

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

30th September 2020 at 3.00p.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members present: Mr Mervyn Walker (Pro-Chancellor and Chair); Professor Helen Abbott; Ms Tobiloba Adeyemi (President of the Guild of Students); Ms Deborah Cadman OBE; Ms Rebecca Cutler (Guild Postgraduate Officer)*; Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal); Professor David Hannah; Mr Malcolm Harbour CBE; Mr Richard Haywood (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Mr Steve Hollis; Dame Lin Homer; Professor Tim Jones (Provost and Vice-Principal); Mr Harjinder Kang; Mr Mick Lavery; Professor Una Martin; Mrs Caragh Merrick (Treasurer)*; Mr Richard Swann; Ms Jacqueline Taylor; Professor Nicola Wilkin.

Also present: Professor Kathleen Armour (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Professor David Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Richard Black (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Erica Conway (Finance Director); Professor Andrzej Gasiorek (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Cathy Gilbert (Director of External Relations) - for Minute 20/77; Professor Laura Green (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Stephen Jarvis (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Ms Gillian McGrattan, Director of Human Resources - for Minutes 20/75 and 20/76; Ms Emma Robinson (Academic Registrar) - for Minutes 20/75 and 20/83; Mr Lee Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Ms Rebecca Lambert (Director of Planning and Performance Insight) - for Minutes 20/80(1) and 20/81; Professor Tim Softley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer)).

Apologies: Mr Alan Davey CBE and Ms Rosie Harris.

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

**via Teams*

20/68 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Reported: by the Pro-Chancellor that his early reflections since taking office on 1st August had been overwhelmingly positive, noting:

- (a) that his key priority was to promote and sustain the ambition of the Council for further development of the University;
- (b) that he had been very impressed with the response of the University to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and commended its leadership on its management of the crisis;
- (c) that his programme of individual induction meetings had been informative and a valuable source of positive feedback, confirming his view that Council was operating extremely effectively;
- (d) the importance of Council remaining flexible, and continuing to foster an open and supportive but challenging culture;
- (e) that contributions from all members of Council at meetings were encouraged,

recognising the great benefit for Council of being able to access the diverse perspectives, skills and experience of lay, student and staff members.

20/69 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

20/70 Declarations of Interest

Reported: that, as recommended by the Effectiveness Review of Council which reported in June, in order to enhance transparency of interests of members of Council and UEB, Council had agreed that:

- (a) there would be a standing item at the beginning of each Council and Committee meeting asking whether there were any changes to the Register of Interests or any interests to declare in relation to any item on the agenda;
- (b) the Register of Interests of Members of Council and UEB would be submitted to the first meeting of Council in each academic year, and that membership of the USS pension fund and UCU and other Unions be recorded and declared at that meeting.

Noted:

- (i) the Register of Interests of Members of Council and UEB, including details of declared membership of the USS pension fund and UCU and other Unions, (CO.20.09.01);
- (ii) that no changes to the Register of Interests or interests were declared in relation to any item on the agenda.

20/71 Membership and Terms of Reference

Noted: the membership and terms of reference of the Council (CO.20.09.02).

20/72 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24th June 2020 be approved (CO.20.09.03).

20/73 Matters Arising from the minutes not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

Reported: that there were no matters arising.

20/74 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Considered: the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.20.09.04).

Reported that:

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

20/75 Covid-19 Update

Considered:

- (a) the work being undertaken by the University in response to the Covid-19 emergency (CO.20.09.05). The latest version of the tracker which recorded decisions made as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak was attached at Appendix 1;
- (b) the proposed extension of the arrangements for the operation of Council and its Sub-Committees, emergency powers and delegations during the Coronavirus Emergency first approved by Council on 2nd April 2020.

Reported that:

- (a) the situation remained challenging, noting the latest national and local position and the current position in relation to campus re-opening, education and students, and Human Resources;
- (b) members of Council commended the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the significant work being undertaken by staff at this difficult time. The discussion covered:
 - (i) the University's excellent relationship with Dr Justin Varney, the Director of Public Health for Birmingham, and liaison with the other higher education institutions in the West Midlands to ensure a co-ordinated response to the impact of the pandemic;
 - (ii) the impact of the national and local restrictions on the University. Delivery of education was not affected by the current Birmingham restrictions, and schools and universities were expected to continue to open, welcome students and operate as planned. Comprehensive measures had been put in place to ensure that campus could open safely for staff and students, and it was anticipated that most activities would continue as planned with a combination of online and on-campus activity. A student community commitment had been produced in partnership with the Guild which set out expectations of student behaviour. The most recent DfE guidance set out four 'Tiers of Restriction' that might apply to universities which were located in an 'Area of Intervention'. The guidance was clear that the default position was to maintain some face to face teaching, alongside online provision. A phased approach to moving to on-line teaching was envisaged. At higher tiers there would be an intention to move in a phased way to more online teaching, initially prioritising some forms of face to face teaching such as labs, clinical or certain year groups, and at the highest Tier to fully on-line teaching. The University Framework for Educational Resilience supported this;
 - (iii) the lower figures for staff and student cases of Covid-19 than those experienced by other higher education institutions. The University was providing extensive support to students who had tested positive and those who were self-isolating in the residences (e.g. delivery of food packages);
 - (iv) the establishment of a pillar 2 'Turnkey' laboratory at the University as part of the local and national testing regime, and drawing on the expertise of academics such as Professor Alan McNally in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, who helped to set up the Lighthouse Laboratory in Milton Keynes. A walk-through testing centre had also been established at the University with Deloitte and Public Health England. Together, these facilities provided an important part of the testing regime for Birmingham;
 - (v) concern about the impact of the pandemic on staff, noting that they had been working under significant pressure for a sustained period since March. It was hoped that things might improve as the academic year progressed, noting the staff wellbeing and support measures that the University had put in place, including comprehensive guidance on the arrangements for return to campus;
 - (vi) the importance of raising public awareness of the extensive work and measures being put in place by higher education institutions to ensure safe opening of the campus for staff and students;
 - (vii) the importance of ensuring that the University was positioned effectively to manage the impact of Covid-19 and prepare for future recovery and realisation of its long term ambitions;
- (c) a further Covid-19 Update would be provided to the next meeting of Council, although members would be kept informed of any significant developments in the meantime.

Resolved: that the arrangements for the operation of Council and its Sub-Committees, emergency powers and delegations during the Coronavirus Emergency approved by Council on 2nd April 2020 (and extended by Council on 19th May 2020 until 30th September 2020) be extended to continue to operate until 25th November 2020 (the date of the next ordinary meeting of Council).

20/76 Voluntary Leavers Scheme

Considered: a progress report on the University's Voluntary Leavers Scheme (CO.20.09.06).

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

20/77 Recruitment and Admissions Update

Considered: a presentation from the Director of External Relations updating on the latest recruitment and admissions position (CO.20.09.07).

Reported:

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

(g) members of Council commended the Director of External Relations and her team for their exemplary management of the challenging 2019/20 recruitment cycle and expressed their appreciation of the huge amount of work which had been undertaken by the Admissions Office in very difficult circumstances. The discussion covered:

- (i) recruitment activities for the 2020/21 recruitment cycle, including virtual Open Days and the use of webinars and live chats;
- (ii) the strong performance against Access and Participation Plan targets which was commended;
- (iii) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Resolved: that Council congratulated the University on the outcome of the 2019/20 recruitment cycle, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

20/78 Finance

(1) 2019/20 Financial Outturn

Considered: the 2019/20 Financial Outturn (CO.20.09.08).

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

(2) Setting the Phase 2 Budget

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

Endorsed: the approach to the setting of the Phase 2 Budget as set out above and in Paper CO.20.09.09.

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

20/79 Research Grants Performance 2019/20

Considered: the University's 2019/20 Research Grants Performance (CO.20.09.11).

Reported:

- (a) that overall it had been a highly successful year for awards and applications, which was all the more remarkable given the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic;
- (b)-(d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Resolved: that Council congratulated the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) on the success of the 2019/20 research grants performance.

20/80 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Considered: the report of the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 22nd September 2020 (CO.20.09.12).

- (1) Key Performance Targets Update

Considered: the Key Performance Targets (KPTs) Update (CO.20.09.13).

Reported that:

- (a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) the next Strategic Framework was currently under development. Significant work had been undertaken early in 2020 but, as a result of Covid-19, work had been paused and the timeline extended to Summer 2021. A new approach to performance monitoring and reporting was being developed alongside this work and was expected to be adopted from the start of the 2021/22 academic year;
- (c) performance reporting during 2020/21 would be treated as exceptional, in the light of the ongoing disruption and impact of Covid-19. It was proposed that a small set of KPIs focussed on broad themes underpinning the University's immediate recovery be monitored regularly. Further discussion of the appropriate measures and process had been held during the September UEB Away Days. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (d) Council emphasised the importance of having an appropriate measure of student satisfaction, noting the root and branch review of the National Student Survey which had been recently announced.

Resolved: that the Key Performance Targets Update be approved as set out in Paper CO.20.09.13.

20/81 Graduate Outcomes

Considered: a report on the University's performance in Graduate Outcomes (CO.20.09.14).

Reported that:

- (a) it had been agreed by Council in June 2020 that Paper CO.20.09.14 would be submitted to this meeting;
- (b) from this year, graduate employability data would be driven by the annual Graduate Outcomes survey (GO). The first release covered students who graduated in 2017/18. The implementation of GO had been challenging for HESA, and this first release had been designated as 'experimental statistics', recognising

that the data were 'newly developed or innovative and undergoing evaluation'. Data quality had come under significant challenge from across the sector, and the response rates were significantly lower than DLHE;

- (c) GO data were complex and heavily caveated. The key metrics normally referenced (Employability and Graduate Employability) were only partly available (the HESA PI for employability was not due until later in the year);
- (d) the release of the Guardian league table had been the first attempt at a standard sector 'Graduate Employability' metric. The University's Guardian 'Career Prospects' score was 87%, joint 11th in the sector, and joint 9th in the Russell Group. The Times League Table was expected to be published soon, noting that the University's 'Career Prospects' score in the Times was expected to be nearer 84% because of the different methodology which they used compared to the Guardian;
- (e) salaries of the University's graduates outperformed the sector, and our arts, humanities and social science graduates had a much better highly-skilled employment rate than the sector average (74% vs 65%). There were also some positive signs in reducing the gaps for local (P2B) students and black students;
- (f) the time lag of GO meant that there was little that the University could do to effect immediate change on its GO performance. Actions implemented now (i.e. from the 2020/21 academic year) would not impact on GO results until 2022. In addition, it was likely that the ramifications of Covid-19 would impact GO outcomes until at least 2022. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Endorsed: the University's approach to Graduate Outcomes as set out in Paper CO.20.09.14 and above.

20/82 Audit Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 29th September 2020.

Reported that:

- (a) progress with the 2019/20 Internal Audit Plan had been disrupted by Covid-19. As a result, there had been a more significant carryover of audits yet to be completed than in previous years but the Head of Internal Audit had assured the Committee that the situation was manageable;
- (b) the Committee had considered the University Risk Register Update for Quarters 3 and 4;
- (c) in relation to approval of the University's Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st July 2020, there would be changes as a result of Covid-19, which would impact the disclosures that would be required in relation to going concern and the deferral of some elements of research income. Full details of the outcome of the work to derive the disclosure and financial impact would be included in the report presented to Audit Committee with the Annual Report and Accounts in November 2020.

20/83 Academic Assurance Report

Considered: the requirements of Council in relation to academic assurance and what academic assurances members of Council will receive during the academic year (CO.20.09.15).

Noted that:

- (a) the effectiveness review of Council which reported in June had found that the University complied with all the requirements of the role of Council in relation to assurance on teaching and the student experience and that there were many

examples of good practice in the range of reports, briefings and opportunities for discussion at Council. In particular, for a number of years Council had considered a detailed assurance report on academic quality and assurance and had a report at every meeting from Senate. However, the discussions of Will Spinks, the External Consultant for the effectiveness review, with members of Council had revealed the need for some members of Council better to understand the principles that underpinned their accountabilities in the area of academic assurance and what academic assurances they were receiving, as they got them, during the year;

- (b) the recommendation of the effectiveness review approved by Council in June had been that a report would be submitted to the first meeting of Council in each academic year that detailed the requirements of Council in relation to academic assurance and, prospectively, what academic assurances members of Council would receive and when, as the academic year progressed (Paper CO.20.09.15). As these materials were then presented during the academic year, they could refer to Paper CO.20.09.15 to remind members of Council that they were part of the ongoing assurance to Council on academic matters, including on matters of academic quality and the student experience.

20/84 CUC Higher Education Code of Governance

Noted: that a new version of the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance had been published on 16th September 2020.

20/85 Forward Programme of Business 2020/21

Noted: the Forward Programme of Business for Council (CO.20.09.16).

20/86 Items Approved Between Meetings of Council

Noted: items of business approved since the last meeting of Council (CO.20.09.17):

- (a) appointments to 2020/21 committee vacancies;
(b) appointment of Professor Stephen Jarvis as Non-Executive Director on the University of Birmingham Enterprise Ltd. Board.

20/87 Capital Projects over £10m

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Received: the progress update on Capital Projects over £10m (CO.20.09.18).

20/88 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.20.09.19).

20/89 Any Other Business

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

20/90 Programme of Meetings

Noted: the programme of meetings of Council for 2020/21:

Thursday 29th October 2020, 1.30pm, Special Meeting of Council (to be confirmed)

Tuesday 24th November 2020, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 25th November 2020, 9.00am, Council Meeting

Tuesday 26th January 2021, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 27th January 2021, 9.00am, Council Meeting

Thursday 22nd April 2021, 9.00am, Council Strategy Day and Dinner

Tuesday 29th June 2021, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 30th June 2021, 9.00am, Council Meeting

[Secretary's Note: The special meeting of Council on 29th October 2020 was not required. A virtual briefing session for members of Council was held instead on that date].