

NOTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL COUNCIL

AWAY DAY MEETING HELD AT GREENBANK STUDENT VILLAGE ON 7 APRIL 2022

Present:	Carmel Booth, President (in the Chair until 3pm); Dr Paul Johnson, Vice-President (in the Chair from 3pm); Professor Dame Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Gavin Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education; Dr Carol Costello, Director of People and Services; Fiona Cullen; Dr Kashmir Gill; Vanessa Griffiths; Helen Miller; Norman Molyneux; Dr Roger Platt; Hans van Mourik Broekman; Dr Diana Walford; Professor Julia Balogun; Professor Hazel Scott; Professor Thomas Teubner; and Kieran O’Sullivan.
Apologies:	Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact; Bertie Woodcock, President of the Liverpool Guild of Students; Cilla Ankrah-Lucas; Ed Fishwick; and Professor Louise Kenny, Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Health and Life Sciences.
In Attendance:	Professor Fiona Beveridge, Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Humanities and Social Sciences; Professor Dinah Birch, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Cultural Engagement; Nicola Davies, Director of Finance; Barry Flynn, co-opted member of Audit Committee; Emma Leonard, Secretary to Council; Kevan Ryan, Clerk to Council; 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.

It was noted that other members of the Senior Leadership Team were in attendance, which was standard practice for Council Away Days, as was Barry Flynn, a co-opted member of the Audit Committee.

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. Augar Review, Implications, and Institutional Response

[The Head of Sustainability, Policy, and Civic Engagement, James Coe, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. A briefing note on the Augar Review.
- ii. A presentation by the Head of Sustainability, Policy, and Civic Engagement providing further detail.

REPORTED:

- iii. The aim of the session was for members to consider the various impacts of the proposals on the University's operations and in particular:
- The impact of finances on a declining resource unit as fees are frozen
 - A compelling student success offer in an era of increased personal liability for funding higher education
 - The size and shape of the institution in a period of restricted growth
 - The opportunities around Life Long Learning Entitlements.
- iv. Headlines from the response to the Augar Review included:
- The Review was framed as a cost saving exercise for the taxpayer by increasing the burden of loan repayment toward some students, while freezing the overall quantum of funding from fees going to universities.
 - An increase to the strategic priorities grant of £300m and £450m of capital funding to support high cost programmes, but it could be argued that this was a reallocation of funds.
 - The potential of £75m bursary funding for the most disadvantaged students.
 - An almost certain freezing of maximum tuition fees at £9,250, up to and including AY2024/25. For new HE students commencing study from AY2023/24 onwards, reducing the rate of interest in and after study to RPI+0%. Although better than a fee cut, this placed a significant strain on University resources.
 - New students would have their repayment threshold lowered to £25,000 which would then increase with RPI from 27/28, and with a repayment terms of 40 years. This was fiscally regressive as it meant that the poorest students on entry would pay back more as they pay back for longer and that because of wider inequities in society this would impact those who face the greatest structural inequalities in the labour market most significantly.
 - A concern about a general squeeze of non-STEM programmes.
 - Consultation on the reintroduction of a form of student number cap.
 - Consultation on minimum entry requirements.
 - Consultation on fee limits of £5,197 for Foundation Years to bring them in line with Access to HE Diplomas.
 - Further consultation on Life Long Learning Entitlements.
 - Post-Qualification Admissions would not be happening but with the potential for some minor reforms of admissions.

NOTED:

- v. Themes emerging from the various proposals would be explored in more depth by Council in due course.

4. Performance and League Table Developments

[The Interim Director of Strategic Planning, Phil Hopwood, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. A report providing details of performance during Quarter 2 against relevant KPIs and the 2021/22 Financial Forecast 2 Report, together with appendices including the latest Environment Scan, a QS World Rankings Consultation and Plan Report, an Overview of Key Performance Indicators and Risks, and a League Table Measures Summary.
- ii. A presentation on league tables.

REPORTED:

Q2 Performance Report

- iii. *Paragraph redacted due to commercial interest.*
- iv. Net Promoter Score analysis for Undergraduate pre-applicants highlighted that returning to in-person open days whilst retaining and developing virtual options would be a logical next step to maximise positive perceptions, whereas results of Postgraduate pre-applicants pointed towards virtual engagement having had a more positive impact on perceptions with this group.

Forecast 2

Paragraphs v – viii redacted due to commercial interest.

League Tables

- ix. The objective of the session was to ensure a common understanding amongst members of:
 - Which league tables matter to the University and why, both domestically and internationally
 - How they are constructed and where the data comes from
 - The relative power of the various levers
 - The University's ability to influence

And agreement as to:

- Priorities within the league table context and subsequent actions
- Future communications.

- x. Put simply, league tables mattered because they had an impact on reputation, student and staff recruitment, partnerships, alumni engagement, and improved performance linked to student experience.
- xi. The league tables that mattered most to the University were: The Guardian, The Times and the Sunday Times, The Complete University Guide, QS World University Rankings, and THE World University Rankings.
- xii. The data that fed into league tables came from a variety of sources: statutory returns (with league table compilers also performing their own calculations on top of the raw data to include/exclude certain groups), reputation surveys, and bibliometric sources.
- xiii. For domestic league tables the University was able to model impacts at University and subject level, changing scores to see how each measure affects overall ranking. Modelling provided an indication of sensitivity to movement, current pressure and where to improve.
- xiv. There were a number of levers that could be pulled to improve league table performance and the University's choices of strategic objective affected performance.
- xv. *Paragraph redacted due to commercial interest.*
- xvi. It should be noted that there were long lead times between improving performance and it being reflected in the league tables. It should also be noted that changes to how the University approaches league tables should bring other core benefits.

NOTED:

- xvii. It would be vital to ensure that academic colleagues understand the importance of the QS rankings.

AGREED:

- xviii. The Quarter 2 and Forecast 2 Performance Report should be approved.

5. The Future of University Governance – Meeting Sector Challenges – Smita Jamdar, Partner and Head of Education, Shakespeare Martineau

RECEIVED:

- i. A presentation from the Partner and Head of Education at Shakespeare Martineau, Smita Jamdar, the objective of which was for Council to consider some of the main challenges for university governance and to consider how it should evolve and adapt in response to a changing sector landscape.

NOTED:

- ii. The presentation explored the following current challenges in university governance: governance versus management; charitable status versus

commercial business; critical friends versus champions and ambassadors; assurance versus strategy and culture; volunteers versus increasing time pressures; and regulatory expectations. The presentation also explored the following underlying themes for the future: value; values; place; and leadership and autonomy.

6. The Great Sustainability Transformation – Mike Barry, Director of Mike Barry Eco Ltd.

RECEIVED:

- i. A brief introductory presentation by the Director of Finance to remind members of the University context, focussing on: Strategy and Approach (to achieve net zero carbon by 2035; to reduce our waste by 50% by 2025; and every student to have the opportunity to undertake a sustainability-related module); Progress to Date; Governance; and Next Steps.
- ii. A presentation by Mike Barry, a leading sustainability expert, with slides headed as follows: COP26; 200 Climate Surveys: 70% of people want political and corporate leadership; Meet People Where They Are At; A New Car Sector is Emerging; A New Energy System is Emerging; A New Food System is Emerging; A New Mobility System is Emerging; A New Approach to Cities; A New Way of Working; Working for Planet + People; A New Approach to Consumption; Single Use to Circular; Atomized Specialist Supply Chains to Shared Value; From Competition to Collaboration; From Spreadsheet to Big Data and Remote Sensing; From Being on Your Own to a Helping Hand; the Company You Keep; and M&S Sustainability Strategy.

NOTED:

- iii. The objective of the session was to help Council to:
 - Understand how sustainability is re-shaping the society and economy that the University participates in
 - Reflect on the value that sustainability can create for the University
 - Discuss its role in integrating sustainability into the University's strategic plans, business plans, KPIs and governance structures.

The presentation was anchored on the following three key strategic questions:

Do you know why you need to become sustainable?

- Insight – *students, staff marketplace disruption, science, funders, policy makers, local community*
- Strategy – *embracing disruption, radical shift in what and how you operate*
- Leadership – *confident, eloquent, transparent, humble, inclusive.*

Do you know what you need to commit to do to become sustainable?

- Targets – *ambitious not iterative, all encompassing not single issue, organisationally relevant*
- Governance – *'the delivery machine', tight control, clear accountability, action orientated*

- Reporting – *regular not annual, two way not one-way report, transparency.*

Do you know how to integrate sustainability into all you do?

- Students, Staff, Alumni – *relevance, clarity, skills, ideas, reward and recognition*
- Suppliers – *supportive, consistent with other buyers, business case*
- Partnerships – *change the system together to make your ambitions possible.*

7. Strategic Risk

7.1 Strategic Risk Register

[The Interim Director of Strategic Planning, Phil Hopwood, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. A report providing the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register.

REPORTED:

- ii. In early 2022 a considered review of each risk on the register had taken place. This had included testing whether risks were still valid as described, whether mitigations were true mitigations, controls or business as usual activity and whether the scoring needed reassessing.
- iii. It was proposed that the following strategic risks should be closed:
 - S6 Culture and Ambition. As staff turnover remained low, changes to the underlying culture and ambition of staff remained, by and large, unchanged. The suggestion was for the risk to be operationally managed and for it to be de-escalated to an operational risk overseen by key staff in the People and Services Directorate and Strategic Change. Furthermore, many of the strategic elements of the risk were better reviewed as part of other risks.
 - S10 Ability to Deliver Strategy whilst responding to COVID-19. With the impact of COVID-19 receding, the emphasis of this risk score would become less specifically tied to COVID-19 and more about institutional strategy. It was believed that the institutional risks would be better picked up through other strategic risks, noting it could always be brought back should a mutation mean it needed revisiting.
- iv. Despite the mitigations in place, the exposure after mitigation for E4 Cyber Security remained high (scored at 16), largely due to the consequences a successful cyber attack would have on key business operations. Given this risk was closely managed by the Audit Committee and Information Governance Committee, Council was asked to agree that it was comfortable with the agreed mitigations and therefore the associated level of risk.

AGREED:

- v. The updates to the Strategic Risk Register and the progress detailed should be approved.
- vi. The closure of risk S6 Culture and Ambition as a strategic risk, moving it to an operational risk overseen by relevant departments, should be approved.
- vii. The closure of risk S10 Ability to Deliver Strategy whilst responding to COVID-19 should be approved.
- viii. The risk exposure level for risk E4 Cyber Security should be approved.

7.2 Deep Dive on Student Related Risks

RECEIVED:

- i. A presentation by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education on the following risks: Student Recruitment (S2) and Student Satisfaction and Wellbeing (S3). The objectives of the session were to ensure there was a common understanding amongst members of:
 - The current drivers and emerging changes to the patterns of student recruitment
 - The controls and mitigations in place to address this
 - The current drivers of student mental health and wellbeing support
 - The current drivers of student satisfaction
 - The activities delivered and in train to control and mitigate.
- ii. Drivers and emerging changes to the patterns of student recruitment included:
 - UK – Growth in potential market size (but inflation eroding fee income)
 - UK – Market share linked to quality linked to league tables and reputation
 - UK/Global – Positioning in high demand subject areas with capacity constraints
 - Global – XJTLU slower recovery than predicted and may not come back to planned levels
 - Global – China applicants now focussing on Top 100 in QS
 - Global – Considerable growth in applications from India in certain subjects
 - Global – Bursaries and Scholarships not optimally aligned.
- iii. Mitigations/controls included:
 - Review/implement plans to increase and diversify OSI
 - Subject-based recruitment plans and development of strategic growth areas
 - Review of bursaries
 - Portfolio development, particularly new programmes at PGT
 - QS improvement work
 - Review and update international strategy and partnerships.

iv. The current drivers of student mental health and wellbeing support and student satisfaction included:

- Pandemic and industrial action
- Increased demand for mental health and wellbeing support due to pandemic
- Online learning and non-optimal estate
- Belonging and disengagement.

v. Mitigations/controls included:

- Additional investment in student support services
- Mental health partner Endsleigh provides 24/7 access to mental health support
- Additional investment in campus to support blended learning
- Development of Student Engagement Strategy
- Student Success Framework and Success Boards to support Academic, Personal and Future Success
- Local NSS plans
- Revised induction and welcome week, engagement forums and staffing levels to support
- Employability: additional internships and work experience opportunities in the city region.

8. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED:

i. The next meeting would be held at 2pm on Thursday 26 May 2022.