



23/39 A meeting of the Council was held in Room 201, Carrington Building, on Monday 3 July 2023 at 2.00 pm.

The President
The Vice-Presidents (Mr K. Corrigan and Mrs K. Owen)
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Wen Tc (only))

ME??

23/40 President's introductory remarks

The President:

Welcomed Edward Gregory, President of Reading Students' Union (RSU), and Sophie Jordan, RSU Education Officer, to their first meeting of Council
Noted that Professor Richard Frazier would complete his term as the Senate's representative on Council before the next meeting of Council. The Council thanked him for his invaluable contribution to its work.
Congratulated Professor Gibbins on his re-election to Council by members of academic staff.
Congratulated Professor Beleska-Spasova on her appointment as Dean of Henley Business School.

Commended Dr Karen Henderson, Director of Technical Services, for her organisation of an excellent

Introducing Semester 2 (January/February) entry cohorts for some programmes

Reviewing academic activities and structures

Sharing services with other universities or other public bodies, which, however, would require significant initial investment and achieve savings only in the medium to longer term

Adoption of artificial intelligence in a range of processes. This would require significant investment over a number of years and, in the current circumstances, might be a longer-term ambition.

A number of lay members, drawing on their business experience, observed that a pre-requisite for sharing services was far-reaching standardisation of processes and that the benefits of moving earlier or later to shared services needed to be evaluated. Early membership of a consortium would allow the University to shape processes, whereas joining a consortium later meant that the University was to a large extent buying a pre-set service.

In response to questions, the Vice-Chancellor:

confirmed that the scoping exercise in relation to academic structures and activities would include consideration of the breadth of the University's current provision and its possible rationalisation, together with identification of areas where student growth might imply expansion;

explained that the University Executive Board was addressing the current financial position in a planned and managed way in order to provide students with the best possible student experience within the available resource. The greater risk to the student experience was the forced adoption of emergency efficiency measures, as had happened in a number of universities;

Explained that the University was alert to issues around the capability and capacity necessary to achieve the planned outcomes. The University had learned from previous change exercises and had now invested in in-house project management support and professionalisation of change processes. There was greater realism in the development of timelines and more effective processes for communication across the relevant communities.

In response to further questions, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource):

Explained that the University was working with UPP to ensure that there was sufficient accommodation for the planned increase in student

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and £2.6m of provisions had been released to the income and expenditure account. He noted that the valuation of investment assets and accounting for USS had not been included in the forecast as these are annual exercises done after each year end.

“That the Financial Quarter 3 report, now submitted, be received.”

23/44 Budget 2023-24 (Item 3.3)

The Council received the Budget 2023-24.

The Director of Finance reported that, following Council’s discussion of the draft Budget at its meeting in March 2023, the figures and assumptions had been reviewed, but there had been no major changes. He explained that the University’s finances were not particularly sensitive to interest rates as the increased cost 4 was offset by a corresponding increase in investment income. [redacted Section 43]. He noted that, in response to a suggestion from Council, the budgeting process included a target that salaries amount to not more than 55% of income, which would be achieved through a combination of cost controls and income growth. He confirmed that testing the budget against a range of scenarios

23/47 [redacted Section 43] (Item 4.2)

23/48 [redacted Section 43] (Item 4.3)

23/49 Acting as Trustee of the NIRD Trust, to approve the allocation of NIRD Trust funds to support research (Item 4.4)

Acting in its capacity as Trustee of the NIRD Trust, the Council received a paper on a proposed allocation of NIRD Trust funds to support research.

In response to questions, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Professor Gibbins advised that NIRD funding was important in leveraging large scale investment in research from external bodies and that a planned discussion of the Research Excellence Framework at Council in 2023/24 would provide useful context for understanding the role and impact of NIRD funding. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that the charitable purposes of NIRD related to agriculture and food research and were not confined to dairying.

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“Council, acting as Trustee of NIRD, RESOLVED that:

- a) A grant be made to the University of £2,000,000 to be used during 2023/24 to support research as detailed in the paper before it and in accordance with the objects of the Trust [subject to any views received from BBSRC. Should such views raise substantial concerns, this matter shall be referred back to the Council acting as Trustee of NIRD for its further consideration]; and
- b) Such grant be funded to support £1,000,000 capital and £1,000,000 revenue expenditure by the University as detailed.

23/50 Report of the Appointments and Governance Committee (Item 5)

The Council received a Report of the meeting of the Appointments and Governance Committee held on 6 June 2023.

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary noted that there were two Council vacancies on the Honorary Degrees Committee and asked members to contact him if they were interested in joining the Committee.

“That:

1. Sian Butler and Sally Plank be reappointed as members of Council for a further period of three years to 31 July 2026, and that their membership of or attendance at committees be extended to the same date, namely:
 - a. Sian Butler: Audit (er)-6 (s)-2 (i)2.6 (t)-68p1C UL-6 (s)-2 (i4hh)2.6 (n6 (m)-6 (m)-S)2 (i)

3. The Investments Committee report directly to the Council and be renamed the Investments and Development Committee;
4. The membership of the Audit Committee be amended as follows:
'Four lay members of Council and no fewer than two/no more than three further lay members appointed by the Council, not necessarily from its own number'
be amended to read:
'Four lay members and at least one further member appointed by the Council, not necessarily from among its own number'; and
5. The Report of the meeting of the Appointments and Governance Committee held on 6 June 2023, now submitted, be approved."

23/51 Report of the Senate (Item 6)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 22 June 2023.

In response to a question on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the review of Senate's effectiveness, the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary advised that a review of their impact would be undertaken in 2023/24. Mrs Egan noted that one recommendation had been that two lay members of Council have rights of attendance at Senate; she had been serving in this capacity and had advised on which matters might be highlighted to Council. The President indicated that over the past year Council had been primarily focussed on business related to finance and planning, but intended that topics more directly related to Senate's work, including the Research Excellence Framework, would be more prominent in Council's consideration in 2023/24.

Mrs Egan, who had chaired the meeting, noted that the Committee had proposed that a Council champion be appointed to support the University's and RUSU's work on

the table and fractional differences could have a disproportional impact on the ranking.

- (c) *At this point, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor withdrew for this item of business due to a conflict of interest.*

23/57 Minutes (23/17-23/38) of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 (Item 12)

The Minutes (23/17-23/38) of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were confirmed and signed.

23/58 Decisions taken by the President on behalf of the Council since the last meeting (Item 14)

The Council noted that:

- (a) The President had approved, on the recommendation of the Senate, the introduction of the degree of Master of Law.
- (b) The President had approved two separate requests to use the equivalent of 10,100 euros and 4,500 euros from the Beckett International Foundation (of which the University is Trustee) to purchase items for the Samuel Beckett archive.

23/59 Documents sealed and to be sealed (Item 15)

The Council received a list of documents sealed and to be sealed.

"That the Council approve the action taken by the Officers and Members in affixing the University Seal to documents sealed since the last Ordinary Meeting of the Council and authorise the Seal of the University to be affixed to the documents to be sealed as now reported."

23/60 Rolling update on topics for future Council meetings (Item 16)

The Council received an update on topics for future Council meetings. The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary invited members to contact him if they felt that a critical issue had been missed from the schedule. He also reported that it was intended to hold the September meeting at Thames Valley Science Park and to start at 10.30 am.

23/61 Ofsted inspection of apprenticeships provision

The Dean of Henley Business School (Professor Beleska-Spasova) advised Council that Ofsted, in its recent inspection of Henley Business School's apprenticeships, had judged the provision to be Good.

23/62 Dates of meetings of the Council in the Session 2023/24 (Item 18)

Meetings of the Council in the Session 2023/24 had been scheduled for:

Thursday 28 September 2023, 12.00 noon-5.00 pm
Wednesday 22 November 2023, 10.00 am-2.00 pm (preceded by an informal meeting and dinner the previous evening)
Tuesday 23 January 2024, 12 noon-5.00 pm
Monday 11 March 2024, 12 noon-5.00 pm
Monday 1 July 2024, 12 noon-5.00 pm.

23/63 Reflections on the meeting (Item 19)

The President invited members to share with colleagues on their table their reflections on the meeting.