

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

1st February 2012

MINUTES

Members present: Mr J E K Smith (Pro-Chancellor, in the Chair); Mr C N Banks CBE (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Mr D J Davies OBE; Mrs M C Davies; Mr M Devenish; Professor D S Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Dr M G Gilbert (Treasurer); Ms E Halford (Postgraduate Mature Students Officer, Guild of Students); Mr M Harrop (President, Guild of Students); Professor M J Hilton; Dr R C Horton; Mr R J Keys; Mr G R Mackenzie OBE; 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

Also present: Professor J Arthur (Head of School) for item 12/05 only; Mrs G Ball (Director of Finance); Dr S J L Gower (Assistant Secretary); Professor J K Heath (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Ms O Kew-Fickus (Assistant Registrar) for item 12/05 only; Professor K O'Brien (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); 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 M D Stringer (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor) for item 12/08 only; 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: Mr R Halton; Ms S Vickers; Mrs H Paver (Director of HR)

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

12/01 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2011 (CO.12.02.01), subject to the following amendment:

- (a) 11/94 to read 'Reported' item b – to read “.....which the Pro-Chancellor was in the process of addressing.” (rather than “... which the Pro-Chancellor had implemented.”)

12/02 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

12/03 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Received: an oral report from the Pro-Chancellor

(i) Evening Presentation to Council

Reported: that the presentation on the Guild of Students by Mark Harrop and Emily Halford had been highly informative and had been much appreciated by members.

(ii) One-to-one meetings with Members

Reported: that the annual round of one-to-one meetings between members and Lay Officers had been scheduled for the late spring / early summer. They would continue to provide an opportunity to reflect on Council's effectiveness and on members' contributions. Following the completion of the meetings the Pro-Chancellor would report back to Council, and the outcomes of the meetings would also assist the Audit Committee in taking a view on the University's governance system.

12/04 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor containing a number of items for information (CO.12.02.02).

(i) Birmingham Fellowships

Reported: that the scheme had been very successful and had achieved its immediate goal of recruiting in excess of 30 outstanding scholars to the University. Details of the Fellows appointed and their research areas would be provided to the next meeting of Council. A second round would be launched later in the year.

(ii) Pay Matters

Reported: that it had still not proved possible to reach an agreement with the local support staff unions. This was particularly disappointing as the final offer of 1.4% meant that over the last three years Birmingham's cumulative offer was the most generous in the sector.

(iii) Admissions

Reported: that Home undergraduate applications to the University were lower this year than last year – a decline that was expected in view of the exceptional nature of last year's round. There was some variation between subject areas. The number of offers made was higher than at the corresponding point last year – it was likely that much of the reduction may have been in the tail of weaker applicants. It was particularly pleasing that A2B applications had increased by 11%, which suggested that the University's financial aid package had been well constituted. A major effort would be led by the Communications Team over the summer to maximise conversions.

(iv) Dental Hospital

Reported: that the proposal to build the new Dental Hospital at Pebble Mill was to be submitted to the Department of Health for approval. It was expected that the bio-incubator would be located in the future at the BRDL site.

(v) HEFCE Grant Letter

Reported: that

- (a) the Grant Letter from BIS to HEFCE had only recently been published as the government had been considering whether it would give a steer on the AAB threshold and the further deregulation of student numbers. In the event further clarification of the AAB position beyond 2012/13 was still awaited;
- (b) student support costs were still running ahead of government estimates and there would be a further claw back of 5,000 on student numbers;
- (c) BIS was seeking to create £62m resource by a claw back of previously committed expenditure, including matched funding for voluntary giving.

(vi) HE Bill

Reported: that

- (a) the HE Bill had been postponed, and it was unclear whether the government would legislate on HE in the current parliament;
- (b) legislation was not required to set the £9k fee, but it was unclear how the issue of inflation of the fee would be handled;
- (c) the powers of OFFA were dependent upon statute and could not therefore be extended without primary legislation;
- (d) without legislation there would be limitations on private entrants to the sectors.

12/05 The University School

There is a separate confidential minute for this item.

12/06 Key Performance Targets

Considered: a report from the Working Group (CO.12.02.04).

Noted: that

- (a) the KPTs showed where there were challenges with the University's research performance (e.g. research grant capture, citations), which in turn influenced international league tables;
- (b) this issue had been discussed in detail last year at the Council Strategy Day, when Professor Tickell had presented the actions the University had in place to address these matters;
- (c) the KPTs were lag indicators, but there already appeared to be signs of improvement – research grant capture in the first six months of the year was significantly higher than last year and the average for the three preceding years. This was being achieved against the background of falling research grant capture across the sector and was an example of where action to improve performance was having an effect;
- (d) the University was adopting a strong REF policy, together with a more rigorous and consistent approach to performance management;
- (e) improved research management systems were leading to a better understanding of bibliometric data, and Heads of School were working to increase numbers of highly cited papers;
- (f) citation rates would also be improved by the mandatory publication of research papers in our open access archive or in other subject-specific open access

archives. Greater emphasis was being placed on collaboration with overseas partners to improve citations.

Resolved: to receive the Report.

12/07 Report from the Strategy Planning and Resources Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 17th January 2012 (CO.12.02.05).

(i) League Tables Review Group

Noted: that

- (a) the Group was addressing domestic League Tables in the first instance and was identifying actions which would improve performance in the short and medium term. It was, however, recognised that the actions being put in place were unlikely to affect League Tables before 2013, given they were driven by historic data already submitted (e.g. to HESA);
- (b) improvement in NSS performance was seen by the Group as a high priority – action plans had been agreed and targets for improved NSS performance set at University and subject level;
- (c) further work was in hand to ensure that data returns reflected the University's performance;
- (d) in domestic League Tables it was the educational factors which changed each year, and so these had been the focus of the Group. These League Tables would continue to use the 2008 RAE ratings for research until they were replaced in 2014 by the REF results;
- (e) the Group was moving on to consider the University's international League Table performance where research and peer opinion were the key factors.

(ii) Easy Access IP and the University

Resolved: that

- (a) the University join the Easy Access Innovation Partnership (EAIP) and that 3-6 patent applications in our current portfolio be made available under EAIP, provided the academic inventors agreed with this course of action;
- (b) in future, patent applications be made available under EAIP if they had a projected value of less than £10m per annum and Alta Innovations had found no licensee for them at a point three months after PCT filing, provided that the academic inventors agreed with this course of action.

(iii) Consultation on the School of Education

Resolved:

- (a) to approve, under the University's Statutes and Ordinances, the establishment of a Redundancy Panel to select one member of academic staff in the School of Education for redundancy;
- (b) that the Pro-Chancellor approve the appointment of the members of the Panel on behalf of Council.

(iv) Review of Business Engagement

Noted: that the Review report had been considered and approved by SPRC and that business engagement would be considered by Council in detail as part of its Away Day when Professor Sir Tim Wilson would be a key-note speaker on university- industry collaboration.

12/08 Single Equality Scheme 2010-2015

Considered: the proposed Single Equality Scheme (CO.12.02.06).

Noted:

- (a) the University had a longstanding and continuing commitment to promoting equality. The Single Equality Scheme brought all the University's disparate activities within one framework and extended these activities to a number of other characteristics. It would provide an opportunity to develop a more light touch approach to monitoring activities across the campus;
- (b) the Scheme would be launched through a series of road-shows in the Colleges and in Corporate Services.

Resolved: to approve the Single Equality Scheme.

12/09 Follow-up to Review of Council Effectiveness

Received: a report (CO.12.02.07).

Noted: that the one-to-one meetings between Lay Officers and Members provided a continuing opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of Council. The Audit Committee would continue to make an annual report on the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's governance systems.

Resolved: to approve the report.

12/10 Lessons Learnt Review Working Group

Received: a paper (CO.12.02.08).

12/11 Projected Outturn at Quarter 1

Received: the financial projections for the first quarter (CO.12.02.08).

12/12 Items approved between Meetings of Council

Received: a list of items approved since the meeting of the Council on 25th November 2011 (CO.12.02.09).

12/13 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.12.02.10).

12/14 Any other business

There was none.

12/15 Dates of Next Meeting

Reported: that the next meeting of the Council would take place on **Tuesday 27th March 2012**. This will be a Strategy Day which will commence at 10.00 a.m. and conclude with dinner. The themes of the day were Wider Aspects of the Student Experience and Business engagement. The key-note speaker would be Professor Sir Tim Wilson, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire and leader of an international review into university-industry collaboration.