The Chair welcomed Miss Millie Avery, the new Huddersfield Students’ Union President, to the meeting.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. MAJOR ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Student Matters

2.1 The former Huddersfield Students’ Union (HSU) President and SU President presented members with an overview of the impact of the current cost-of-living crisis on students at the University, and highlighted the following:

- Research undertaken by the HSU indicated that a significant proportion of current students were concerned about debt and having enough money for essentials. This was statistically more concerning for commuter students.
- Recent government interventions to help lower income households with the cost-of-living crisis neglected to provide students with additional support. Student maintenance loans had not increased in line with inflation to address rising bills.
- In response to rising costs, the HSU had produced a cost-of-living crisis booklet for students detailing matters such as cooking on a budget.
- Students were likely to spend increasingly more time on campus to save money on bills and obtain hot food.
- Placement students would be disproportionately more affected by increased travel costs.
- The availability of part-time job opportunities that facilitated being able to study and work was becoming increasingly challenging.
- Information provided by the University to International students on the cost of living in the UK needed updating.
- The various strategies that the HSU had planned for 2022/23 to address some of these issues, working alongside the University to
ensure that students were fully aware of the financial support available, and to continue lobbying regional and national bodies to make sure that the needs of students were not overlooked.

Ms Tonya Magennis joined the meeting.

2.2 Members queried whether there had been a significant increase in the number of students receiving the University’s hardship funding, and what steps had been taken to assist students in meeting rising utilities costs. It was confirmed that there had been an increase in demand for this type of funding in response to rising rents and bills.

2.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor briefed members on the costs of a standard room provided by DIGS, the University’s accommodation provider of choice, confirming that it had the accolade of being the best value student accommodation in the country. The University would continue to work closely alongside the HSU to ensure that students were aware of the available financial support mechanisms, and to continue promoting student common rooms as welcoming areas for students to spend time in and facilitate the provision of hot meals via microwaves.

2.4 Members noted that the University’s attendance monitoring systems would continue to be used proactively to ascertain where non-attendance was a result of non-academic issues, including financial difficulties.

3. MINUTES

3.1 Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March, and associated confidential supplement, be accepted as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Outcome of Initial Teacher Training bid (item 2.3) – the Vice-Chancellor reported that two thirds of the bids submitted nationally to continue delivering initial Teacher Training had been unsuccessful in the first round.

5. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

5.1 There were no specific items of business.

6. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

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

➢ The very positive National Student Survey 2022 results that had shown a marked improvement across all areas. The Vice-Chancellor thanked all staff and students for their hard work in achieving these scores and commented that item 10 on the agenda would include further detail on the results.

➢ Success in the recent REF 2021 exercise, placing the University within the top 50 (out of 157) institutions for research power.

➢ Being ranked within the world’s top 10 institutions for reducing inequalities in the Times Higher’s Impact Rankings 2022.
➢ Receiving the Queen’s Award for Enterprise in International Trade.
➢ Professor Heather Clark, the University's Professor of Contemporary Poetry, had been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2022.
➢ Dr Mayo Olajide had led a research team that demonstrated how the induction of brain inflammation accounts for neurological damage in COVID-19 patients.
➢ Professor Catherine Johnson had been named as one of the experts advising the UK Government on the evolution of the digital media landscape.
➢ A collaboration between the University and Pendle Polymer Engineering has been classed as 'Outstanding' by Innovate UK.
➢ Coterie, a partner strategy and execution specialist, had been awarded a £194k Management Knowledge Transfer Partnership by Innovate UK.
➢ The Mark Hinchliffe Ted Hughes collection had been acquired by the University for Heritage Quay.
➢ The Minister of State for Transport, Andrew Stephenson MP, recently opened the new test facilities within the Centre of Excellence in Rolling Stock, within the Institute of Railway Research.
➢ A foundation stone for the new Jo Cox More In Common Centre had been unveiled by Kim Leadbeater MP and other members of Jo Cox’s family.
➢ A new eye clinic, University Valli Opticians, would shortly open at the University, offering a full optometry service to the public.
➢ Professor Tim Thornton’s research on the murder of the Princes in the Tower had featured in the BBC documentary *Lucy Worsley Investigates*.

6.2 The Vice-Chancellor briefed members on staffing changes in the School of Arts and Humanities. Members were informed that there had been some negative media coverage regarding the proposed changes to staffing within the School of Arts and Humanities. The University Secretary confirmed that all due processes were being observed, and members were assured that all internal policies concerning consultation with the Trade Unions and staff had been followed correctly.

6.3 Council noted that the Senior Executive would include consideration of communications to members of Council should the University be subject to any adverse media coverage.

6.4 Members were invited to contact the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Human Resources outside of the meeting with any further queries.

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 23 June 2022, including:

➢ Proposals for new Council membership.
➢ Proposals to enhance governor engagement. Members were asked to provide any feedback following the recent visit to the Institute for Railway Research to the University Secretary, alongside suggestions for future activities.
➢ The outcome of the annual Prevent return.
➢ Amendments to the University’s Freedom of Speech Policy.
➢ Updates from the Office for Students (OfS). The University’s Scheme of Delegation would be reviewed and updated in response...
to OfS guidance and brought forward for approval to Audit Committee and University Council in the autumn.
  ➢ The application of the University Seal since the last meeting.

7.2 Council members considered the amendments to the Freedom of Speech Policy and resolved to approve them.

7.3 The University Secretary confirmed that the proposed new Council member appointments had been considered in the context of the existing Skills Matrix and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion metrics. Members resolved to approve the following appointments with effect from 1 August 2022 for an initial three-year term of office:
  ➢ the appointment of Mrs Clare Morrow to University Council, including as an external member of Honorary Awards Committee;  
  ➢ the appointment of Mr Paul Leigh as a co-opted member of Audit Committee.

8. EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

8.1 The University Secretary reminded members that the review had been commissioned by Council in line with CUC Guidance. A Steering Group compromising several Council members had been established to work with Advance HE during the process, and regular reports had been received by Governance and Membership Committee. This Committee had considered the report at its June meeting and noted that the University’s governance arrangements had been found to be effective and efficient and compliant with the CUC Code.

8.2 University Council thanked the University Secretary and the Steering Group for its work in coordinating the review before considering the report’s recommendations and suggestions, which were designed to facilitate continued enhancement as no matters of poor practice or non-compliance had been found by the reviewers. Members supported the recommendation to increase student representation within its membership. The overall size and composition of University Council would be evaluated as part of the work undertaken in response to the report.

8.3 Council members agreed that the University Secretary would develop a governance action plan that focused on those areas that aligned with the University’s strategic priorities. This plan would be presented to the next meeting of Governance and Membership Committee, prior to consideration at the November meeting of University Council.

8.4 The recommendation within the CUC Code of Governance to undertake an external governance effectiveness review every three years was noted. Members agreed that this exercise would be conducted after four years in light of the confidence expressed in the University’s governance processes within the last two reviews.

INSPIRING:

9. STUDENTS’ UNION REPORT

9.1 The Students’ Union President updated members on a range of HSU activities, including:
➤ Student engagement activity, including the results of the recent Varsity competition with the University of Bradford, and other HSU society updates.
➤ Strategic planning for the next academic year.
➤ The Anti-Racism project.
➤ Issues affecting international students.

9.2 Members congratulated the SU team for its breadth of activities offered and queried if student engagement had increased following the return to campus. The SU President confirmed that engagement was returning to pre-pandemic levels, but that there was a shift in the type of events that were now popular. This would continue to be monitored.

10. HUDDERSFIELD STUDENT SURVEY 2022 RESULTS

10.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, briefed members on the internal Huddersfield Student Survey results for 2022, highlighting an overall satisfaction rating of 78.7% representing an improvement on the previous year. Significant improvements had also been made to Learning Community scores following the return to on-campus delivery.

10.2 Members received a presentation on the NSS 2022 results and congratulated the Senior Executive on the University’s move from the fourth to the second quartile for overall satisfaction scores. Notable improvements had been made across all question areas as well as in many individual subjects, and wider University-level projects to enhance aspects of course organisation and management (such as timetabling) continued to generate positive outcomes.

10.3 Council members congratulated the efforts of all University staff and HSU Sabbatical Officers in delivering the results for both surveys, and queried what steps were being taken to achieve an overall ranking within the top quartile nationally (as aligned with the University’s Strategy Map). The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, reported that several teaching and learning projects had been implemented that were producing positive outcomes on the overall student experience.

Ms Tonya Magennis left the meeting at this point, and Mrs Ruth Taylor joined the meeting. The following agenda item was taken out of order.

PEOPLE FIRST:

20. ANNUAL HR MONITORING REPORT

20.1 The Head of Human Resources summarised the main findings of the report, outlining several areas where notable progress had been made since the last monitoring exercise. It was noted that the data was not fully comparable with the previous report due to the impact of lockdowns on working patterns.

20.2 In response to a member query, it was confirmed that exit surveys were sent automatically to staff leavers to encourage increased participation. Council was assured by the actions taken concerning the Race Equality Charter, noting that the action plan produced in response to the external governance effectiveness review would consider matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, and human resources more widely, in greater depth.
Mrs Ruth Taylor left the meeting.

### INNOVATIVE:

#### 11. REF 2021 RESULTS

11.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor briefed members on the University's REF 2021 results, which indicated a positive increase in the range and quality of research conducted at the University. The University had submitted 70% of its academic staff to the exercise across an increased number of Units of Assessment (UoA), and this proportion was higher than in many other UK higher education institutions. The University’s research power rating was now in the top 50 nationally, with some UoA’s outranking Oxbridge in this category.

11.2 Members congratulated the Senior Executive on these results, and queried what plans were in place for the next exercise. The Vice-Chancellor reported that strategic investment had been made in specific research areas and designated projects, and additional areas may be bought in. The University planned to continue with its inclusive approach in submitting as many eligible staff as possible to the next REF.

### INTERNATIONAL:

#### 12. INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS, ENROLMENTS AND RETENTION

12.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the paper, reminding members of the improvement to international student enrolments compared with the previous year.

12.2

### GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY:

#### 13. HOME APPLICATIONS, ENROLMENTS AND RETENTION

13.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor briefed members on Home applications enrolments and retention data. Changes in applicant behaviour this year arising from the pandemic had resulted in delayed decision-making and consideration of alternative non-University routes to qualifications, and a corresponding increase in the number of 'In process' and 'no response' figures. However, attendance at recent Open Days had increased in comparison with the same point in 2021, and additional resource had been allocated for Clearing in anticipation of increased student activity during that period.
13.2 In response to member queries, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that detailed competitor data was not available, although January 2022 data from UCAS evidenced an overall decline in applications of 1% from across the UK sector. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University was continuing to monitor applications, enrolment and retention data in the context of its growth and efficiency performance indicators on the Strategy Map.

14. RE-APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITORS

14.1 Council resolved to approve the re-appointment of Uniac as the University’s internal audit service, as recommended by Audit Committee.

15. UPDATE ON SOUTHGATE DEVELOPMENT

15.1 The Vice-Chancellor briefed Council on the latest position regarding the costs of the Southgate project.* The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee reported that the project had been discussed in detail at its last meeting, where it had been agreed that the Executive considered the various options for moving forwards before presenting their preferred option to University Council.

15.2 After further discussion, members agreed that an updated budget and project timeline would be considered at the University Council Strategy Day in October. The Director of Estates and Facilities confirmed that BAM Construction had been appointed under a pre-construction agreement with a view to fixing materials prices by that point (subject to full planning approval being granted).

16. REVISED CAPITAL PLAN

16.1 The Director of Estates and Facilities identified changes to the existing Capital Plan and highlighted a small number of items that required approval (totalling £845k). The Chair of Estates and Finance Committee confirmed that these items had been considered at the recent meeting of the Committee, which had recommended approval.

15.2 University Council resolved to approve the £845k requested within the revised Capital Plan.

17. DIGITAL STRATEGY INVESTMENT PLAN

17.1 The Director of Digital Information reminded members that the Digital Strategy Investment Plan had been approved by Council in July 2019, subject to an annual requirement to approve the proceeding year’s budget. The plan was accompanied by a report detailing the various projects in operation.

17.2 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee reported that the Plan had been considered at its recent meeting where it had been recommended that approval of the annual digital strategy budget should be integrated into the University’s standard operational budgeting process.

17.3 Council resolved to approve the digital strategy budget for 2022/23, and to approve the integration of approving the digital strategy budget into the University’s operational budgeting processes starting September 2022.
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:

18. UNIVERSITY FINANCIAL STRATEGY

18.1 The Director of Finance confirmed that the University Financial Strategy had been reviewed, and no changes to the current Strategy were proposed.

18.2 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee confirmed that this Strategy had been considered at its recent meeting where it had been resolved to recommend no further revisions. Council resolved to approve the continued use of the current Financial Strategy.

19. ANNUAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

19.1 The Director of Finance presented the proposed budget for 2022/23, noting that a revised budget would be considered in November prior to submission to the QTS in December.

19.2 Council members received the indicative forecast for 2026-27, noting that continued uncertainty in pension liabilities would continue to impact on the overall balance sheet.

19.3 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee reported that this matter had been discussed in detail, and the Committee had recommended approval. University Council resolved to approve the annual revenue and capital budget.

PEOPLE FIRST:

20. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

21.1 Members noted the annual Health and Safety Report that had also been considered at the June meeting of Audit Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS:

21. COMMITTEE MINUTES

22.1 The minutes of the following meetings were noted:

Audit Committee, 9 June 2022
Estates and Finance Committee, 17 June 2022
Governance and Membership Committee, 23 June 2022
A summary of the Senate meeting held on 22 June 2022.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.1 Council members provided several suggestions in response to a request for feedback on the revised papers format. These included providing timings for individual agenda items, and highlighting reports that had been considered at Council Committees without generating substantive discussions at the start of the papers pack. The Chair requested that any additional feedback on the revised papers format be forwarded to the University Secretary.
23.2 Members noted that it was the last University Council meeting for Miss Natalie Stuart, out-going SU President, and wished her success in her future endeavours.

23. **AVAILABILITY OF AGENDA, PAPERS AND MINUTES**

24.1 **Resolved:** to exclude the following papers from the open version under Standing order 11.8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Matters Arising</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor’s Business</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>External Governance Effectiveness Review</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>International Applications, Enrolments and Retention</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Home Applications, Enrolments and Retention</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Update on Southgate Development</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Revised Capital Plan</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Digital Strategy Investment Plan</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Annual Revenue and Capital Budget</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Annual HR Monitoring Report</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Annual Health and Safety Report</td>
<td>UC_2022_07_07_P21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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24. **DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Tuesday, 4 October 2022 at 13:00 – Strategy Session (venue tbc)
Wednesday, 23 November 2022 at 13:00 (venue tbc)

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