UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

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| **MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL COUNCIL**<br><br>**AWAY DAY MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM ON 13 APRIL 2021** | |

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| **Present:** | Mrs Carmel Booth, President (in the Chair); Dr Paul Johnson, Vice-President; Professor Dame Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Gavin Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education; Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact; Dr Carol Costello, Director of People and Services; Mr Adnan Hussain, President of the Guild of Students; Ms Fiona Cullen; Dr Kashmir Gill; Ms Vanessa Griffiths; Mrs Helen Miller; Mr Norman Molyneux; Dr Roger Platt; Mr Hans van Mourik Broekman; Dr Diana Walford; Professor Julia Balogun; Professor Hazel Scott; Professor Thomas Teubner; and Mr Kieran O'Sullivan. |
| **Apologies:** | Ms Cilla Ankrah-Lucas; Mr Ed Fishwick; and Mr Barry Flynn (co-opted member of Audit Committee). |
| **In Attendance:** | Professor Fiona Beveridge, Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Humanities and Social Sciences; Professor Dinah Birch, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Cultural Engagement; Ms Nicola Davies, Director of Finance; Professor Louise Kenny, Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Health and Life Sciences; Mrs Emma Leonard, Secretary to Council; Mr Kevan Ryan, Clerk to Council; Mr Tim Seamans, Director of External Relations; and Professor Wiebe van der Hoek, Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Science and Engineering. |

1. **President's Welcome**

   The President welcomed those present and gave an overview of the day which would commence with an initial review of performance and financial pressures, followed by more future-focussed sessions.

   It was noted that other members of the Senior Leadership Team were in attendance, which was standard practice for Council Away Days, as was Mr Tim Seamans, Director of External Relations.

2. **Disclosures of Interest**

   Members were asked to disclose any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. No such interests were disclosed.

3. **Quarter 2 and Forecast 2 Reports, and Report on Financial Performance and Current Position**

   [The Deputy Director of Finance, Mr Paul Fallon, and the Interim Director of Strategic Planning, Mr Phil Hopwood, attended for this item.]

3.1   Quarter 2 Performance Report

**RECEIVED**:

i.    A report providing details of performance during Quarter 2 against KPIs, and appendices including the latest Environment Scan, an Overview of Key Performance Indicators and Risks, and a League Table Measures Summary.

**REPORTED**:

ii.   Of particular note in the Environment Scan was that several long-awaited outputs from the Department for Education had arrived simultaneously in January. Much of the main messaging had already been circulated and formed parts of previous Environment Scans. Together they provided an overall picture of the future direction of post-18 education under the current government without the main detail on how the fee regime might be affected that would clarify the external political and funding strategic risk. It was expected that any changes to the student finance system would be brought forward ahead of the next Comprehensive Spending Review due in Autumn 2021.

iii.  The greatest challenge was seen in the financial KPIs due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, predominantly on international tuition fee income. It was expected that this challenge and uncertainty in the level of financial pressure would continue for the short to medium-term.

iv.   Beyond the finances, the lagged nature of some of the KPIs meant that the possible impact of COVID-19 on other metrics, such as student satisfaction, had yet to flow through. Anticipating these downstream impacts, actions to mitigate the identified threats to wider performance had been implemented.

v.    Some indicators within the scorecard were either new or did not have external benchmarks (or both). Consequently, for these a period of baseline setting was underway to establish the indicator, record relevant reportable data and agree targets that were challenging but achievable. For the other indicators, where the Strategy 2026 target was well known such as student satisfaction or graduate prospects, the trajectory to these targets would be defined by Quarter 3.

vi.   Although none of the KPIs were due to have updated data values to report at Quarter 2, there had been a refresh of student diversity data initially reported at Quarter 1. The Performance Scorecard commentary sought to address any internal activities or external drivers that may impact upon future KPI performance and also highlighted, where applicable, what relevant activities would be delivered and updated in the next two quarterly reports.

**AGREED**:

vii.  The Quarter 2 Performance Report should be approved.

3.2    Forecast 2 Report

**RECEIVED**:

i.    The 2020/21 Financial Forecast 2 Report.

**REPORTED**:

*Paragraphs ii – iv redacted due to commercial interest.*

**AGREED**:

v.    The Financial Forecast 2 Performance Report should be approved.

**3.3    Financial Performance and Current Position**

**RECEIVED**:

i.    A paper providing some context in relation to the University's financial performance and position, together with a presentation from the Director of Finance, Deputy Director of Finance, Interim Director of Strategic Planning and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact covering:

- Reminder of Strategy 2026 KPIs and current context
- Financial performance – historic benchmarking including research income per FTE and Staff Student Ratio rankings by cost centre
- Actions taken to date to mitigate financial losses
- Future options for savings and need for investment
- Research focus – performance.

**REPORTED**:

ii.    The paper used historic benchmarking to highlight the University's position compared with peers as it was in 2018/19, the last year for which there was comparator information.  It also summarised performance by HESA cost centre, again using 2018/19 data.  New benchmarking data was expected in the next couple of months.  The University's financial performance compared to others for income and costs was as follows:

- Surplus – % of income below average
- Net cash flow – % of income below average
- Staff costs – % of income in line with Russell Group
- Premises costs – % of income in line with Russell Group
- Professional Services costs – below average but with high transactional costs
- Tuition fee income – % of income well above average
- Research income – % of income well below average
- Other income – % of income on average (excluding Oxford and Cambridge)
- Investment income – % of income above average
- Donations – % of income well below average.

*Paragraphs iii – v redacted due to commercial interest.*

vi.    Next steps would be to assess in detail the deliverability, benefit and phasing of one-off and recurrent savings measures that would create an integrated five year plan (for submission to Council in July 2021) which: minimises the impact on the student experience; minimises financial sustainability risk; and is deliverable and continues to deliver Strategy 2026; whilst: minimising deficits as per previous Council direction; continuing investment in support of strategic efficiency/capability initiatives (e.g. PS Futures, hybrid working, estate optimisation, digital enhancement); and continuing investment in income generating activity (e.g. diversified student intake, research bid support).

**NOTED**:

vii.    Streamlined professional services support would increase the time available to academic colleagues for research.

viii.    It would be important not to depersonalise the student experience, even though that was resource intensive.

ix.    Leadership was a critical factor in the ongoing culture change required. It was acknowledged that the organisation had undergone significant cultural change over the previous six years, which had challenged attitudes of mediocrity and a lack of looking beyond internal practice.

**AGREED**:

x.    The detailed analysis presented was very helpful.

4.    **Shaping the Liverpool Student Journey of the Future**

[The Director of Student Experience and Enhancement, Dr Paul Redmond, attended for this item.]

**RECEIVED**:

i.    An overview presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education to set the scene and prompt discussion in four break out groups to elicit some fresh perspectives from Council members around the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of the students we want to recruit and how do we appeal to them?
- What do you think a post-COVID university education/experience should look like?
- What are the key elements/enablers of an inclusive university experience?
- How can we help overcome disadvantage at all points of the journey?
- What should we be doing at the transition points?
- What does student success mean to you?
- What personal qualities will our graduates need in the future?
- What characteristics does a responsible global citizen have?
- What partnerships do we need in the future to help us achieve our goals?

- Do we have any opportunities to be distinctive?

**NOTED**:

ii. Common themes emerging from the group discussions included:

- The University should champion equality of opportunity
- The University should be a University that cares, starting with distinctive admissions and then progressively building social and cultural capacity to develop local and global citizens
- The University's distinctiveness was defined by the city of Liverpool and the opportunities it could provide, employment and enterprise
- Research-connected curricula was important in building flexible, problem-solving students, with students being regarded as partners and co-producers
- More partners were needed, including alumni, to bring professional capital
- Initiatives such as the Liverpool Promise (which created graduate jobs in Liverpool City Region SMEs) were important – the Director of Student Enhancement and Experience would come back with suggestions for how Council members could support the initiative.

5. **Future Ways of Working for Professional Services**

[The Director of Human Resources, Mr Keith Watkinson, attended for this item.]

**RECEIVED**:

i. A presentation from the Director of Human Resources on a proposal relating to a new way of working for Professional Services staff who are based in offices, the principles developed to underpin the approach, what the institutional and individual benefits would be and the phases for implementation.

**REPORTED**:

ii. The COVID-19 pandemic had acted as a catalyst for change, with working from home being the norm for many over the past year. It was important that the University reflect on what had been working well in order to learn lessons to help shape future practice. The idea was that the University would adopt a hybrid way of working where appropriate, combining the benefits of working from home with those of working on campus. This would involve colleagues coming to campus to undertake certain pieces of work, when it was needed and agreed. Benefits to the institution included: an opportunity to re-shape campus space and re-design the delivery of services (in partnership with academic colleagues and students); the initiative would go some way to meeting the significant financial savings needed; and contribution to the achievement of sustainability goals. For the individual benefits included: improved work-life balance; enhanced autonomy; and saving time and costs associated with commuting.

iii. The Professional Services Operating Model was underpinned by the following key principles: Flexibility; Quality Service Provision; Physical Environment; Technology; Inclusion and Wellbeing; Outcomes Focused; and Building on Progress. Detailed planning and preparation was being undertaken on each of the principles. This would involve determining success measures in relation to

space, civic engagement, IT and digital literacy, student satisfaction, staff satisfaction, and wellbeing, before moving to engaging and transitioning to new ways of working. It was difficult to be precise around timescales, particularly given the phases of the pandemic, but it was hoped that the first new spaces could be trialled in the summer.

iv.     The University was not alone in exploring this. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's research 'Embedding New Ways of Working: Implications for the post-pandemic workforce' had found that prior to the pandemic nearly two-thirds of employers had none/fewer than 10% of staff working from home, but that this was anticipated to rise significantly with 40% of employers expecting over 50% of their workforce to work from home regularly in the future.

**NOTED**:

v.      It was imperative that the student experience would not be adversely impacted by the proposals, particularly given the intentions around personalising the student experience.

vi.     The collegiate, social and collaborative benefits of working on campus (within and across teams) must not be ignored. It was important for new colleagues to feel integrated and a part of the University.

vii.    Care needed to be taken to not exacerbate issues relating to diversity and equality.

viii.   Flexible working opportunities for those based on campus also needed to be considered.

ix.     The intention was to look at how some of the estate could be redeployed to improve the student and staff experience by creating sector-leading study, communal and social spaces and green spaces to tackle climate and nature crises and support enhanced wellbeing. Shedding some of the older estate would also allow the University to drive forward its sustainability and carbon footprint goals, mindful of the need to also factor in carbon emissions from home working.

x.      Consideration would need to be given to the approach to be taken to meetings (i.e. all in-person or a mixed in-person/virtual hybrid format), noting that new technologies to support hybrid meetings was emerging.

6.  **Principles, Purpose and Personality** How we manage our reputation and define our brand

[The Director of Marketing, Mrs Alison Kerwin, attended for this item.]

**RECEIVED**:

i.      A presentation from the Director of External Relations and Director of Marketing covering:

- The University's approach to getting the message across and managing its reputation in an increasingly complex environment

- Insights from some of the key audiences about how the University is currently perceived
- Latest on the development of the new brand strategy
- An opportunity for Council to shape development of the brand.

**REPORTED**:

ii. Excellent communications helped support the delivery of Strategy 2026 by enhancing the reputation and brand of the University, and the city of Liverpool, nationally and internationally. A key role of External Relations was to connect the University with its stakeholders around the world and inspire them to be the University's advocates.

iii. The communications environment was far more complex than ever before bringing both challenges and opportunities. Using a range of channels and platforms was vital – email, social media, blogs, video, forums. There was a place for what was known as the Broadcast Model, but research showed that younger audiences in particular needed dialogue and interaction. Just as face-to-face was important with regard to teaching, face-to-face forums were a key part of the staff communications output and the frequency of this forum had been increased. Also important were frequency and repetition to embed messages, the use of student voice/staff voice and testimonials.

iv. The University's brand and reputation was built on a diverse range of factors that informed people's perceptions. Brand and reputation worked hand in hand. The University's reputation was shaped by what people know about it, its history and what it had achieved and its brand was how it stayed relevant and differentiated itself. The aim was to make it easier for people to recall that something they had seen or heard was associated with the University and for that association to trigger other positive associations.

v. External Relations was working on a business case to explore the introduction of a piece of software that would return significant cost savings versus what was currently spent on outsourcing design. A review was also underway of anything that could be developed into useful templates to help staff to create on-brand communications. Another key project for this year was around selling the brand internally.

vi. Brand and reputation was measured via: perception surveys (all stakeholder groups from 2022); reach and sentiment of media coverage; reach and engagement on social media; web analytics; and marketing for recruitment performance including % of applications and conversion.

**NOTED**:

vii. The University's social media presence was considered to be excellent and the work on brand had shown a positive shift in recent years.

viii. It was important to ensure that student ambassadors were sharing up-to-date and appropriate programme information, noting that it would be beneficial to engage Schools/Departments in briefing ambassadors.

ix.     Consideration could be given to whether enough was being made of 'brick', i.e. solid, reliable, durable, something to build on for life.

x.      The Alumni magazine was a good collection of great stories about what the University was doing and these stories could usefully be more widely known in the city region.

xi.     It would be good to see the Original Redbrick concept evolve so that it could only relate to the University of Liverpool and no other Russell Group institution, and represent no other city.

xii.    A lot of work was undertaken relating to student recruitment which highlighted how the University was perceived in relation to Russell Group competitors and broader perception surveys would be introduced once the brand was launched.

xiii.   A further update on reputation and brand development would be submitted to Council early next session.

**7.     Closing Remarks from the President of Council**

**NOTED**:

i.      It was clear that there were challenges and opportunities ahead:

- The University had a burning platform and a critical affordability challenge which would underpin the next few years
- Building upon improvements in research quality, the University faced a research challenge to drive up financial performance and narrow the gap with peers
- There were opportunities in relation to the student journey alongside opportunities to enhance the University's distinctiveness
- There was an opportunity to build upon change that had already taken place with new ways of working, although words of caution were expressed
- There was also an opportunity to shape the brand post-COVID and build upon the high profile that the University had had during the pandemic.

These were all key areas that Council would revisit over the next few months and there would be some important decisions ahead.

ii.     The passion, resilience, excellence and dedication shown by the University's Senior Leadership Team over recent months should be commended.

iii.    Members would be asked to reflect on the Away Day and to provide feedback to inform planning for future sessions.

**8.     Date of Next Meeting**

**NOTED**:

i.      The next meeting would be held at 2pm on Tuesday 25 May 2021.