

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

25 November 2020

MINUTES

Author:	Ms Alison Jones, University Secretary, 26 November 2020
Present:	Mr Jonathan Thornton (Chair), Mr Bernard Ainsworth, Mr Delroy Beverley, Professor Paul Bissell, Mr Robert Cox, Professor Bob Cryan, Mr Rhys Davies, Mr Mark Fisher, Mrs Virginia Lloyd, Ms Tonya Magennis, Mr Adetayo Opankunle, Baroness Kathryn Pincock, Mrs Helen Thomson, Professor Isobel Pollock-Hulf, Professor Tim Thornton
In attendance:	Professor Andrew Ball, Mr Tim Hosker, Ms Alison Jones, Mr Andrew McConnell, Mrs Siobhan Moss, Professor Jane Owen- Lynch, Mr Mike Redfern (Grant Thornton), Professor Alistair Sambell, Professor Dave Taylor, Mrs Tracey Taylor
Apologies:	There were no apologies

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

PAPER REFERENCE

The representative from Grant Thornton and members of the Executive were welcomed to the meeting.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor declared an interest in item 18 (the Annual Remuneration Report).

2. MAJOR ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Review of Performance against the 2025 Strategy Map

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor, and members of the Executive, delivered a detailed presentation on progress towards the achievement of the KPIs in the 2025 Strategy Map. Members were reminded of the extensive consultation involving the whole of the University community and of the drafting process leading up to approval by Council in July 2019. Members also noted that the annual review was based on a substantiated self-assessment by each Executive lead against the agreed KPI trajectory to 2025 which had been challenged at a range of University and Council committees, including scrutiny at Senate and Audit Committee, before being presented at Council

Council considered the proposed RAG-rating (having been reminded of the colour coding rationale) for each of the KPIs under the six Strategy Map themes as follows:



- 2.2 In response to a member's question on the University's performance relating to Top 300 partnerships, it was reported that many projects funded in early 2020 to support this KPI had stalled with the advent of Covid and that a discussion on how future funding should be employed would feature as part of this year's planning round. With regard to the financial performance of Schools and Services, the apparent contradiction between the Times Higher World Rankings and the financial performance of one School in particular

was queried. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the sector as a whole was experiencing declining applications in this subject area, coupled with the challenges presented by local Russell Group and Conservatoire competitors; it was noted that the University was working closely with the School in terms of cost savings and new, innovative provision.

- 2.3 [REDACTED] The importance of monitoring the wellbeing of the workforce in light of the challenges in HE and increasing unemployment was raised and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that staff wellbeing/absence was a standing item at the Business Continuity Management Group agenda, which continued to meet weekly, and that HR initiatives were resulting in high levels of staff availability at present. It was agreed to revisit the reduced cost per transaction in HR processes and the impact on the user experience at a future meeting.
- 2.4 Members queried the likely impact of the global pandemic in the medium term, to which the Vice-Chancellor responded that, [REDACTED] the overall trajectory by 2025 should be achievable. Following detailed deliberation, members resolved to **approve** the KPI trajectory and RAG-rated summary as presented, in line with the Audit Committee's recommendation.

Professor Andrew Ball, Mrs Siobhan Moss, Professor Alistair Sambell and Professor Dave Taylor left the meeting.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes and confidential supplement of the meeting held on 2 July 2020 be accepted as a correct record.

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4. MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 5.1 The Chair reminded members of their responsibilities as a collective body and not as representatives for any group external to, or within, the University. It was also emphasised that deliberations were confidential to the extent that they were not represented in the open minutes to allow for full and frank discussions and to facilitate effective decision-making.

6. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- 6.1 Council was briefed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning on the arrangements for moving to online teaching from 8 December to the end of term, noting that the lateral flow Covid testing centre for staff and students would be operational as of Monday 30 November. The ability to meet demand was queried and it was reported that the daily target should be achievable, particularly since the University had a considerable proportion of commuter students. Government guidance on the return to campus in January was still awaited; the University intended to continue its blended approach next term and to operate the test centre on a continuous basis post-Christmas. It was noted that the government had asked universities to consider extending access to the test centre to smaller HEIs and local colleges and that the University would take a view on this once capacity levels were known.

6.2 The Vice-Chancellor updated members on a wide range of news from around the University, including:

- Dr Hamid Merchant and Dr Syed Shahzad Hasan from the School of Applied Sciences have commissioned research into the use of steroids and risk of infections, especially viral infections of the upper respiratory tract, following the warning from the World Health Organisation that steroids could reduce immunity.
- Professor Dame Jane Jiang would be leading a £5.5m research project to create production line nanoscale error sensors. The new nanophotonic sensors, capable of ultra-accurate measurement on a nanoscale, will enable automated production lines to detect and correct errors in situ and deliver greater production efficiency and cost savings.
- A long-term £5m+ project, led by Professor Adrian Wood, was helping rural communities in Ethiopia make a sustainable living from its precious forests, using the latest technology to facilitate data analysis by Dr Hwang and the Community Conservation of Wild Coffee and Natural Forest Management (CCWCNF) Team. The latest development was the use of high-resolution satellite images to track changes in the forest over time. University funding would enable the development of 3D maps of the forest to estimate the number of coffee bushes without the need for counting on the ground.
- The University's Institute of Railway Research (IRR) has launched the £1.8m Smart Rolling Stock Maintenance project to improve the maintenance of the UK's railway rolling stock, following the award of a grant from the European Regional Development Fund, supported by the Northern Powerhouse.
- The University was one of just five universities in the country selected by Health Education England to pioneer a new 'blended learning' programme designed to introduce digital training skills to solve the country's nursing shortage
- The Global Disaster Resilience Centre has been awarded £166k by the prestigious Newton Fund for a project centred on pandemic planning. The project, 'Improving COVID-19 and pandemic preparedness and response' through a multi-hazard early warning system, builds upon the award-winning work on tsunamis already conducted by the Centre and will help Sri Lanka and the wider region to better prepare, respond and recover from disruptions caused by pandemic threats.
- Professor Jessica Malay, a leading contemporary authority on Lady Anne Clifford, recently discovered the full extent of the Great Lady's library whilst researching at Oxford's Bodleian Library as a Sassoon Visiting Fellow.
- A major biography of the poet and novelist Sylvia Plath, entitled *Red Comet: The Short and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath* by the American scholar and University Professor of Contemporary Poetry, Heather Clark, has received critical acclaim.
- The University has signed Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC) which helps universities to improve the representation, progression and success of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff and students within higher education. As part of its commitment, within the next three years, the University would be applying for a Bronze Award by developing initiatives and solutions to improve race equality across the University.
- Nick Hardiker, Professor of Nursing and Health Informatics and Associate Dean (Research and Enterprise) has been selected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) for his work to

improve nursing practice and care through better information management.

- Dr Georgina Blakeley and Dr Vanessa Taylor have been named as National Teaching Fellows in recognition of being innovative and outstanding teachers. The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), run by Advance HE, is the most prestigious individual award for teaching excellence in higher education.
- The Ni3 Centre, which uses its research to develop and evaluate computer games as educational tools for violence prevention in the aim of ending gender-based violence across the world, was recently awarded \$750,000 from the United Nations' prestigious Fund to End Violence Against Children. The Centre's Director, Professor Adele Jones, was recently celebrated by the Southbank Centre, the UK's largest arts centre in an outdoor exhibition entitled Phenomenal Women: Portraits of UK Black Female Professors.
- Mechanical engineering graduate, Harvey Kangley won the Future Innovators category at the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) Awards for his work with local firm Associated Utility Supplies (AUS). The University and AUS have collaborated to develop and deliver innovative projects that could lead to improved level crossing safety and infrastructure on the UK's railways.
- The China Scholarship Council conferred upon music graduate, Dr Xueyang Fang, the highest award possible to a home student who has studied overseas. Known as the 'Chinese Government Award for Outstanding Self-financed Students Abroad', the award was in recognition of 'her remarkable achievements' within music archaeology, under the supervision of Professor Rupert Till.
- University art graduate, Frank To, has been appointed UK official artist ambassador to IM Swedish Development Partner. In partnership with IM Swedish Development Partner, Swedish sustainable and social impact start-up, A Good Company, has launched the world's first pen made from Humanium Metal, a special element made from upcycled illegal firearms. To has been commissioned to create artwork to be sold to raise funds for projects supporting survivors and violence-prevention programmes.
- New figures compiled by Government statisticians show how the University's students are among those most likely to land jobs or go on to further study soon after graduation. A wide range of courses, from healthcare to history, English studies and the performing arts are at or near the top of the table for employability or further study.

7. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

7.1 The University Secretary briefed members on a range of governance matters which had been considered by the Governance and Membership Committee at its meeting on 11 November 2020, including:

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- The conclusion of the initial review of the new CUC HE Code of Governance and the intention for the University Secretary, assisted by the Vice-Chair of Council, to conduct a more detailed desktop review of the University's compliance with the Code, the findings of which would be reported at the March 2021 meeting.
- The outcome of the recent in-house Governance Effectiveness Review, together with the Governance Action Plan which had been updated to include actions resulting from the Review, together with feedback from the annual one to one discussions between Council members and the Chair.

- The positive findings of the review of the Estates and Finance Committee's effectiveness after its first year of operation, which demonstrated proper scrutiny of the financial elements of its remit.

7.2 Members considered the University Secretary's review of the Audit Committee Terms of Reference against the recently published CUC Audit Code of Practice and resolved to **approve** further (non-substantive) revisions to bring them completely in line with the new Code.

7.3 Following the earlier approval of revised processes relating to the appointment of staff members on Council, the University Secretary reported on the outcome of the nominations run by Senate over the summer for an academic member of staff and a member of general staff. Members resolved to **approve** the Governance and Membership Committee's recommendation to make the following Council and committee appointments:

- Professor Jessica Malay - academic staff member on Council; and
- Mr Krish Pilicudale - general staff member on Council and member of the Honorary Awards Committee.

7.4 Following discussions at the Council Strategy away day in October, the University Secretary briefed members on the University's work with the Ministry of the Interior in Libya, providing assurance on the legal, tax, and due diligence work undertaken by the University.

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FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

8. YEAR END ACCOUNTS AND PROCECURES

8.1



8.2 The Director of Finance highlighted the adjustments since the latest set of management accounts, together with three inconsequential control recommendations and three non-material unadjusted items. Members noted that the most significant balance sheet movement was an increase in the pension liability though this had been offset by gains in the cyclical 5-year Estates revaluation. It was reported that a more detailed analysis of the impact on the University's finances would be presented to the Estates and Finance Committee in March 2021. In response to a member's question on the impact of a zero-pay award on the lower paid members of staff, the Vice-chancellor confirmed that the University was committed to pay the living wage.

8.3 **Financial Statements for University subsidiaries:** the accounts for the University of Huddersfield Enterprises Ltd and the Huddersfield Enterprise and Innovation Centre Ltd (HEICL) were noted. Whilst observing that HEICL had returned a surplus for the third consecutive year, Council agreed to continue the University's financial support until at least November 2021 and **authorised** the Chair of Council to sign a letter addressed to Grant Thornton to that effect.

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8.4 **Financial Guarantees:** members reviewed the financial guarantees for the year to 31 July 2020, which remained unchanged from the previous year.

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8.5 **External Audit Findings:** the external auditors presented their Audit Findings

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for the University and its subsidiaries (including the University's responses). Council resolved to **approve** the Audit Findings, as recommended by the Audit Committee.

- 8.6 Letter of Representation:** the Chair was **authorised** to sign the letter to Grant Thornton on management representations on behalf of the University Council, noting a minor amendment since the Council papers had been issued to members. UC_2020_11_25_P8.5
- 8.7 Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion:** members considered the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion, noting the endorsement of the Audit Committee at its November meeting. UC_2020_11_25_P8.6
- 8.8 Audit Committee Annual Report:** the Chair of Audit Committee presented the Committee's Annual Report for the 2019/20 academic year, acknowledging the support of the external and auditors. The positive opinions on risk management control and governance, VFM and quality assurance of data as well as the new opinion on sustainability (in line with the new CUC HE Audit Committee Code of Practice) were noted. Council resolved to **authorise** the Chair to sign the Audit Committee Annual Report. UC_2020_11_25_P8.7
- 8.9 Financial Statements for the year to 31 July 2020:** members endorsed the Report of the University Council (which had been subjected to the usual scrutiny by the internal auditors) and resolved to **approve** the Financial Statements, and to **authorise** the Chair and the Vice-Chancellor to sign them on behalf of the University Council. Members congratulated the Executive on their excellent financial management. UC_2020_11_25_P8.8

The representative from Grant Thornton left the meeting.

9. FINANCIAL FORECAST

- 9.1** Members noted that, whilst the Office for Students (OfS) had announced earlier in the year that it would be restricting the Financial Forecast to years one to three in light of Covid-19, the guidance was subsequently changed on 9 September 2020 to reinstate the original forecast years, together with the requirement to submit an interim financial return (not requiring Council approval) which had been successfully submitted to the OfS before the deadline of 30 October 2020. UC_2020_11_25_P9.2
- 9.2** The Director of Finance reminded Council of the provisional budget for 2020/21 previously agreed at the July 2020 Council meeting and presented the subsequent revisions, mainly relating to tuition fee income, depreciation and changes to the University's Estates Capital Plan, together with the following assumptions for the 2021/22 Forecast:

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Members noted that the University was proposing to submit the Annual Financial Return to the OfS in December rather than by the later February 2021 deadline. The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee confirmed that the Committee had considered the Financial Forecast in detail at its meeting on 13 November 2020 and was supportive of the proposals, noting the improved position since former approval in July.

- 9.3** Council resolved to **approve** the Financial Forecast 2020/25 for onward submission to the OfS.

10. STUDENTS' UNION ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31 JULY 2020

- 10.1 Council received the HSU Financial Statements, noting the positive result in spite of commercial activities being severely curtailed as a consequence of the Covid-19 lockdown. UC_2020_11_25_P10

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY

11. HESES RETURN, APPLICATIONS, ENROLMENTS AND RETENTION

- 11.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor updated Council members on student recruitment performance and acknowledged the contribution of the University community in achieving the improved position for September 2020 entry. Progress in retention was also reported, due to a substantial reduction in withdrawals compared with last year and the professionalism of the student body in responding to the pandemic was recognised. Looking forward to September 2021 entry, it was noted that delayed decision-making across the sector was impacting on current application levels. When queried on the changes in the UCAS offer process, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that since, under the proposed new scheme, offers would be made only once applicants' results were known, this would require the University to become even better at cultivating the relationship between applicants and the institution and promoting the benefits of studying at Huddersfield. UC_2020_11_25_P11

12. ESTATE MATTERS

- 12.1 The Acting Director for Estates and Facilities provided an update on the potential acquisition of the Southgate site.*
- 12.2 [REDACTED] UC_2020_11_25_P12.1
- 12.3 The Acting Director of Estates and Facilities updated members on a range of capital projects, acquisitions and disposals outlined in **Paper UC_2020_11_25_P12.2** UC_2020_11_25_P12.2

The Acting Director of Estates and Facilities left the meeting.

INSPIRING

13. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

- 13.1 The HSU President presented the highlights since the last Council meeting, particularly: UC_2020_11_25_P13
- the Strategic Plan results for the 2019/20 academic year and targets for 2020/21;
 - key achievements including:
 - record engagement levels in clubs and societies with a 15% increase against 2018/19, despite the current pandemic;
 - a 30% increase in students voting in the elections;
 - the issue of over 900 transcripts to committee members, academic representatives and volunteers in the Students' Union providing formal accreditation for the skills they had gained.

- an increase in the National Student Survey score, rising to 63%, compared with a National average of 55.9%, placing HSU in the top quartile; and
 - support for students through the Covid-19 crisis from the Advice Centre (which experienced a 55% increase in academic enquiries) including lobbying for rent refunds and the creation of a “safety net” policy for students.
- an update on Officer priorities including student VFM, work on campus facilities and social space development, equality in education, inclusivity, accommodation, sustainability and student wellbeing; and
 - the impact of Covid-19 on Welcome Week events, the successful digital livestream “HSU Big Night Out” event, attendance by over 2,500 students at the online induction talks and efforts to ensure academic representatives in place by the end of October (440 representatives, over 130 of whom were trained).

The Vice-Chair of Council requested feedback on how students were coping with the pandemic to which the HSU President responded that positive feedback had been received regarding the University’s arrangements for students returning home for the Christmas break. The low reporting of cases on campus was noted which was attributed to staff and students working in partnership and adhering to the safety precautions in place.

14. ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

- 14.1 Members considered the annual Academic Governance Report, key elements of which included:

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- additional assurance around the University’s response to maintain academic standards during Covid-19;
- processes to safeguard integrity and standards in the area of graduate outcomes;
- a summary of external examiner reports;
- annual evaluations;
- thematic reviews;
- changes to the University’s portfolio;
- student feedback and engagement mechanisms; and
- trends in student casework.

In response to a query, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning confirmed that the vast majority of withdrawn courses were simply as a result of name changes and/or refreshed content; it was agreed that additional context to reflect this should be incorporated in future reports. Council resolved to **approve** the Report, as recommended by Senate and the Governance and Membership Committee.

15. DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

- 15.1 In view of the range of degree apprenticeships offered by the University (largely in the School of Human and Health Sciences), Council was briefed on the change in the inspection regime and governance for such programmes and noted that, as of 1 April 2021, OFSTED would assume sole responsibility for the inspection of apprenticeship training provision at all levels.

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16. REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY

- 16.1 Members reviewed, and resolved to **approve**, the annual report on compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, which detailed the University's approach to research integrity and its research environment. UC_2020_11_25_P16

PEOPLE FIRST

17. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

- 17.1 Council **approved** the University's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework, as recommended by the EDI Committee, noting that all EDI themes, both staff and student related, were now consolidated in this single Framework. In response to a query on whether Council should nominate a member to champion EDI matters, members agreed on the importance of maintaining Council's collective responsibility for this key area and to support the Executive in embedding the Framework. UC_2020_11_25_P17

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning left the meeting. The Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary also stepped out of the meeting at this point

18. ANNUAL REMUNERATION REPORT

- 18.1 Members considered and **approved** the Annual Remuneration Report from the Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee which provided assurance to Council that the Committee had effectively discharged its responsibilities, having had sight of detailed comparator information, and that the remuneration of the Vice-Chancellor was set at an appropriate level,. UC_2020_11_25_P18

The Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary re-joined the meeting.

19. ANNUAL PREVENT REPORT

- 19.2 Council reviewed the Annual Prevent Report (which included additional commentary around Covid-19 this year), the associated data return, accountability statement and the Prevent Risk Register. Members **approved** the Prevent Report and **authorised** the Chair of Council to sign the Prevent annual accountability statement for onward submission to the OfS, together with the data return, as recommended by the Audit Committee. UC_2020_11_25_P19

20. HONORARY AWARDS

- 20.1 **Resolved:** to approve six nominations for honorary awards as recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee and Senate. Members were asked to keep the names of those proposed as strictly confidential until formally announced by the University.*

OTHER COUNCIL MATTERS

21. RE-APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

- 21.1 In line with the Audit Committee's recommendation, Council resolved to **approve** the re-appointment of Grant Thornton for the year ending 31 July 2021 and that a tender exercise take place in the New Year with a view to making an external auditor appointment for subsequent years by the July Council meeting. UC_2020_11_25_P21

22. ANNUAL WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT

- 21.1 Members received the Annual Whistleblowing Report which had also been presented to the University's Senior Leadership Team, Senate and Audit Committee. It was reported that, following discussions at the recent Audit Committee meeting, the broader context of how the whistleblowing procedures dovetailed with other University procedures would be incorporated into next year's report. UC_2020_11_25_P22

23. COMMITTEE MINUTES

- 23.1 The minutes of the following meetings were noted: UC_2020_11_25_P23

Audit Committee, 24 September and 12 November 2020
Estates & Finance Committee, 25 September and 13 November 2020
Governance & Membership Committee, 11 November 2020
Honorary Awards Committee, 15 October 2020
Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee, 4 July 2020
Senior Staff Remuneration Advisory Committee, 4 July 2020
A summary of the Senate meeting on 4 November 2020.

24. UNIVERSITY SEAL

- 24.1 The application of the seal since the last meeting was noted, together with the outcome of the recent audit of the Seal Register following a change in the University's approach in reporting such matters to Council. UC_2020_11_25_P24

OTHER BUSINESS

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 25.1 There was no other business

26. AVAILABILITY OF AGENDA, PAPERS AND MINUTES

- 26.1 **Resolved:** to exclude the following papers from the open version under Standing order 11.8.

Agenda item 7	Governance Matters – Appendices B and C only	UC_2020_11_25_P7.1
	MSc Forensic Science – Ministry of the Interior, Libya	UC_2020_11_25_P7.2
Agenda item 8	Letter of Support for HEICL	UC_2020_11_25_P8.2
	Financial Guarantees	UC_2020_11_25_P8.3
	External Audit Findings	UC_2020_11_25_P8.4
	Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion	UC_2020_11_25_P8.5
	Audit Committee Annual Report	UC_2020_11_25_P8.6
	Financial Statements – summary and commentary only	UC_2020_11_25_P8.8
Agenda item 9	Financial Forecast	UC_2020_11_25_P9.2
Agenda item 10	Students' Union Accounts for the Year to 31 July 2020	UC_2020_11_25_P10
Agenda item 11	HESES return, Applications, Enrolments and Retention	UC_2020_11_25_P11
Agenda item 12	Revised Capital Plan	UC_2020_11_25_P12.1
	Capital Projects, Acquisitions and Disposals	UC_2020_11_25_P12.2
Agenda item 14	Annual Report on Academic Governance	UC_2020_11_25_P14
Agenda item 16	Report on the Concordat to Support Research Integrity	UC_2020_11_25_P16
Agenda item 18	Annual Remuneration Report	UC_2020_11_25_P18
Agenda item 19	Prevent Duty Annual Accountability Return 2020	UC_2020_11_25_P19

27. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday 25 February 2021, Strategy Day (exact details to be confirmed)
Thursday 19 March 2021, 13.00 in the Boardroom, Student Central

(* = Further details in the Confidential Supplement to these minutes, excluded under Standing Order 11.8)