

MINUTES OF COUNCIL
FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER 2014

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

In attendance: Professor Nishan Canagarajah, Dr H Galbraith, Ms R Geller, Mr A Nield, Miss K Gullon (Clerk), Ms L Robinson.

Apologies: Mr A Garrad, Dr Moira Hamlin, Councillor Brenda Massey, Mr P Finch.

1. Welcome and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed new Council members Professor Stephen Mann and Dr Sally-Ann Kitts, as this was their first meeting. The Chair also welcomed Councillor Brenda Massey, who had been appointed to Council by Bristol City Council subsequent to the last meeting of Council, but who was unable to attend today.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Dr Alison Bernays, Pro-Chancellor, who was attending the meeting. Dr Bernays would be retiring as Pro-Chancellor on 31 December 2014, and the Chair noted her substantial and exemplary service to the University over many years. Council thanked Dr Bernays and wished her well in future endeavours.
- 1.3 The Chair noted that, subsequent to the previous meeting of Council, Professor Guy Orpen had taken post as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Nishan Canagarajah had taken post as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Chair congratulated them on their appointments and welcomed them 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.
- 3.2 A number of members of Council declared that they had interests in the USS matters to be discussed by virtue of their being members of the USS pension scheme.

4. Minutes of meeting on 4 July 2014

4.1 CONFIRMED.

5. Matters arising and actions

5.1 The Finance Director provided an update on the student residences Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) proposal approved in principle at the last meeting of Council. Subsequent to that meeting an offer had been made in accordance with what had been approved by Council, but that offer had not been accepted. The originally contemplated site was likely to not be available. A split site was now being considered: in terms of capacity and also the likely commercial terms. A formal proposal would be brought to Council in due course.

5.2 Professor Orpen declared an interest in the DBFO, as a member of the board of University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

6. USS presentation

6.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: a presentation from Finance Director (on file).

6.2 The presentation, which had also been presented in large part to University staff members at various roadshows, highlighted the following:

- Since the actuarial review in March 2014, the trustees and employers had decided that substantial action was required to ensure the future financial viability of the scheme.
- There are two key drivers: cost and risk. The strength of the employers' financial covenant to meet their (collective) obligations was a very important consideration for the USS trustees.
- The key objective of proposals currently being considered by employers is to maintain employer contribution rates at between 16 and 18% of pensionable pay.
- Many factors had contributed to the deficit, including market conditions.
- The University had a legal requirement to meet its share of any deficit in contributions.
- The University had confirmed its broad support for the proposals and considered that fundamental change was essential to ensure the financial viability of both the scheme and the University. Prior to confirming support the Finance Director had consulted with Finance Committee, the Treasurer, and the Chair of Personnel Equality & Health and Safety Committee.
- This was a key HR issue, and industrial action was possible. Although the employer's proposals had not yet been finalised, given the tight timeframe for completion the University had decided to be proactive and communicate at an early stage with members of the scheme. An extensive series of roadshows was scheduled and a number had already taken place, the purpose of which was to communicate the various options being considered.
- UCU had issued a ballot for industrial action. If the outcome of the ballot was in favour of a strike, this would be likely to take the form of an assessment boycott.

6.3 The Chair praised the communication to date with members of University staff. In response to questions put to the Finance Director by members of Council, the following issues were emphasised:

- For most staff who were not eligible for USS membership the University provided pensions either through UBPAS or UBGPP and there was no longer a simple comparison to USS. .
- USS was very different to the Teachers' Pension Scheme, which was an unfunded government-backed scheme.

- The USS trustees would need to finalise the March 2014 actuarial valuation by June 2015 and would need agreement by the Pension Regulator. A key element of this was having a robust financial plan that was affordable by employers, with risk consistent with the employers' covenant. To achieve this fundamental change to the contribution/benefit structure of USS was essential.
- Demutualising the scheme was not part of the current proposals, but further consideration was planned.
- In its current and previous responses to the UUK consultations the University had identified the need for a fundamental review of both the mutuality and exclusivity aspects of USS to USS previously.
- This was a significant risk for the University, and Council should be very much engaged with the issue. From 2015/16 the share of the USS deficit will be shown on the University's balance sheet.

7. Chair's Report

7.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/001**).

7.2 Council APPROVED the appointment of Dr Moira Hamlin as Chair of the IT Committee.

7.3 Council RECOMMENDED the appointment to Court of Professor Paul Hayes, Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Plymouth.

Appointment of the Vice-Chancellor

7.4 The appointment panel had been in place for some time now, and had received a very useful information/briefing session. Longlisting and shortlisting had now taken place and the panel had arrived at a shortlist of 5 candidates, of which three were men and two were women. Interviews would then take place on 16 and 17 October 2014. The Chair reported that the panel were being challenging yet supportive and that the process was proceeding very satisfactorily. There was an external member of the appointment panel, the current Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham Professor Sir David Greenaway. Professor Greenaway was acting as consultant, and therefore would not be able to vote in the appointment panel's selection. The Chair reported that Professor Greenaway been particularly impressed with the consultation exercise conducted by the University, the diverse nature of the appointment panel, and the training that had been provided to the appointment panel

7.5 As previously notified to Council members by email, there would be an extraordinary meeting of Council to be held on 31 October 2014 for the purpose of ratifying the appointment panel's recommended candidate. This would be the only agenda item. For those members unable to attend in person, telephone conferencing would be available. No paperwork would be circulated in advance of the extraordinary meeting, instead hard copy documents would be provided on the day to attendees and electronic copies by email, at the relevant time, to members who were not physically in attendance.

7.6 The Chair reminded Council that its meeting of 14 November 2014 would have a very full agenda, and was likely to last until the afternoon of that day.

8 Vice-Chancellor's report

8.1 RECEIVED: (reference **CN/14-15/002**).

- 8.2 The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that, since its last meeting, Greg Clark MP had been appointed Minister for Universities, Science and Cities. Previous experience suggested that few new higher education policies were likely to be announced until after the forthcoming 2015 general election.

Admissions

- 8.3 Professor Squires updated. The overshoot noted in the Vice-Chancellor's report had arisen as a result of two main factors. Firstly, twice as many applicants who held Bristol as their insurance place achieved the University's requirements (whilst failing to meet the requirements of their first choice institution) as had been modelled. Secondly, the number of students who successfully obtained re-grades (which then led to their meeting the University's requirements, far later than anticipated) doubled from the number the previous year. These highly unusual circumstances emphasised the current volatility of the market.
- 8.4 There had been some shortfalls in postgraduate taught student numbers, which had been largely compensated by overshoot in the School of Economics, Finance and Management. There had been a slight decline in the number of home postgraduate taught students, which had been anticipated given the rise in home tuition fees, but the situation was being watched carefully.
- 8.5 In respect of the strain which had accordingly been placed on the University's residential provision, the University was working closely with the Students' Union to address the concerns of any dissatisfied students. Additional support was being provided to students, particularly additional storage and study space. Council was reminded that the private rented sector of the city of Bristol itself is at capacity, which further complicated the situation.
- 8.6 During the summer, the University had entered clearing for the first time in respect of two programmes: Modern Languages and Social Policy. This decision had not been taken lightly; the University had considered that the possible reputational risk associated with entering clearing, but concluded that this action carried less risk than compensating an undershoot in those programmes by over-recruiting to other programmes. As a result of entering clearing, the University had attracted strong students to both programmes. Those students' progress at the University would be tracked in order to inform future decisions about entering clearing.
- 8.7 Overall, although an overshoot and the consequential accommodation issues were far from ideal, Council should be encouraged that the University had met its intake targets with very high-level students. By comparison, nine other Russell Group institutions failed to meet their intake targets and ten or eleven were still clearing.

2014 National Student Survey (NSS)

- 8.8 The Vice-Chancellor updated and informed Council that the most recent Sunday Times league table had concluded that large universities in city centres did not tend to perform as well as small campus universities in the NSS.
- 8.9 Professor Squires advised Council that in relation to specific questions (such as satisfaction with study space), which have been addressed in School action plans, the University's scores had generally either remained the same or had improved. This suggested that the work being undertaken with Schools was paying dividends and it would continue. The question of 'overall satisfaction' was far more intangible. There were a significant number of students at the University for whom Bristol was not their first choice. That might well be reflected in the University's NSS scores. The University was working hard to understand students' views in order to address this issue.
- 8.10 Student satisfaction in relation to assessment and feedback was below the sector average, but was proving particularly resilient to upward change. This was common

across many research-intensive universities, and it would be important for the University to articulate both why feedback at the University perhaps differed from other institutions and the benefits of studying at a research-intensive university.

- 8.11 The University was working collaboratively with the Students' Union in order to raise students' satisfaction with that institution. It was noted that students' unions in campus-based universities also tended to achieve higher NSS scores than those based in city centres. However, there might be certain specific incidents or issues, such as the lack of a summer ball, which disproportionately affected overall student satisfaction. This issue would be further discussed at the Student Affairs Committee.

League Tables

- 8.12 The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that next year's league tables would take into account the outcome of the REF. This year, the University had ascended in all of the global rankings. The importance of league tables was affirmed: the University was, rightly, very proud of its status and the University's website had been updated to draw attention to its status as a "global top 30 university".

Quantum Hub

- 8.13 Professor Canagajarah updated. The Vice-Chancellor described various current key national projects which may be of interest to the University. Funding, and the location of funded projects, were likely to be highly topical in the coming months. The Chair thanked all those involved.

Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

- 8.14 RECEIVED and NOTED the paper tabled to the meeting (CN/14-15/007).
- 8.15 APPROVED: the honorary degrees and fellowships and the public orators set out in the report.

9. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council and Nomination of the Secretary

- 9.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/003**).
- 9.2 The Chair and Vice-Chair of Council left the room for this item and the Vice-Chancellor took the chair. Council ELECTED:
- Mr Denis Burn as Chair of Council for a further year until 31 December 2015
 - Mr Bob Morton as Vice-Chair of Council for a further year until 31 December 2015.
- 9.3 The Chair of Council resumed the chair. The Treasurer left the room for this item. Council NOMINATED Mr Andrew Poolman as Treasurer and agreed to RECOMMEND TO COURT that it APPROVES the reappointment of Mr Andrew Poolman as Treasurer for a further year to until 31 December 2015.

10. Amendments to Statutes 15 and 19 and to Ordinance 6

- 10.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference **CN/14-15/004**).
- 10.2 APPROVED by SPECIAL RESOLUTION: the proposed amendments to Statutes 15 and 19 and to Ordinance 6.

11. Report of the Nominations Committee of Court

- 11.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: (reference CN/14-15/005)

12. Faculty of Medical and Veterinary Sciences Annual Report

- 12.1 The Chair reminded Council members that the report had previously been circulated (reference CN/14/067).
- 12.2 The presentation highlighted the numerous achievements of the Faculty over the past year. In response to questions from Council members, the Dean of the Faculty explained that the Biomedical Review represented a key strategic challenge for the Faculty, but was also generally regarded as a positive opportunity.

13. Annual report of Chair Appointments

- 13.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (**CN/14-15/006**).

14. Standing items

Equality and diversity implications

It was noted that the Annual report of Chair Appointments contained few senior female appointments. Though this was typical for the sector, the University was working to improve this position.

Communication and consultation

The Chair reminded Council members that the report of the Honorary Degrees Committee should not be discussed outside of the meeting, as the persons named in that report had not yet been approached.

Date of next meeting

There would be an extraordinary meeting of Council on 31 October 2014, at 2pm.

The following meeting of Council would be held on Friday, 14 October 2014 at 9am.