

COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the 235th meeting of Council held on **Wednesday, 13 March 2024** at 2.00pm in ESGW402, Eastern Gateway Building

- Present:**
- Professor Stuart Palmer (SP), Chair
 - Ms Amanda Rowlatt CBE (AR), Deputy Chair
 - Ms Sharon Blackman (SB)
 - Ms Janet Dean (JD)
 - Professor Dave Delpy (DD)
 - Dr Rita Gardner CBE (RG)
 - Mr Mark Garrett (MG)
 - Professor Paul Hellewell (PH)
 - Ms Lucinda Hunt (LH)
 - Professor Andrew Jones (AJ), Vice-Chancellor & President
 - Mr David Kennedy (DK)
 - Ms Josie Mangan (JM)
 - Mr Shashank Manjunatha (SM)
 - Ms Tone Rosingholm (TR)
 - Mr Suraj Shaw (SS)
 - Dr Peter Thomas (PT)
 - Professor Claire Turner (CT)
 - Ms Anne Waltham (AW)
 - Professor Jonathan Wastling (JW)
- Observing:**
- Ms Roshana Gammampila (RG)
- In attendance:**
- Dr Manuel Alonso (MA), Chief Operating Officer
 - Ms Gemma Bailey (GB), Director of HR
 - Mr Peter Cross (PC), Interim Chief Finance Officer
 - Professor Amanda Harvey (AH), Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor – Quality Assurance – *for item 24/62*
 - Mr Craig Lithgow (CG), Chief Executive, Union of Brunel Students – *for item 24/57*
 - Ms Maddie McGowan (MM), Director of Marketing, Communications and Recruitment
 - Dr Nicola Rogers (NR), Chief of Staff
 - Dr Rosa Scoble (RS), Director of Strategic Planning
- Officers:**
- Mr Tristan Foot (TF), University Secretary and General Counsel
 - Ms Helen Dalrymple (HD), Associate Director of Governance - *minutes*
- Apologies:**
- Mr Mukhtar Ahmed (MA)
 - Mr Chris Maw (CM)

place in June. A meeting had been arranged with the widow of Benjamin Zephaniah to discuss ways in which the University could commemorate him.

- 56/07** Council discussed the current political climate, the government's migration advisory committee had brought its review forward and this could impact the recruitment of international students.
- 56/08** Members asked what Brunel's take was on this issue. It was important to emphasise that international students were not taking the places of domestic students. Many were postgraduates and the skills they learnt benefited UK industry enormously. Council asked if it could be provided with a summary for them to have to hand when questioned. **ACTION: AJ**
- 56/09** The dip in overseas applications was discussed. Post pandemic demand from international students had passed, there was a recession in China and there had been several other dynamic changes across the sector.
- 56/10** Referring to the earlier discussion, joining the UoL could improve the University's market share. A strategic broadening of areas that would grow or that would remain resilient was underway.
- 56/11** Members asked for more information on Brunel becoming a signatory of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), this would be followed up outside the meeting. **ACTION: RS**

23/57 REPORT FROM UBS (CO/4003)

- 57/01** **NOTED:** The Union of Brunel Students Report
- 57/02** Members welcomed the paper, they addressed a wider question of how the University should be involved in the governance of the Student Union. The University had to oversee the finances of UBS and ensure that free and fair elections were held. Whatever was put in place would have to be mutually beneficial.

23/58 STRATEGIC PLANNING DELIVERY (CO/4004)

- 58/01** **APPROVED:** The KPIs for each delivery plan and targets, subject to further discussion of Financial Sustainability KPIs.
- 58/02** **NOTED:** The timetable for reporting and monitoring of KPIs which would be added to the Executive Board and Council meeting schedules.
- 58/03** Members asked why some financial KPIs were not specific or not set yet; these would be updated when the five-year plan was agreed in June, and targets would be inputted.
- 58/04** Council queried some of the KPIs, some of them seemed too narrow. It was always difficult to balance internal indicators with external benchmarks, many were proxy, it was a matter of trying to find what best represented what was being measured.

- 58/05** It was agreed that this was a useful discussion; there had been 124 KPIs at one point and there had not been a culture in place that prioritised them. Information should be pulled together and used for change.
- 58/06** KPI F4 was queried as it had an action to create a more entrepreneurial approach. This related to developing a more sophisticated understanding of finance across the organisation and being more business like in commercial activity.
- 58/07** Members said that they would like to review all the KPIs together once a year, this would be added to the annual business schedule. **ACTION: TF**
- 58/08** Council confirmed its overall support for the KPIs, but wanted further discussion on those for Financial Sustainability. This would be taken to the Finance Committee next week. The KPIs as a whole would come to Council in July. **ACTION: TF**

OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

23/59 UNIVERSITY BRANDING (PRESENTATION)

- 59/01** **NOTED:** The update on University Branding.

23/60 FINANCIAL POSITION (PRESENTATION)

- 60/01** **NOTED:** Management Accounts for six months, up until 31 January 2024.
- 60/02** [REDACTED]
- 60/03** Members noted the efficiencies each college were putting in place and that they were different. They wondered how the figures would look in five years or so and sought assurance that the situation would improve.
- 60/04** Planning was very cautious and cost bases were being reduced. Departments were given early visibility of budget to enable them to see how their strategic objectives could be met efficiently and to identify areas for growth.
- 60/05** In the context of the HE sector, universities had never been in a worse financial position. Brunel was currently reasonably resilient.
- 60/06** It was agreed that research income needed to improve; now that the RAAC issues on campus were being resolved, more buildings could be used.

23/61 UPDATE ON CYBER SECURITY (4005)

- 61/01** **NOTED:** An information update and progress on the cyber security/information security position, following a report to Audit & Risk Committee in November 2023.
- 61/02** Good progress had been made on the mitigation of cyber security risks. This work would feed into the Digital Strategy which should come to the next meeting of Council in July.
- 61/03** Members said that they would like to meet the new senior staff in the area. The Chief Digital and Information Officer and other appropriate information security colleagues would attend a future meeting with an update.
ACTION: MA

GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE

23/62 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN (CO/4006)

- 62/01** **NOTED:** The update on the progress of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) and the associated institutional risks
- 62/02** A series of risks had been identified for the new style of plan for 2025/26 – 2028/29. Members heard that further investment was likely to be necessary.
- 62/03** There was some discussion around the level of support required by students; some students left their studies because they did not have much experience of education and needed external support. AH clarified that the APP was aimed at domestic, undergraduate students.
- 62/04** Members asked what happened in the application process to identify those for whom potential support might be needed. More could be done on this to enable a better transition to university studies. The APP was a four-year strategy and aimed to catch all that needed support.

23/63 ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT (CO/4007)

- 63/01** **NOTED:** An annual update on changes to institutional level risks in reflection of the University strategy, highlighting key risks above risk appetite which may affect delivery of institutional objectives and propose changes to progress risk management maturity.

23/64 ANNUAL EDI MONITORING REPORT (CO/4008)

- 64/01** **NOTED:** Information on the diversity of the University's workforce and a summary of progress made against its EDI strategy.
- 64/02** The report had brought to light some concerns, members asked how they would be addressed. There could be publicity around how disability, for

example, was dealt with appropriately, with positive outcomes for employees.

64/03 Council was asked to consider what reporting they required on EDI matters and at what level of detail.

64/04 Members thanked the HR and EDI Committee for its work and for having acted on last year's recommendations.

23/65 PAY GAP REPORT (CO/4009)

65/01 **NOTED:** The University's Pay Gap Report for 2023, including ethnicity and disability pay gap calculations in addition to gender.

23/66 OVERSIGHT OF THE UBS (4010)

66/01 **DISCUSSED:** An update on actions taken since Council received legal advice on the extent of its statutory duties relating to the students' union.

66/02 Council **AGREED** that the Governance and Nominations Committee should consider a proposal to ask a Council Member to sit on the Board of Trustees of the Union and to consider its relationship with the University.

GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS

23/67 GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW (CO/4011)

67/01 **NOTED:** The need to conduct a review in academic year 2024-25

23/68 COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2024/25 (CO/4012)

68/01 **APPROVED:** Council meeting dates for 2024/25 subject to changes required to secure room bookings, a quorum etc. in the usual way. Diary invites would be circulated after the meeting.

RECURRENT ITEMS (FOR INFORMATION)

23/69 ANNUAL CYCLE OF BUSINESS (CO/4013)

69/01 **NOTED:** The annual cycle of business for Council.

23/70 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES (CO/4014 – CO/4017)

70/01 **NOTED:** Finance Committee Minutes 25 January 2024 (CO/4014)

70/02 NOTED: Remuneration Committee 1 February 2024 (CO/4015)

70/03 NOTED: Governance & Nominations Committee Minutes 8 February 2024 (CO/4016)

70/04 NOTED: Audit & Risk Committee Minutes 21 February 2024 (CO/4017)
Annual report on International Risk (CO/4017a)

23/71 REPORT ON BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT SENATE (CO/4018)

71/01 NOTED: The report to Council matters arising from the meetings of Senate held on 13 September and 6 December 2023.

23/72 MEDIA COVERAGE (CO/4019)

72/01 NOTED: Media coverage of Brunel University since the last meeting.

23/73 OFS COMPLIANCE SUMMARY (CO/4020)

73/01 NOTED: Assurance of how the University was meeting its ongoing Conditions of Registration and any significant updates relating to the OfS.

23/74 STAFF APPOINTMENTS, RESIGNATIONS AND LEAVE OF ABSENCES (CO/4021)

74/01 NOTED: All academic, post-doctoral and senior professional appointments, retirements, resignations and fixed term contract terminations since the last report dated 7 November 2023 and permanent academic employees taking leave of absence.

23/75 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND FEEDBACK ON THE CURRENT MEETING

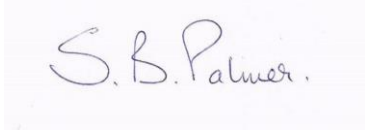
75/01 SP suggested having a two-hour meeting of Council, preferably face to face, before the next formal meeting in July. Dates would be sent out shortly. **ACTION: TF**

75/02 Warm thanks were given to PC whose term as Interim Chief Finance Officer would be finishing shortly. His help and support were appreciated, he had been a 'safe pair of hands' in some challenging times. All wished him well in his next role.

75/02 There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was ended at 5:20pm.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 3 July 2024

Meeting Minutes Approved: July 2024

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature reads "S. B. Palmer." with a period at the end.

3 July 2024

Professor Stuart Palmer, Chairperson

Date