

**Minutes currently confidential to Council**

**Minutes marked Commercial in confidence or confidential have been redacted from the web version**

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

**MEETING OF COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2025**

**Hybrid Meeting Held at Medway Boardroom (M3-38), Medway 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: Thomas Hyner; Dr Mark Downs; Paul Pugh; Julie Kelly; Victoria Wilson; Graham Razey OBE; Dr Sam Parrett CBE. President Kent Student 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 HR & OD, Martin Atkinson (items 9 & 11); Interim Chief Operating Officer, John Duffy; Acting Director of Commercial Services and Estates, Melissa Browne and Head of Legal, David Emanuel (item 9). Governance Support Officer, Hannah John; Head of Secretariat, Lanre Folarin; Interim University Secretary and Director of Governance & Assurance, Dr Jo Wright.

**Apologies:** Lay Members: Sarah Dance, Mayuri Lakhani.

**5953 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION**

- a. The Chair noted apologies and welcomed members, including the new Interim Chief Operating Officer, John Duffy. Also, the Chair stated that matters for approval would be deferred to 8 April given that the meeting was not quorate and members agreed. It was also agreed that the order of proceedings be slightly amended for more efficient deliberations. Accordingly, agenda items 9 and 11 were taken first.
- b. The Chair reminded members of their fiduciary duty to the University as trustees.
- c. **Disclosure of Interest:** None.
- d. The Interim University Secretary informed Council of a minor amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2025.

**5954 UNIVERSITY PROJECTS**

The interim COO, Acting Director of Commercial Services and Estates, Head of Legal and Director HR & OD updated Council.

**a. Project**

Council received and noted Paper **C2024/087** Progress Update on the Project. Council was informed of the selection of an experienced partner with verifiable track record across the sector to deliver the project on the basis of the preferred option 3. Additionally, Council was presented an outline of the financial and operational benefits expected over the 5-year contract period. **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

Through discussions, Council noted that:

- Financial sensitivity testing showed that the project was more viable than the in-house model even in a low growth scenario.
- Among other benefits, the project would bring a range of innovations and improvements to the campus and support the social values that are important to our community. **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- When considered in light of other projects being explored, the transaction is still necessary in furtherance of Kent 2030 and any contractual obligations entered into should duly protect the University's interests.
- There had been staff consultations on various levels including with staff unions **[minutes confidential to Council]**. The Kent Student Union team were also engaged during the procurement process. Council acknowledge the need to protect the interest of student workers as well.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- The full business case would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) and at the next meeting of Council. The FRC would be expected to examine the projected financial savings more closely.

**Action:** *Present the full business case to FRC and Council for approval.*

**b. Project**

Council was informed that the tender had been launched and was ongoing until April.

**5955 UPDATE ON VSS**

The Director of HR and OD presented and Council noted Paper **C2024/090** **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

Through discussion, Council noted that:

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

- Council was reassured that the VSS had been endorsed by the Redundancy Committee following a thorough review and in consideration of the reality of the University's financial situation.

#### 5956 **ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Acting Vice Chancellor welcomed members to Medway campus and reported that:

##### **Internal:**

- Work on the Medway Docking Station was progressing well and the project launch was well attended.
  - Work was ongoing via KBS to launch a 2 year accelerated degree offer for commuter students, which would be enabled through the new term structure.
  - The University was ranked 2nd in the Times Good University Guide 2025 for Social Work which continues to go from strength to strength.
  - The new facilities in the Oasis Lounge on Medway campus have received very positive feedback from students.
  - There has been a period of industrial dispute with the staff trade union, UCU which has so far, not affected students but a 5 day consecutive strike action had been voted to commence next week, 24-28 March. Negotiations have been explored in a bid to call off the strike but to no avail.
  - That the lecture by one of the University's most distinguished alumni, Mark Drakeford, former First Minister of Wales had been well-attended and provided a useful avenue for networking thereafter.
  - The University has been sent an Amber Alert from the National Crime Agency warning about the risks of misuse of 3D printers to make firearms.
  - That the Eastern ARC Annual Report had been uploaded to the reading room.
- The Acting Vice-Chancellor expressed appreciation to the teams working to deliver Kent 2030 as well as the financial statements and going concern assessments.

##### **External:**

- The HE White Paper to include a new funding model which is expected by the Summer.
- The Spring Statement which is expected to announce more budget cuts.
- The House of Commons Education Committee's special session on University Finances holding on 6 April.
- The status of the bill to provide powers to Skills England (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill).

#### 5957 **STRATEGIC PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (S&P) presented and Council noted Paper **C2024-084** Programme Highlights Report which outlined risks, issues and decisions of note, the implementation status and overall programme management. The report also provided workstream level details including key considerations regarding funding and anticipated partnerships in light of the impact of the rebasing.

Council noted that:

- Work was ongoing to improve the management of the programme in relation to governance framework, benefits management and reporting templates with advice from EY. A number of workshops are being convened to resolve this.
- The new reporting structure was acknowledged but members felt there was still need for it to present a broader, less transactional picture of the project status and highlight overarching elements such as the University's new persona. The idea being to create a strategic narrative around the varied status of the University as a foundation for how the University is projected going forward.
- On reporting, it was noted that although the detailed reports would be presented to the working group, same could be provided for Council's information via the Diligent Reading Room.
- Despite the improvements in service delivery across directorates, there wasn't commensurate improvement in the student recruitment numbers. It was acknowledged that designing a better management structure for K2030 delivery would be useful. The gap in the membership of the K2030 Joint Assurance Board and the need for a new lay member to join the Board were noted as being actioned. However, Council would need to review whether there is still need for the Board due to a need to avoid duplication of efforts.
- The improvement in the RAG rating was a welcome development.

**Action:** *Resolve lay member vacancy on the Board. (Interim Director G&A)*

## 5958 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented the following reports:

### a. CFO's Report

Council noted paper **C2024/085** Report on the Financial Performance to Date. The CFO reported a slightly improved performance compared to 2023/24, although it was stated that significant savings were from pay and non-pay budgets and the August 2024 staff pay award was yet to be implemented. Also, that although there was a deficit from operations, the University held a better cash position and remained ahead of budget. The Q2 Forecast was noted as being in deficit due largely to adverse student recruitment and the related impact on expected earnings on accommodation, etc. Notable changes across areas of the I&E were also highlighted.

### b. Lenders Update

Council was informed that the Deed [**minutes confidential to Council**] approved at its last meeting had been signed [**minutes confidential to Council**]. The relevant legal document for Project [**minutes confidential to Council**] had also been finalised following a review by Council's Sub-Group, there being no fundamental changes to the draft Term Sheet.

[**minutes confidential to Council**].

It was mentioned that parties aimed to sign the agreement next week. However, Council was informed that the accounts timeline had been impacted as there was

need to undertake some additional work, such as, reflect inflationary risk in CPI terms.

In view of the foregoing, the OfS extended the deadline for submission of the financial statements until 25 April.

Through discussions, Council noted that a directive had recently been issued for HEIs to provide interim financial reports to the OfS [**minutes confidential to Council**].

**c. Project [**minutes confidential to Council**]**

Council was informed that [**minutes confidential to Council**].

**d. Project [**minutes confidential to Council**]**

Council was informed that [**minutes confidential to Council**].

Council noted the update [**minutes confidential to Council**].

**5959 GOVERNANCE UPDATES**

The Interim University Secretary and Director of Governance and Assurance reported and Council noted papers **C2024/088** Post-Governance Effectiveness Review Update and **C2024/089** Council Communications Protocol. It was explained that due to current back-end settings on Diligent, members would still receive notifications via their personal email addresses.

Additionally, Council was asked to consider the appointment of a Link Council Member to Senate in order to more effectively assure itself of academic governance. Council welcomed the proposal and noted that the appointment would be made through the Nominations Committee.

Council noted the papers and agreed to defer the approval of paper **C2024/089**. Meanwhile, members were encouraged to direct any further questions to the Interim University Secretary.

**5960 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

[**minutes confidential to Council**]

**ITEMS BELOW THE LINE**

**5961 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:

- Tuesday 8 April 2025 (MS Teams; 3:00-4:30pm)
- Friday 16 May 2025
- Friday 27 June 2025

## PLANS AND REPORTS FOR NOTE

The following reports were presented to Council to note.

### **5962 ANNUAL REPORT OF SENATE 2023/2024**

Council noted paper **C2024/091**.

### **5963 KENT STUDENT UNION REPORTS**

Council noted papers **C2024/092** Report on the Kent Student Union Elections and **C2024/093** Kent Student Union Officer Restructure.

## MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES TO NOTE AND APPROVE

The following minutes and recommendations were presented to Council to note and approve.

### **5964 RECOMMENDATIONS OF HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE MEETING 21 FEBRUARY 2025**

Council noted the report of the Honorary Degrees Committee meeting, **C2024/094** but deferred approval of the recommendations to its next meeting.

## MINUTES AND REPORTS TO NOTE

The following reports and minutes were presented to Council.

### **5965 REPORT OF THE SENATE MEETING**

Council **noted** paper **C2024/095** Report of the Senate Meeting held on 5 March 2025.

### **5966 MINUTES OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Council **noted** paper **C2024/096** Minute of the meeting of 12 March 2025.

### **5967 MINUTES OF FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Council **noted** papers **C2024/097** and **C2024/098** minutes of the meetings held on **13 December 2024** and **24 February 2025**.

### **5968 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING**

Council **noted** papers **C2024/099** and **C2024/100** Minutes of the meetings held on **14 November 2024** and **18 February 2025**.

### **5969 MINUTES OF PEOPLE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Council **noted** paper **C2024/101** Minutes of the meeting of **14 February 2025**.

### **5970 MINUTES OF THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

Council **noted** paper **C2024/102** Minutes of the meeting of **27 January 2025**.

### **5971 REDUNDANCY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES**

Council **noted** papers **C2024/103** and **C2024/104** Notes of the meetings held on **18 December 2024** and **15 January 2025**.

**5972 MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Council **noted** paper **C2024/105** Minutes of the Meeting held on **27 November 2024**.

**5973** Council **noted** the Forward Programme 2024/25, Paper **C2024/106**.

**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, (University Secretary), (email: [j.wright-2062@kent.ac.uk](mailto:j.wright-2062@kent.ac.uk)).