

74. Welcome and Thanks

The Chair thanked Kelly Knapp for her service to Council.

75. Declarations of Interests in relation to Agenda Items

Noted:

- a) the Vice Chancellor, Chief Financial Officer and University Secretary – roles approved by Council – raised a conflict in relation to the Revised Disciplinary Regulations (Minute 84);
- b) Ari Sadanandom raised a conflict as a Professor within the Department of Biosciences in relation to the Finance Committee Report (Minute 88).

76. Minutes of Meetings held on 31 January 2023

Approved: the minutes of the meetings held on 31 January 2023.

77. Matters Arising

Noted: there were no matters arising.

78. Action Log and Schedule of Business (C/22/67 and C/22/68 Confidential)

Noted: the status of the Action Log and Schedule of Business.

79. Chair's Business

Received: a verbal update that Green Park had been retained to assist with lay member recruitment and a timeline agreed. Three lay members were sought – two to begin their first term this year (1 August 2023) and one to begin their first term next year (1 August 2024) and observe in the interim.

80. Vice Chancellor Report (C/22/69 Confidential)

Noted:

- a) the recently appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost, Mike Shipman, would join the University on 1 August 2023. He was scheduled to attend the July pre-Council event and Council meeting and would like to meet with lay members – one-to-one meetings would be scheduled;
- b) a delegation of University employees had recently returned from a productive trip to India. Separately, the Indian High Commission had visited Newcastle and the Vice Chancellor attended an event that had resulted in constructive discussions where agreement was reached that a delegation would visit the University as there was interest in the Arts & Humanities as well as the University's museums;

- c) the Recruitment, Admissions and Target Setting (RATS) Group was providing regular updates to University Executive Committee (UEC) that offered real time monitoring;
 - i. postgraduate recruitment – international and UK – was volatile and a trend

84. Diversity Pay Annual Report (C/22/73 Confidential)

Noted:

- a) the agenda to be updated to reflect the acting Provost as the Sponsor
- b) the former Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost had led efforts in response to the diversity pay gaps within the University. As a result, the gender pay gap continued to close – nearing the agreed target – but further work was needed.

Agreed: the updated Action Plan and performance indicators.

85. Revised Disciplinary Regulations (C/22/74 Confidential)

Noted:

- a) the agenda to be updated to reflect the Vice Chancellor as the Sponsor;
- b) there had been an in depth discussion at Senate regarding the proposed changes;
- c) certain proposed changes to the Regulations also required updates to the Statutes, which were pending Privy Council approval;
 - i. the University had recently received feedback from Privy Council following its submission of proposed changes to the Statutes in spring last year. The feedback was being reviewed by outside counsel after which, if deemed required, the Statutes Review Working Group would reconvene to assess next steps;
- d) separate work was underway to update the University's Conflict of Interest and Personal Relationships at Work Policy that would be presented to Council at a later date.

Agreed: changes to the Disciplinary Regulations subject to the following changes:

- a) removal of 7.2 (k) "behaviour not in keeping with the University's values...;"
- b) revision of 16.2 to read "The dismissal of any senior member of staff, who have been appointed by Council as per the University Statutes, requires the approval of Council."

Jeremy Cook, Sam Dale and Simon Forrest joined the meeting for the following item.

86. Student Support Project

Received: a presentation on the Student Support Project from the Director of Student Support & Wellbeing. Once implemented, the system would help facilitate the sharing of information amongst relevant interested parties across the University and thereby reduce the requirement for student in distress to recall their circumstances multiple times. Complemented with process improvements and training, the project aimed to achieve more efficient processes and a more effective student / staff experience.

Noted:

- a) the system was an "off the shelf" tool that had been slightly customised for the University;
- b) the system would capture confidential data that needed to be appropriately protected – not only to align with regulatory requirements but also ethical obligations – and access would be appropriated embedded and monitored;
- c) the Team currently leveraged data to adapt its operations and services. A more comprehensive review would be undertaken utilising the system's enriched data to assess other opportunities for improvement;
- d) approximately 25% of students raised disclosures, which was not uncommon across the higher education community. Societal changes had provided an environment for increased disclosure – mental health was the most common disclosure versus learning disabilities which had historically been the most common disclosure.
- e) the University was considered one of the best in the country for its provision of student support, especially for autistic students.

Agreed:

- a) Audit & Risk Committee to review the Student Support Project and provide assurance by design; ARC
- b) a summary of Council's safeguarding obligations to be provided in alignment with recent case law; AW
- c) a post implementation update to be provided to Council. JC / SD

