



**The 274th meeting of Council was held on Friday 22 March 2024
from 9am to 1pm in the Terrace Room, Bramber House**

MINUTES

Attendees: Rosemary Martin, Tony Bullman, Sasha Roseneil, Michael Luck, Aleema Shivji, David Curley, Steve Caddick, Richard Zaltzman, Miriam Zukas, Katie Ghose, Jane Parsons, Mark Devlin, Charlotte Skeet, Sara Crangle, Kristine Langhoff, Jo Moran-Ellis, and Josh Francis

In attendance: Emma Potts, Jacinda Humphry, Sally Priddle, Lisa Glandfield and Marta Appleyard

Apologies: Nick Watson, Susan Angoy, Rose Linehan, Paul O'Prey, and Gordon Finlayson

PART 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Welcomes and apologies for absence

- 1.1 Council welcomed Jacinda Humphry, new Chief Financial Officer and Emma Potts, Interim Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary.
- 1.2 Council noted apologies from Nick Watson, Rose Linehan, Paul O'Prey, Susan Angoy and Gordon Finlayson

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest to note.

3. Minutes

Resolved:

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2023 were APPROVED as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 Council noted that there were three open actions.
 - 4.1.1 The Brighton and Sussex Medical School visit would be re-scheduled to align with the arrival of the new Dean of the Medical School.
 - 4.1.2 Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Affordable Housing Policy would be brought to a future meeting.
 - 4.1.3 The Artificial Intelligence session was due to be scheduled as a joint session with Senate. Strategy development, new academic regulations and Access and Participation Plan sessions

had been prioritised this academic year. A session on Artificial Intelligence would be scheduled for next academic year.

5. Chair's Action and Report

- 5.1 Council noted that the Chair had taken two formal actions on behalf of Council:
 - 5.1.1 Accepted the resignation of the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary.
 - 5.1.2 In line with Regulation 9: Procedure for written emails, requested the approval of the appointment of the interim Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary.
- 5.2 Council received a verbal update from the Chair. It was reported that the Chair had supported the appointments of the new Chief Financial Officer and the interim Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary. The Chair had also attended a series of events with other institutions' Chairs of Council. Court, otherwise known as Sussex Annual Forum, had been formally re-instated after the pandemic and would take place on 20 June 2024.
- 5.3 Council received a summary of the feedback from the Council Effectiveness survey. It was reported that overall, members thought business was managed effectively. There was a desire to reduce paperwork, have more opportunities to discuss the bigger picture and direct engagement with the community. Overall, it was felt that Council focused on the right subjects and the new thematic agenda structure was appreciated, but members would welcome more opportunities to consider strategic matters and they felt that student matters should be brought higher up Council's agenda. There was a desire to increase awareness of Council and its role and establish more opportunities for stakeholder engagement. It was felt that sector specific finance training and training on how the University was structured would be useful. This feedback would be taken forward by the Chair of Council and the Executive.
- 5.4 It was reported that the Chair of Council was working with the Executive to reduce the quantity of paperwork, ensuring papers were clearer and more targeted towards their audience. In addition, the Chair was looking at the structure of meetings and briefings going forward to maximise engagement and secure participation from a range of stakeholders.

PART 2 – KEY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

6. Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 6.1 Council received an update from the Vice-Chancellor. It was reported that Professor Steve McGuire would be leaving the University in the summer term; an interim appointment would be made in the short term whilst recruitment for the permanent Executive Dean (Business School) was undertaken. The recruitment of Executive Dean (Media, Arts and Humanities), Executive Dean (Science, Engineering and Medicine), Executive Dean (Social Sciences) and Director of Faculty Professional and Technical Services were underway. Recruitment was also underway for the Executive Director (Communications, Engagement and Advancement), Director of Research and Enterprise, and Dean of the Brighton and Sussex Medical School.
- 6.2 Council noted that the University was 26th in the QS World University Sustainability 2024 Rankings (vs 55th in 2023), 13th in Europe and 18th in the UK. The University was 16th for its work on Equality, 19th for Environmental Impact (up from 35), 74th for Social Impact (up from 121) and 36th for Governance (new component this year).

- 6.3 In December 2023, the University was awarded Silver overall in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), having been awarded Silver in the 2017 TEF. Council noted that Silver meant that, at Sussex, the student experience and student outcomes were typically very high quality. The Executive were aiming for the University to achieve Gold in the next TEF assessment which would take place in 2027.
- 6.4 Council noted that planning permission had been secured for the library entrance to provide improved accessibility. The West Slope partnership agreement had also been finalised, enabling a groundbreaking ceremony to take place on 21 March.
- 6.5 The University of Sussex had joined the universities of East Anglia, Essex and Kent to become the fourth member of the Eastern Arc Research Consortium. At a ceremony at the Royal Society in London on 11 January 2024, the four Vice-Chancellors signed a memorandum of understanding that would support joint working in research, education, innovation, knowledge exchange, training, and equipment-sharing. The Eastern Arc had grown to be a significant regional catalyst for collaboration and cooperation, resulting in over £10m of funding for partnerships between two or more of the member institutions since 2020.
- 6.6 It was noted that Brighton and Sussex Medical School had been awarded Athena SWAN Gold (December 2023). The University had been added to the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register and was on track to offer degree apprenticeships from September 2024. The University's Social Work Provision had been re-inspected and re-approved (February 2024) and Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships were launched in February 2024.
- 6.7 Council discussed the external challenges the University and the wider sector were facing, including the government policy changes affecting international students. External analysis suggested that a 20% decrease in international student recruitment would result in 80% of higher education institutions facing financial deficits.
- 6.8 The Vice-Chancellor reported there had been strong engagement with the strategy development. To date, students were most excited about the vision and dates were planned to engage future students (16–18-year-olds).
- 6.9 Council noted that the University had had a number of brilliant achievements and there was a lot to celebrate, it was suggested that the University should celebrate and promote its achievements more.

Focus on Finance and Risk

7. Student recruitment, admissions, and next steps update

- 7.1 Council considered an update on Student recruitment, admissions, and proposed interventions.

8. Financial Monitoring Report

- 8.1 Council considered the 2023/24 Q2 forecast.

9. Institutional Risk Register

- 9.1 Council considered the updated Institutional Risk Register (IRR) and noted that the IRR was considered by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) on 8 March 2024. The Committee noted

that the content of IRR had been subject to a thorough review by the University Executive Risk Management Board.

Focus on Education and Research

10. Senate Report

- 10.1 Council considered a report from Senate which provided an update on business and assurance on maintenance of academic standards.
- 10.2 Council considered the Degree Outcome Statement 2023 and noted that this was an annual assurance report from Senate to Council on academic standards of awards and related quality of learning opportunities. It was noted that:
 - 10.2.1 In 2022 the proportion of 1st class degrees awarded declined and the proportion of 2.1 and 2.2 degrees increased.
 - 10.2.2 Home and EU students achieved higher overall outcomes than overseas students.
 - 10.2.3 White students had continued to achieve a higher proportion of 1st class or 2.1 degrees than students identifying as black and minority ethnic (BAME).
 - 10.2.4 Women received better degree outcomes than men.
 - 10.2.5 1st/2.1 outcomes for students with a disability exceed those with no known disability in every year.
 - 10.2.6 The University had assured itself that assessment criteria met sector reference points.
- 10.3 Council noted Senate's assurance on the University's ongoing compliance with the Quality and Standards B Conditions.
- 10.4 Council discussed the University's approach to research. It was reported that the introduction of Faculties would provide a significant opportunity to think strategically about research and promote collaboration especially with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School.
- 10.5 Council noted the Precautionary Action Report.

Resolved:

- 10.6 Council APPROVED the Degree Outcome Statement 2023 for publication on the University's website.

11. Student Matters

- 11.1 Council considered an update from the Chair of the Student Experience Committee. It was noted that a panel of students from across the University had attended the Committee: the panel was part of the ongoing work to consider the role of the Committee and how Council could hear a range of student voices.
- 11.2 The Committee had received an update from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) on projects and priorities that support the improvement of the student experience including the Student Information System, Curriculum Reimagined and the launch of degree apprenticeships.

- 11.3 The Committee had received an update on progress of the implementation of the current Access and Participation Plan and the development of the new plan. The new plan would focus on the University's priorities for recruiting and supporting underrepresented groups. The Committee discussed three priority student experience areas: Retention (withdrawal from the University); awareness of mental health services, and community relations on campus - particularly in times of crisis but also in relation to disagreement more generally. Feedback from students highlighted that there were concerns around the mental health of students; Sussex had a higher proportion of students reporting mental health challenges than other institutions in the sector.
- 11.4 The Committee heard about the improved relationship between the University and Students Union.
- 11.5 Council considered an update from the USSU Council representative. It was reported that the Union elections had been held with a 21% turnout which was a 6% increase on the last academic year. The Union was still struggling to recruit to volunteer positions, and it was considering strategies to engage students with the volunteer positions. It was reported that an accessibility audit of Falmer House had been commissioned. It had received 375 student advice cases and was recruiting two new part-time case workers to support the caseload. There were 181 active societies and a new 'pay it forward' scheme had been implemented at Falmer's Bar. The Union was working with local community to address the increase seen in spiking in clubs.
- 11.6 USSU was also developing its student Access and Participation Plan 2024-29 submission which would be submitted alongside the University's.

Focus on Strategy and Performance

12. Sussex 2035

- 12.1 Council considered an update on the development of the Sussex 2035 Strategy. It was reported that there had been 22 significant engagement events with 2800+ attendees, 2000 pieces of feedback and 100+ emails to the Sussex2035 email address. The Strategy development was proceeding in four main strands:
 - 12.1.1 Values, Mission & Purpose, and Vision.
 - 12.1.2 Core Themes (Education & Student Life, Research & Enterprise, Global & Civic Engagement)
 - 12.1.3 Core Drivers of Change (Environmental Sustainability, Human Flourishing, Digital and Data Futures).
 - 12.1.4 Enabling Themes (Financial Sustainability, People & Culture, Infrastructure).
- 12.2 Work was underway to look at the development of Key Performance Indicators which would enable the tracking of progress and impact.
- 12.3 Council welcomed the level of engagement with the Strategy work, which it believed reflected an improved trust in management.
- 12.4 The analysis of the feedback showed that 86% of staff, students and alumni were supportive or very supportive of the vision, with students the most supportive (91%). Staff were the least

convinced as to whether Sussex could be described as distinctive. 87% of students supported the values whereas 44% staff agreed that Sussex embodied courage.

12.5 The draft strategy would be shared after Easter with the community for feedback and Court would provide an opportunity to hear from local partners in the community.

12.6 Distinctiveness would be a key consideration through the next part of the consultation process.

13. KPI Report

13.1 Council considered an update on two institutional KPIs. It was noted that the University had met the “improve our position in global sustainability and impact rankings” KPI, improving its overall position in the QS Sustainability Rankings from 55th to 26th. It was noted that the University had not met the “meet obligations under Access and Participation awarding gap” KPI, as the achievement gap between those identifying as UK Asian and UK Black with UK White students had widened.

14. Pay Gap Report 2024

14.1 Council noted the annual pay gap report 2024. “Reduce the gender pay gap” was an institutional KPI and all public sector bodies were required to publish an annual report. It was noted that:

14.1.1 The mean gender pay gap was 14.4%, a reduction of 2.5 percentage points compared to the previous year.

14.1.2 The mean disability pay gap was 17.4%, an increase of 4.0 percentage points compared to the previous year.

14.1.3 The mean ethnicity pay gap was -4.6%, compared to -1.7% the previous year.

PART 3- GOVERNANCE

15. Annual Public Interest Governance Principles assurance report

15.1 Council considered the annual Public Interest Governance Principles assurance report. It was noted that oversight of the Governance and Management E conditions of registration were reserved to Council and the annual report summarised the controls in place to ensure ongoing compliance with the public interest governance principles. The OfS’ regulatory framework required governing bodies to have a self-assessment process in place to ensure ongoing compliance.

15.2 Council discussed how the University ensured academic staff were aware of their responsibilities, it was reported that training was being developed.

15.3 Council discussed the implementation of the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act and noted that an Executive working group was meeting regularly to look at the expectations and actions required to ensure compliance. The Executive was responding to all relevant OfS consultations.

16. Institutional Policies

- 16.1 Council considered the revised Donations Policy. It was noted that not receiving donations from tobacco companies was a requirement for certain research funding. The University was reviewing its overarching ethical investment policy.
- 16.2 Council considered the revised Health and Safety Policy.
- 16.3 Council considered the annual Data Protection Policy assurance report. The University's Data Protection Policy was a Council policy as it is fulfilling a statutory responsibility and the annual report provided assurance on the University's ongoing compliance with requirements. Council noted it was positive to see how the University was managing these issues.

Resolved:

- 16.4 Council APPROVED the revised Donations Policy.
- 16.5 Council APPROVED the revised Health and Safety Policy.

17. Nominations Matters

- 17.1 Council considered the renewal of three independent Council members' terms.
- 17.2 Council noted the annual declarations of interest and fit and proper persons report.

Resolved:

- 17.3 Council APPROVED the renewal of Tony Bullman for a period of 3 years from 1 August 2024.
- 17.4 Council APPROVED the renewal of Steve Caddick for a period of 3 years from 1 August 2024.
- 17.5 Council APPROVED the renewal of David Curley for a period of a year from 1 August 2024.

18 Updates from Chairs of sub-committees

- 18.1 Council considered an update on matters from the Audit and Risk Committee not covered elsewhere on the agenda. Council noted there had been technical changes to the University's Financial Regulations including the change in title of post from Director of Finance to Chief Financial Officer, improved clarity and aligning text between detailed section and appendix and between sections in the Financial Regulations. It was also noted that the Committee had received updates on four internal audits- IT Service Delivery, Staff Well-being, Occupational Health, Cyber Security and School Governance. The positive Cyber Security Internal Audit rating recognised the work undertaken to improve the University's systems and response to incidents. It was noted that there were no outstanding recommendations.
- 18.2 Council considered an update on matters from the Finance and Resources Committee not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
- 18.3 Council noted that review of the Treasury Management Policy was a priority for the summer term.
- 18.4 Council considered an update on matters from the Remuneration Committee not covered elsewhere on the agenda. The Committee had considered the revised Professorial pay banding proposals, welcoming the approach but requesting additional information for the

following meeting. The Committee had noted an update on positive actions undertaken to address senior staff diversity; the market supplement recipients 2023 report; the protected characteristics report of £100k earners, and the outcomes of Discretionary Pay Review 2023.

PART 4- MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

19 Joint Brighton Sussex Medical School Board

19.1 Council noted the draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2024

20 Any Other Business

20.1 The Chair reported that there were a series of significant items due for reporting in the summer term which meant the meeting's timings may need to be revised.

21 Dates of next meetings

14 July 2024

March 2024