

**UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
ASSEMBLY**

**OPEN MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10:00, MONDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2020
VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS LIVE EVENT**

Present	Professor Stuart Croft	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
	Sharon Tuersley	Secretary to Council
	Lara McCarthy	Head of Governance Services (Tech support)
	Jane Bryan	Reader, School of Law & a member of the Senate appointed by the Assembly
	Sophie Black	Assistant Registrar (Governance) (Tech Support)
	Becky Purnell	Administrator (Governance) (Tech Support)
	Emma Jeavons	Assistant Registrar (Governance) (Minute taker)
	Lauren McCleary	Administrative Officer (Governance (Minute taker)
	Members of the Assembly (121 members present including the above-listed)	

Ref	Item
001	<p>Welcome and Introductory Remarks</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members of the Assembly to the meeting and to those who were viewing the recording at a later date.</p> <p>They reported that the meeting had first been announced on Insite on Monday, 12 October and the draft Standing Orders of the Assembly (Option 1) were published online on the same date. Additional information about the meeting and voting process was published on Insite on Tuesday, 20 October. Finally, the agenda, motion, and associated documents were published online and communicated via Insite on Wednesday, 28 October.</p> <p>One motion had been brought forward for the Assembly's consideration: Amending the draft Standing Orders of the Assembly (Option 2). The motion would be presented, followed by proposed amendments to the motion, as submitted by the deadline of Friday, 23 October 2020 at 12.00pm. An online vote would then be carried out using an anonymous web form after the meeting.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor invited the Secretary to Council to set out housekeeping announcements.</p> <p>The Secretary to Council reported as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting was being run as a Microsoft Teams Live Event as it had not been possible to hold a socially distanced physical meeting at this time, as would be required due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. • They declared the meeting open. • The comments functionality would be enabled throughout the meeting to give everyone an opportunity to submit comments on the proposals and these would be collated at the end of the meeting. • Both the comments and a recording of the meeting would be published on Insite shortly after the meeting for all members of the Assembly to view. Any comments that went against the University's Equality & Diversity Policy would not be published. • Proposed amendments submitted before the deadline of Friday, 23 October 2020 at 12.00pm were being presented as part of the motion under item 005.
002	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that they had no further business.</p>
003	<p>Conflicts of interest</p> <p>No conflicts of interest had been declared ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>The Secretary to Council noted that the meeting related to the Standing Orders of the Assembly which related to all Assembly members. Any conflicts of interest were invited to be declared by using the comments function or via email to the Governance team after the meeting.</p>

004	<p>Standing Orders of the Assembly</p> <p>The Secretary to Council reminded members that the Assembly was not a decision-making body of the University, rather, it could make recommendations to the Council and Senate. It was confirmed that the Assembly may however approve its own Standing Orders.</p> <p>The meeting was taking place as a Microsoft Teams Live Event as it had not been possible to hold a socially distanced physical meeting at present, therefore a number of the procedural elements under the current Standing Orders did not apply.</p>
005	<p>Motion to the Assembly: Amendments to the Standing Orders of the Assembly</p> <p>The Assembly received the motion to amend the Standing Orders of the Assembly (005-A021120).</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor invited the Secretary to Council to present an overview of the motion moved.</p> <p><u>The Motion – Option 1</u></p> <p>The Secretary to Council, as Proposer of the draft Standing Orders of the Assembly (005a-A021120), introduced the key points of the motion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standing Orders had been updated to ensure that the purpose of the Assembly as a democratic, non-decision making body, representing all staff's interests, was clearly understood and accessible to everyone. • Essentially, the Standing Orders encapsulated the same intent of the previous Standing Orders, in a simplified and understandable way, and addressed out of date content to ensure a wide representation of views from across the University. • They had also been updated to include a straightforward and practical process that guaranteed meetings of the Assembly could continue online and that all of Warwick's 7,000 staff, irrespective of the areas they worked in or situations they found themselves in, could exercise democracy and have a say on matters that affected them, the University, and the campus. <p>On that basis the Secretary to Council asked that:</p> <p>This Assembly noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Standing Orders of the Assembly, as published on Insite on 12 October 2020, set out the purpose of the Assembly and provided a process by which the Assembly could meet online. <p>This Assembly believed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Standing Orders of the Assembly would ensure the purpose and processes of the Assembly, whether meeting physically or virtually, were up to date and widely understood by all its members. <p>This Assembly resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Standing Orders of the Assembly, as published on Insite on 12 October 2020, and the process by which the Assembly could meet online were recommended to the Assembly for approval. <p><u>Amendments – Option 2</u></p> <p>The proposer of the amendments to the Draft Standing Orders of the Assembly, Jane Bryan, Reader – School of Law and a member of the Senate appointed by the Assembly, (005b-A021120), read out a pre-prepared statement, copied, without any amendments, below (for clarity, references to “Sharon” are to Sharon Tuersley, Secretary to Council):</p> <p><i>“Introduction</i></p> <p><i>My name is Jane Bryan and I am a Reader in the School of Law and I am one of the six Assembly representatives on Senate. Together with my fellow Assembly rep, Dr Gavin Swartz-Leeper (Deputy Head of the School for Cross-faculty Studies: Liberal Arts), who has seconded this motion, and with the full support of my fellow Assembly reps, Paul Trimmer, Dr Naomi Waltham-Smith and Professor Saul Jacka, collectively representing academic and professional services staff at Senate, we feel we must oppose the proposed amendments to the Assembly</i></p>

Standing Orders put forward by Sharon Tuersley, Secretary to Council, and Lara McCarthy (amendments called Option 1).

My fellow Assembly reps and I have spoken out because we see the amendments under Option 1 as measures whose main effect will be to limit the democratic power of the Assembly: by restricting its ability to meet and thereby weakening its ability to speak collectively to the senior management of the University.

We can see no credible justification for some of the changes proposed in Option 1 other than to limit the voice of staff members.

As Assembly representatives we felt these Amendments under Option 1 – and their potentially silencing effect upon the Assembly - needed to be challenged and openly debated and an alternative set of amendments – Option 2 - offered that sought to protect – rather than limit - the voice of staff members.

Who are the Assembly?

The Assembly is the only formal body that can influence decision-making in the University to which all staff members belong and in which all staff members can participate.

What is its value?

Whilst other Universities have done away with their Assemblies, Warwick's was celebrated in a thorough review in 2017 for its crucial role in providing (and I quote the report of the Assembly Working Group) 'a unique and valued mechanism for informed debate that enables all staff to influence decision making in the University' (Report of the Assembly Working Group 2017 page 4).

The Assembly performs that role – not by regular meetings – but by giving power to its members to call for a meeting when members feel a meeting is needed.

As stated in section 4 of Statute 9: 'The Chair of the Assembly [that is the Vice-Chancellor] will summon a meeting at the request of not fewer than twenty-five members'.

It is these meetings of the Assembly - called by ordinary staff members - that ensure all staff can engage with 'Senate, Council and the University's senior management' – again as noted by the Assembly Working Group (Report of the Assembly Working Group June 2017, page 2).

So why are Assembly reps on Senate so troubled by the proposed amendments in Option 1?

During times of contentment, or relative contentment, members do not usually feel the need to meet and speak out about the policies of University Senior Management but the value of the Assembly is there – lying dormant – to come awake when times are turbulent – issues difficult and opinions divided – to enable ordinary staff members to meet and debate and make their views known.

It is hard to believe it is a coincidence that it is at this point – in the middle of a pandemic – when hard decisions have to be made - that the Secretary to Council seeks to limit the power of the Assembly by increasing how many members are needed to call a meeting and how many members are needed to ensure any meeting is quorate.

Even harder to believe is that it is a coincidence that these amendments are proposed when two calls for a meeting properly made by members over the summer – one relating to STP contracts and one relating to concerns over the return to campus and in-person teaching - are currently on hold – both having been signed by more than 25 members but fewer than 50.

In summary:

As Assembly reps, we are not saying there is no value in the Amendments proposed by Sharon Tuersley – there are some clear improvements – for example, the provision that the Provost can chair meetings when the Vice-Chancellor can't, and that for urgent meetings the quorum be 100. We too have adopted these changes. The reformatting Sharon has introduced has certainly made the current Standing Orders clearer and the amendments Gavin and I propose adopt that same clear structure.

But Sharon's amendments in Option 1 go further than tidying and clarifying – they propose two new measures which make it far harder for the Assembly to meet and speak and it is here that we diverge.

We do not include in our proposed amendments in Option 2 any changes to the number of members needed to call a meeting of the Assembly and we do not seek to change the numbers required for quoracy for non-urgent meetings of the Assembly

Sharon suggests that her version strengthens the rights of Assembly members, ensuring that a call for a meeting by fifty staff members will mean that a meeting will be called – no longer a request by 25 that can be ignored but a call by 50 that must be respected

But the Statutes governing the University already state that the Vice-Chancellor will call a meeting when asked to do so by 25 or more members. It was never only a request that could be ignored. Statute is clear: a call must be heard and actioned

#25 to 50

Looking at the numbers, the move to requiring 50 members to call a meeting rather than 25 – in a staff body of 7000 – does not seem perhaps significant but it flies in the face of the recent recommendation of the Assembly Working Group in 2017 – adopted by Senate and Council – to keep the number of members required to call a meeting to 25 - and they recommended this as they extended the Assembly to include all staff on grades 1-9.

So why did the Assembly Working group not recommend increasing the number of members required to call a meeting when it increased the size of the Assembly?

To prevent any barriers standing in the way of members calling a meeting – because the calling of a meeting does not mean that only 25 members determine its outcome – it merely opens up space for debate. The outcome of a meeting of the Assembly does not determine University policy – the Assembly can only make recommendations - it only ensures that the collective voice of ordinary staff members feeds into the decision-making process.

And perhaps a pragmatic realisation that if 25 staff members sign their name to a public call for a meeting of the Assembly – many more may silently agree and want that space for discussion of University policy but be fearful of the consequences that may follow if they do sign – and in light of the job insecurity many in the Assembly face – that can hardly be surprising. If 25 do sign, many more may wish they could

There seem to be no practical reasons driving this amendment. If so many meetings were called that none of us had time to work, it might seem sensible for the Assembly to limit the frequency of meetings by raising the number of members required to call them – but there have only been only 5 meetings of the Assembly called by members in the last ten years and none called by the members since May 2017 – such meetings are hardly filling our diaries

Therefore there seems no reason to propose this change to the number of members needed to call a meeting – with all of the difficulty this will require – seeking the approval of the Privy Council to alter our governing statutes - unless it is being driven by a determined desire to make it harder for members to meet

#50 to 150

In terms of non-urgent Assembly meetings, the current Standing Orders require 50 members for a quorum – Option 1 seeks to increase this to 150.

Again, there seems no justification for this amendment - in fact several of the meetings of the Assembly – where recommendations on important issues such as the Prevent strategy, TEF and Statute 24 were made and electronic voting was permitted, would not have been quorate on these figures

Again there seems no reason to propose this change unless it is being driven by a desire to make it harder for members to meet

New Amendments

The amendments Gavin and I put forward under Option 2 do not want to make it harder for the members to meet – seeking no change to the numbers required to call a meeting or to achieve quoracy.

We do however propose two new measures to protect the voice of the Assembly – seeking to embed time limits to ensure that calls by members for meetings of the Assembly are acted upon – and acted upon promptly.

Currently there are no time limits on how quickly a meeting must be called once a duly framed request is received by the Vice-Chancellor. As I said – two calls for meetings made in the summer are still on hold.

As Assembly reps, we feel this needs to change – there should be no more duly-framed calls for a meeting by members that are not acted upon promptly.

We propose that the Assembly takes this opportunity to revisit the SOs and make them clearer but - by choosing option 2 - include processes that will ensure that the ability of members to meet is not limited but is in fact protected

Thank you”.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Proposer of amendments for their presentation.

The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of the voting process, as below:

- Voting would be carried out using an anonymous online web form.
- An announcement would be made on Insite when the voting period opened, likely to be Monday, 2 November at 1.00pm and close on Friday, 6 November at 4.00pm.
- The amendments to be voted on would be provided on the online voting form.
- Members of the Assembly would be asked to vote for either:
 1. Option 1 – the Draft Standing Orders of the Assembly as proposed by Sharon Tuersley, Secretary to Council, or
 2. Option 2 – Proposed Amendments to the Draft Standing Orders of the Assembly as proposed by Jane Bryan, member of Assembly on Senate
- Once the voting deadline had passed, votes would be counted and a summary of the result would be communicated with members of the Assembly via Inbox Insite the next working day, Monday, 9 November.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked all those in attendance and involved in the meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor declared the Assembly meeting closed.

Close at 10:20