



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Minutes Meeting of Council

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| Date: | 22 October 2018 |
| Present: | Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair); Mrs Hope and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors; Mr Sutcliffe, Treasurer; Professor Valentine, Acting President & Vice-Chancellor; Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Ms Jones, Dr Layden, Professor Maltby, Professor Morgan, Dr Nicholls, Professor Petley, Professor Siva-Jothy, Mr Sly, Mr Sykes, Ms Whitton, Mr Wray |
| Secretary: | Dr Strike |
| In attendance: | Mrs Dingle, Ms Kee, Dr Offiah, Mr Swinn, Ms Tayyab, Mr Wright |
| Apologies: | Ms Hague |

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Whitton, Professor Morgan and Professor Petley to their first meeting as members of Council, and Mr Sutcliffe, attending his first meeting in his capacity as Treasurer. Also welcomed were Mr Wright, Deputy Director of HR, who was attending for item 11, and Dr Offiah, Deputy Chair of the BAME staff network, and Ms Tayyab, Students' Union Women Officer, who were attending for item 7.

AGENDA

1. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Council noted that the agenda included a request to agree the University's response to the UUK consultation on USS pensions and this conflict of interest was noted. All staff members of Council were members of the scheme, as was Dr Nicholls.

No other conflicts of interest were declared.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2018, having been circulated, were approved and signed, subject to one correction to the list of attendees.

3. MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES

Matters arising on the Minutes were noted as follows:

- (a) Minute 3(b), Fundraising benchmarking: The survey results from CASE Europe had been published and DARE would update Council in November.
- (b) Minute 3(e), Cyber Security: A briefing on cyber-security was held prior to this Council meeting.

- (c) Minute 6, AMRC matters: The three substantive proposals had been circulated to Finance Committee following Council and no objections or concerns were raised. The Executive Dean of AMRC had been invited to attend and provide updates to UEB more often during 2018/19.
- (d) Minute 8, Financial Forecasts: The budget pack had been circulated to Council on 20 August, as well as UEB and other key committees and University staff groups. Prior to submission to the OfS in September, the financial forecasts had been amended slightly to reflect changes to the assumptions about future pensions contribution rates, an approach agreed by Council and Finance Committee.
- (e) Minute 10, Senate Effectiveness Review: A consultation paper had been circulated to those staff who were eligible for Senate membership and to Senate members. The results would be reported to Senate on 31 October. The new Senate Academic Assurance Committee had been formally established and initial membership approved. It met for the first time on 16 October, including discussion of the annual academic assurance report that Council will receive, via Senate, in November.
- (f) Minute 11, Social Sciences Hub: Clarification had been provided to the Chair of Council about the £840k cost of the PCSA extension. The accompanying report to item 10, Capital Report, referred.
- (g) Minute 24, KPI and Performance reporting: The regularity and nature of KPI and performance reporting, together with the Corporate Risk Register, was considered in preparing and updating the Council business plan for 2018/19.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Council received and noted the regular update on health and safety issues, which did not highlight any particular problems, concerns or compliance issues. High level health and safety risks would be included in the first 2018/19 iteration of the Corporate Risk Register, which would be presented to Council in November, and to Audit Committee. Members requested that future health and safety reports detail any accidents and incidents in the reporting period, note the key concerns and risks, and include relevant data and trend analysis to support existing narrative reporting.

5. ACTING PRESIDENT & VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Council received and discussed the Acting President & Vice-Chancellor's report and accompanying presentation, in which she provided information on key current and forthcoming developments in the policy environment and against each of the themes in the University's Strategic Plan. Points noted in particular included the following:

- (a) Brexit: The Government had extended its commitment to underwriting Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ funding until 2020, even in the event of no deal. However, this scenario looked increasingly likely and the Government had published a suite of detailed technical notes about its preparations for such a situation. These notes were informing an evaluation of relevant institutional risks, and UEB was considering a proposed action plan.
- (b) Post-18 Education and Funding Review: The Review was expected to publish its interim report by the end of 2018, linked to recommendations by the Office for National Statistics on the treatment of student loans in the public accounts that was due in December. The final report should be published in Spring 2019. The outcome of this process was critical to the future of HE funding and could create significant challenges for the University and the sector as a whole.

- (c) Office for Students: The OfS was consulting on its new approach to access and participation, focusing on the whole student lifecycle from access and progression to degree outcomes. The University's emergent BAME Strategy (See Minute 6, below) was one of several initiatives and ongoing activities that should lead to enhanced performance in these areas. The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation had written to all UK Vice-Chancellors asking them to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of students; the Government was expected to implement its Mental Health Charter in 2019/20.
- (d) Education and Student Experience: Student Recruitment and Employability: Overall, student recruitment was positive but variable across different categories. Home undergraduate numbers were 202 below target but application levels had been 3% higher than the sector average and Russell Group competitors, which reflected positively on the University's recruitment and marketing activities, notably its approach to Open Days. The strategic decision to concentrate on recruiting high quality students had increased the proportion of new entrants at ABB+ or equivalent from 72 to 76%. Recruitment of overseas students was above target in all categories: undergraduate (+17%), postgraduate taught (+32%) and postgraduate research (+7%). Student numbers in all categories were subject to attrition, which was usually higher for overseas students, prior to the 1 December census date. Council was pleased to note that the University had been ranked top in the North of England for graduates securing graduate level employment or further study within six months of graduation (85%).
- (e) Education and Student Experience: External Environment: The University was preparing to renew its institutional TEF submission in January 2019 while individual departments were preparing action plans in readiness for subject level assessments in 2021. Clarification was provided that the NUS-led boycott of the NSS was initially driven by principled opposition to the marketisation of HE, but TEF participation was now a condition of registration with the OfS. The University and Students' Union were actively discussing student engagement with NSS in future. Council noted that performance in external league tables was broadly stable but with slight declines in the Times Higher Education World and Times Good University Guide. It was pleasing to note strong performance against the Russell Group in measures for social inclusion and access.
- (f) Research and its Impact: On 31 October, Senate would consider proposals to designate a small number of flagship cross-disciplinary University Research Institutes following a competitive process. The initiative was part of efforts to concentrate resource around interdisciplinary research excellence, within an agreed hierarchy. The latest annual REF stocktake exercise was complete and action plans had been agreed with Faculties and Departments. The priority for 2018/19 was to develop strong Impact Case Studies and to increase numbers of four star outputs. The University had led the preparation and submission of an Expression of Interest to the UKRI Strength in Places fund, in collaboration with the partners from the SCR and North West of England. If accepted, a full proposal would be submitted in April 2019. The Northern Powerhouse Minister and University alumnus, Jake Berry MP, had recently visited the University to open three new advanced engineering research centres, funded in partnership by ERDF, UKRI and the University, which had received high praise in media coverage. It was also pleasing that Mr Berry had commended the strength of the University's values and identity in his opening address.
- (g) Strategic Partners, AMRC update: Building on Council discussions on 9 July, a number of follow-up activities were reported. Preliminary discussions had been held to draft a University strategy for AMRC and an inventory of assets had been developed to inform. External advice on potential future structures and financing

options could be sought by tendering for specialist consultancy services. A proposed approach to naming and branding had been developed, on the basis of legal advice, and consideration of a new capital case was on hold pending expected funding announcements from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

- (h) Strategic Partners, Other: A UEB Task and Finish Group was considering the risks and opportunities around Brexit, OfS regulation and Management School accreditation on the University's future relationship with the International Faculty. A new fundraising campaign was in development and the University continued to foster positive relations with the SCR Mayor, Dan Jarvis, who was due to visit the University on 9 November.
- (i) Our Place Locally and Globally & Public Responsibility: The University was hosting a series of alumni events in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing during October, and had held a successful Agents Conference in June that had been attended by agents from 43 countries. Locally, the largest Festival of the Mind to date had taken place across the city in September, with 145 academics producing 300 events that attracted over 50,000 visitors. A 'Cool to be Clever' campaign to promote academic excellence and raise aspiration levels amongst disadvantaged school pupils had been commended by Government and was cause for confidence in the ability of other activities to contribute to successfully delivering access and WP objectives. An update on the MRI-PET fundraising campaign would be provided at Council in November.
- (j) Challenge of Resource, Finance: It was pleasing to note that overall financial performance was positive, with the draft annual results showing an operating surplus following two years of outturn deficits. However, the highly variable performance of the individual Faculties reflected particular ongoing challenges in different areas. Work during 2017/18 to review and revise the institutional process for allocating budgets and introduce greater transparency and consistency into budget setting at Faculty level was supported by communications to raise financial awareness and literacy amongst key staff.
- (k) Challenge of Resource, Estates: The University was working with the contractor for the Social Sciences Hub to manage significant costs increase in order for revised business cases to be presented for approval to Finance Committee and Council without jeopardising the building programme. If approved, it was vital that construction was completed, and the building operational on time, to avoid significant lost revenue. Council would consider the matter further in due course and recommended that the University undertake contingency planning against the risk that any related contractual obligations owed to the University could not be fulfilled. Estates Committee could also consider these matters at its next meeting.
- (l) The Power of People: On the advice of sector bodies and in concert with others in the sector, the University had implemented the final employers national pay offer of a 2% increase from 1 August 2018. Unison were balloting members on industrial action and UCU had held a disaggregated ballot, with the University branch one of a very small proportion that had voted in favour of strike action and action short of a strike. Further information was expected following the UCU HE Conference in November. More positively, the University had launched its Academic Career Pathways initiative in June, which would provide clarity about expected performance at all career stages by focusing on excellence and ambition. The successful Sheffield Leader programme had been relaunched with renewed focus on developing teams and leadership skills in priority areas.

6. UNIVERSITY BAME STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 Council received a presentation on the University's emergent BAME Strategy and accompanying action plan under the Power of People theme in the University Strategic Plan. Preparations were underway to formally launch the Strategy during 2018/19. The Strategy was a collaborative development between UEB, the BAME Staff Network and the Student's Union, with input from the Vice-President for Education and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC). Related activities included the establishment of the BAME Staff Network, including a working group to tackle racism; University and Students' Union activities to promote and celebrate Black History Month; and a Task and Finish group to consider BAME perspectives and experiences.
- 6.2 It was noted that EDIC had previously identified the need to promote a positive, genuine culture of inclusivity and equality of opportunity across all aspects of University life, to which the five high level objectives of the new Strategy would respond. There was also increasing interest and scrutiny in this area in the face of growing evidence of a sectoral BAME attainment gap, micro aggression and 'everyday' racism experienced by BAME staff and students. The OfS consultation on fair access would reflect these concerns, and REF 2021 would mirror the TEF in requiring an institutional Equality and Diversity statement. Advance HE were also consulting on the introduction of BAME Charter similar to the Athena Swan Charter promoting gender equality.
- 6.3 Council noted a summary of institutional data and additional contextual feedback from BAME students and staff that demonstrated that BAME staff and students were not a homogenous group, with differential rates of attainment among different nationalities and ethnicities. However, the overall attainment rate was consistently around 12-13% lower than white students with the same entry qualifications. With respect to staff, BAME colleagues were under-represented, especially at higher grades and rates of career progression were relatively low. More broadly, additional activity would identify any additional support needs for BAME staff and students with other protected characteristics, gather evidence of bias and exclusion, and address indirect, cultural factors such as unconscious bias, including staff training and mentoring. It was noted that the desired cultural and behavioural changes could benefit those with other protected characteristics and it may be appropriate to align mentoring and training activities. The University could also learn from good practice in other universities and other sectors.
- 6.4 Council welcomed the BAME strategy and related supporting activities. An update on progress would be provided in October 2019.

7. REPORT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

- 7.1 Council received and noted an update on student mental health following approval of the Student Mental Health Strategy in October 2017. The Student Access to Mental Health Service provided a single point of access for students, with clearer and quicker processes for seeing individual students, and was successfully evaluating and directing new cases to the most appropriate support service. It was reported that the number of students contacting SAMHS had increased by 30% in 2017/18, with increases in all student categories. High rates of satisfaction were reported with respect to face to face services but this was less positive for online resources. It was suggested that the University could make greater use of AI and IT as the technology developed, and lessons could be learned from organisations such as the NHS.
- 7.2 Priority activities for 2018/19 encompassed further engagement with PGR students, in the context of nationally recognised issues; accredited student-facing staff training; awareness raising, for example Our Mental Health Week; and responding to the UUK 'Suicide-Safer Campuses' initiative. With respect to the latter, the University already acted in accordance with many of its proposals, offering targeted support and

increased interventions in cases of concern and considering mental health as part of wider campus wellbeing initiatives.

- 7.3 Council agreed to receive regular updates on progress and it was reported that Audit Committee had requested an internal audit review of student wellbeing activity during 2018/19.

8. **STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021: ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

Council received an evaluation of institutional-level performance to date against the seven themes of the University's current Strategic Plan, based on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) previously agreed by Council and subsequently proposed for amendment by UEB. The ratings indicated for each theme were the result of internal consultation, informed by the available data and relevant qualitative factors. The report was retrospective, and where possible used external data to provide a comparison with the Russell Group. The annual KPI assessment, in addition to informing Council, was intended to facilitate self-appraisal by individual theme owners and to support University and Faculty action planning and prioritisation. Council approved the KPI assessments for the University and changes to indicators and measures, and future approaches to reporting to mitigate the impact of the time lag in data availability.

8.1 **Key Performance Indicators 2018: Our Education and Student Experience**

The Vice-President for Education provided a summary of progress against the six KPIs supporting the Our Education and Student Experience theme of the Strategic Plan that had now been rationalised into four, drawing particular attention to those relating to student recruitment and the student experience.

- (a) Student recruitment: As previously noted (see Minute 5 (d), above), the University had focused on recruiting high calibre students. This would have a beneficial impact on future student recruitment by positively affecting league table performance. Members noted analysis showing that applicants to all Faculties consistently preferred a competitor when receiving offers from both institutions., which had been identified during the 2017/18 planning round. Although challenges remained and significant sustained effort was required, strategic focus on institutional tariff should improve relative performance over time. The University was also proactively seeking to influence factors within its control, for example using the Programme Level Approach (PLA).
- (b) Student experience: Relative performance in the NSS had declined due to lower response rates caused by the student boycott. Nevertheless, the results did highlight specific areas, especially assessment and feedback. PLA would drive improvements by encouraging innovation and creativity in the assessment and feedback methods. The University ranked strongly for graduate prospects but a high average student to staff ratio in all categories except PGR students negatively affected relative performance and also had implications for staff providing pastoral support. Non-continuation data placed the University sixth in the Russell Group, despite a small decline since 2012/13; marketing and recruitment activities should make greater reference to this success.
- (c) New KPI – Teaching Excellence Framework: UEB had recommended combining measures for student satisfaction, graduate prospects and completion into a new TEF KPI. This reflected the institutional importance of each measure in the context of externally benchmarked performance and ranking, the forthcoming introduction of subject level TEF and the fact that TEF participation was a condition of continuing registration with OfS. In preparation for a renewed institutional TEF submission and subsequent

subject-level assessment, departments were preparing action plans and identifying support needs necessary to deliver the excellent student experience and outcomes that should translate into strong scores against TEF metrics.

- (d) Our Place Locally and Globally; Our Public Responsibility: Attention was drawn to strong recruitment of overseas students which exceeded the Russell Group average in all student categories. The University succeeded in attracting greater numbers of Chinese students but was relatively less successful in other overseas markets, which increased risk. Intake of young full-time entrants from the SCR had increased and the University was now ranked 15th in the Russell Group. Although mature student numbers had declined since 2012/13, due in large part to the national collapse in part-time student numbers, the University still compared favourably against its peers. Analysis of BME attainment was less positive but steps were being taken (see Minute 6, above), which could be informed by how LPN student attainment had improved. The focus of widening participation activities funded under the Access and Participation Plan was on access, success and progression, supported by a range of underpinning activities, including overnight accommodation around Open days, which was unique in the sector, and regular engagement with schools.

Points noted in discussion included the following:

- Clarification was provided about the cultural challenge in ensuring that all academic staff understood the potential departmental and institutional implications of poor TEF performance and plans to effect and manage positive change.
- It was pleasing to note that the University had awarded broadly stable numbers of first class degrees in the last five years, in the context of potential future external reporting requirements about grade inflation.
- The relatively high percentage of new entrants from State Schools and those with an LPN background was a clear demonstration of the University's values and its commitment to access and widening participation, and should be more widely celebrated.

8.2 Key Performance Indicators 2018: Our Research and its Impact

The Vice-President for Research and Innovation provided a summary of progress against the six KPIs supporting the Our Research and its Impact theme of the Strategic Plan.

- (a) Research Income: Research income data showed a significant increase in 2017-18. However, the application of the FRS102 accounting standard meant that these data were inherently volatile from year to year. The length of time between the award of a research grant and related income generation meant that the reported data represented activity undertaken three to four years ago. Therefore, it was useful to consider the current position by looking at the value of research grant capture and work in progress; the value of awards had increased by over £30m in three years, at a faster rate than the external funding available, with notable successes in certain areas. The University was ranked sixth in the UK for contract and collaborative income, which was a significant achievement. These awards were now dominated by knowledge exchange requirements, giving cause for optimism that the University could continue perform strongly.

- (b) PGR Students: The decline in new PGR student registrations since 2014/15 was disappointing, including a substantial decrease in overseas numbers. PGR students made vital contributions to academic departments through their technical work, research contribution and support for teaching activities. Furthermore, they often secured influential national and international roles, in which they could act as strong advocates for the University. The overall proportion of PGR theses submitted within four years was below the 80% benchmark set by the Research Councils, although it was improving. In addition, submission rates in different departments were highly variable with a number performing above the benchmark. Action taken included Senate setting an expectation that submission should occur within a student's funding period and additional pastoral and wellbeing support to address known challenges around PGR student mental health (see also Minute 7, above).

Points noted in discussion included

- The University had prepared plans for attracting the greater numbers of PGR students to sustain and develop vibrant research communities.
- Although work to prepare for REF 2021 was not directly reflected in the KPI data, it should have a positive effect in due course by raising individual and collaborative performance and impact.

9. CAPITAL UPDATE

- 9.1 Council considered a report on the status of capital projects within the current five-year Estates Strategy period to 2022 and noted that an exercise to review project prioritisation and cash flow analysis had been undertaken. This would be reported to Council in November 2018. It was pleasing to note that the University expected to return an operating surplus in excess of its financial strategy target, which should support delivery of priority capital projects without breaching the agreed internal financing limit.
- 9.2 Council considered and approved the release of an additional £1.3m of funding for the MRI-PET project to cover costs that exceeded estimates in the original business case. Finance Committee had approved the increase in fees on 15 October. Members also noted positive discussions to resolve issues over purchasing equipment as part of the LVV project.

10. RESPONSE TO UUK CONSULTATION ON USS PENSIONS

- 10.1 Prior to discussion, Council was reminded that members who were also members of the USS scheme must consider this matter in the best interests of the University, not as individual scheme members.
- 10.2 Council considered the proposed response to the UUK employer consultation on recommendations from the UUK-UCU Joint Expert Panel (JEP). The JEP had been convened to resolve the current dispute between employers, represented by UUK, and UCU over the USS 2017 valuation, which had led to industrial action during 2017/18. The University had established a USS Valuation Working Group during 2017/18 and had reconvened the group, with updated terms of reference and membership, to consider the latest developments and propose the University response.

- 10.3 Members noted the complex background to the matter, risks associated with the acceptance or refusal of the recommendations and their potential implications for students, staff and industrial relations. It was reported that the new proposals would increase the University's staff costs by £4m per year, compared to £13-14m if USS implemented its original proposal and invoked the costs sharing rule in the Scheme Rules. Clarification was provided over the likely timescales for implementation, whereby changes could be in place by August 2019 and would remain until the next triennial valuation of the scheme, in 2020. However, Council further noted that both the USS Trustee and the Pensions Regulator had to accept the new proposals and that longer-term challenges would remain outstanding, specifically over the USS valuation methodology and the wider governance of the scheme.
- 10.4 Following discussion, Council approved the draft University response, which was supportive of the JEP recommendations. It was agreed that the response would be submitted by the Acting President & Vice-Chancellor, as Accountable Officer, but make clear that Council had considered and endorsed the content.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

- 11.1 The Committee received and endorsed the findings of the first annual review of the Code of Ethics, which had been approved by Council in July 2017 to replace the previous Framework for Ethical Decision Making, and approved related minor amendments to the Code itself. It was pleasing that the review had found no substantive issues or concerns but action was proposed to: enhance institutional processes to avoid or address conflicts of interest of committee members; coordinate and share knowledge in relation to external partnership due diligence; notify qualifying whistleblowing disclosures to the University Secretary who may also as appropriate also inform the Chair of Audit Committee and/or the Chair of Council; and provide explanatory guidance for Heads of Departments, working with Professional Services Directors. It was confirmed that Audit Committee had endorsed the report on 18 October.

12. ANNUAL COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Council received a summary of responses to the annual effectiveness questionnaire and endorsed proposed actions. Members were invited to contact the University Secretary with suggestions for other business items or issues for consideration.

13. REGISTRATION WITH THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

Council received and noted the report, comprising an update on the University's successful registration with the OfS as a Higher Education provider without conditions, and reportable events notified to the regulator since registration was confirmed. Members also noted the compliance register that had been prepared to ensure that ongoing conditions of registration were satisfied. The register would be reviewed and overseen by Risk Review Group. Council would receive regular updates at future meetings and would be informed of significant reportable events if and when they were notified. It was suggested that Council could usefully receive an annual review of the University's relationship and interactions with regulator.

14. MINUTES OF THE SENIOR REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 23 July 2018)

Council received and approved the report, including amended terms of reference. Members also noted new reporting requirements about senior staff remuneration from the OfS and under the CUC HE Senior Staff Remuneration Code, against which it was agreed that the University should aim to be regarded as an exemplar.

15. COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN 2018-19

Council received and noted a draft business plan for 2018-19, noting that this was intended as a reference point for planning Council agendas and arranging associated events and communications. The plan would be regularly updated and included in the papers for each Council meeting. Members wishing to propose additional items were invited to contact the Secretary.

16. COUNCIL SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Council received and approved updates to the Scheme to ensure compliance with the CUC HE Senior Staff Remuneration Code and OfS requirements.

17. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF COUNCIL PAPERS

Council received and approved recommendations concerning the publication on the web of papers presented at the meeting, in accordance with previously agreed proposals on the disclosure of information. It was noted that a number of papers were confidential and would not be made publicly available.

18. OTHER BUSINESS

Human Resources Committee: It was reported that the Committee had recently experienced difficulties in members being unable to attend meetings such that two recent meetings had not been quorate. Further consideration would be given to how to ensure members were able to attend meetings. Members were also invited to send to the Committee Chair suggestions to fill a current vacancy, with a preference for someone to effectively represent BAME issues.

These Minutes were confirmed

at a meeting held on 26 November 2018

..... Chair