

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

27th September 2011

MINUTES

Members present: Mr J E K Smith (Pro-Chancellor, in the Chair); Mr C N Banks CBE (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Mrs M C Davies; Mr M Devenish; Professor D S Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Mr M G Gilbert (Treasurer); Mr R Halton; Mr M Harrop (President, Guild of Students); Dr R C Horton; Mr G R Mackenzie OBE; Professor J M Marshall; Dr N E Price OBE; Hon Alderman D Roy OBE; Professor C Ryan; Professor A J Schofield; Professor M C Sheppard (Provost and Vice-Principal); Ms C Snowball CBE; Dr R Sondhi CBE; Ms S Vickers

Also present: Mrs G Ball (Director of Finance); Dr S J L Gower (Assistant Secretary); Professor J K Heath (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mrs H Paver (Director of HR); Professor E W Peck (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor M C Press (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Mr L Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Professor A Tickell (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor M Whitby (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor R A Williams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor L S Young (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College)

Apologies: Professor M J Hilton; Mr R J Keys; Professor K O'Brien (Pro-Vice-Chancellor)

Papers: The minute book contains copies of all written papers or reports to which reference is made below unless indicated otherwise.

11/69 Membership and Terms of Reference of the Council

Received: the membership of the Council for 2011/12 and its terms of reference (CO.11.09.01).

11/70 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2011 (CO.11.09.02).

11/71 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

11/72 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Received: a report from the Pro-Chancellor containing a recommendation and two items for information (CO.11.09.03).

(i) Acquisition and Disposal of Land

Resolved: to approve the continuation of the Acquisitions and Disposals Group for the year to 30th September 2012.

(ii) One-to-one meetings with Council Members

Reported: that one-to-one meetings had taken place over the summer between the Senior Officers and Members of Council. The Pro-Chancellor thanked members for their openness and engagement with the process. Members had been particularly positive about the manner in which Council had operated in the last year, the conduct of business, the revised sub-committee structure and the outcomes of the Review of Council Effectiveness in general. The Pro-Chancellor had shared the findings with the Chair of the Audit Committee and should provide that Committee with reassurance in relation to Council's effective discharge of its governance responsibilities. A small number of issues had been raised by individuals which the Pro-Chancellor would explore with Officers.

(iii) Meeting with Guild Officers

Reported: by the Pro-Chancellor that he had had a constructive meeting with the Guild officers which touched on various matters, including employability and the students skills agenda. The Pro-Chancellor expressed his desire for a continuation of the constructive relationship between the University and the Guild.

11/73 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor containing a number of items for information (CO.11.09.04).

(i) Capital Framework

Reported: that

- (a) since Council had signed off the next stage of the Capital Framework at its meeting in June a series of consultations had been held with local residents and other stakeholders. As expected a wide range of views was emerging, from wholehearted support to concerns about the proposed car park;
- (b) the Director of Estates was addressing these issues, and it had been decided that the Framework would continue to be presented as a single package aimed at enhancing the central spaces of the campus and improving the student and staff experience. This might lead to some delay in obtaining formal approval from the City Council, but this was judged preferable to the disaggregation of the proposals.

(ii) Birmingham Fellows Update

Reported: by Professor Adam Tickell, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer), that the initiative had been hugely successful. 1400 applications had been received, many of them of the highest quality, and 240 had been placed on a long-list. Short-listing meetings were taking place that week, with a view to holding interviews early in October and making between 25 and 50 appointments. Seven appointments

had already been made under a fast-track scheme to applicants who already held their own funding. It was expected that the initiative would start to have a positive impact on the University's research profile, in line with the strategy outlined to Council in April.

(iii) Update on Immigration Regulations

Reported: that the situation was becoming increasingly serious because of the inflexible way in which UKBA was applying the new rules. The problems in obtaining visas were adversely affecting the recruitment of international staff and students, and this was sending a very negative message to the world about the UK. In contrast, competitors like Australia and the US had relaxed their immigration regulations because of damage done to their universities. International students were a massive and successful export business for the UK which was being damaged.

Agreed: that

- (a) a briefing note would be drawn up for use by Council members, noting that this would not be available until November, as the best evidence would be to cite the impact on student registrations;
- (b) members would use their networks wherever they could to underline that universities aimed to recruit the most talented staff and students in a global pool, and that their ability to do this effectively was being compromised by the immigration regulations and the way these were being applied.

(iv) White Paper Consultations

Reported: that

- (a) in July the government had announced changes in Home Undergraduate student number controls. All student numbers at AAB or better would be removed from the controls and universities would be permitted to recruit as many students as they wished at AAB or better. This would leave a core of students in the student contract from which a margin of c. 8% would be removed – universities would be able to bid for these but at a fee of no more than £7,500;
- (b) Colleges were now undertaking an analysis of current patterns of demand, comparator information and other market intelligence. UEB would review this information in the autumn and make a judgement on whether and how Home Undergraduate numbers might need to be rebalanced.

(v) NSS

Reported: that

- (a) the University's position in the *Sunday Times* League Table and in the NSS had slipped slightly. Professor Karen O'Brien, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), had commenced a programme of work around the NSS: a number of actions had been put in place that might bring some prompt improvement (including initiatives on employability and a review of the University's data returns), but the major initiatives in relation to learning spaces would take time to have their effect;
- (b) the Registrar and Secretary was convening a task and finish group to focus on further actions that could be taken to enhance the University's position in League Tables.

11/74 Report of the Court Review Group

Considered: a paper on the Review of Court, reflecting the discussion at Court (CO.11.09.05).

Reported: that at its recent meeting Court had discussed in detail the Report, previously endorsed by Council in June. The present paper summarised the key issues identified by members of Court:

- (a) there continued to be a misperception amongst members of Court that the Court played a more substantial constitutional role than was in fact the case;
- (b) there was a clear desire on the part of many members of Court to maintain their involvement with the University. It might be desirable to achieve this, possibly through an "Annual University Meeting" separate from the constitutional function of Court;
- (c) a strong case had been made for continuing to engage with the Emeritus Professors in particular and increasing their representation on the newly constituted Court;
- (d) the omission of student representation on the proposed new membership of Court was an oversight. The President of the Guild would therefore be added to the membership ;
- (e) the transition to the new Court needed to be handled as sensitively as possible

Resolved:

- (a) to re-affirm the key principles underpinning the original proposals of the Review Group, especially the significant reduction of Court membership;
- (b) to invite the Review Group to reflect on the observations at Court and to bring back to Council final proposals made in the light of Court's discussion, including in particular proposals for an "Annual University Meeting".

11/75 Term of Office of Chancellor and Process for Appointment of New Chancellor

Considered: a paper (CO.11.09.06).

Agreed: to endorse the recommendations that

- (a) Sir Dominic Cadbury's period of office as Chancellor should be extended by twelve months to 31st July 2013;
- (b) an Appointment Committee be established to identify his successor with the powers and membership as set out in the paper.

11/76 Update on the University of Birmingham Guangzhou Centre

Considered: a paper reporting recent developments (CO.11.09.07).

Noted: by Professor Peck that

- (a) the Guangzhou initiative was a signature development for the University. This was a genuine academic collaboration with the third major city in China which was also one of Birmingham's twin cities. It had been fully endorsed by the Global Engagement Group;

- (b) the initiative was likely to lead to the creation on campus of a China Institute, proposals for which would be produced during the autumn;
- (c) the aims of the initiative included increasing the number of Chinese students registering in Birmingham, the development of collaborative research, as well as leveraging research funding from China resulting in research publications, and opportunities for student research projects and travel. Guangzhou was likely to pay for staff time and travel involved in these projects.

Resolved: to welcome the progress made to date.

11/77 Staffing in the School of Education

Approved: a paper on academic developments in the School of Education as the basis for continuing consultation (CO.11.09.08).

11/78 Term of Office of Provost and Vice-Principal

Approved: a paper recommending that Professor Michael Sheppard's term of office as Provost and Vice-Principal be extended for a further twelve months to 31st July 2013. (CO.11.09.09).

11/79 Changes to the University Statutes

Considered: a paper, inviting Council to approve proposed changes following consideration by Court and Senate (CO.11.09.10).

Resolved: to approve the proposed changes for submission to the Privy Council.

11/80 Determination of Redundancy Procedures under Ordinance 3.20

Approved: a paper proposing an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation (CO.11.09.11).

11/81 Amendment of the University's procedure for dealing with appeals to the Guild of Student's complaints process

Approved: proposals for an amendment to the Code of Practice (CO.11.09.12).

11/82 Report of the Membership Committee

Approved: a recommendation regarding the appointment of Dr John Craggs as Chair of the BPAS Trustee Body (CO.11.09.13).

11/83 Report from the Senate

Received: a report from the meeting of the Senate held on 21st September 2011 (CO.11.09.14).

11/84 BPAS Update

Received: a report (CO.11.09.15).

11/85 Items approved between Meetings of Council

Received: a list of items approved since the meeting of the Council on 29th June 2011 (CO.11.09.16).

11/86 Affixing of the University Seal

Received: a report noting the transactions which had required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council (CO.11.09.17).

11/87 Any other business

(i) Vice-President (Education) of the Guild

Reported: by the President of the Guild of Students that the Vice-President (Education) of the Guild had been arrested following an incident outside the Liberal Democrats Party Conference at the ICC and had been remanded in custody. This, however, was only one of a number of matters of concern. He had failed to attend a number of events run by the Guild in Freshers' Week and there were other issues connected with his conduct. He had been suspended by the Guild whilst these matters were investigated.

(ii) Retiring Member of Council

Resolved: to thank Professor Janice Marshall whose term of office was due to end on 30th September 2011 for her contributions to the Council and its committees.

11/88 Dates of Next Meeting

Reported: that the next meeting of the Council would take place on Friday 25th November 2011, at 9.00 a.m. in the Senate Chamber, Aston Webb Building

There would be a presentation at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday 24th November in Hornton Grange, followed by dinner