

COUNCIL
31 March 2022 at 2pm
Teams

MINUTES

Sections marked Commercial in Confidence are claimed as exempt from publication under Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.

Members:	Chair – External member	Mr Michael Queen
	Joint Vice-Chair – External member	Mr Vib Baxi
	Joint Vice-Chair - External member	Ms Rachel Hubbard
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Robert Napier
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu
	Provost & Executive Vice-President	Vacant
	Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education	Prof Osama Khan
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Andy Chalklin
	President, Students' Union	Ms Ajay Ajimobi
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Esat Alpay
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Karen Bullock
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Daniel Horton
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	External member	Dr Mike Goodfellow
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell

In attendance: Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President - Strategy, Planning & Performance
Mr Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Ms Lucy Evans, Chief Student Officer (22/036)
Ms Debbie Lawson, FHMS Director of Faculty Operations (22/040)
Mr Alan Sutherland, Director of Campus Services (22/039)
Prof Paul Townsend, FHMS PVC and Executive Dean (22/040)

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

22/030 Preliminaries

- .1 Ajay Ajimobi, Judith Eden and Pam Powell sent apologies.
- .2 It was noted that Esat Alpay was teaching between 4 and 5 and so would need to leave the meeting.

22/031 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

22/032 Minutes

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 were **adopted** and agreed for publication on the website.

22/033 Matters Arising

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**.
- .2 With respect to the action to provide data to the USSU to enable them to complete the TEF submissions, it was noted that it could not currently be completed as the information was embargoed until after the NSS ended.
- .3 It was agreed that the action to share with Council the draft of the first contract for Cervus+ to provide services to another institution, could be cancelled as it was open ended and would happen in due course.

22/034 Chair's Items

- .1 Council **ratified** the Convene resolution approval for the reappointment of David Varney as Pro-Chancellor and the reappointment of Elliot Antrobus-Holder, Vib Baxi, Rachel Hubbard and Pam Powell for a further three-year term on Council.

22/035 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 It was noted that any UK Government funding for research projects with Russia would cease. However, the University only has one, inactive research link with Russia.
- .3 Thanks were recorded to all involved at the University in the fast and helpful response to the Ukraine crisis, particularly in offering support to affected staff and students.
- .4 The Government response to the Augur Review was noted. The potential change to minimum entry requirements for a university degree should not have an impact on Surrey as its entry requirements are significantly higher. However, there were concerns about the impact on certain groups of students with non-standard entry qualifications, particularly with respect to widening participation.
- .5 It was noted that, whilst there had been improvement to the research grants and contracts bidding rates, further improvement to the success rates was a focus. A significant research grant had been awarded to an academic in the Centre for Environmental Strategy.
- .6 With respect to new staff appointments, it was noted that Tim Dunne, the new Provost and Senior Vice-President, will be starting on 4 April, but will not be on campus until 21 April. Recruitment for a new Executive Dean of FASS was in progress. The Head of the Sustainability Institute role was being advertised and a search firm had been appointed.
- .7 There was discussion of the Trade Unions' letter to the VC and Chair of Council regarding Innovate Surrey. Their main concern was the impact on staff and around future plans. If it was proposed to move any operational areas into Operate Surrey Ltd all appropriate consultations will be completed.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL**22/036 Student Welfare Report and Independent Review of the Centre for Wellbeing**

- .1 Lucy Evans attended to give a presentation.
- .2 The following additional points were noted:
 - .2.1 Whilst the University's main duty was to provide education to students and there was no specific legislation for wellbeing at universities, there was an expectation of support services we are expected to provide for students, including their wellbeing. However, this was not equivalent to NHS services in terms of mental health provision. The scope of the duty increased in line with what the University promised to its students.
 - .2.2 Due to the pandemic, there was a sector wide increase in demand for mental health crisis appointments both in institutions and the NHS. Surrey had responded with increased staffing but was also reviewing the service more widely to identify potential improvements and efficiencies.
 - .2.3 It was noted that, of the c. 12% of students who are neurodiverse, some would have been diagnosed before joining the University and there would have been discussion on their needs before they arrived. It was more challenging where students had not been diagnosed. Unless neurodiverse students were also from widening participation backgrounds, the academic entry requirements would not be adjusted.
 - .2.4 The average waiting time for counselling appointments was ten days as they were for less urgent issues. Crisis appointments were scheduled the same day if on a weekday. After hours and weekends, the Security Department would direct students in crisis to the appropriate statutory service, in consultation with the wellbeing duty call-out officer as required.
 - .2.5 There were improvements to the joined-up nature of services and systems, whilst recognising that confidential matters could not be widely shared.
 - .2.6 The responsibility for academic staff to identify issues and signpost students to the right services was recognised. The University was responsible for providing staff with the right tools and providing reassurance that the services would offer students support.
- .3 Council recognised the challenges, emotional and otherwise, of supporting students' mental health and thanked all involved.
- .4 Noting that Lucy Evans was moving to the University of Edinburgh in May, Council took the opportunity to offer their sincere thanks for her great contribution and best wishes for her future career.

22/037 Education Report and 85 Plan

- .1 Osama Khan gave a presentation, covering the progression challenge and enhancement support, MySurrey Engagement, MEQ (Module Evaluation Questionnaire) checking in conversations, NSS and PTES response rates and MySurrey Voice engagement.
- .2 With respect to the NSS, it was noted that the response rate was now above that at the same time last year, which compared very favourably to the national picture of a response rate 10% below that at the same time last year.
- .3 Noting that the Surrey PTES (Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey) response in 2021 was 22.4%, there was a focus on achieving a greater participation this year.

- .4 There was discussion of the differing progression rates in different departments. It was noted that factors such as the difficulty of the subject and employment opportunities contributed, but support from the department was also a contributor. It was noted that there was a sector wide decrease in progression rates, possibly due to students being less prepared after the pandemic. Students from the University foundation programme outperformed direct entry students in terms of progression on the degree programmes. Departments are proactively working to identify and support students with issues.
- .5 With respect to MySurrey Voice, it was noted that not all staff had access and suggested that there should be review of whether all the staff who did have access needed that access.

22/038 Update on Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)

- .1 Andy Chalklin presented the report.
- .2 The potential benefits of the arrangements in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, reduced pension costs and commercialisation of the services were noted.
- .3 There was discussion of staff in services transferring to a SPV.
- .4 It was noted that new staff would be employed directly into the SPV and enable new business to be brought in. There was a need to ensure that services provided to the University were not affected by any new business and that quality was maintained.
- .5 The timing and approval routes were discussed. Council were supportive but asked to be kept involved, particularly as Council approval will be required before SPVs started to offer services to other institutions.

22/039 Student Accommodation

- .1 Alan Sutherland attended to give a presentation.
- .2 The following additional points were noted:
 - .2.1 The University provided good accommodation at a good price, particularly with respect to the shorter length of leases available. This would be emphasised more in marketing to students.
 - .2.2 It was noted that the University was c.£3m below Budget on accommodation income in the current year, mainly due to the accommodation office having worked to a forecast that differed from the central student numbers forecast. The process has been amended in the current planning round. It was recognised that forecasting accommodation demand was complex and there were risks in over promising accommodation to students.
 - .2.3 It was noted there with an increased external supply of private, and a tendency during the pandemic for more students to choose to stay at home and commute into the University, there is a potential oversupply. It would be useful to have an idea of the external supply and pricing, relative to the University's offer and assess the level of oversupply to demand.

Action: AS

- .3 It was noted that accommodation was no longer a constraint in student growth, although it was recognised that there were other constraints such as teaching facilities, study and social spaces.
- .4 Council asked to have a tour of student accommodation.

Action: RA

22/040 Medical Programme

- .1 Paul Townsend and Debbie Lawson attended to give a presentation, covering the project governance, an overview of the Graduate Entry Medicine programme and key progress against milestones.
- .2 It was noted that there was the potential for widening participation scholarships which would enable students to pay the standard £9250 home fee with philanthropic income paying the difference to the c. £42k fee. It was hoped that 10-20% of students would be from widening participation backgrounds, but there remain some Office for Student concerns that we believe are resolvable but need further work to bring to a conclusion. The longer-term vision was for the Medical Programme to gain publicly funded places. It would still remain a small programme.
- .3 The learnings from the Vet School project had been reviewed and were informing the Medical Programme project. There was the potential to share some of the pre-clinical training with the Vet School and Nursing programmes.
- .4 The Treasurer asked for the financial audit report to be shared.
Action: PT
- .5 Council **supported** the Medical Programme project.

22/041 Financial Forecast

- .1 Phil Grainge gave a presentation.
- .2 It was noted that, 7 months into the year, the University was c. £6.8m favourable to budget, largely due to an underspend against the staff costs budget, primarily within Faculties. The Q2 full-year forecast showed a material improvement in the projected deficit, with the level of centrally applied overlay increasing to anticipate continued underspend on staff and non-staff costs in the remaining 5 months of the year. Staff underspend was a function of turnover being higher than anticipated and challenges recruiting, with the impact of the delayed recruitment including opportunity cost, for example with respect to developing large research bids.
- .3 The capital expenditure projection remained within the three-year envelope with phasing showing an increase in the 2021/22 expenditure. It was recognised that the phasing was likely to be further adjusted with some slippage into later years. The Estates element of the capex budget may also need to be topped up in year three of the plan.
- .4 A net cash outflow exceeding Budget was still forecast but had improved by £9.5m versus the previous forecast, driven by I&E underspends. Despite the cash outflow, the year-end cash balance projection remained c.£10m ahead of the Budget, due to the start of year position being higher than anticipated when the budget had been set (see September 2021 Council minutes). The majority of the cash upside from 2021/22 was to be added to the VC's strategic opportunities fund.

22/042 Chair of Council recruitment update

- .1 Ros Allen presented the paper.

.2 It was noted that it was hoped to hold the informal interviews on 10 June and the formal interviews on 20 June.

.3 The Office for Students needed to be informed when a new Chair of Council took over but did not need to give approval nor meet the new chair.

22/043 Student Experience Committee report

.1 Vib Baxi presented the report, drawing to Council's attention the key elements of discussion at the Committee.

.2 It was noted that some department and schools had their own feedback mechanisms, which may be why they were not engaging with My Surrey Voice.

22/044 Policy Framework

.1 Council noted the report.

22/045 Scheme of Delegation

.1 Sarah Litchfield presented the report.

.2 It was suggested that setting up a subsidiary should in future be required to have committee approval.

Action: RA and SL

.3 Council **approved** the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

22/046 Council Effectiveness Review 2022

.1 Sarah Litchfield presented the report.

.2 Noting that the review would take place in September, anyone interested in joining the working group was asked to contact RA.

22/047 OfS Reportable Events

.1 Sarah Litchfield presented the report.

.2 Council **approved** the updated table.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

22/048 Council Code of Conduct short form

Council **noted** the report.

22/049 Compliance with the CUC Code of Good Governance

Council **noted** the report.

22/050 Health and Safety report

Council **noted** the report.

D CLOSING ITEMS

22/051 Any Other Business

- .1 Noting that it was Mike Goodfellow's last meeting, Council took the opportunity to express its sincere thanks and appreciation for his contribution to the University.
- .2 Noting that it was Osama Khan's last meeting, as Tim Dunne would be joining Council, the Board took the opportunity to register its sincere thanks to him for his contribution to Council and the wider University.
- .3 It was agreed to add an update on China to the agenda of a future Council meeting.
Action: RA

22/052 Date of next meeting
26 May 2022

Mr Michael Queen, Chair