



MINUTES OF COUNCIL

FRIDAY 20 MARCH 2015

Present: Mr D Burn (Chair), Mr R Cowap, Dr E Crawley, Mr A Garrad, Mr C Green, Dr M Hamlin, Dame D Holt, Sir R Kerr, Dr S-A Kitts, Ms P Lawrence-Archer, Professor N Lieven, Mr T Macdonald, Dr J Manley, Professor S Mann, Professor R Middleton, Mr B Morton, Professor G Orpen, Ms C Peck, Ms A Phillips, Mr T Phipps, Mr A Poolman, Mr B Ray, Mr M Saddiq, Professor J Squires, Ms V Stace, Ms A Stephenson, Professor Sir Eric Thomas, Ms S Vieru, Mr J Wetz.

In attendance: Professor N Canagarajah, Dr R Cross, Ms R Geller, Mr G Gregory (for item 13), Ms K Gullon (Clerk), and Mr A Nield.

Apologies: Mr P Hand

1. Welcome and announcements

1.1 The Chair members of Council to the meeting.

2. Apologies

2.1 NOTED.

3. Declaration of interests

3.1 Members were reminded that they had an obligation to disclose any pecuniary, family or other personal interest that they had in any matter under discussion at any meeting of Council as soon as practicable. Members were reminded of their fiduciary duty to avoid conflicts of interest.

3.2 As for previous meetings of Council, staff members disclosed their ongoing interest in USS matters, as members of the Scheme.

3.3 Professor Orpen disclosed an interest in item 9, as Non-Executive Director of the University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH). Mr Garrad disclosed an interest in item 9, in respect of interests in the Enterprise Zone.

4. Minutes of meetings on 6 February 2015

4.1 CONFIRMED.

5. Matters arising and actions

5.1 There was nothing outstanding to report that was not being addressed at this meeting.

6. Chair's report

6.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: an oral report from the Chair of Council

6.2 In particular, Council NOTED:

- The Vice-Chancellor Designate, Professor Hugh Brady, would join Council at its meeting on 22 May 2015. The Chair of Council thanked the Vice Chancellor for his

assistance in the induction of Professor Brady and praised his open and helpful attitude throughout.

- The Chair had participated in the appointment panel for the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (Faculty of Health Sciences). The panel had appointed Professor Sarah Purdy, from what had been a very strong field of candidates. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that one of the recommendations of the Biomedical Review was that the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry be renamed as the Faculty of Health Sciences from 1 August 2015. Certain procedural matters would be brought to Council in May (following their consideration by Senate in April) for formal approval, in order to give effect to the recommendations of the Biomedical Review.

7. Vice-Chancellor's report

7.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **CN/14-15/031**).

7.2 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the appointment of Professor Purdy, and noted the benefit this would bring to the tone of the University's Medical Curriculum.

7.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor had recently been appointed to NERC Council. NERC (the Natural Environment Research Council) was a non-departmental public body under the umbrella of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). Council congratulated the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the appointment.

7.4 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the current political landscape, and possibilities in respect of the upcoming General Election. In particular, the Labour-proposed reduction in tuition fees posed a number of strategic questions for the University – not least because it was not yet clear how a decreased income stream might be compensated by other means. The very recent budget statement had included two key points for the University: (1) financial support for PhDs and research-based masters degrees (on which there was little detail thus far) and (2) allocation of substantial resource in the north of the country. There appeared to be a trend towards direct funding of research by the Government. This linked to a review of the UK's research councils led by Sir Paul Nurse (the Nurse Review), which aimed to explore how research might be supported most effectively. The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the likelihood of changes to Higher Education funding.

7.5 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the allocation of resource to the north of England, and noted that the South-West had not received similar allocations. The importance of the GW4 in raising the profile of the region was noted. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor updated on a recent GW4 away day. This had been very positive, and had included Deans and Research Directors from member institutions. One of the themes emerging from the away day was an acknowledgement of a growing trend towards place-based innovation. The growing importance of Manchester was considered to be an example of this trend, and the GW4 might well be able to leverage relationships in a similar way. It was felt that there was enormous potential to utilise the GW4 to raise the profile of its member institutions, particularly within the Arts and the Biomedical domains.

Admissions and recruitment update

7.5 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) updated on the current position and advised Council that work with Deans and Admissions Tutors was being undertaken to further consider intake targets. The recruitment of international undergraduate students, in particular, was being monitored very closely and it may be necessary to make up any shortfall in admissions with home undergraduate students. There were no significant concerns regarding postgraduate taught or postgraduate research

student recruitment, although deposits received were slightly lower than at a similar point last year. Although there was no room for complacency, the overall picture was positive.

7.6 In response to questions from Council members:

- The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) reminded Council it was only possible to benchmark the University's performance in admissions and recruitment against a national picture. This was due to the highly competitive nature of this activity, which meant that it was incredibly difficult to glean information from other individual institutions. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) reminded Council of the admissions and recruitment streams of the recently approved International Strategy.
- In respect of the reasons students provide when declining offers from the University, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) advised that the University does seek to capture this information but it has proven difficult to solicit responses from students who have chosen to attend other institutions. The University's brand analysis would seek to address this, by speaking to students and their parents. This was a very significant piece of work, and it was hoped it would provide the University with a rich dataset to understand how it sits in the market. It would also help the University to understand what matters to students in making their applications and decisions, in order to assist its future strategic planning.
- It was too early in the cycle to identify progress that was being made with respect to applicants from widening participation backgrounds. It would be difficult to comment with any certainty on this issue until after confirmation.

University of Hereford

7.7 The Vice-Chancellor commented on the plans for the new university, which was modelled on Olin College of Engineering (a model becoming more common in the sector). The Vice-Chancellor was proud of the project, and noted the University's altruism in engaging with the project. There were also tangible benefits to the University, such as improved industrial relations. Council should be encouraged by the approach by the University of Hereford: it had been important for the new university to have credibility, and as such it had approached what it considered to be high-quality Universities.

7.8 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) provided Council with additional detail of the consultancy which the University had agreed to provide. This would relate to curriculum issues, quality assurance and admissions. Council would receive further updates in due course.

7.9 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) commented on the difference between the University's engineering programmes and the model to be adopted by the new university. It appeared that there will be no competition between the programmes. In response to questions from members of Council, it was reported that the new university expected to recruit 300 students in 2017, building up to about 5000.

Director of Residences

7.10 The Deputy Registrar reported on the appointment, and reflected on the importance of this role to the student experience.

Fee-setting

7.11 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) reminded Council that it had previously requested further information about the fee-setting process. This was set out in more detail in the written report, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) reflected on the importance of considering pricing in a more strategic way. It was important to

consider the variations from country to country when setting international fees, including in the use of strategic discounting. This issue was moving very quickly, particularly as the sector developed so rapidly. The Vice-Chancellor reflected on changes in attitudes to pricing within the higher education sector over the years.

- 7.12 In response to questions from Council members the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) reported that the University could not charge a different fee for the same programme in different countries. However, scholarships could be targeted to help to alleviate financial barriers and to help ensure the diversity of cohorts. Although the University had considered additional scholarships for home postgraduate taught students, the University was not receiving such applications in numbers that would make this appropriate.
- 7.13 The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that the financial outcome of the REF process would soon be known. It would be interesting to see how, if at all, grants were moderated. There would be some kind of transitional funding put into place, and the University would very carefully monitor this situation. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the REF outcome for the University had been excellent, and any decrease in funding would be regrettable, but should not detract from the excellent result achieved in the process itself.

8. Financial Matters

- 8.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **CN/14-15/053**).
- 8.2 The Finance Director advised members of Council of the current financial performance of the University. [redacted: confidential]
- 8.3 The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Minister for Universities and Science had confirmed funding allocations to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for the 2015/16 financial year. HEFCE had subsequently commented on its broad proposals for distribution of that funding, which was broadly in line with the University's expectations.
- 8.4 The Finance Director advised Council that the restructure of the Coombe Dingle Sports Trust (CDST) had now been completed. [redacted: confidential]
- 8.5 The Finance Director reminded members of Council as to the planned timetable for restructure of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The current formal consultation with active members would end in mid-May, this would then flow through into the finalisation of the March 2014 Actuarial valuation. Implementation was targeted for April 2016, though this was at the earliest possible date.
- 8.6 The Finance Director noted the reduction in long term interest rates/gilt yields over the last 12 months and noted the adverse impact on pension scheme funding. This was likely to have an impact upon the upcoming actuarial review of UBPAS. The UBPAS trustees were giving some further consideration to investment strategy options and the Finance Director would be discussing this in more detail with Finance Committee.
- 8.7 [redacted: confidential]
- 9. Student Residences: Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) Proposal**
- 9.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/054**).

- 9.2 The Finance Director reminded Council of the current need for additional student beds [redacted: confidential] The Finance Director outlined the various scenarios available to the University, including:
- third party short term arrangements the University owning (and then building upon) its own site
 - a DBFO arrangement.
- 9.3 The Finance Director discussed with Council the relative merits of the options noting that given the relatively limited financing capacity of the University. There was an attraction to financing student residences through a DBFO structure and retaining financing capacity for academic buildings were such alternatives were not available.
- 9.4 [redacted: confidential]
- 9.5 [redacted: confidential]
- 9.6 [redacted: confidential]
- 9.7 [redacted: confidential]
- 9.8 [redacted: confidential]
- 9.9 [redacted: confidential]

Council:

- CONFIRMED its support of the use of a DBFO financing structure as part of the University's overall financial strategy
- APPROVED in principle the acquisition of a site
- AGREED that the Finance Director and Bursar should enter into negotiations regarding a site [redacted: confidential]

10. Student Lifecycle Support Programme (SLSP)

- 10.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/055**).
- 10.2 The Deputy Registrar thanked Council members for attending the various briefing sessions which had been arranged. The Deputy Registrar reminded Council of the rationale for SLSP. There were three key drivers:
- Underdeveloped systems currently in place
 - Interfaces were currently undocumented
 - Student focus: student numbers had grown, there was greater regulation within the sector than when many systems had been introduced, and student expectations of the University's systems were increasingly high.
- 10.3 The risks of a large-scale IT project had been noted, and the Programme team was working to mitigate those through liaison with other universities, maintaining a high-quality team, and ensuring adequate resource for the Programme.
- 10.4 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) outlined the key anticipated benefits of SLSP, which were:
- Greater opportunity for student 'self-service' – enabling their better engagement with information
 - More user-friendly workflows (for example in making admissions decisions) for both academic and professional services staff

- Providing institutional support for student success, including better information to students (and their personal tutors) about progress to ensure informed decision-making about maximising student potential
 - Better and clearer information about applicants, which would join up information about students whilst they attend the University
 - A single integrated system to support assessments across the University
 - Much better and effective support for student events: including recruitment events, graduation ceremonies etc.
 - Annual costs savings.
- 10.5 The Chair of the Finance Committee advised that the Business Case had been considered by Finance Committee, which had considered that if the University was to realise its aspirations, SLSP was essential.
- 10.6 The Chair of the IT Committee advised that the IT Committee had considered that the need for SLSP was self-evident. It had been clear to the IT Committee that the process had to be, and was being, managed carefully. There had been a good deal of support for SLSP from members of the IT Committee, though it had been noted that the University's IT infrastructure may require some short-term investment to ensure local systems continue to work properly until SLSP is completed.
- 10.7 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of UPARC and Chair of the University's Systems and Processes Investment Board (SPIB), and the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee each advised Council of the support for SLSP expressed by those committees.
- 10.8 The Chair commended the Programme team for the Business Case. It was noted that SLSP would be considered again by Council throughout the implementation and procurement processes.
- 10.9 Council APPROVED the Phase III (Implementation) Business Case.
- 11. Report of the Student Affairs Committee (spotlight slot)**
- 11.1 RECEIVED: (reference **CN/14-15/056**).
- 11.2 The Chair of the Committee reminded Council that the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) had amended its Terms of Reference at the end 2013/14, and as a result now had a more strategic oversight role. The Chair felt that SAC was now much more engaged and energised. Whilst the University's Education Committee has operational responsibility for the student experience, SAC provided the oversight from a Council perspective. SAC didn't, and shouldn't, oversee all of the University's educational activities, nor did it seek to replicate the duties of the Students' Union Trustees.
- 11.3 In the preceding year, SAC had been particularly pleased with University's Bristol Doctoral College, the Learning Spaces Roadmap, and its coordinated approach to the National Student Survey (NSS). SAC had also praised the new system of personal tutoring, but noted that some challenges remained. In the coming academic year SAC would particularly focus on:
- SLSP
 - The higher education review (QAA)
 - Educational enrichment activities
 - The Students' Union's performance against SPIs

- The effectiveness of the course reps system, the revised personal tutor system and the response of the University and the Students' Union to the NSS results.
- 11.4 Members of Council commented that it would be important for SAC to continue to emphasise that there was no 'universal' student experience, and in particular that the postgraduate student experience was distinct from the undergraduate student experience.
- 11.5 The Chair thanked members of SAC for their continued hard work, and the Chair for her helpful overview of its activities.
- 12. Report of the Membership Appointments and Governance Group (MAGG)**
- 12.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/036** and **CN/14-15/057**).
- 12.2 APPROVED the following appointments from 1 January 2015:
- Ms Victoria Stace, as Chair of the Student Affairs Committee
 - Ms Anne Stephenson, as Chair of the Personnel, Equality and Health & Safety Committee
 - Mr Paul Hand, as Chair of the Finance Committee,
- each for a term of three years and each subject to their continuing appointment as a lay member of Council.
- 13. Report of the Personnel, Equality and Health & Safety Committee**
- 13.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/058**).
- 13.2 The Chair of the Committee commented on the annual Equality and Diversity report, which had been considered by the Committee. The University had made some excellent progress in this area, and the Chair of the Committee commended the work done to date. There remained a number of issues to address, some structural and some more conceptual. The Committee had highlighted, in particular:
- the relatively low proportion of home students disclosing a black or ethnic minority (BME) background
 - the gender mix of professors appeared to be fairly static, notwithstanding the positive work which been conducted in this area.
- The Committee will continue to examine these issues as part of its ongoing work.
- 13.3 In response to questions from Council members, there was significant discussion of the incidence of mental health in students and young people more generally. It was noted that an increase in reported mental health difficulties was not unique to Bristol, but was increasing across the high education sector. Council noted that this issue was also being considered by SAC and the University's Student Experience Committee. Following discussion, Council APPROVED the Equality and Diversity Annual Monitoring Report for publication.
- 13.4 Council noted that the Committee had agreed with the recommendations of the Council Effectiveness Review that it change its name to the Human Resources (or HR) Committee. After careful consideration, Council APPROVED the change of the name of the Personnel, Equality and Health & Safety Committee to the Human Resources Committee.
- 14. Report of the Audit Committee**
- 14.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/059**).
- 15. Report of the Finance Committee**

- 15.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (CN/14-15/060).
- 16. Report of the Estates Committee**
16.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/061).
- 17. IT Committee**
17.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/062).
- 18. Report of the Nominations Committee of Court**
18.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/063)
- 18.2 The Chair of Council reminded Council that there was currently a vacancy for a member of Council on the Committee and invited members of Council interested in standing to the Committee to put themselves forward.
- 19. Amendments to Ordinance 3a**
19.2 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/064)
- 19.2 Council APPROVED BY RESOLUTION the proposed amendments to Ordinance 3a, with immediate effect.
- 19. Report of Senate meeting on 23 February 2015**
19.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/065).
- 19.2 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chair, and Council, for taking into account the views of Senate regarding the number of Academic members of staff on Council.
- 20. Annual Report: Faculty of Social Sciences and Law**
20.1 RECEIVED: (reference CN/14-15/066).
- 21. Standing items**
- Equality and diversity implications
- Council did not consider that any equality and diversity issues had arisen at the meeting which had not been fully considered at the appropriate point previously. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised Council that the REF process had had a focus on equality issues, and that HEFCE appeared to be broadly content with the way the process had been conducted from an equalities perspective. The REF non-submission rate was marginally higher for women rather than men, which had been noted and would be further considered by the Senior Executive.
- Communication and consultation
- The Chair of Council reminded Council members that a number of papers had been marked as 'strictly confidential' and should therefore not be discussed outside of the Council meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Council would be held on Friday 22 May 2015.