



## University Council

**Paper no:** 2021-10-20-03

**Paper title:** Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 October 2021 at 08.30-12.30 in Lecture Room 16, Cranfield Management Development Centre

**Present:**

Ferguson, Iain (Chair)	Hynes, Alice
Atkinson, Helen	Wainwright, James
Carter, Caroline	Mayhew, Maxine
Chen Davison, Lesley	Rowlands, Simon
Day, Colin	Saggu, Jaz
Fairweather, Paul	Sparks, Emma
Hart, Ian	Stokes, Claire <i>(by video conference)</i>
Hill, James	Thompson, Chris
Holford, Karen	Watkins, Peter

**Attending:** Aspinall, Philip, Chief Operating Officer  
Douglas, Gregor, University Secretary  
Pollard, Simon, PVC International and Recruitment *(for item 4)*

### 1. Introduction

The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council welcomed members and attendees to the meeting. Particular welcome was extended to Karen Holford, Chief Executive & Vice-Chancellor (CE&VC) who had taken up her new role with effect from 1 August 2021.

### 2. Disclosure of interest

There were no disclosures recorded.

### 3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

**Received:** Paper 2021-10-20-03 setting out the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021.

**Resolved:** The minutes were approved.

#### Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Health & Safety update

*Professor Simon Pollard joined the meeting*

#### 4.1 Quarterly Health & Safety Report

**Received:** Paper 2021-10-20-04a being the quarterly report to Council from the Cranfield Health & Safety Committee (CH&SC) covering the period 1-31 August 2021.

**Noted:** The Council Lead on Health & Safety reported that overall it was pleasing to see that health and safety management and

governance was being taken to the next level. The Chair of CH&SC presented the quarterly report and invited discussion. The following points were noted:

- (a) There had been two incidents requiring investigation, the first involving the 737 aircraft which had been gifted to the University; and the second a fire in Stringfellow Hall of residence. Both investigation reports had raised useful recommendations which had since been addressed.
- (b) The ISO 45001 audit had been passed, observing that the University's risk assessments should transfer from a routine to bespoke process.
- (c) There would be continued efforts to enhance health & safety culture and behaviours.

#### 4.2 Annual Health & Safety Report

Received: Paper 2021-10-20-04b being the annual report to Council from the CH&SC covering academic year 2020/2021.

Noted: Taking the report as read, the Chair of CH&SC responded to comments and questions relating to:

- *Hydrogen projects*: the University had a growing portfolio of projects related to use and production of hydrogen. Current levels of activity remained below the threshold requiring registration under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015. A third party company would provide training to staff and students on the safe use of hydrogen, and training to support researchers and technical staff in the development of risk assessments and risk management actions;
- *Occupational Health Referrals*: recognising there had been an increase in referrals to occupational health for musculoskeletal issues, Council suggested that the University might wish to monitor the impact of the hybrid working pilot;
- *Safety tours and visits*: due to Covid-19 lockdown there had been minimal activity by way of visibility tours and health and safety related inspections. Visits and inspections had now resumed alongside an enhanced reporting structure.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of CH&HC for the annual report commenting that the University should be proud of its continuing and positive response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

*Professor Simon Pollard withdrew from the meeting.*

#### 5. **Chief Executive & Vice-Chancellor's Report**

Received: Paper 2021-10-20-05 setting out the Chief Executive's report from July to September 2021.

Noted: The Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor introduced her report highlighting that:

- 5.1 the Arc Universities Group (AUG) wholeheartedly supported the Government's creation of a Spatial Framework for the Arc as a means to deliver sustainable growth for the region. AUG supported the consultative approach that was being adopted for this long-term project of global significance, which placed environmental sustainability issues to the fore.
- 5.2 the MK:U pilot apprenticeship programmes at Bouverie House, Milton Keynes were up and running with circa 40 apprentices in attendance.
- 5.3 With the approval of the Pro-Chancellor, the CE&VC had appointed the Director of Human Resources to membership of the University Executive.
- 5.4 In September 2021, Marshall Aerospace & Defence Group had confirmed that they would be going exclusive with Cranfield Air Park and that RAF Wyton was no longer an option. At its meeting on 19 October, Finance Committee considered potential risks to the overall project. The CE&VC confirmed that engagement with the MADG Board and Marshall family remained positive.

## 6. Report from University Executive

Received: Paper 2021-10-20-06 being the quarterly report from University Executive.

Noted: Taking the report as read, the CE&VC and members of the University Executive responded to comments and questions relating to:

- *Tuition Fees*: taught and research fees were set one year ahead, ie. fees for the current academic year, 2021/2022, had been approved in July 2020 and fees for next academic year, 2022/2023, had been approved in July 2021. Each year, detailed market benchmarking was undertaken to ensure that the University did not fall behind the sector and to align course fees with major competitors. The market review this year had been broadened to include more competitors, including Russell Group universities. In discussion, Council encouraged the University to undertake a broader benchmarking exercise, particularly to reflect further on the UK market and changing student demographics
- *Academic Technology Approval Scheme*: it was reported that ATAS was a scheme whereby international applicants for sensitive courses identified as being relevant to the development of technology with a potential military application required Foreign Office approval. This was supplementary to the University's UKVI Sponsor Licence. Retention of the UKVI licence was conditional on compliance to UKVI regulation and a number of metrics, including number of visas refused; Cranfield as well within the tolerance levels.

Resolved: Council thanked University Executive for their report.

**7. Council Statement on Freedom of Speech**

Received: Paper 2021-10-20-07 setting out proposed amendments to the Council Statement on Freedom of Speech.

- Noted:
- (a) University Executive had recommended amendments to the Council Statement of Freedom of Speech to provide for online meetings; and to establish more clearly the University's position on freedom of speech generally.
  - (b) In discussion, Council welcomed the clear statement of principles as appropriate for the University. It was noted that a Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill was making its way through parliament.
  - (c) There was a wide-ranging discussion about the Statement's relationship to provision around academic freedom, which was provided for in the Charter. While accepting that the statement was broadly in line with sector norms, Council encouraged a fuller review of content for next year's update to include further reflection on sector benchmarks, including HEPI guidance, and on the appropriate balance of detailed procedures cited and explained.

Resolved: Noting that a fuller review would be conducted in 2022, Council approved the amendments to the Statement on Freedom of Speech for publication. **Action: GD**

**8. Student registrations and budget update**

Received: Oral report on student recruitment and revised budget

- Noted:
- (a) The Chair of Council reported that a revised budget was being worked up and would be presented to the University's auditors and Council members in November. Council discussed the financial impact of the USS pension situation and the potential for strike action; and whether KPIs would be adjusted. Recognising that the KPIs had been set in June 2021 the CE&VC commented that there were no immediate plans to update targets. However, Council could expect future targets to be developed alongside the new Corporate Plan.
  - (b) Student registration week had gone well and, as at 20 October the number of registered students was: 1945 taught; and 231 research. This reflected the tremendous effort made during the year by University staff to convert applications to offers.
  - (c) The overriding positive message was that the budget for 2021/2022 was better than forecast.

**9. Briefing: Apprenticeships**

*Sean Tyrrel and Melvyn Peters joined for this item*

Received: Briefing on Cranfield University's Apprenticeship provision

- Noted:
- (a) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Director of Education SoM gave a presentation to Council. The following points were noted:

- all training provision was aligned to practitioner standards combining on- and off-the-job training;
- development of apprenticeships is overseen by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE);
- apprenticeships were available across a range of levels including level 6 & 7 (Bachelor's or Master's level equivalent) and could include a degree;
- Ofsted inspected the quality of apprenticeship training; Cranfield was anticipating an inspection, the date of which would be given at short notice;
- 1,490 apprentices had received training during 2020-2021; an increase of 19% on the previous year;
- apprentices had been registered on 15 master's level courses (level 7), aligned to 8 professional standards.

(b) The majority of Cranfield level 7 apprentices were in the School of Management on the Senior Leader standard. The Director of Education from the School of Management summarised development of the School's apprenticeship portfolio. There was a wide-ranging discussion of the University's apprenticeship strategy, the risks associated with its provision and their mitigation, and the strengths and weaknesses as reflected in the University's self-assessment, and plans for enhancements.

Received: Council thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and the Director of Education SoM for their presentation.

*Sean Tyrrel and Melvyn Peters withdrew from the meeting.*

## 10. Report from Council Sub-Committees

### 10.1 Finance Committee

#### Management Accounts

Received: Oral report from the Chair of Finance Committee

Noted: Finance Committee had met on 19 October to consider:

- the management accounts for year ending 31 July 2021: the headlines were that the operating surplus was £1.5M better than forecast; the cash balance was £5M lower than forecast due to repayment of the HSBC loan and costs associated with the residential accommodation being 3 months ahead of schedule.
- the ongoing USS pension situation: although the USS Trustee Board had agreed to take forward the Joint Negotiating Committee recommendations, the Unions remained dissatisfied and were planning on balloting members within the next few weeks. Finance Committee planned to discuss pensions in broader terms in Spring 2022 and would report to Council.
- CAeSL: the company was consistently delivering reliable monthly management information. The company accounts had not been signed but this had not led to a delay in completing the Cranfield University Group accounts. The company was making progress in terms of attracting investment for Project Fresson.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of Finance Committee.

#### 10.2 **Audit Committee**

Received: Oral report from the Chair of Audit Committee.

Noted: Audit Committee had met on 19 October to consider assurance reporting including:

- the Annual Academic Report from Senate: the comprehensive report had highlighted the challenges of Covid-19. The report had endorsed for submission to Council in November.
- the National Security Standing Group report: this was the first report on a whole range of matters relating to: security; export control; cyber; students/staff; and the political landscape. The University's key priorities were in training and dissemination of security information. Audit Committee requested a follow-up report next year.
- Risk and Resilience – following the workshop in March 2021, a new framework was being worked up. The Head of Internal Audit, Chair of Audit Committee and the Corporate Planning Director would ensure that the new Corporate Plan and Risk and Resilience Framework were aligned.
- Audit Committee's Annual report to Council: this would be presented to Council in November.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of Audit Committee

#### 10.3 **Joint Finance and Audit Committee (JFAC)**

Received: Oral report from the Chair of JFAC

Noted: JFAC had met on 19 October to receive the External Auditors Audit Report for the year end 31 July 2021 and the draft statutory accounts for the year end 31 July 2021.

Noted: On behalf of both Finance Committee and Audit Committee, the Chair of Finance Committee reported that the annual audit had run very smoothly, with the external auditors reporting that there were no areas of concern. The statutory accounts would be presented to Council in November. JFAC thanked the External Auditors and the University Director of Finance and colleagues for their contributions.

Resolved: Council thanked the Director of Finance.

#### 10.4 **Remuneration Committee**

Received: Oral report from the Chair of Remuneration Committee

Noted: Remuneration Committee had met in July to review the initial drafts of Executive PDRs and more recently to sign off individual targets. The periodic reviews of reward and recruitment processes had been put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic but it was now time to revisit this. Remuneration Committee had been pleased to hear that the Director of Human Resources was now a member of University Executive.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of Remuneration Committee

**11. Update from the MK:U Board**

Received: Oral report from the Chair of the MK:U Board

Noted: MK:U, based in Bouverie House, had officially opened its doors in October 2021 and had welcomed apprentices from Santander and BAE Systems. The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was scheduled for 27 October; whatever the outcome Milton Keynes Council remained entirely supportive of MK:U and the Council and the MK:U Board were committed to the project continuing.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of the MK:U Board.

**10. Any other business**

10.1 Council members were invited to note the date of future meetings, in particular the opportunity to visit the School of Water, Energy and Environment ahead of the next meeting of Council on 25 November.

10.2 The Chair of the Cranfield Disability Network (CDN) shared a distressing experience in which he had encountered accessibility issues during a visit to one of the University's recently refurbished facilities based at Cranfield. The CE&VC and COO thanked the Chair of CDN for speaking out and apologised on behalf of the University. The CE&VC provided assurance that equality, diversity, and inclusion was a high priority for her. The University was invited to reflect on this experience with respect to the estate and with management of access during visits. Council members wishing to join the CDN were invited to express an interest.

Julie Morris  
Governance Officer  
November 2021