

MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL COUNCIL

**MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2024
AT THE KUUMBA IMANI MILLENNIUM CENTRE**

Present:	Carmel Booth, President (in the Chair); Hans van Mourik Broekman, Vice-President; Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Richard Black, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Cilla Ankrah-Lucas (until the end of item 10); Dr Alison Campbell; Dr Mark Carawan; Fiona Cullen; Barry Flynn; Dr Kashmir Gill (via Zoom); Helen Miller; Mark Proctor; Matthew Reed; Dr Diana Walford (via Zoom) (until the end of item 10); Professor Hazel Scott; Professor Thomas Teubner; Kieran O’Sullivan; and Kathryn Manley, Vice-President of the Liverpool Guild of Students.
Apologies:	Vanessa Griffiths; Vasiliki Samuels, President of the Liverpool Guild of Students; and Professor Julia Balogun.
In Attendance:	Professor Gavin Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education; Dr Carol Costello, Director of People and Services; Nicola Davies, Chief Financial Officer; Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact; Kevan Ryan, Clerk to Council/University Secretary and General Counsel; and Emma Leonard, Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary.

Prior to the meeting, members met with representatives from the Kuumba Imani Millennium Centre to hear about the work of the Centre and its existing and potential links with the University.

COMMITTEE AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

1. Disclosures of Interest

Members were asked to disclose any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. No such interests were disclosed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24 November 2023

AGREED:

- i. The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2023 should be approved as an accurate record.

3. Report on Action Taken by the President on Behalf of Council and Business Dealt with by the Pensions Sub-Group

RECEIVED:

- i. A report on action taken by the President on Council’s behalf and business dealt with by the Pensions Sub-Group since the last business meeting.

REPORTED:

- ii. The President had taken Chair's action as follows:

Draw Down from Investment Portfolio (approved 24 November 2023)
Paragraph redacted due to commercial interest.

Sensor City – Letter of Support from the University (approved 16 January 2024)

To approve an amendment to the letter of support for Sensor City previously issued by the University. In order that KPMG could move ahead with signing the Sensor City financial statements, they required the letter of support to be amended so that it covered the period up to 31 January 2025 to ensure that it covered the full going concern period (12 months from the date of them signing the accounts).

- iii. Since the last business meeting of Council, the following matters had been dealt with by the Pensions Sub-Group:

ULPF Draft Schedule of Contributions

Chair's action approval had been obtained via the Chair of the Pensions Sub-Group on 22 November 2023 to sign up to the new ULPF schedule of contributions.

Paragraph redacted due to commercial interest.

Chair's action approval was requested on this occasion due to the tight turnaround required.

USS Consultation with UUK on the Schedule of Contributions Arising from the 2023 Valuation

The Pensions Sub-Group was consulted on the Schedule of Contributions payable from 1 January 2024. The Trustee was consulting employers (through UUK) on paying employer contributions of 14.5% of salary, in total, for each of their members in the scheme.

The Pensions Sub-Group supported this proposal without any amendments in November 2023.

AGREED:

- iv. The action taken by the President on Council's behalf as outlined in 3ii above and the action taken by the Pensions Sub-Group as outlined in 3iii above should be endorsed.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/DISCUSSION/NOTE

4. President's Communications

RECEIVED:

- i. An oral report from the President of Council covering her attendance at upcoming meetings of the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) Board and Committee of University Chairs (CUC) (including that the University would be hosting the inaugural meeting of the CUC Northern Chairs).

5. Clerk to Council's Communications

RECEIVED:

- i. An oral report from the Clerk to Council.

REPORTED:

- ii. The class action seeking compensation for online teaching during the pandemic and the effect of exam marking boycotts by striking lecturers continued. In keeping with others in the sector, the University had confirmed that it would allow a further 28 days for 400 students who would otherwise be outside of the statutory limitation period to particularise their cases. The UCL test case continued and the potential cost implications were unknown at this stage.
- iii. The Advance HE Academic Governance Collaborative Project had now concluded and a full effectiveness review of the Senate was commencing. Further information about the review would be shared with Council in due course.
- iv. An update on Freedom of Speech matters would be brought to Council in May 2024.

6. Vice-Chancellor's Communications

RECEIVED:

- i. A report from the Vice-Chancellor on University, sector wide and political news, covering:

University Updates

- Appointment of Chief Operating Officer
- Queen's Anniversary Prize
- New Year Honours
- Staff Awards
- New Contributions Framework for Academic Colleagues
- Changes to Contribution Points on Grades 1, 2 and 3
- Equality Objectives Action Plan

Higher Education Sector and Political Updates

- Joint Meeting with Liverpool City Council Executive Team
- USS Pension Contribution Rates
- Visit from Universities Minister Robert Halfon MP
- Further Political Engagement
- VC Conference – How do we create a more successful Liverpool?
- UK Association with Horizon Europe
- Changes to REF Assessment Timetable.

REPORTED:

- ii. There had been several research funding successes recently for the Faculty of Science and Engineering – these were under embargo but would be shared in due course. One such success which had been announced was that the

University would lead a £12m research hub alongside Imperial College London, to develop state-of-the-art Artificial Intelligence for Chemistry and accelerate its adoption, thanks to a combined investment from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and consortium partners.

- iii. Council members had recently received a briefing note on the coverage published in The Sunday Times on 28 January 2024 regarding international student recruitment at Russell Group universities and in particular on foundation pathways and the use of agents and third party recruitment bodies. UUK and the Russell Group had issued statements correcting the factual inaccuracies and had also referred the article to the Independent Press Standards Organisation. UUK had announced it would: review the Agent Quality Framework; commission the QAA to review the quality and comparability of International Foundation Programmes and Foundation Programmes for Home students; and update the Admissions Code of Practice to clearly state its applicability to international recruitment. It was not believed that the University had significant concerns in relation to the issues raised.

7. Liverpool Guild of Students Update, including Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2023

RECEIVED:

- i. An oral update from the Vice-President of the Liverpool Guild of Students.
- ii. The Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2023.

REPORTED:

- iii. Guild Officer elections would be held in March, noting that there would be at least three new Officers appointed this year.
- iv. The Guild was working with the NUS on a response to the OfS Freedom of Speech consultation.
- v. A significant number of students had now received bystander training, engendering culture change from the ground up.
- vi. The principal income sources for the Guild were the block grant provided by the University and funds generated through commercial activity. The Guild had produced a surplus for the financial year of £41,303 before the movement on the pension scheme liability (2022: £616,438). Net liabilities at 31 July 2023 stood at £148,562 (2022: £132,701). The cash and current asset investments balance at the financial year end was £2,662,355 (2022: £2,177,760). In summary, the Guild was in a stable financial position but the Trustees were cognisant of future pension liabilities arising from the Students' Union Superannuation Scheme – now closed to accrual for Guild staff – and the financial strategy of the Guild reflected this risk while adequately resourcing ongoing charitable activities.

NOTED:

- vii. In accordance with the agreed actions following Halpin's effectiveness review, the President of Council would be attending an upcoming Guild Board of Trustees Meeting.

8. Liverpool 2031 Priorities Update

RECEIVED:

- i. An oral update from the Vice-Chancellor on the outcomes of the recent Senior Leadership Team Away Day, held on 11 and 12 January 2024.

REPORTED:

- ii. The Away Day had been positive and had focussed on the next stages of development of the different pillars of the University's new strategic framework, Liverpool 2031, as well as some of the important, underlying plans.
- iii. The discussions had been very productive and a number of clear priorities had been established including in relation to the emerging research frontiers, prioritisation of international student number growth and agile development of priority programme areas, and international partnerships.
- iv. More detailed discussions on early progress against Liverpool 2031 would be held at Council's April Away Day.

9. 2023/24 Financial Forecast 1

[The Director of Finance, Paul Fallon, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. A paper providing details of the forecast year end position for the University in the current financial year, 2023/24.

REPORTED:

Paragraphs ii – iv redacted due to commercial interest.

AGREED:

- v. Forecast 1 should be approved.
- vi. A briefing paper on XJTLU should be shared with Council members.

10. Strategic Risk Register Development Update

[The Director of Strategic Planning, Phil Hopwood, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. A paper proposing the strategic risks associated with the University's new strategy, Liverpool 2031, the institutional level operational risks, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) leads and the level of appetite for each risk, as endorsed by SLT.

REPORTED:

- ii. The update was required because the existing institutional risk register articulated the relationship between Strategy 2026 and strategic risk management, and as such, needed revising following the approval of Liverpool 2031.
- iii. The main changes from the strategic risk register associated with Strategy 2026 were:

Risks broadly retained and/or slightly adjusted from Strategy 2026:

- Cyber Security
- Student Recruitment
- Research Quality and Quantity adjusted to Research Quality, Income and Impact
- Financial Sustainability adjusted to Financial Capacity

Risks now considered operational rather than strategic risks:

- Student Satisfaction and Wellbeing
- Compliance

Strategy 2026 risks consolidated into new risks in Liverpool 2031:

- Reliance on Key Partnerships, Political and Funding Landscape and Reputation consolidated into the new risk of Global Reputation
- Culture and Ambition and Staff Recruitment and Retention consolidated into the new risk of Staff Recruitment, Retention and Performance

New risks under Liverpool 2031:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Infrastructure: Digital and Estates
- Capacity to Deliver Transformation
- Regional Profile and Engagement.

- iv. The profile of risk appetite across the 10 revised strategic risks was two at 'low', six at 'medium' and two at 'high', compared to Strategy 2026, where the eight risks were spread across two at 'low', two at 'low/medium' and four at 'medium'; this presented a higher degree of risk appetite commensurate with the significantly increased ambition within Liverpool 2031.
- v. Once approved by Council, a detailed review of each risk (scoring, mitigations etc.) would be performed for presentation at Council's Away Day on 10 April 2024. The existing Risk Management Framework would also be covered at the Away Day.

AGREED:

- vi. The revised strategic risks, risk leads and risk appetite levels should be endorsed for more detailed consideration at the April Away Day, subject to: further consideration being given to whether the Student Satisfaction and Wellbeing risk should be regarded as strategic rather than operational; the term 'risk holders' being used instead of 'risk leads'; and clarity being provided around who would be responsible for the relevant risks until the Chief Operating Officer is in post.

11. Annual Diversity and Equality Report 2022/23 and Race Equality Charter Update

[The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Humanities and Social Sciences and Chair of the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team, Professor Fiona Beveridge, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- i. The Annual Diversity and Equality Report 2022/23.
- ii. A tabled summary of the Race Equality Charter (REC) themes and objectives.
- iii. A presentation on Council's REC-related actions.

REPORTED:

Annual Diversity and Equality Report

- iv. In addition to meeting statutory requirements, as outlined within the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010), the report demonstrated the University's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion through highlighting the progress made over the last academic year against the University's Equality Objectives.
- v. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the University was required to provide data and information on workforce and service-user (students) by: age, disability, ethnicity (nationality included as best practice), gender/sex, religion/belief, and sexual orientation.
- vi. The new approach to the report aimed to streamline findings in a succinct way. The report included a Summary Infographic which provided a snapshot of equality monitoring data for the University community. Appendices including staff workforce data and student profile data by protected characteristic would be uploaded to the University's webpages to allow readers to view the details of both the staff and student data sets.

Race Equality Charter

- vii. As of January 2024, the University was officially a Bronze Award holder of the Race Equality Charter.
- viii. As part of the action plan associated with the submission to Advance HE, Council's commitments were to:

- Enhance race equality and race literacy across Council, through:
 - Developing Associate Member roles for Council and key sub-committees
 - Introducing unconscious bias training for all Council members
 - Potential Council participation in reverse mentoring from February 2025
 - Improve local community engagement with Council opportunities, through:
 - Ensuring the annual Governance Meeting Programme hosts a minimum of one meeting in a local community venue
 - Enhancing links with other large organisations and collectives within the City Region, to further promote governance opportunities
 - Improve the ethnic diversity of Council membership, through:
 - Ensuring Associate Member roles serve as a pipeline for future Council membership
 - Making interventions to ensure a minimum of three out of 13 Lay members are of RM backgrounds, by the end of the 2026 recruitment cycle.
- ix. One of the key learnings from the self-assessment process was the importance of disaggregating data. It was important to look beyond an aggregated white vs 'BAME' split and consider specific ethnic groups wherever possible. There were many inequalities by ethnicity at both institutional and Faculty level, with the solutions being context specific. For example, in the 2022 REC survey, Chinese staff and student respondents were almost level with white respondents in several areas. In contrast, Black staff and student respondents were far less positive; an aggregation of white vs 'BAME' responses would have disguised specific inequalities affecting the University's Black community.

AGREED:

- x. The Annual Diversity and Equality Report 2022/23 should be approved.

12. University and Health and Safety Update

NOTED:

- i. Due to timing constraints, this item would be deferred to the May 2024 meeting of Council.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

13. Senate

RECEIVED:

- i. A report on the meeting of the Senate held on 24 January 2024, covering the following items:
- Assessment Appeals Procedure for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes
 - Degree Outcomes Statement
 - Annual Diversity and Equality Report 2022/23 (*dealt with as a substantive item by Council – see minute 11 above*)

- Reports from Senate's Committees: Research and Impact Committee.

AGREED:

- ii. The Assessment Appeals Procedure for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes should be approved. The review had been undertaken with the aim of simplifying the appeals process for staff and students, and to make it more accessible, transparent and timely. The revisions had been consulted on widely and had been recommended by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- iii. The Degree Outcomes Statement should be approved. Over the past five years, 84% of students at the University had achieved good honours awards (Class I and II:1). The overall position and the distribution across classes remained largely stable until 2020/21 when there had been a rise in the number of students awarded Class I and the proportion of good honours awards had risen to 88% due to safety net provisions and changes to assessment instituted by the University in the Major Disruption Policy. This proportion of good honours dropped in 2022/23 to 82%, remaining slightly above the pre-pandemic levels of 2018/19 (79%).

14. Finance and Resources Committee

RECEIVED:

- i. A report on the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 17 January 2024 covering the following items:
 - Finance Forecast 1 (*dealt with as a substantive item by Council – see minute 9 above*)
 - Investments Sub-Committee – Revised University Investment Strategy
 - Vice-Chancellor's Update
 - Admissions Update
 - Capital Matters
 - Estates Strategy Initial Overview
 - Student Accommodation – Fire Safety
 - Treasury Management Policy Review.

AGREED:

- ii. The revised University Investment Strategy should be approved. Following a review at Investments Sub-Committee (ISC), the assumptions underpinning the Strategy had been updated to reflect increased liquidity requirements for the University and the impact of introducing total return accounting for investments, which reduced the focus on income returns as an element of capital returns could be utilised. A targeted investment return of CPI plus 1% had been introduced for the University portfolio. An annual report would be produced to provide ISC with assurance that no one fund manager held more than 10% of their individual portfolio in one investment, and that no one investment produced more than 10% of portfolio income. The investment allocation would remain unchanged.

15. Health and Safety Governance Committee

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- i. A report on the meeting of the Health and Safety Governance Committee held on 25 January 2024, covering the following items:
 - Wellbeing Annual Report 2022/23
 - Safety Adviser's Office Update (Including Safety Net)
 - Update on Institutional Health and Safety Plan Key Performance Indicators
 - Statutory Compliance Update
 - Business Continuity Management Update
 - Fire Safety Update
 - Kieran Brinn Final Review.

16. Thanks

NOTED:

- i. This would be the last Council meeting attended by the Director of People and Services, Dr Carol Costello, who would retire in March.

AGREED:

- ii. Dr Costello should be thanked for her excellent contributions and wished well for the future.

17. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED:

- i. The next meeting would be an Away Day to be held on Wednesday 10 April 2024, with timings to be confirmed.