

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

3rd February 2010

MINUTES

Members present: Dr W J Glover (Pro-Chancellor, in the Chair); Mr C N Banks CBE (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Dr S Battle CBE; Ms B Blow; Mrs M Cass; Professor D S Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Mr M G Gilbert (Treasurer); Mr R Halton; Mr D Hartnett CB; Miss B Jones, (Vice-President (Education and Access), Guild of Students); Mr G R Mackenzie OBE; Professor J M Marshall; Mr F Neuner (President, Guild of Students); Mr N C Paul CBE; Dr N Price OBE; Hon Alderman D Roy; Professor C Ryan; Professor A Schofield; Professor M C Sheppard (Vice-Principal); Mr J E K Smith; Dr J S Taunque MBE

Also present: Mrs G Ball (Director of Finance); Dr S J L Gower (Minute Secretary); Professor J K Heath (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mr P Marshall (Acting Head of Planning) for item 10/01 only; Professor E W Peck (Head of College); Professor J I Petts (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor M C Press (Head of College); Professor A J Randall (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mr L Sanders (Registrar & Secretary); Professor N P Weatherill (Head of College); Professor L S Young (Head of College)

Apologies: Mrs M C Davies; Dr S S Sahota OBE; Professor M D Stringer (Acting Head of College)

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

LUNCHTIME PRESENTATION

10/01 New University Strategic Framework

Received:

A presentation on the New University Strategic Framework, followed by discussion of the emerging issues.

Noted in the discussion that:

- The Strategic Framework should reflect the interrelationship and mutual dependences of the University and the City of Birmingham.
- The University should use the Framework to state as confidently as possible the importance and scope of its activities;
- The Strategic Framework could recognise the contribution of the student body to the University as a world-class scholarly community.
- SPRC had agreed that there should be about 10 KPIs in the Strategic Framework. These should be high level, reflective of priorities that really mattered in enhancing the University's academic performance, realistic, challenging and achievable. Council was supportive of this approach.

COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING

10/02 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2009 (CO.09.02.01) be approved, subject to the correction of Hon Ald. Roy's name in 09/85(iii).

10/03 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

No matters were identified.

10/04 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Received:

A paper from the Pro-Chancellor with one recommendation and a number of items for information (CO.10.02.02).

(i) University Closed Days

Resolved:

That, in line with practice nationwide, the University would close on Monday 4th June 2012 for the late May Bank Holiday (rather than 28th May, as previously agreed by Council on 30th November 2009), and on Tuesday 5th June 2012, an extra day to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

(ii) Appointment Panel for the Head of the College of Arts and Law

Reported:

That Mr C N Banks would serve as the Lay Member of Council on the Appointment Panel

(iii) HE Governance Forum – Governing Body and Executive Relationships – Working Together to Meet the Challenges

Reported: by the Deputy Pro-Chancellor

That discussions at this event had centred on the attributes of good working relationships and advice that might be given to new Vice-Chancellors and Chairs of Governing Bodies. One key-note speaker had drawn attention to the need for Governing Bodies to draw on the full range of the skills of their members, many of whom had experienced similar challenges to those now faced by Higher Education. A further suggestion was that universities should be less risk-averse, notwithstanding the difficult challenges being experienced by the HE sector.

(iv) HEPI Policy Briefing Seminar

Reported: by the Deputy Pro-Chancellor

That the event had been addressed by Professor Roger Brown, of the Centre of Higher Education Research Development at Liverpool Hope University. He had suggested two possible strategies in response to the current challenges the sector was facing – collaboration and differentiation. The latter included: status and reputation; location and geographical coverage; increased focus on core activities (doing fewer things better); diversity of funding sources; attractiveness to overseas investors; cost reduction without quality reduction; and underlying financial strength of the institution.

There had also been a briefing on the legal landscape for HE, focussing on the main themes of the student as consumer, equality law, charity law and Freedom of Information.

(v) Remuneration Packages for Vice-Chancellors

Reported:

That the *Times Higher Education* would shortly publish its annual table of remuneration for Vice-Chancellors. Figures for this University would be complicated by the fact the year had seen two Vice-Chancellors in post. The Remuneration Committee had taken a deliberate approach to reward outstanding achievement by the University's senior staff with increments. This would impact on comparisons this time next year and would be seen against a background of salary freezes in some institutions.

(vi) Good Campus Relations

Reported:

That UEB had approved a review of Good Campus Relations, proposed by the Registrar and Secretary. The police had recently praised the University's procedures on Freedom of Expression and managing speakers on campus, but it was timely to review the University's approach to these matters

10/05 Vice-Chancellor's items

Received:

A report from the Vice-Chancellor on a number of items for information (CO.10.02.03)

(i) Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance led by Lord Browne

Reported:

That the first call for evidence had been made. The University had decided not to make a submission at this stage, not least because the Director of Finance was a key member of the group that was producing the Russell Group's response, and the Vice-Chancellor was a member of the Browne Review Group. It was likely that a further stage of consultation would offer a set of principles or putative models, and the University would respond at that point.

(ii) Nuclear Engineering

Reported:

That the University had been disappointed that it had not been awarded additional numbers, particularly in view of its investment in Nuclear Engineering. The University had written to HEFCE to notify it of its concerns, including those expressed by lay members of SPRC, and a response was awaited.

10/06 Funding Issues following the Pre-Budget Report

Considered: a paper (CO.10.02.04) and a tabled paper summarising the key points in the HEFCE Preliminary Grant Announcement for 2010/11 (COM.10.02.04a)

Noted: that

- (a) even after the recent announcements a number of uncertainties remained. The Annual HEFCE Grant Letter would be received in March. However, the dislocation between the government's financial year and that of HEFCE meant that further reductions were still a possibility;
- (b) nothing that had been announced lay beyond the assumptions made in the Financial Forecast which Council had received in November. However, this underlined the importance of the University achieving its assumptions on research income growth, student numbers and savings.

Resolved:

That a short briefing note on the current position in HE would be prepared for members of Council that they might use to inform their contacts with politicians and other opinion-formers. This would cover points such as the importance of HE to the economy, the dependence of many jobs in the wider economy on universities, the importance of not inflicting lasting damage on the sector, and an acceptance that universities should take their fair share of public spending cuts, but no more.

10/07 Projected Financial Outturn for the Year ended 31st July 2010

Considered: a paper assessing the University's projected outturn for the year ending 31st July 2010, in comparison with the budget for the year to 31st July 2010 (CO.10.02.05).

Reported: that

- (a) the University budget had been adjusted in year in the light of quarterly outturns;
- (b) a significant amount of out-performance had arisen from additional student recruitment and was therefore secure; some of the resource arising from this out-performance was being returned to Colleges;
- (c) restructuring costs were projected to rise to £9.2m, which was a reflection of costs arising from the Sustainable Excellence proposals;
- (d) efforts were being made to ensure that, as far as possible, spend on the full planned capital expenditure programme of £70.9m in the current financial year remained on course;
- (e) a further actuarial valuation of BPAS would take place in March 2010.

Resolved:

That the Report be received.

10/08 Report of the Council Effectiveness Review Group

Considered:

A paper from the Review Group (CO.10.02.06)

Noted: that

- (a) the conclusion in the Review Group's report, that the quality of members' contributions to Council and the University, as well as their networks and international perspectives, was welcomed;
- (b) it was important to ensure that informal networks, including with alumni and those with a commitment to HE and the University, continued to be used to encourage applications for Lay Membership of Council;
- (c) it was desirable that the membership of Council should reflect diversity, including gender and ethnicity;
- (d) discussions regarding members' contributions at the end of their first term of office would be conducted with sensitivity.

Resolved:

That the recommendations be approved as set out in the Report.

10/09 Report from the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Considered:

A report from the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 19th January 2010 (CO.10.02.07)

Application from the Guild of Students for a University Loan

Noted: that the proposed loan was to support ambitious plans for the further development of the Guild building, which was the oldest student union building in England. It was indicative of the maturing relationship between the University and the Guild as an independent entity.

Resolved: that

The loan be approved on the terms stated in the paper.

10/10 Capital Projects over £5m

Considered: a progress report on capital projects over £5m (CO.10.02.08)

Noted: that the Chancellor's Court Auditorium project was proceeding satisfactorily. Tenders were due to be received within the next 14 days, demolition work on the Aitchison

Building had commenced, and fund-raising targets had been surpassed. Discussions were currently taking place on art work for the new building.

10/11 Items approved between Meetings of Council

Received: a paper listing items approved since the meeting of Council on 26th November 2009. (CO.10.02.09)

10/12 Affixing of the Seal

Received:

A report noting the transactions which had required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of the Council (CO.10.02.10)

10/13 Any Other Business

There was none.

10/14 Date of next meeting

Reported:

That the next meeting of the Council would take place on **Wednesday 14th April 2010** and would commence at **10.00 a.m.** The meeting would include more detailed consideration of the Strategic Framework, and lunch would be taken at the Guild of Students.