

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

14th April 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; Mrs M C Davies; Professor D S Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Mr M G Gilbert (Treasurer); Miss B Jones, (Vice-President (Education and Access), Guild of Students); Mr G R Mackenzie OBE; Professor J M Marshall; Hon Alderman D Roy; Professor C Ryan; Dr S S Sahota OBE; Professor A Schofield; Professor M C Sheppard (Provost and Vice-Principal); 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); Professor E W Peck (Head of College); Professor J I Petts (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mrs C Pike (Director of Legal Services) for item 10; Professor M C Press (Head of College); Professor A J Randall (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mr L Sanders (Registrar & Secretary); Professor M D Stringer (Acting Head of College); Professor N P Weatherill (Head of College);

Apologies: Mr R Halton; Mr D Hartnett CB; Mr F Neuner (President, Guild of Students); Dr N Price OBE; Mr J E K Smith; Professor L S Young (Head of College)

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

10/15 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2010 (CO.10.04.01) be approved.

10/16 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

No matters were identified.

10/17 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Received: a paper from the Pro-Chancellor with a number of items for information (CO.10.04.02).

Review Group on Council Effectiveness

Reported by Mr C N Banks that the work of the Review Group was continuing, and it expected to make its final report to the next meeting of Council. The major remaining themes included the structure, remit and membership of Council committees; the style of

presentation of papers to Council; a review of arrangements for student representation; and how the work of Council might be more effectively communicated to the wider University.

10/18 Vice-Chancellor's items

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on a number of items for information (CO.10.04.03).

Links with Chicago

Reported: that the visits to Chicago undertaken by a number of University of Birmingham staff were envisaged as the first stage of a three-year initiative. Staff from Chicago would make return visits to Birmingham in the next few months and a programme of workshops was being developed for staff in Corporate Services. The Chicago hosts had been impressed by the seniority of the Birmingham delegation. It would be desirable to achieve greater involvement in the initiative from the City of Birmingham and the business community.

HEFCE Consultations

Reported: that the consultations had led to widespread criticism from the sector. HEFCE had noted these responses and had agreed to produce a revised text.

Circles of Influence Campaign

Reported: that the total money received now stood at £54m.

Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance

Reported: that this University would not make an individual submission to the Review but would contribute to the response from the Russell Group. It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor was a member of the Review Group.

Outcome of HESSES Data Audit

Reported that:

- (a) the numbers had now been rebased on the basis of the definition of non-completion by HEFCE and a claw-back figure of £58k had been agreed. An action plan had been drawn up on the basis of this exercise, and this would be monitored by the Audit Committee;
- (b) the University had recently been informed by HEFCE that its annual assessment of the level of risk was "not at higher risk" which was the best judgement available. This would be notified to the Audit Committee which would formally report to Council in June.

Congratulations

Reported: that Professor Susan Hunstan and Professor Stephen Gorard had recently been elected Academicians of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Resolved:

That Professors Hunstan and Gorard be congratulated on their election.

10/19

New University Strategic Framework

Considered: a paper (CO.10.04.04) during the afternoon session.

Noted: the following points which arose in the course of discussions.

- Birmingham's aim to be a top 50 University in the world was seen as an important goal and outcome of the Strategic Framework. It would be a significant achievement in itself, but it would also be essential in assisting the University to attract funding, as well as the best students and staff, in an increasingly global market. The Global top 50 goal was interdependent and balanced.
- A step-change was required if the University was to move forward. Staff would be key to this, and the University will need to appoint and to develop the highest quality staff.
- The University and its staff needed to demonstrate confidence and a capacity and willingness to embrace change.
- Birmingham should build on its heritage as England's first civic university and connect this to its global aspirations.
- We should be clearer about the University's contribution locally, and particularly of its staff. We should be able to capture and to promote the strong connections with and contribution to local networks.
- The University was already well-established in a number of areas – we needed to 'enhance', rather than to 'embed' our engagement.
- We must be able to demonstrate what makes the University of Birmingham distinctive. We should be different in a way that really mattered to people.
- Our students needed to be internationally competitive – we need to develop a specific Birmingham measure of value-added.
- Distinctiveness and research strengths were important – the University must be clear what these were and build on them.
- Research rated as 4* would bring a high reputation nationally and internationally. It was important to capture in the Strategic Framework the need to improve the proportion of 4* research at the University in the next REF.
- It was appropriate that there should be a relatively small number of KPTs in the Strategic Framework. But these must be supported by a further layer of KPTs, that UEB would monitor and could report on to Council. These indicators should be monitored for relevance and others added as appropriate.
- The Strategic Framework needed to be embraced by the whole University, and to be underpinned by plans in the Colleges.

Agreed: that the direction of travel outlined in the paper and the broad strategic goals were an appropriate basis for the continuing development of the Strategic Framework.

10/20 BRDL Update

Considered: a paper (CO.10.04.05).

(Note: there is a separate confidential minute in relation to this item.)

10/21 INLOGOV Review

Considered: a paper updating members on progress (CO.10.04.06)

Reported: that

- (a) Council had agreed in September to support a recommendation asking for the review of INLOGOV to initiate a consultation process that might result in a redundancy process;
- (b) a number of minor changes had been made to the recommendations at the request of the staff. The academic strategy was supported by the staff;
- (c) it had been possible to achieve the academic objectives without the need for redundancies;
- (d) the outcome of the consultation had been supported by the College Board and by Senate. Senate had been very supportive of the recommendations and the consultation process that had led to them.

Resolved: that:

- (a) the paper be endorsed;
- (b) that those who had been involved in the consultation process be thanked.

10/22 Sociology Review

Considered: a report on progress (CO.10.04.07)

Reported: that

- (a) a process of consultation had taken place on the proposals considered by Council in November. This process had been comprehensive and inclusive, involving staff, students, unions and other stakeholders. It had also been transparent, with regular meetings and postings of infrastructure on the College web-site;
- (b) there was no dispute about the fundamental issues identified in the original report, and the College would withdraw from teaching in Media, Culture and Society;
- (c) the proposals now saw the retention of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Sociology, and its move as a discipline from Social Policy to POLSIS;
- (d) it had been possible to achieve staffing reductions through voluntary severance. At this stage there was no requirement for compulsory redundancies, and there was no need at present for Council to establish a Redundancy Committee;
- (e) the outcome had been strongly supported by the College, UEB and Senate. Senate had commended the process and welcomed the efforts that had been made to minimise the impact upon staff and students.

Reported: by Ms Jones that the students had appreciated their involvement in the consultation process – they were reassured by the changes that had been made to the original recommendations, and were confident in the future.

Resolved: that

- (a) the paper be endorsed;
- (b) that all those involved in the consultation process be thanked.

10/23 Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Considered: a report (CO.10.04.08)

Noted: that the proposals offered an opportunity to test the market, but that this did not preclude the possibility of internal appointments

Resolved: that the paper be approved and that the periods of office of Professors Petts and Randall as Pro-Vice-Chancellors be extended until 31st March 2011 and 31st July 2011 respectively.

10/24 Maximising the University's Cultural and Heritage Resources

Considered: a paper (CO.10.04.09)

Noted: that the University had extensive cultural assets, but that more needed to be done to provide leadership to co-ordinate the University's in this area at a time of significant opportunity.

Resolved: that

- (a) the recommendations in the paper be approved;
- (b) Professor Ian Grosvenor be appointed to the office of Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Cultural Engagement) for a period of three years with immediate effect.

10/25 Report of the Membership Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Membership Committee held on 16th March 2010 (CO.10.02.10).

Noted: the progress with appointing lay members to the vacancies on Council.

Resolved: to approve the recommendations of the Committee that:

- (a) Mr M G Gilbert be re-appointed as a lay member of Council, for a further period of four years from 1st August 2010;
- (b) that Professors Cillian Ryan and Andy Schofield be appointed with immediate effect to the vacancies on SPRC and the Council Membership Committee respectively for the period to 31st July 2013.

10/26 Projected Financial Outturn

Received: a report 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.09.04.11).

Noted: that

- (a) all capital projects were on time, with the exception of the Muirhead Tower, which was yet to be fully handed over because of issues relating to Special Collections;
- (b) there was no risk to funds which were unused at this point in the year;
- (c) it would be useful to arrange an annual update and discussion on estates matters at a Council meeting.

10/27 Report of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Received: a report from the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Recourse Committee held on 16th March 2010, noting the progress on the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) (CO.10.04.12).

10/28 Report of the Audit Committee

Received: a report from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 9th March 2010 (CO.10.04.14).

10/29 Report of the Senate

Received: a report from the meeting of the Senate held on 17th March 2010 (CO.10.04.14).

10/30 Review of Student Grievance to Council Cases

Received: a paper summarising Student Grievance Cases to Council, noting that Council welcomed information about the actions resulting from these cases. (CO.09.04.15)

10/30 Items approved between Meetings of Council

Received: a list of items approved since the last meeting of Council

10/31 Affixing of the University Seal

Received: a report noting the transactions which have required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council

10/32 Any other business

There was none.

10/33 Date of next meeting

Reported:

That the next meeting of the Council would take place on Wednesday 30th June 2010, starting at 2.00 p.m., preceded by lunch at 1.00 p.m.

