

# NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

## COUNCIL

20 March 2023

**Present:** Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President), Madeline Baugh (President, Students' Union), Tom Caulker, Linda Conlon, Jo Geary, Alex Lamb, Dr Phillip Lord, Bill MacLeod, Claire Morgan, Dianne Nelmes, Marta Phillips, Pat Ritchie, Angela Russell, Nitin Shukla, Professor Daniel Siemens, Professor David Thwaites, Professor Brian Walker (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and Angela Woodburn.

**In attendance:** Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar), Justin Cole (Executive Director of External Relations), Nick Collins (Executive Director of Finance), Jackie Scott (Executive Director of People Services), and Dr Simon Meacher (Head of Executive and Governance Office).

**Apologies:** David Bird, Jan Deckers, Mack Marshall, Heidi Mottram, and Mags Scott.

## MINUTES

### 50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in advance of the meeting.

### 51. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Received the draft minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30 January 2023.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document A. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.***

### 52. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Noted that:

1. The University Health and Safety Committee had held its latest meeting on 16 February 2023 providing initial approach for a new University Health and Safety Strategic Plan, and reviewing management standards for Non-Ionising Radiation, Laser Safety, Display Screen Equipment, and Fire Safety.
2. The Committee had also discussed the outcomes of a report on Research Culture, in which technicians had highlighted concerns about whistleblowing procedure regarding unsafe practice. The concerns were being followed up by the Head of Occupational Health and Safety Services.
3. The Gamma Cell Irradiator (GCI) had been decommissioned by the chosen contractor. The high activity sealed source had been removed from campus along with a number of smaller sealed sources and everything had gone smoothly.

### 53. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Noted that:

1. The Chair congratulated the Vice-Chancellor and President on their election as Chair of the Russell Group from September 2023.
2. As previously agreed by Council on recommendation from Nominations Committee, a recruitment process would commence this year for a new Chair of Council. At its next meeting in May, Nominations Committee would consider the detailed arrangements for advertising and shortlisting for the role. The Senior Independent Governor would lead the process. Should a suitable candidate be identified and appointed, the individual would be invited to assume the role of vice-chair for some (or all) of the academic year 2023/24 prior to taking the role of chair in Summer 2024.

#### 54. **VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS**

Received the Vice-Chancellor and President's report. Highlights of this report are provided below.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document B. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Reported that:

##### 1. Industrial Action

Following constructive meetings between the Universities and Colleges Employers Association and the Higher Education trade unions, a joint statement had been agreed to finalise terms of reference for negotiations on pay review, pay gaps, workload and contract types. In addition, Universities UK and the University College Union had issued a joint statement outlining how both parties were working together on the future of USS pension scheme benefits, with an agreement to prioritise the improvement of benefits to pre-April 2022 levels.

Subsequently, the University and College Union had considered the proposals for pay and pensions. A meeting of branch delegates had voted in favour of consulting members formally on the proposals but against pausing strike action, while two thirds of members who voted in an informal ballot wanted consultation and a pause in strike action. The union's Higher Education Committee had voted to continue strike action, but not to put the proposals to members. As a result, the UCU strike action planned for the week commencing 20 March would go ahead.

##### 2. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC)

Newcastle University and the Royal Society of Arts had been named as new hosts of the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) provided independent research and policy recommendations for the UK's creative industries. Newcastle University would host the Northern Hub of the Creative PEC. The new hub would connect the North East with London, drawing on and enhancing the University's significant place-based policy expertise, developing partnerships and informing policy for the creative industries over the next five years and beyond.

##### 3. Innovating Together in the Universities of the North East

The North East's five universities came together on Friday 3 February to launch the Innovating Together - Universities in the North East (InTUNE) report at the Transforming Tomorrow Together Roundtable hosted by Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive Officer of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The report showcases the contribution made by the region's universities to innovation and business growth in the

region, and our potential role in delivering activities which contribute to the Government's Levelling Up agenda. This included support for businesses and the creative industries, R&D collaborations, and workforce training in key sectors.

4. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education

Professor Tom Ward had decided to retire from his role as Pro-Vice Chancellor of Education after nearly two years at Newcastle. Tom had steered the University through a very challenging period for Education including its submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework. Professor Ruth Valentine had been appointed as Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and a process for the appointment of a permanent successor to Professor Ward was proposed.

***Resolved that Council approve proceeding with a process for the appointment of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education.***

5. Dean of Innovation and Business

***Resolved that Council approve an extension to the appointment of Professor Mike Capaldi as Dean of Innovation and Business from 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024.***

6. UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace

At its meeting on 14 February 2023, Executive Board had confirmed its support for an application to UNESCO to renew the Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace established in 2016. The Chair had been extremely successful and made a significant contribution to the University's national and international profile. Subject to approval from Senate and Council, a bid would be made to Philanthropy Oversight Group, for continued use of interest from the George Brown Endowment Fund for the existing 1.5 FTE staff supporting the Chair.

***Resolved that Council approve the submission of a bid to the George Brown Endowment Fund for continued use of interest for the existing 1.5 FTE staff supporting the UNESCO Chair.***

7. Retirement Benefits Plan Pension Scheme

Jack Hunter (Deputy Director, Estates), had been recommended for appointment as one of the three University nominated Trustees of the Retirement Benefits Plan Pensions Scheme.

***Resolved that Council approve the appointment of Jack Hunter as a Trustee of the Retirement Benefits Plan Pension Scheme.***

55. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Received a report from the Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and the Registrar.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted:

1. The strategic risks relating to home and international student recruitment had been updated since the last meeting of Council. Strategic Risk 12 'Failure to maintain estate condition and functional suitability' was currently under review and would incorporate the digital estate as well as the physical estate going forward.

***Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the risks facing the University were being managed appropriately.***

**56. ELECTRIFICATION PROCESS INNOVATION CENTRE**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture and Engineering introduced a discussion.

Noted that:

1. The economic rationale for investing in electrification was well-established. The future of transport, energy, consumer goods and many more sectors would eventually completely rely on an electrification solution.
2. The Electrification Process Innovation Centre (EPIC) was a proposal currently under consideration by Executive Board. EPIC aimed to provide industry with a 'one-stop shop' for the capability they required to grow their business, educate their workforce, and deliver manufacturing processing utilising the underpinning technologies required to deliver net zero.
3. The initiative would build on, and consolidate, the University's existing academic strengths in machines, drives and batteries, permitting increased collaboration with industry in the North East. It was hoped that EPIC would be able to meet the growing demand from students, industrialists and the government for degree apprenticeships.
4. A ten-year programme was proposed, requiring significant investment in people and facilities over the next three years, building upon almost £18m of existing investment by Innovate UK, the Faraday Institute, and the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The government's recent announcement of the creation of Investment Zones provided an opportunity to access funding for initiatives that could harness local sector strengths to drive productivity, and deliver sustainable growth to benefit local communities.
5. A business case for EPIC would be brought to Council for approval, subject to further consideration of the project's funding, partnership and governance dimensions.

**57. CHANGES TO THE UNIVERSITY STATUTES**

The Registrar introduced a paper.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The proposed changes resulted from the independent review of university governance that took place during 2022. The initial report and findings were presented to Council in October 2022 and a sub-group of Nominations Committee subsequently reviewed the full report and made recommendations that were accepted by Council in December 2022.
2. As an outcome of the governance review, the University received a recommendation to consider an increase in the number of ex officio members of Senate to reflect the very specific role they have in helping the University to achieve its strategic academic aims.
3. In addition to adding University Deans to the membership of Senate, it was proposed to formalise the appointment process for University Deans, allowing Senate and Council to define and appoint to these roles.
4. In keeping with the University's required process for amendments to the Statutes, Academic Board, Convocation and Senate had been invited to comment on the proposed changes. No

feedback had been received from Academic Board. The Chair and Deputy Chair of Convocation had endorsed the proposed amendments on behalf University alumni.

5. At its meeting on 1 March, Senate endorsed the proposals regarding University Deans following a vote. Senate had also agreed to convey to Council a view that Council may wish to increase the number of academic members of Council.

***Resolved that Council endorse the proposed changes to the Statutes, subject to final approval from Court and the Privy Council.***

#### 58. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Honorary Treasurer introduced a report.

[Circulated after the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. At its most recent meeting, the Committee had reviewed the University's Financial Report for the six months to 31 January 2023. The outlook for the financial year had improved from the position at Quarter 1. The full-year statutory result was now forecast as a break-even position. Additional unforeseen research related funding body grants had been awarded during the second quarter, contributing to the improved position.
2. The Committee had received an update on the energy, cost and carbon savings achieved following work to implement a range of energy saving measures over the winter period. Delaying the start of the heating season and reducing the heating set point had resulted in reduced gas consumption (by up to 20%) and cost savings of £150k, with associated carbon savings of around 500 tonnes.
3. Following a question raised at Council's previous meeting in January 2023, Finance Committee had reviewed a report detailing the capital projects in the investment list that may be subject to inflationary cost increases above approved budget values.
4. The Committee had endorsed minor changes to the University's Financial Regulations and Socially Responsible Investment Policy, which were being presented to Council for approval.

***Resolved that Council approve the changes to the University's Financial Regulations and Socially Responsible Investment Policy.***

#### 59. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Senior Independent Governor introduced the annual report from the Remuneration Committee and revised terms of reference.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The annual report and updated terms of reference had been prepared to comply with the Higher Education Senior Staff Remuneration Code, published by the Committee of University Chairs in November 2021, and to comply with recommendations arising from the independent review of governance.

***Resolved that Council approve the revised terms of reference for Remuneration Committee.***

#### 60. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY AND STUDENTS' UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Registrar introduced a report.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Students' Union would shortly be submitting its annual subvention bid for 2023/24.

#### 61. **REAPPOINTMENT OF A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR**

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a paper.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Professor Nigel Harkness's tenure as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences was due to conclude on 31 August 2023. Since being appointed to the role, Professor Harkness's tenure had been highly successful. He had led the Faculty through a period of growth and change, including a significant transformation of the Faculty's academic leadership team, building a strong a collaborative culture. Over the course of his tenure Professor Harkness had steered the faculty through the pandemic ensuring student and colleague experience was a key focus whilst also leading on the closure of the Newcastle University London Campus.
2. There had been many notable achievements including the award of the triple accreditation for the Business School for five years, completion of large-scale estates projects, enhancement of student experience and REF successes. The University wished to build on Professor Harkness's exceptional performance in the role and proposed the extension of his tenure as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences for a five year period until 31 August 2028.

***Resolved that Council approve the re-appointment of Professor Nigel Harkness as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences for a five year period until 31 August 2028.***

### **ROUTINE BUSINESS**

#### 62. **SENATE: 18 JANUARY 2023**

Received the Annual Student Casework Report and an update on the March meeting of the Committee.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

#### 63. **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Received an updated version of the regulations.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that Council approve the updated University Financial Regulations.***

#### 64. **RESEARCH MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Received the updated policy and procedure.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

***Resolved that Council approve the revised University Research Misconduct Policy and Procedure.***

**65. REPORTED BUSINESS**

[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]