



University Council

Paper no: 2024-04-25-03a

Paper title: Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 November 2023 held by video conference

Present:

Ferguson, Iain (Chair)	Hubble, Jane
Atkinson, Helen	Hynes, Alice
Carter, Caroline	Imafidon, Ehizuelen
Chen Davison, Lesley	Price, Jo
Day, Colin	Rowlands, Simon
Greening, Connie	Saggu, Jaz
Hill, James (<i>by Teams</i>)	Stokes, Claire
Hart, Ian	Watkins, Peter
Holford, Karen	Zeidler, Phil

Apologies: None

Attending:

Aspinall, Philip, Chief Operating Officer
Douglas, Gregor, University Secretary
Pollard, Simon, Chair of CU H&S Committee (*for item 4*)
Sibbald, Ian, Director of Finance (*for item 7*)
Terry, Leon, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation (*for item 5(a)*)
Tyrrrel, Sean, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education (*for item 5(a)*)

1. Introduction

The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

2. Disclosure of interest

Claire Stokes would recuse herself from decision at item 5.1(c).

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-03 being the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2023.

Resolved: Council approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 October 2023.

4. Health and Safety update

Simon Pollard joined for this item

Received: Oral update from the Chair of the Health and Safety Committee

Noted: The Chair of the Health and Safety Committee reported that:
(a) the Health and Safety Director had negotiated a drawdown contract with Otto Simon Ltd, the consultants that had been commissioned to undertake and advise on hydrogen activities. This would enable Cranfield to seek advice on a project-by-project basis as required.

- (b) Internal inspections continued to take place across the campus;
- (c) Laser and radiation audits would be conducted by an external adviser (Harwell)
- (d) Slips, trips and falls campaigns had been launched across all university channels in an attempt to raise awareness and reduce the number of incidents.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of the Health and Safety Committee.
Simon withdrew from the meeting

5. Reports from Council Committees:

5.1 Audit Committee

(a) Academic Assurance and Skills Report

Professor Sean Tyrrel and Professor Leon Terry joined for this item.

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-05a being the Academic Assurance and Skills Report

- Noted:
- i The Chair of Audit Committee introduced this item confirming that Audit Committee had engaged in detailed discussion of the report at its last meeting. The report was well presented and included valuable reflection and data providing academic assurance.
 - ii. The report contained detail on the range of projects completed and those ongoing from last year, and on priorities for the coming year. Academic risks had been identified explicitly at Audit Committee's request.
 - iii. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation highlighted research initiatives launched during the reporting period, including the Early Career Researchers Network to support researchers in development activities throughout their career. All initiatives were aligned to the five priority areas of the Research and Innovation strategy.
 - iv. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education focused on Cranfield's apprenticeships offering. Council had previously contributed to the Ofsted initial monitoring review in 2022 and the University was anticipating the full inspection visit by April or earlier. Many initiatives aligned to the quality improvement plan had been undertaken and there was ongoing focus on apprenticeship culture across the University. Senate's Effectiveness Review recommendations aimed to support this engagement.
 - v. Active engagement with generative AI and Chat GPT was ongoing, including emerging guidance.
 - vi. On mental health, post-lockdown student demand had switched from online counselling to face-to-face support. Cranfield's approach to marketing to disabled students, reviewing exceptional circumstances and making reasonable adjustments was noted.

- vii. The results of the taught and research student satisfaction surveys (PTES/PRES) provided valuable feedback. Cranfield had improved in six out of nine categories. However, PTES results across the sector excluding the Russell Group had increased substantially this year; Cranfield was engaging with Advance HE to understand the data. The PRES results were favourable, with the biggest challenge being research culture. Part-time students, both taught and research, were of greatest concern.
- viii. In response to a question on survey response rates, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education advised that Cranfield response rates were 66% for full time students (3 times higher than the national average); and 25% for part-time students.

Resolved: Council approved the Annual Academic and Skills Report for publication and invited reflection on the presentation of data including trends over time for inclusion in next year's report.

Sean and Leon withdrew from the meeting

(b) Audit Committee Annual Report to Council

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-05b being the annual report from Audit Committee to Council

Noted: It was reported that Audit Committee had:

- i. encouraged the development and implementation of a rigorous and thorough internal audit process;
- ii. invited University Executive to reflect on matters arising from the internal audit function and management actions in relation to systems and processes; and
- iii. encouraged the application of the refreshed risk management process to support delivery and strengthen organisational resilience and focus on key strategy projects, including MK:U and the airport redevelopment.

Resolved: Council approved Audit Committee's Annual Report and thanked the Committee members for their contributions.

(c) Appointment of External Auditors

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-05c setting out a proposal to extend the appointment of PwC as the University's external auditors.

Noted: Having reflected on discussions at Audit Committee and Council earlier in the year, the Chair of Audit Committee presented a recommendation to extend PwC's appointment as external auditors with effect from 1 April 2024 for a term to be agreed. In discussion, Council indicated that its preferred outcome would be a three-year appointment, subject to negotiation with PwC.

Resolved: Council agreed to the extension of the appointment of PwC as Cranfield's External Auditors for up to three years with effect from 1 April 2024. The terms and conditions of appointment, including fees, would be agreed with Audit Committee.

5.2 Finance Committee

(a) Management Accounts to 31 July 2023

Ian Sibbald joined for this item

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-05d being the management accounts to 31 July 2023

Noted: The Director of Finance presented the management accounts, summarising that:

- i. income for the year was £25.3 million above last year (12.8% increase) and £7.6 million above budget reflecting the continued improvements in trading with a full return to pre-covid levels.
- ii. the operating surplus for the year was £2.7 million.
- iii. cash had decreased by £14.0 million during the year. It was £1.17 million lower than the quarter three forecast as at 31 July 2023.

Resolved: Council thanked the Director of Finance for his report.

(b) Financial Statements to 31 July 2023

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-05d being the financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2023.

Noted: The Chair of Finance Committee introduced this item. It was noted that the Joint Finance and Audit Committee had received the financial statements at its meeting on 8 November 2023. Amendments had been made to this final version for signature.

Resolved: University Executive approved the University's Financial Statements to 31 July 2023 for signature and filing with Companies House.

(c) Oral update on 2023/24 to date

Received: Oral update from the Director of Finance

Noted: The Director of Finance summarised the position to date. It was noted that the Q1 budget round had just been concluded and based on the revised budget the first quarter operating position showed a £1.8m deficit. This compared with the £2.3m budgeted deficit. The operating surplus for the full year was forecast to now be £4.5m compared to the £4.4m operating surplus budgeted. Cash at 31 July 2024 was forecast to be £5.5m compared to the £4.4m budgeted.

Resolved: Council thanked the Director of Finance for his oral report.

Ian withdrew from the meeting

5.3 Remuneration Committee

Received: Oral update from the Chair of Remuneration Committee on matters relating to remuneration committee, and people and culture more generally

Noted: The Chair of the Remuneration Committee reported that during her period in office the Committee had focused on drivers to inspire staff to perform rather than requiring fundamental change to the reward structure. The Remuneration Committee had met to review the salaries and rewards of members of the University Executive and other senior members of staff.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair and members of Remuneration Committee for their contributions.

5.4 Nominations Committee

Received: Oral update from the Chair of Nominations Committee

Noted: The Chair of Nominations Committee advised Council that the Nominations Committee would meet in the first week of December to consider vacancies arising on Council and Committees in 2024 and 2025. It would determine the expertise it would be seeking in the next recruitment round.

6. Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor's Report (CEVC)

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-06 setting out Cranfield and sector related news

Noted: The CEVC took the paper as read, but highlighted the following:

- i. *Engineering Icon*: Professor Dame Helen Atkinson DBE FREng had been named as an Engineering Icon on a special Tube Map to mark National Engineering Day (1 November);
- ii. **EMBARGOED: RPIF Bid**: Research England had informed Cranfield that the £69M bid to build a world-class hydrogen aviation ecosystem at Cranfield's Global Research Airport had been recommended for approval, subject to a short period of due diligence;
- iii. *Civitas study*: In November 2023 Civitas published their latest study which further examined UK university activities funded by Chinese entities. Cranfield's published response via the media made it clear that all its projects had ended and were all civil in nature. Cranfield's security partners were not concerned about the latest Civitas study which did not raise new issues. At the recent joint University Executive and Council workshop, the security partners had highlighted government regulations and policies which were complex and challenging to navigate. Council discussion noted that government thinking was still evolving. Of greater concern was the resourcing required to undertake all the necessary additional steps when working internationally and handling legacy issues. Audit Committee would have an opportunity to speak with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor International at its next meeting.

- iv. Council discussed financial challenges and the CEVC reported that, from her position as a member of UUK's Financial Sustainability Group, it was clear that this was a UK sector wide issue. Wherever possible there were co-ordinated representations to government, recognising higher priority calls on ministerial time. Audit Committee would receive a briefing from the Director of Finance in December 2023.

Resolved: Council thanked the CEVC for her report.

7. Report from University Executive

Received: Paper 2023-11-27-07 being a report on items addressed by University Executive during the reporting period.

Noted: (a) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report
Rebecca Jarrett and Naomi Benjamin joined for this item.
Received: Appendix A being the Annual report on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Noted:
- i. The CEVC introduced the EDI report which demonstrated Cranfield's journey of continuous improvement. The report included a range of data compiled in line with statutory reporting requirements, and included a set of four new strategic ambitions.
 - ii. Council engaged in discussion of a range of matters which included the merits of establishing a People Committee and interest in future visibility of data from the LGBTQ+ community.

Resolved: Council approved the EDI Annual Report for publication
Rebecca and Naomi withdrew from the meeting

(b) Prevent and Safeguarding Annual Report
Fran Radcliffe and Jo Catterill joined for this item
Received: Appendix B being the Annual Prevent and Safeguarding Report.

- Noted:
- i. The University Secretary reported that the OfS required the University to submit a Prevent annual accountability declaration and data return. The OfS had no queries about the 2021-2022 submission and no areas had been identified as requiring further action.
 - ii. The Prevent report set out the detail on Cranfield's mechanisms for governance; the risk register had been updated to reflect the 5x5 template used elsewhere; broadly self-assessment of risk was low-medium, as confirmed by our external professional advisors.

iii. There had been three Prevent cases referred to the Prevent Lead during 2022/2023, resulting in one Prevent referral. The Police had confirmed that that case was not a counter terrorism risk and was no longer a subject of concern. All three cases had now been closed. Cranfield had low numbers compared to the education sector in the region.

iv. On safeguarding, 54 students had been identified as potentially at risk during the reporting period. No safeguarding referrals were made to the local authority, however partnership working with NHS mental health teams had increased.

v. The student death in April 2023 was found by the coroner's inquest to have been suicide. A formal case review was underway, informed by UUK guidelines on postvention.

Resolved: Council approved the Prevent and Safeguarding report for submission to the OfS.

Fran and Jo withdrew from the meeting.

(c) Energy and Environment Report (EEC)

Gareth Ellis joined for this item.

Received: Appendix C being the Annual report from EEC; and Annex A setting out the recently adopted Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Noted: i. The Deputy Chair of EEC introduced discussion by thanking the Energy and Environment team for their continued contribution to the University. The report set out Cranfield's progress against our environmental targets.

ii. The Energy and Environment Manager presented the report noting that it now included a RAG rating against the KPIs. It was noted that there had been steady improvements in some areas, but the reduction in carbon emissions had fallen slightly behind. It was anticipated that this would turn around following implementation of several projects to de-gas the campus.

iii. Council considered what actions could be taken to make a significant difference. The Energy and Environment Manager commented that Cranfield's decarbonisation projects would continue, as would electricity generation, and there were proposals to connect directly to a planned local electricity farm.

iv. Acknowledging the water metering issues and the identification of leaks, Council encouraged

Cranfield to focus on campaigns around reduction in water consumption and food waste, both of which were high profile issues.

- v. It was reported that following completion of a number of initiatives, data on the airport would be available in time for inclusion in the next annual report. It was noted that Marshall would be supplied via a different grid, and their carbon footprint would be reported separately.
- vi. Council endorsed the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy recently approved by University Executive. It was noted that this strategy was an important element of Sustainability Development Goal 13.

Resolved: Council thanked the Energy and Environment Committee for their report.

Gareth withdrew from the meeting.

8. Any Other Business

- 10.1 There were four papers included for information: Secretary's Report; Approved minutes of Council committees; List of members; and Schedule of future meetings. There were no comments raised on these papers, nor any further items of business raised.
- 10.2 A Teams briefing would be held on 15 February 2024; the next face-to-face meetings would be in April where Council started with strategy discussions, followed by the standard business meeting. The Chair thanked members for their contributions to Council and committees during the calendar year.

Julie Morris
Governance Officer
December 2023