.

5904 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** paper **C2024/042** Minute of the meeting of 25 October 2024.

5905 MINUTES OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** paper **C2024/043** Minute of the meeting of 5 November 2024.

5906 REPORT OF THE HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE MEETING

Council **noted** paper **C2024/044** Minute of the meeting of 15 October 2024.

5907 SENATE REPORT

Council **noted** paper **C2024/045** Report of the meeting held on 6 November 2024.

5908 Council noted the Forward Programme 2024/25, Paper C2024/046.

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 Jo Wright, (Secretary to Council), (email: j.wright-2062@kent.ac.uk).

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