Council

23/86 A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 10.00 am in Room 201, Carrington Building, Whiteknights.

Present: The President (in the Chair)
The Vice Presidents (Mr K. Corrigan and Mrs K. Owen)
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Dr C. Baylon)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor E. McCrum)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D. Zaum)

Mr S. Alexander
Mr S. Ali
Professor E. Beleska-Spasova
Mrs S. Butler
Professor R. Frazier
Professor J. Gibbins
Mr E. Gregory
Mr J. Jack
Mr P. Milhofer
Mrs S. Plank
Mr N. Richards
Dr C. Shaw
Professor K. Strohfeldt
Dr J. Young

In attendance:
The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary
The Director of Finance
The Director of Quality Support and Development
The Director of Research Services (for Minute 23/89 only).

Apologies had been received from Mr A. McCallum, Ms S. Maple and Ms S. Jordan.

23/87 President's opening remarks

The President thanked members for the discussion the previous evening, which would inform the further development of the University Strategy.

23/88 Disclosure of Interests (Item 2)

The Committee received and noted a paper from the University Secretary in regard to Disclosure of Interests.

Items for presentation and discussion

23/89 Quality in Research: presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Research Services (Item 3)

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The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Research Services (Dr A.-M. van Dodeweerd) gave a presentation on Quality in Research.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr van Dodeweerd outlined the scope of quality assurance in research, the roles and responsibilities of post-holders, and the role of the Committee for Open Research and Research Integrity (CORRI). They explained that the University's commitment to open research supported the assurance of the integrity of research. Research was governed by the University's Code of Good Practice in Research and by the national Concordat to Support Research Integrity (CSRI). While the CSRI did not have legal status, UKRI's processes effectively promoted compliance. In a recent self-assessment exercise, the University evidenced its strong performance against CSRI requirements. The University had improved its research integrity training over the past few years, and would next focus on issues relating to the misinterpretation of data, which was a common concern across the sector.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr van Dodeweerd noted that a Concordat for Environmental Sustainability in Research and Innovation would shortly be published, which addressed the sustainability of infrastructure, procurement, and travel, and set out expectations in relation *inter alia* to leadership, system change and reporting.

They also explained that funding bodies had a range of standard and specific requirements in relation to governance and quality, including provisions around legal compliance, institutional policies, and procedures for due diligence and safeguarding. In respect of 'trusted research' (research in sensitive areas with security dimensions), there were additional requirements around cybersecurity, export control and enhanced due diligence. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr van Dodeweerd explained UKRI's regime of reporting, review visits, and dipstick testing.

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The President noted that these assurance processes provided the basis for the annual statements signed off by Council.

In response to questions, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained the process by which potential breaches of research integrity were investigated, and advised that, where an issue was identified, possible actions included a warning, the termination of employment, and retraction of the artiie[rd

from UEB informed by the RUMAL Board, would be submitted to the Council at its March meeting.

23/91 Freedom of speech (Item 5)

The Council received the Annual Report on Freedom of Speech, together with a report from the Student Experience Committee on its discussion of freedom of speech.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that freedom of speech was a right both in UK common law and international law, while academic freedom was an employment right specific to academic staff, by which, in undertaking their academic activities, they could express any views within the law without placing at risk their employment or any of its benefits. The University's Royal Charter (paragraph 6.2) effectively extended the right of academic freedom to all categories of staff.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University, under his leadership, had been active in protecting and promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom. Last year, in the context of a controversy surrounding a research seminar on gender-critical and transgender issues, he had written a blog defending academic freedom and explaining why it was right that academics should be free to explore ideas which may make some people uncomfortable. He also referred to an incident where one of the Students' Union societies had issued and then withdrawn an invitation to an MP; the University had apologised to the MP and the society had reinstated the invitation for a more appropriate time. The Vice-Chancellor reported that, in the context of the current conflict between Israel and Palestinians, he and the RSU President had brought together students from both sides to discuss the conflict and had emphasised that the University and RSU were there to support all students, whatever their circumstances and whatever their views. The University sought to be an environment in which complex, sensitive and controversial issues could be discussed openly and respectfully.

The Vice-

In response to questions, the Vice-Chancellor expanded on the principle of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law and their relationship to the Prevent duty. He also noted that, in applying its external speaker policy, the University had not excluded any speaker from the campus and had managed protests effectively. He also reported that students generally welcomed debate and wanted to be exposed to a range of different views. The University had to be vigilant that its recruitment processes promoted a plurality of intellectual positions among its staff.

The President, on behalf of Council, thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his active stance on academic freedom and freedom of speech, and for his clarity of thought, commitment and courage in upholding these principles.

Resolved:

"That the Annual Report on Freedom of Speech, now submitted, be received."

Items for approval

23/92 Report of the Student Experience Committee (Item 6)

The Council received the Report of a meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 2 November 2023, together with the University's Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment.

Mrs Owen, on behalf of the Committee, commended to Council the Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment. The Committee believed that the Report was thorough and set out an appropriate plan of action. In response to a question, the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary confirmed that a high proportion of reported cases had resulted in no action due to lack of evidence, and indicated that, since this was the first time these data had been reported, it was difficult to judge whether this rate was normal, although colleagues in student services had advised that this was the sort of rate to be expected.

Resolved:

1. "That the Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment, now submitted, be approved;

2. That the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee, held on 2 November 2023, now submitted, be received."

23/93 School of Humanities (Item 7)

The Council received a paper on a restructuring proposal in respect of the School of Humanities.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) (Professor Zaum) explained the background to the proposed closure of the School of Humanities and the incorporation of its constituent departments into other

planning, particularly in relation to approval of accommodation contracts and the operations of the University's subsidiaries. Progress had been made in

sat with Council itself. The Council would work on governance matters through its committees and working groups or through involvement of individual lay members, as appropriate.

Mrs Owen reported that the Committee had reviewed the remuneration of the Vice-Chancellor and members of the University Executive Board (as detailed in the University's Annual Report). She reminded Council that the Vice-Chancellor, on his appointment, had requested a salary below the market rate and had since regularly declined increases in his salary. The Committee had prevailed on him last year to accept a salary increase in line with the increases for other staff. The Committee was mindful that the Vice-Chancellor's remuneration was anomalous in comparison with similar institutions and that remuneration below the market rate incurred some reputational risk for the University and might have implications for the eventual recruitment of a successor. The Committee welcomed the Vice-Chancellor's acceptance of a pay rise and reaffirmed the importance of the note on the Vice-Chancellor's principled stance in the Annual Report.

Resolved:

1. "That:

   (a) The Appointments and Governance Committee be renamed the Appointments Committee;

   (b) The Remuneration Committee be renamed the People and Remuneration Committee;

   (c) The membership of both Committees, subject to (d) below, be:

      A Vice-President of Council (Chair) (Kate Owen)
      Another Vice-President of Council (Kevin Corrigan)
      Two other lay members of Council (Sian Butler and Sue Maple)
      An elected member of Council (John Jack);

   (d) The Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor be members of the Appointments Committee, but in attendance at the People and Remuneration Committee;

   (e) The President and the Director of HR be in attendance at both Committees;

   (f) The draft terms of reference of the Appointments Committee and of the People and Remuneration Committee, now submitted, be approved;

   (g) The People and Remuneration Committee be quorate if at least three members are present;

2. That the Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee, held on 13 October 2023, now submitted, be received."

Members of the University Executive Board and the Dean of Henley Business School returned to the meeting.

23/96 Report of the Appointments and Governance Committee (Item 10)

Mr Alexander, Mr Jack, Professor Zaum and the Director of Finance recused themselves from the discussion of this item and withdrew from the meeting.

The Council received a Report of the Appointments and Governance Committee.

The President reported that:

- Following a competitive internal recruitment exercise, it had been(it)-4 themsoruieetitAa

Mr Alexander, Mr Jack, Professor Zaum and the Director of Finance returned to the meeting.

Items for report

23/97 Report of the Vice-Ch9-0.0535 0 To1w 8.9 (n8.9BT/35 0 Td[(C)/35). (o tc 0 Tw 2.5 0 Td( )Tj0

Resolved:

"That the Annual Report on Health and Safety, now submitted, be received."

23/101 Suggested items for future Council meetings (Item 15)

The Council received an update on topics for discussion at future Council meetings. The President invited members to contact her or the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary if they wished to suggest further topics.

Resolved:

"That a paper on suggested topics for discussion by Council, now submitted, be received."

Items for note

23/102 Minutes (23/64-23/85) of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 (Item 16)

Minutes (23/64-23/85) of the meeting of the Council held on 28 September 2023 were confirmed.

23/103 Matter arising on Minutes of meeting on 3 July 2023 (Item 17)

Minute 23/55: Report of the Audit Committee—Corporate Risk Register and Annual Risk Management Report

The Corporate Risk Register and Annual Risk Management Report had been received at the Council meeting on 3 July 2023, but subsequently, on the advice of Internal Audit, it had been decided that Council be asked also to approve the documents.

Resolved:

"That the Corporate Risk Register and the Annual Risk Management Report, received by Council on 3 July 2023, be approved."

23/104 Decisions taken by the President on behalf of the Council (Item 18)

The Council noted that the President had approved the notification to the Office for Students of a reportable event. The notification related to a partner organisation which might no longer be able to support delivery of a University programme, and the consequent arrangements for supporting students to complete their studies.

23/105 Availability of Council papers (Item 19)

The Council received a note on the availability of Council papers.