**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COURT**

**Minutes of the Sixty-Fifth Annual meeting of Court**

**held on Friday 10 February 2023**

**Present:** The Rt Hon the Lord Willetts (Chancellor)

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| --- | --- |
| Mr A Aggarwal  Mr G Arthur  Mrs J Arthur  Mr P Ash  Cllr Mr E Baines  Ms E Blyth  Mr G Bodiwala  Mrs S Bowie  Professor N Canagarajah  Mr J Chandarana  Cllr Mr G Cole  Mr M Cullen  Mr S de Looze  Dr S Dale-Black  Mr G Dixon  Mr H Doyle  Ms M Duke  Cllr Mr K Feltham  Mrs S Forsyth  Mr B Ghelani  Mr R Graham-Brown  Mr G Green  Lady Gretton  Dr J Higgins  Mr B Hindocha | Sir L Howard  Mr D James  Mr I Johnson  Mrs G Johnston  Ms K Law  Mr P Lawson  Ms A Linsell  Dr G Lewis  Col R Martin  Mr D Moore  Mr K Nagle  Professor K Pounds  Dr N Reed  Mr P Rivlin  Mr R S Sandhu  Professor S Sharma  Dr V Sharma  Mr D Tams  Mr G Thompson  Dr B Towle  Mrs S Waddington  Mr P Wilson  Mr A Wessel  Mrs C Wessel  Mr R D Wood  Dr D Wykes |

**In attendance:** Dr M Aderin-Pocock, (Chancellor-Elect, observer), Mr P Gowdridge (Chief Financial Officer, University of Leicester); Ms R Faint, Mr J Pandya, Mr S O’Connor and Ms R Selfridge (Development and Alumni Relations Office, University of Leicester); Mr A Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor’s Office, University of Leicester), and Mrs A Benson (Assistant Secretary to Court, University of Leicester)

**Apologies for absence** were received from those members of Court whose names are listed in the Appendix attached to these minutes.

23/M1 **COURTESIES**

The Chancellor welcomed all Court members to the meeting, particularly the Chancellor-Elect who was attending as an observer, prior to taking on the role of Chancellor from 1 March 2023.

The Chancellor reflected on his tenure, observing that the University was entering a period of consolidated success in terms of its student recruitment, reputation and its standing within the higher education sector. In addition, its contribution to national infrastructure, such as in its work with the space industry, was continuing to grow.

23/M2 **MINUTES**

**Court formally received** the minutes of the sixty-fourth Annual Meeting, held on 11 February 2022.

23/M3 **MEMBERSHIP OF COURT**

**Court received** the current list of the Full Members of Court, as at 1 February 2023. **Court noted** that the current list was presented each year at the Annual Meeting. The complete and updated Full and Associate membership lists could be viewed at any time on the University’s website.

23/M4 **ANNUAL PRESENTATION BY THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR**

The University’s President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nishan Canagarajah, gave his annual presentation to Court.

The President and Vice-Chancellor outlined the achievements of the University in 2022 across the key themes of the Centenary, education, research, student recruitment, campus developments and civic engagement.

It was reported that the University had had considerable success in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 as well as raising its profile in the Times Higher Education World Rankings and other media league tables. However it was acknowledged that league table metrics were liable to frequent change.

During the University’s Centenary over £11.5 million had been pledged through philanthropic gifts. 75 events had been held over the year, including the Poppy Pilgrimage, the ChangeMakers Festival, the Difficult Conversations lecture series, the Leicester Literary Festival and over 100 trees were planted on campus.

The University had advanced 30 places in REF 2021, with 89% of its research judged to be ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’. High-ranking subject areas included Clinical Medicine, History, Sports and Exercise Science, Museum Studies, Archaeology, Media and English. Archaeology and Biological Sciences had been ranked 1st in the UK for impact, and Clinical Medicine, Sports Science and Sociology were ranked 1st in the UK for research outputs.

Further research achievements had included £26 million awarded for the Biomedical Research Centre and £10 million funding to improve care outcomes in India and Nepal. 100 funded PhD studentships had been awarded in 2022-2023, with a further 50 planned for 2023-2024. Leicester researchers had been awarded two of the five Philip Leverhulme Prizes in Archaeology. The Fellowship Academy had been launched in autumn 2022 to support early-career researchers, and five new Research Institutes had also been launched throughout the year.

The President and Vice-Chancellor drew attention to initiatives which showcased the University’s heritage of kindness, such as the University of Sanctuary project supporting refugees and asylum seekers, and university twinning partnerships with Kremenchuk and Poltava Agrarian universities in Ukraine, collaborating on research and education.

Considering present and future challenges, the attention of Court was drawn to the University’s need for sustainable growth whilst maintaining the quality of its teaching and learning, and to the need to deliver the strategic plans for estates and digital infrastructure.

Other challenges, such as recent industrial disputes and post-pandemic student engagement and assessment, were reported against a backdrop of uncertain HE funding and cost of living pressures on University expenditure, such as staff pay, pensions and utilities costs. The wider context of Government HE policy was explored, including the role of the Office for Students as regulator and forthcoming developments in areas as diverse as freedom of speech, international student migration, student employability and degree apprenticeships.

The President and Vice-Chancellor formally recorded his thanks to the outgoing Chancellor for his period of service.

Court discussed the relationship between the University and the space industry, considering ways in which the University could use its research and enterprise achievements in this area to boost national and local engagement.

Court commended the University for its recent successes, noting the national surge in interest in studying History which was also reflected at Leicester.

**Court noted** the report of the President and Vice-Chancellor.

23/M5     **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2021-2022**

**Court formally received** the University’s audited financial statements for the last financial year, covering the period from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022.  The statements also included a strategic overview report of the institution’s activities and highlights, and a corporate governance statement of the responsibilities of the Council (as the University’s governing body) and its key committees, over the previous year.  The statements had been approved by the Council and submitted to the Office for Students, the regulator for universities, in line with the relevant timeframes.

The University’s Chief Financial Officer, Paul Gowdridge, presented an overview of the University’s current financial situation.

**Court noted** that in the year to 31 July 2022 the University was pleased to report a successful year, generating £42 million of cash from operations (12% of income). The £60 million Covid Corporate Financing Facility had been fully repaid during the year and had been replaced by a Revolving Credit Facility to ensure appropriate ongoing access to liquidity.

The University had generated a surplus of £10 million, with its income increased by 7.4%. It was reported that the University’s financial performance represented overall improvement in its financial resilience, with surplus retained for investment. £37 million had been invested in estates and infrastructure. Two major developments for the University, Space Park Leicester and the Freemen’s Common development, had been completed and opened.

There was an ongoing focus on the continual improvement of the University’s financial resilience. Turning to the current year (2022-23) outlook, it was reported that overall this was stable and better than planned. Strong student demand had been demonstrated by better-than-budgeted student recruitment. Over £10 million of additional resources had been allocated and it was currently forecasted to end the financial year with approximately £30 million cash. However considerable increases in cost pressures were also anticipated, arising primarily from staff costs and utilities. In the longer term, there was pressure to continue to achieve more with less cost.

Court requested further information on pension provision adjustments. It was noted that this would be reliant on forthcoming valuation processes due in March 2023.

Court discussed the financial and operational challenges of sustainable student number growth in the context of needing to develop and maintain the University’s educational quality alongside estates, infrastructure and staffing considerations. The focus on generating cash surplus was intended to support investment and sustainable growth.

**Court noted** that the University was well-placed to respond to the government’s ambition in relation to NHS workforce planning, due to strong relationships, the expansion of Allied Health Professionals programmes and capital investments.

**Court received and noted** the Financial Statements for 2021-2022.

23/M6 **CIVIC UNIVERSITIES AGREEMENT – UNIVERSITIES PARTNERSHIP**

**Court received** a presentation by the University’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professional Services), Kerry Law.

Universities Partnership was civic universities agreement with De Montfort University and Loughborough University alongside five local authorities (Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland, Oadby and Charnwood). The partnership had been formally launched in 2022 and included collaboration with local initiatives such as the NHS Heroes Ball, Leicestershire Live Education Awards, the Lord Lieutenant’s Awards and the Diwali Festival.

The partnership was contextualised within the Our Citizens theme of the University Strategy, and the University’s heritage of kindness. It aimed to tap into the greater recognition of the civic role of universities through the establishment of the national Civic University Network backed by the Department for Education.

For Leicester, the benefits of the partnership would be to ensure the University’s world-class research and education benefits the region, to drive community-led improvements in society, to achieve more through collaboration (while retaining distinct identities), to attract funding and opportunities to the region and to shape and influence policy.

Four regional challenges had been identified – financial environment, community tensions, skills gaps and sustainability (net zero) targets). Emerging projects in procurement partnership, international place marketing, graduate retention and student mental health partnership pathways were highlighted. The importance of securing external funding in a challenging economic climate was emphasised.

The priorities for 2023 were to respond to local priority challenges, seek external funding, expand the coalition of partners and broaden engagement, raise the profile of the partnership and to deliver and evidence impact.

Court requested to be kept updated on progress and any opportunities for members to contribute. Engagement within local communities would continue to be vital at the level of individual programmes as well as at an institutional level.

23/M7 **CHANCELLOR’S CLOSING REMARKS**

Drawing on the theme of civic engagement, the Chancellor expressed pride in the University’s local achievements and relationships, noting the economic advantages for Leicester of having two distinct universities who were prepared to work together within the city and across the wider region.

The Chancellor expressed his personal thanks to the University community for its support during his tenure.

The Chancellor thanked Court for the opportunity to serve the University and wished it, and his successor as Chancellor, every success for the future.

CHAIR

Duration of meeting: 1hr 30 mins

Appendix

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**MEETING OF COURT**

**Friday 10 February 2023**

**Apologies**

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| Mr G Acquah | Mr B Hindocha |
| Mr P Bateman | Ms R Jenkins |
| Mr K Beaumont | Mr J Kapasi |
| Dr R Bettles | Mr M Kapur |
| Mr P Bhojani | Mr C King |
| Dr M Chamberlain | Dr D Luckett |
| Mr J Chandarana | Mr A Mamujee |
| Mr P Cottingham | Ms L Perham |
| Ms C Ellis | Mr C Ramsey |
| Mr J Foster | Mr H Stevenson |
| Dr S Furness | Dr P Sykes |
| Mr H Ghelani | Mr R Tapp |
| Mr B Hellyer | Mr M Turnbull |
| Dr R Hake | Mrs C Wigley |
| Mr M Hindle | Mr D Woodhead |