

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

29th June 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; Professor M J Hilton; Dr R C Horton; Mr R Hunter, (Vice-President (Education and Access), Guild of Students); Mr R J Keys; Mr G R Mackenzie OBE; Professor J M Marshall; Ms D Meredith (President, Guild of Students); Dr N 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 J S Taunque MBE; Ms S Vickers

Also present: Mrs G Ball (Director of Finance); Mr I Barker (Director of Estates) for item 11/ 45 only; Dr S J L Gower (Assistant Secretary); Mr M Harrop (President-elect, Guild of Students); 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 N P Weatherill (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor M Whitby (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor L S Young (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College)

Apologies: Dr R Sondhi CBE

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

11/39 Medical and Dental Sciences

Council received a presentation from Professor L S Young on the evening of 28th June on the College of Medical and Dental Sciences.

Resolved: to thank Professor Young and his colleagues for the visit to the Medical School that had taken place the previous evening

Noted: that an impressive range of important research was being undertaken in the College and it was important that staff in the College continued to maximise the visibility for this work amongst their external peer community and amongst research sponsors and funding bodies.

11/40 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2011 (CO.11.06.01).

11/41 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

11/42 Pro-Chancellor's Items

(i) Chair of UCAS

Reported: that the Vice-Chancellor had been elected Chair of UCAS

Resolved: to congratulate the Vice-Chancellor on his appointment.

(ii) Grade Point Averages (GPA)

Reported: that discussions on the possible introduction of GPA had been widely reported in the press in the last few weeks. This University's leading role in the discussions had been particularly prominent. The issue had been discussed at the last meeting of Senate, where the initiative had been welcomed.

(iii) Council Strategy Day

Reported: that the Council Strategy Day would take place on 27th September. Education would be a key focus of the discussions.

(iv) HEFCE Assessment of Institutional Risk

Reported: that the University had recently been informed by HEFCE that its annual assessment of the level of risk was "not at higher risk" – this was the best judgement available. This would be notified to the Audit Committee which would formally report to Council in the autumn.

11/43 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor containing a number of items for information (CO.11.06.02) and an oral report on the White Paper on HE.

(i) Birmingham Fellowships Scheme

Reported: that the Scheme aimed to bring to the University up to 50 of the brightest early career academics. The Scheme had been advertised in May – it had attracted very favourable international press coverage, and applications were being received from across the world. The Scheme was well on target to achieve its objectives. It might be expanded if, when the 50 posts had been filled, it was felt that there were still candidates of appropriate standing.

(ii) USS

Reported: that

- (a) the scheme changes had been approved and would be implemented from 1st October;
- (b) the increase in employer contributions would be sustainable within the University's budgets;
- (c) an ongoing issue for the Remuneration Committee was the impact of recent tax changes for senior staff. Remuneration Committee had developed a policy, but further changes to USS rules were anticipated. Colleagues were assessing how the University could continue to ensure that staff were appropriately remunerated without being penalised by these changes.

(iii) OFFA Agreement

Reported: that

- (a) the University had submitted its OFFA Agreement. Many universities had been asked by the Acting Director of OFFA to consider raising the proportion of their income above £6k spent on OFFA-related activities. A Working Group had been able to achieve this by including a broader range of expenditure on the student experience, which benefited Widening Participation students, including outreach and employability activities and academic support tutoring;
- (b) the Agreement had been signed off by the Pro-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor in line with the delegation previously agreed by Council.

(iv) Guangzhou Update

Reported: that

- (a) the initiative was being led by Professor Peck. He briefed Council on progress with the Guangzhou development;
- (b) the SPRC Working Group on Global Engagement, which reported to SPRC on 14th June 2011, concluded that Guangzhou should be the signature development of the University's strategy in China. The first phase of this development was the establishment of a University of Birmingham Collaborative Centre in Guangzhou. There had been excellent engagement from academic staff across the University in the research proposals for the Centre and nine projects had been identified as the basis for further discussion with the Guangzhou Municipality, including matched funding of the projects;
- (c) as an initial step, the University's Representative Office in Guangzhou would be launched on 6th-7th September. It was hoped that in subsequent phases the University would be able to develop and expand the initiative, possibly with a teaching dimension;
- (d) there was a separate paper under the SPRC Report seeking Council's approval of the legal and other steps necessary to establish the Centre (minute 11/48 refers).

(v) White Paper

Received: a summary of the key points from the White Paper in Higher Education, "Students at the Heart of the System", which had been published the day before Council met (tabled as CO.11.06.02b).

Noted: that

- (a) 65,000 undergraduate places would be removed from institutional quotas for 2012/13. This equated to the numbers of students gaining A-Level results of AAB or better. Institutions would be free to recruit as many students at AAB or above as they wished;
- (b) 20,000 places would be removed from institutions pro rata, and institutions invited to bid for these at £7,500 or less;
- (c) Colleagues in the Planning office were undertaking an analysis of the impact of the White Paper on the University's position. The University would need to consider whether there should be some rebalancing of student numbers between subjects. Some reduction of home undergraduate student numbers might also be considered;
- (d) there would be a further update to Council at its meeting in September.

11/44 University Budget 2011/12 and Forward Look

This Minute is Commercial and in Confidence and is available to Members of Council only.

11/45 Capital Framework

Considered: a paper containing recommendations for proposed projects and a presentation from Professor John Heath and the Director of Estates (CO.11.06.04).

Reported: that

- (a) major investments were proposed for Sport, the Library and the Student Hub, together with the supporting infrastructure. These were imperative if the University was to deliver on the Strategic Framework and to produce significant improvement in the student experience;
- (b) this was an integrated set of proposals that would dramatically transform the campus.

Resolved:

- (a) to welcome the ambitious set of proposals and to congratulate Professor Heath, Mr Barker and their colleagues on the quality of the proposals;
- (b) to approve the preferred options as set out in the paper for: the redevelopment of the Library and Sports Centre, for the refurbishment of Aston Webb C Block as a Student Hub, and the Institute for Advanced Studies; and the associated gross budget for these projects of £144m;
- (c) to approve the development of feasibility studies for consideration in the following phase of the Capital Framework for: the refurbishment of Arts, refurbishment of Physics, provision of an MBA Centre, provision of a Data Centre and refurbishment of University Centre/Staff House as detailed in the paper.

11/46 Report of the Court Review Group

Considered: the final report of the Review Group (CO.11.06.05).

Resolved: to support strongly the recommendations in the report and to forward it to

Court for its comments.

11/47 Report from the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Considered: a report from the meetings of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 11th May and 14th June 2011 (CO.11.06.06).

Reported: that

- (a) the proposal to seek a £75m loan facility from the EIB would enable the University to undertake a range of residential and income-generating activities. The loan was being offered on particularly advantageous terms for the University in recognition of its financial strength and viability;
- (b) the Deputy Pro-Chancellor had been closely involved in the proposals for the formation of Cognition Matters as a spin-out company and would serve as acting Chairman in the short-term.

Noted: the progress report from the SPRC review of Global Engagement, and the development of the University Centre in Guangzhou, arising out of this review (Minutes 11/43(iv) and 11/48 also refer).

Resolved:

- (a) to approve the proposed EIB loan facility of £75m for residential and income generating capital developments as set out in the SPRC report;
- (b) to approve the formation of a spin-out company, Cognition Matters, as set out in the SPRC report;
- (c) to receive and to note the other matters in the report, as appropriate.

11/48 Birmingham Guangzhou Collaborative Centre in Guangzhou

Considered: a paper concerning the development of a Birmingham Guangzhou Collaborative Centre and the legal and other steps necessary to establish the Centre (CO.11.06.07).

Noted:

- (a) that as reported above to Council (Minutes 11/43(iv) and 11/47 refer), the development of a Centre in Guangzhou was the University's signature initiative in China and formed a key part of its globalisation strategy developed by the SPRC Global Engagement Review Group;
- (b) external legal advice had been sought on the necessary legal steps proposed in the paper to establish a University Centre in Guangzhou starting with a Representative Office in Guangzhou, moving to a Wholly Foreign Owned Enterprise to permit educational consultancy, and possibly a joint venture with a Chinese university to allow teaching alongside Chinese institutions. The paper confirmed the company structures required to progress the initiative;
- (c) the project group on Guangzhou, led by Professor Peck, was considering further issues such as IP protection, data security and potential tax liabilities that might arise in China. The Chair of Audit Committee had experience in these areas and would discuss these further with Professor Peck.

Resolved: to approve

- (a) the establishment of a University Representative Office in Guangzhou;
- (b) the creation of the new Alta Cyclotron Services Limited and the use of the old Alta Cyclotron Services Limited for the University's Chinese activities;
- (c) the twin track approach to the establishment of legal vehicles, and a Wholly Foreign Owned Enterprise for the development of the Centre;
- (d) the proposed initial composition of the Board of Directors of Alta Birmingham China Limited and delegation of the appointment of two further directors to the Vice-Chancellor.

11/49 Proposed Amendments to Statutes and Scheme of Delegation

Considered: a set of amendments (CO.11.06.08).

Noted: that the proposed amendments to the Statutes would be submitted to Court in September for comment and further considered by Council thereafter.

Resolved: to approve

- (a) the proposed amendments to Statutes for submission to Court;
- (b) the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

11/50 Report from the Audit Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 7th June 2011 (CO.11.06.09).

Resolved: to approve the new University Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy and to receive the remaining items in the Report.

11/51 Report of the Membership Committee

Received: a report from the meeting of the Membership Committee held on 14th June 2011 (CO.11.06.10).

Agreed: to approve the recommendations in the Report.

11/52 Approval of Guild Bye-Laws

Considered: the revised Bye-Laws of the Guild (CO.11.06.11).

Agreed: to approve changes as set out in the paper.

11/53 Draft Annual Report from the Council to Court

Received: copy of the draft report to be submitted to Court in September 2011 (CO.11.06.12).

Resolved: to approve the report for submission to Court.

- 11/54 Annual Assurance Report on Health and Safety
Received: the annual assurance report submitted by UEB, noting the issues raised (CO.11.06.13).
- 11/55 Annual Assurance Report on Equality and Diversity
Received: the annual assurance report submitted by UEB, noting the issues raised (CO.11.06.14).
- 11/56 Report from the Senate
Received: a report from the meeting of the Senate held on 15th June 2011. (CO.11.06.15).
- 11/57 Term of Office of Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Approved: a recommendation that the term of office of Professor J S Bale as Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) be extended to 30th September 2015 (CO.11.06.15a).
- 11/58 Capital Projects over £5m
Received: a progress report on capital projects above £5m approved by Council (CO.11.06.16).
- 11/59 Items approved between Meetings of Council
Received: a list of items approved since the meeting of the Council on 13th April 2011 (CO.11.06.17).
- 11/60 Arrangements for Transaction of Business between meetings of Council
Approved: arrangements for transaction of business during the summer vacation (CO.11.06.18).
- 11/61 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.11.06.19).
- 11/62 Any other business
(i) Future Business at Council

Noted: by the Pro-Chancellor that he would welcome suggestions from members of major themes that might be the focus at Council in the coming year, either at meetings, Strategy Days or in evening presentations.

(ii) Retiring Council members

Resolved:

- (a) to thank the following Council members whose terms of office were due to end on 31st July 2011 for their contributions to the Council and its committees:

Dr Jagjit Taunque
Ms Dora Meredith
Mr Rob Hunter

- (b) to thank Professor Nigel Weatherill, who was attending his last meeting of Council as Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences before taking up the post of Vice-Chancellor at Liverpool John Moores University.

11/63 Dates of Next meetings

Reported: that meetings of the Council would take place on the following dates during 2011/12:

- Tuesday 27th September 2011 – Strategy Day – whole day meeting starting at 10.00am
- Friday 25th November 2011
- Wednesday 1st February 2012
- Tuesday 27th March 2012 – Strategy Day
- Wednesday 27th June 2012

The meetings on 25th November, 1st February and 27th June would commence at 9.00 a.m. These meetings would be preceded by a dinner on the evening before the day of the meeting, at which there would be a presentation on strategic issues, followed by informal discussion over dinner.

The meetings on 27th September and 27th March would be Strategy Days concluding with dinner.