

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

2nd October 2019 at 3.45 p.m.

MINUTES

Members present: Mr Ed Smith CBE (Pro-Chancellor, in the Chair); Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Mr Derrick Anderson; Mr Malcolm Harbour CBE; Mr Richard Haywood (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Dame Lin Homer; Professor Tim Jones (Provost and Vice-Principal); Mr Mick Laverty; Professor Una Martin; Mrs Caragh Merrick (Treasurer); Ms Joanne Park (Guild International Officer); Mr Josh Williams (President of the Guild of Students); Professor Karen Rowlingson; Mr Richard Swann; Ms Jacqueline Taylor.

Also present: Professor Kathleen Armour (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Professor Richard Black (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Erica Conway (Finance Director); Ms Cathy Gilbert (Director of External Relations) - for Minute 19/65; Professor Andrzej Gasiorek (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Laura Green (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Ms Carolyn Pike, Director of Legal Services - for Minute 19/67; Mr Lee Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Professor Andy Schofield (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Tim Softley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer)), Dr Steve Taylor, Director of Strategy and Operations, Birmingham Life Sciences Park - for Minute 19/67.

Apologies: Mr Alan Davey CBE; Dame Una O'Brien; Professor David Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Mr Harjinder Kang; Professor Corey Ross; Ms Deborah Cadman OBE; Professor Nicola Wilkin.

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

19/57 Council Strategy Day: 2nd October 2019

The three sessions of the Council Strategy Day had considered:

- (a) a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor, followed by a discussion, on the higher education environment and its implications for the University, including political and sector context, the state of the University, recruitment position, financial outturn and the University's priorities for 2019/20;
- (b) a presentation from the Provost and Vice-Principal, followed by a discussion and break out groups, on the development of the next Strategic Framework, including key themes, plans for revision of the University's Key Performance Targets and the process and timescale for the work;
- (c) a presentation from the Provost and Vice-Principal, followed by a discussion, on the development of the next Capital Programme for the period 2021-26, including initial proposed priorities (placeholders) and the process and timescale for the work.

(1) Strategic Framework

Reported that Council supported the following approach to the development of the next edition of the Strategic Framework:

- (a) the Strategic Framework would be developed around four themes **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) the use of a balanced scorecard approach for the revision of the Key Performance Targets would be explored further;
- (c) the first draft of the narrative of the Strategic Framework and revised Key Performance Targets would be considered at the next Council Strategy Day on 2nd April 2020;
- (d) the aim was for the next edition of the Strategic Framework to be approved by Council in June 2020.

(2) Capital Programme 2021-26

Reported that Council approved the following approach to the next Capital Programme 2021-26:

- (a) work would continue on the priorities for the next Capital Programme which would be developed **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;
- (b) further details of the rationale for this prioritisation and for those projects which had not been included would be provided to Council;
- (c) sources of capital funding, in the context of the University's financial profiling over the five year period, would be considered and the recommended way forward submitted to Council, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (d) a set of design principles would be developed for application to the capital projects submitted for approval as part of the next Capital Programme;
- (e) the aim was for a paper recommending the Capital Programme for 2021-26 to be approved by Council in June 2020. A separate paper setting out how this Capital Programme would be funded would also be submitted to the June meeting of Council.

19/58 Membership and Terms of Reference

Noted: the membership and terms of reference of the Council (CO.19.10.01).

19/59 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26th June 2019 be approved (CO.19.10.02).

19/60 Matters Arising

Reported: that there were no matters arising.

19/61 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Considered: the report of the Pro-Chancellor (CO.19.10.03).

Reported:

- (i) the outcomes of the one-to-one meetings between the Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer and members of Council for 2018/19;
- (ii) that the Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer had found the overall tenor of the feedback from the one-to-one meetings with members of Council to be extremely positive and constructive. There was a strong consensus

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amongst members of Council that governance continued to be strong and individual comments/suggestions made were in pursuit of Council's commitment to continuous improvement;

(iii) given that the next effectiveness review of Council would be conducted during 2019/20, the feedback from this year's one-to-one meetings would be considered and the outcome reported to Council as part of the effectiveness review. In addition, there were some specific individual requests which would be followed up outside of the meeting.

19/62 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Noted: the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.19.10.04).

Reported: that, in relation to Paragraph 9, Industrial Action, the University was continuing to work with ACAS to resolve the dispute with Unison.

19/63 Research Grants Performance 2018/19

Considered: the University's Research Grants Performance for 2018/19 (CO.19.10.05).

Reported that:

(a)-(d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(e) Council congratulated all staff who had contributed to achieving this excellent research grants performance for 2018/19. The discussion then focussed on:

- (i) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (ii) the importance of Horizon 2020 funding for the University, noting though that the future of this remained unclear pending the outcome of Brexit;
- (iii) progress with the introduction of Worktribe, the University's new research management software system.

19/64 Student Surveys

(1) National Student Survey 2019

Considered: the outcome of the National Student Survey 2019 (CO.19.10.06).

Reported that:

(a) the University's overall satisfaction score had fallen by half a point, although there had been some outstanding scores at individual subject level. As in previous years there were considerable differences between scores at subject level, and assessment and feedback remained a low-scoring area for most subjects;

(b) it was important to recognise that over the last academic year colleagues had worked hard to improve the student experience and, in the low scoring subjects, there was real disappointment that the outcomes were not stronger. This disappointment was shared by members of SPRC, although it was recognised that some of the enhancements and new approaches already in place would take longer than one cycle to deliver the required positive impact;

(c) the proposed strategy for the NSS during 2019/20 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;

(d) members of Council expressed their support for the University's strategy for the next NSS;

(e) the student members of Council highlighted:

- (i) in relation to safety, the particular concerns of international students about their safety in Selly Oak. The University continued to work closely with the Guild, West Midlands Police and the student community to provide

reassurance to all students on the safety of Selly Oak following two serious incidents in the area in Autumn 2018 (noting that the area actually had lower crime rates than other parts of the City). The University also funded a free evening shuttle bus between campus and Selly Oak and additional community police officers for Selly Oak;

- (ii) in relation to welfare, a number of individual cases of delays in accessing welfare services. The University had recently made a significant investment strengthening welfare services and would continue to monitor the position, noting also that the delays in welfare provision experienced by students referred to NHS Services were beyond the control of the University. The University was committed to ensuring the effectiveness of its welfare services and Council agreed that it would return to this matter when it considered the annual assurance report on student welfare, mental health and wellbeing in January 2020. In the meantime, the Guild International Officer was asked to provide the details of the individual cases which she had quoted to the Academic Registrar so that he could investigate these;
- (iii) that at institutional level, the scores of Black and Asian UK domiciled respondents were lower than those of their White peers in most questions, especially in Teaching, Learning Opportunities, Assessment and Feedback, Learning Community, Social Opportunities, Workload, and Overall Satisfaction. Each School, Heads of School (HoS) and Heads of Education (HoE) had been tasked with ensuring that where students with specific characteristics tended to rate their experience more negatively, actions were in place to understand and respond to their particular concerns. The University's Access and Participation Plan included targets to address the BAME attainment gap and this was a key priority for UEB, noting that a BAME Attainment Gap Task and Finish Group had recently been established to identify, track, and evaluate practice around BAME attainment and make recommendations to achieve these targets accordingly. The work of the University on inclusive curriculum, unconscious bias and race awareness was noted. Council would also receive a further briefing on student equalities and diversity matters when it considered the next assurance report on equalities and diversity in 2020.

Endorsed: the supportive and targeted strategy for 2019-20 approved by UEB as set out in Paper CO.19.10.06.

(2) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2019

Considered: the outcome of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2019 (CO.19.10.07).

Reported that:

- (a) that overall 85% of postgraduate taught students had been satisfied with their course. Compared to both the sector and Russell Group benchmarks, the University was ranked in the highest quartile for overall satisfaction;
- (b) that the response rate had improved significantly to 38% (compared with 23% in 2018);
- (c) that the Office for Students (OfS) had piloted a postgraduate taught student survey similar to the National Student Survey (NSS) earlier in the year. The University had participated, but promotion had been limited during the PTES fieldwork period to protect the PTES response rate. It was thought unlikely that there would be any useful data from the pilot;
- (d) the benefits of the new postgraduate management structure, noting the positive

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impact of the creation of the PGT Lead Role in the Graduate School to coordinate PGT across the Colleges;

(e) that the Business School had done particularly well to secure strong outcomes despite the challenges posed by over-recruitment.

Noted: the results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2019 and the actions being taken in respect of this as set out in Paper CO.19.10.07.

19/65 Recruitment and Admissions Update

Considered: the Recruitment and Admissions Update (CO.19.10.08).

Reported:

(a) that, whilst earlier in the year the recruitment position had been challenging, the outcome for 2019 entry had been positive;

(b)-(f) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(g) that Council commended the success of the Clearing operation this year and thanked all staff who had contributed to this significant achievement for the University;

(h) that the discussion covered:

- (i) the recruitment performance of the University of Birmingham Dubai, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;
- (ii) the University's approach to Degree Apprenticeships, noting the particular success of those offered in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and the partnership between the College of Social Sciences and Birmingham City Council;
- (iii) the success of the University's Open Days. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;
- (iv) in relation to home undergraduate recruitment for 2020 entry, the balance between quality of intake and numbers, as measured by the best three A levels, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**.

19/66 Audit Committee

Considered: an update from the Chair of the Committee on the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 30th September 2019. The report of the meeting would be submitted to Council in November 2019.

Reported that the key issues covered at the meeting of Audit Committee had been:

(a) IT and Cyber Security. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. Longer term measures on cyber security would form a key part of the University's Digital Strategy, which was currently under development and which would be considered at the evening presentation for Council in January 2020;

(b) the accounting treatment of USS in the University's accounts for 2018/19. This would be considered at the next meeting of Council when it received the 2018/19 accounts for approval and was considered further at Minute 19/67 below;

(c) the position regarding Core Systems which had also been reported to Council in the Report of Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee (Paper CO.19.10.09). The current position and the actions being taken were noted by Council;

(d) Risk Management. The College Risk Register for Life and Environmental Sciences would be presented to Audit Committee in November 2019, completing the current cycle of College-based risk review. Audit Committee had discussed whether its review of risk management could be enhanced by incorporating a more thematic approach for future meetings.

19/67 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Considered: the report of the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 24th September 2019 (CO.19.10.09).

(1) 2018/19 Financial Outturn

Considered: the draft financial outturn for the 2018/19 financial year in the management accounts format (CO.19.10.10).

Reported that:

- (a) the published accounts in statutory format were currently being audited;
- (b) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (c) there was a technical accounting requirement to disclose the present value of future deficit contributions as a provision on the University's balance sheet. Changes to that provision were charged / credited to staff costs in the year they were identified. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]** The British Universities Finance Directors Group was working with Auditors to identify a better way of reporting the impact of USS pension provision in the Accounts. UUK was also aware of the issue and was in discussion with the OfS **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(2) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(3) USS Update

Reported that:

- (a) following support of 'Option 3' from universities, the 2018 USS valuation exercise had been completed. This option meant that employee contributions to the USS Pension Scheme had increased from 8.8% to 9.6% from 1st October 2019 and the University's contribution rate had increased from 1st October 2019 to 21.1%;
- (b) the second report of the USS Joint Expert Panel to inform the 2020 USS Valuation would be published later in the month;
- (c) UCU had opened a ballot for strike action in relation to the USS pension position. It had also opened a second ballot related to pay, workloads, casualization and equality at the same time. These would both run from 9th September to 30th October 2019 and each higher education institution would be polled separately;
- (d) SPRC had reflected on the financial challenges facing the University in relation to projected future pension costs (noting that every 1% increase in employer contributions equated to a cost of £2m for the University) and Home undergraduate tuition fee income (the value of which would reduce in real terms over time as the statutory tuition fee level was not expected to change). **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

[The Vice-Chancellor and Principal declared an interest in this agenda item by virtue of his position as Chair of USS].

19/68 Appointment of Pro-Chancellor

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

19/69 University of Birmingham Dubai Governance Structure

Noted: the revised governance structure for the University of Birmingham Dubai which had been approved by the Council Dubai Sub-Group (CO.19.10.12).

Resolved: that the Provost and Vice-Principal would consider student representation in the revised governance structure and report back to the Council Dubai Sub-Group.

19/70 Council Code of Practice on Corporate Governance

Noted: that the Council Code of Practice on Corporate Governance had been updated to include:

- (a) the revised Fraud Response Policy and new Anti-Fraud Policy Statement of the University approved by Audit Committee in March 2019;
- (b) changes to web links and to reflect in the Scheme of Delegated Powers of Council the replacement of Alta Innovations Ltd. with University of Birmingham Enterprise Ltd (CO.19.10.13).

19/71 Forward Programme of Business 2019/20

Noted: the Forward Programme of Business 2019/20 (CO.19.10.14).

19/72 Items Approved Between Meetings of Council

Noted: items of business approved since the last meeting of Council (CO.19.10.15). This consisted of two appointments to the membership of the Investment Sub-Committee (Ms Lucy Baldwin and Professor Hisham Farag).

19/73 Capital Projects over £10m

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Received: a report from the Director of Estates (CO.19.10.16).

19/74 Affixing of the University Seal

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Received: a report noting the transactions which had required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council (CO.19.10.17).

19/75 Any Other Business

Reported: that there were no items of Any Other Business.

19/76 Programme of Meetings

Noted: the programme of meetings of Council for 2019/20:

- Tuesday 26th November 2019, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
- Wednesday 27th November 2019, 9.00am, Council Meeting
- Tuesday 28th January 2020, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
- Wednesday 29th January 2020, 9.00am, Council Meeting
- Thursday 2nd April 2020, 9.00am, Council Strategy Day and Dinner
- Tuesday 23rd June 2020, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
- Wednesday 24th June 2020, 9.00am, Council Meeting