

Minutes currently confidential to Council

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UNIVERSITY OF KENT

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 May 2025

Hybrid Meeting Held 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; Paul Pugh; Sarah Dance; 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; Peter Pentecost, Financial Sustainability Director (item 7); Catherine Morris, Sustainability Manager (item 9); Prof Gurprit Lall, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (EDI) (item 10); Prof Shane Weller, DVC Research & Innovation (item 11); Assistant Director (Governance), Sarah Megson (item 12); Governance Support Officer, Jamie Cox; Head of Secretariat, Lanre Folarin; Interim University Secretary and Director of Governance & Assurance, Dr Jo Wright.

Apologies: Lay Members: Thomas Hyner, Mayuri Lakhani.

5990 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

- a. The Chair welcomed members, including the new Governance Support Officer, Jamie Cox and noted apologies from 2 lay members. In view of this, Council acknowledged the meeting as inquorate and agreed to adjourn and reconvene the meeting in line with the Standing Orders (clause 3(x)(c)(iii)).

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Thereafter, the meeting was reconvened and the Interim University Secretary confirmed receipt of the written position of Lay Member, Mayuri Lakhani, on matters for approval.

- b. The Chair reminded members of their fiduciary duty to the University as trustees.
- c. **Disclosure of Interest:** None.
- d. The Chair noted the duplication of some reports in relation to the Strategic Plan and Current Performance as well as the CFO's report. The DVC (S&P) and CFO apologised to Council for the duplication and the Acting VC stated that going forward papers would be checked at an executive level prior to being made available to Council.

5991 MINUTES

Council approved Paper **C2024/126** Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2025.

5992 MATTERS ARISING

The Action Log, paper **C2024/127** was noted and items 5957, 5947, 5944, 5800, 5870 closed.

5993 ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Acting Vice Chancellor reported on the following:

External:

- Kent County Council election swing to Reform – A letter had been sent to congratulate the new Council Leader, Linden Kemkaran and invite her to the University. The former Council leader, Roger Gough had also been sent a letter thanking him for his service to the Council and support to the University.
- While the future relationship with HE is unknown, the University would continue to engage on the economic and collective interests of the region.
- Political developments, including questions by the House of Commons to the Education Minister, and the Minister of Skill's response to the Annual Financial Sustainability Report by the OfS.
- Immigration White Paper and new obligations to be met by HEIs.
- Tension between 2 key markets, India and Pakistan – it was noted that support was being provided to affected students.
- Upcoming EU/UK Summit.
- Legislative Developments - The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill and The Commencement Regulation for the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, effective on 1 August.

Internal:

- The University hosted a successful Annual Kent and Medway Business Summit, last week and the first Kent & Medway Boys' Impact Conference on 24 April.

- The University has been shortlisted as University of the year for the NEON (National Education Opportunities Network) Award.
- The University has been shortlisted for the 'University of the Year' award at the inaugural Academic Employability Awards, a national celebration of innovative approaches to embedding employability within higher education.
- Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) has been granted full accreditation by the General Medical Council (GMC), joining the list of institutions authorised to award UK primary medical qualifications from 9 April 2025.

Council enquired about compliance with the new immigration obligations and was informed that although the rules were still to be reviewed, compliance challenges were not expected. It was also noted that strategic communications would be deployed to control the narrative as it relates to Kent.

5994 **STRATEGIC PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (S&P) presented and Council noted paper **C2024/128** Programme Highlights Report which outlined risks, issues and decisions of note, the implementation status and overall programme management. The paper also included the External Stakeholder Reporting Pack (Financial Performance Covenants), the Key Performance Milestones, and the Implementation Plan Spreadsheet (Costs and Benefits).

Council was informed that the overall programme status was trending amber, reflecting the challenges faced in relation to programme resourcing and delivery timelines. However, Council was assured that work was ongoing to deliver the various workstreams which have also been streamlined. It was reported that when the new modules go live by September, the volume of support required for the Education Modernisation Workstream would reduce and the next priority would be Size and Shape to support growth; and Academic workforce to support enhancing resourcing of the academic workforce and driving staff performance. The RPD (appraisal) was also being revamped to be more performance oriented and allow for monitoring of performance alongside the appropriate provision of staff development and support.

On brand positioning, Council was informed that a strategic plan had been developed and would be executed in due course. However, the recently appointed interim Director of Marketing and Recruitment, who worked on the strategy would be exiting the University soon for a permanent role elsewhere. In response to concerns about plans for delivery of the referenced brand strategy, it was explained that there would be a comprehensive handover to the Interim COO, pending recruitment of a new director. It was also noted that the confidentiality obligations agreed upon employment would remain binding on exiting staff to protect the interests of the University.

Council also noted that pending recruitment of a Dean for KBS, a Transformational Director had been appointed and is working on a "speedboat" strategic plan.

The Acting VC flagged and Council noted that the University is currently carrying a risk in relation to the increased number of interim lead roles being held due to

financial constraints. It was also noted that interim directors can be subject to a shorter notice period, but mitigations are in place.

5995 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Financial Sustainability Director presented and Council noted paper **C2024/129 [minute confidential to Council]**.

Council was informed that the report covered the period till the end of March. EBITDA performance was reported as good with the University recording significantly higher cash levels above threshold and Rebased Case, although now nearing the period of slower income. It was stated that a slight improvement in financial performance was expected but would likely have a neutral cash impact, i.e. lower capital grant income and lower capital spend.

The finance team is working on the 25/26 budget which would be presented at the next Council meeting and it was stated that some going concern levers may need to be pulled in the baseline budget when the latest recruitment data is considered and reflected.

On Lender relations, it was reported that since the signing of the accounts, there has been limited interaction **[minute confidential to Council]**.

[minute confidential to Council].

[minute confidential to Council].

Council noted the reports on finance and highlighted the need to be mindful of possible impact of reduced capital spend on the University's high-risk areas, such as accommodation, business intelligence, fire, etc. The CFO explained that the Rebased Plan included an element of catch-up capital expenditure budget and if **[minute confidential to Council]**, this will provide funds for business system improvements. However, there is an ongoing need to balance expenditure with the need to preserve cash to address liquidity risk.

Also, Council requested an update on student recruitment. In response, the DVC (S&P) reported an increase in offers and improvement in offer making timelines (now at 2-3 days), particularly for prospective undergraduate and postgraduate research students. Also, that internal recruitment had been assessed as satisfactory; to be revisited after the UCAS deadline. It was further reported that a number of new initiatives were being deployed in addition to recruitment campaigns being run and Open Day event coming up in June and July to attract UG and PGT students. The campaign materials were also being translated for target international markets. It was also stated that the admissions pipeline was being reviewed with a special focus on KBS, with new bursary offerings.

Council noted the update and asked how the recruitment was trending compared to last year **[minute confidential to Council]**. Council noted this and the fact that it would be useful to attempt to quantify the impact of the Immigration White Paper on Recruitment.

Action: Include YoY data in student recruitment reporting DVC (S&P)

Audit Committee to monitor impact of reduced capital spend on high risk areas

5996 SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT

The Sustainability Manager presented and Council **noted** paper **C2024/130** Annual Report on Sustainability. The report detailed the following headlines and key achievements:

- End of the 2021 Sustainability Strategy and development of a 2025-2030 strategy focused on Net Zero, biodiversity, campus operations, curriculum and research and engagement & student experience.
- Green Gown Award (Benefitting Society Category)
- Wilder Kent Award (Gold)
- Environmental Management System ISO14001 Recertification for another 3years from January 2025
- Biodiversity Improvement Works on campus (annual Bio-Blitz event)
- Risks and Opportunities facing the University and HE sector

Council welcomed the report and asked about the challenges being faced in delivery the sustainability strategy, with reference to the new stance of the USA (withdrawal from the Paris Agreement). It was mentioned that there was need to more proactively weight the sustainability impacts of decisions being made within the University to avoid the erosion of progress made by the sustainability team. Also, it was noted that regardless of the USA's stance on climate change, sustainability initiatives and funds aimed at promoting biodiversity and green spaces had not been affected.

Council also asked for suggestions on ways to maximise use of the campus and how sustainability reporting cost was being managed. Council was informed that a lot was already being done including the Bio-Blitz event but there was need to publicise it better for visitors on campus. However, to do more, more granular data would be required. Regarding reporting cost, it was explained that there were different levels of report from basic to advance allowing institutions to report at the level of available resources.

Action Point: Add Sustainability impact to cover sheets. (G&A)

5997 EDI ANNUAL REPORT

The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor presented paper **C2024/131** EDI Annual Report, highlighting that efforts to embed EDI monitoring within respective schools with the appointment of EDI leads in each school and within human resources and talent and organisation teams, etc. Also mentioned were plans to introduce Lived Experiences Schemes and Diversity Marks and agree on a communication plan to explain this to students and prospective students. Additionally, it was noted that consultations for the 2025-2030 EDI Strategy were ongoing.

Council noted the report and asked about how diversity marks work and to what extent students recognise it when deciding on University. It was explained that feedback was varied among student communities with some being more aware than others, and marginalised students being a bit more concerned about equality issues, often seeking information on the lived experience of current or former students. There were also discussions on whether enough was being done to support students and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds and encourage engagement with surveys to improve feedback on race equality and other diversity issues and enhance the University's action plan.

Further, it was clarified regarding the Athena SWAN status of the new School of Arts and Architecture that additional information was required for a decision to be made. Gathering the accurate data had proved challenging due to institutional changes and an extension had been requested and granted until July 2027.

An error was pointed out on Table 3 which the Associate PVC EDI committed to correcting.

Council **approved** the Annual EDI Report.

5998 PRESENTATION BY THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY STEERING GROUP

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) presented the plans for the University's 60th anniversary year (academic year 2025/26) and highlighted activities to hold from Summer 2025 to Autumn 2026 on 3 key themes - Innovation, Sustainability and Community.

The plan also included initiatives to re-launch the University and its focus on civic missions and extensive stakeholder engagement sessions led by the Chancellor.

Council noted the plans and thanked the DVC (R&I) and the 60th Anniversary Steering Group.

5999 SENATE MEMBERSHIP 2025/26 ONWARDS

The Assistant Director (Governance) presented paper **C2024/132** Senate Membership Structure which had been updated, with Senate approval to reflect the new academic restructure. The new membership takes effect from 2025-26.

A concern was raised about the reduction in the number of student representatives but it was clarified that this was due to changes made by Kent Student Union which meant that the 2 sabbatical officers put forward covered the scope of representation previously covered by 3 sabbatical officers. Another concern was that elected PG representation on Senate should be separated on the basis that PGT and PGR student needs are different. Council was informed that recommendations in this regard ought to be formally proposed by KSU but had not been formally proposed on this occasion.

Council noted the concerns and explanations provided and agreed to **approve** the new structure on the basis of 5 student representatives (rather than 4), with the

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Governance teams (UoK and KSU) to determine the details of how the positions will be filled (sabbatical officers or elected representation).

6000 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ITEMS BELOW THE LINE

6001 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 27 June 2025

PLANS AND REPORTS FOR NOTE

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

6002 COUNCIL SCHEDULE

Council approved paper **C2024/133**.

6003 KENT STUDENT UNION ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION (CONSTITUTION)

Council noted paper **C2024/134**.

6004 KENT STUDENT UNION CODE OF PRACTICE

Council noted paper **C2024/135**.

6005 ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Council noted paper **C2024/136**.

6006 REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR K2030 ASSURANCE BOARD

Council approved paper **C2024/137**, noting the changes made to the Board structure.

MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES TO NOTE

The following minutes were presented to Council to note.

6007 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Council **noted** paper **C2024/138** Minutes of the meetings held on 24 April 2025.

6008 MINUTES OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Council **noted** paper **C2024/139** Minutes of the meeting of 25 April 2025.

6009 Council **noted the Forward Programme 2024/25, Paper **C2024/140**.**

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 (Interim University Secretary), (email: j.wright-2062@kent.ac.uk).

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