



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Minutes Meeting of Council

- Date:** 29 April 2019
- Present:** Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair);
Mrs Hope and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors;
Mr Sutcliffe, Treasurer;
Professor Lamberts, President & Vice-Chancellor;
Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Ms Jones, Dr Layden,
Professor Maltby, Dr Nicholls Professor Petley, Professor Siva-Jothy, Mr Sly,
Mr Sykes, Professor Valentine, Ms Whitton Mr Wray
- Secretary:** Dr Strike
- In attendance:** Mrs Dingle, Ms Kee, Mr Swinn, Mr Fleming (item 5), Mrs Wray (items 5 and 6)
- Apologies:** Ms Hague, Professor Morgan,

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November, having been circulated, were approved and signed.

3. Matters Arising on the Minutes

Matters arising on the Minutes were noted as follows:

- (a) Minute 5(k), Pay Negotiations and Pay Dispute (2018): Following ballots for industrial action, which did not gain mandates for action, the five sector trade unions wrote to UCEA on 7 March 2019 to confirm that they were bringing the 2018-19 pay round to a close.
- (b) Minute 6.2, Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework: The institutional submission to the Call for Views was circulated to Council on 27 February 2019 prior to submission on 1 March.
- (c) Minute 8, Capital Report – Translational Energy Research Centre: The respective capital grant applications were either contracted, signed off or a contract was awaited.
- (d) Minute 7, Social Sciences Hub: The substantive geotechnical ground risk had been transferred under contract. The four areas not covered by the contract were deemed either low risk or covered by prudent provisions in the project costings. Value engineering on the whole project would take place in the same way as any other capital project.

4. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

Council received and discussed the President & Vice-Chancellor's report, in which he 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: Following the extension of the Article 50 process to 31 October 2019, the University continue to prepare for a worst case, 'no deal', scenario. Institutional planning was at as an advanced a stage as was possible given ongoing uncertainty. It was also reported that the Government had recently announced its intention to remove EU student access to SLC funding from 2020/21, meaning these students may be subject to international tuition fees. However, the statement required clarification as it was not made contingent on Brexit.
- (b) Post-18 Education and Funding Review: The sector continued to await the outcome of the Augar Review, with continued speculation about a potential recommendation to reduce the maximum home undergraduate tuition fee from £9,250 to £7,500 per annum.
- (c) International Education Strategy: The Departments for Education and International Trade had launched an International Education Strategy on 16 March, including a pledge to increase the number of international students coming to study in the UK from 370,000 to 600,000 and education exports from £20bn to £35bn by 2030. Although these targets would represent a significant institutional opportunity, the lack of Home Office support for increasing international student numbers was a major obstacle to be overcome.
- (d) Office for Students: The University would submit its Access and Participation Plan in May 2019. This was an area of particular interest to the OfS following the publication of guidance on the issue in the Autumn of 2018, which highlighted the need for a whole student lifecycle approach, but with increased flexibility in the manner in which institutions seek to tackle student disadvantage and under-representation.
- (e) Civic Universities Commission: The Civic University Commission, established by the University Partnership Programme and chaired by Lord Kerslake, had published its final report. The University was one of over 30 universities to have signed a Civic University Agreement, reaffirming its commitment to local communities by prioritising the economy and quality of life in the local area.
- (f) Student Number Forecasts: Departmental and Faculty level student number forecasts for 2019 entry had now been agreed as part of the annual planning and financial forecasting process. The implications of targets in each student category on the University's income forecast had been subject to detailed scrutiny.
- (g) National University Performance Metrics: With respect to the HESA Performance Indicators, it was pleasing to note that the University consistently performed above the sector benchmark for entrants from state schools and colleges and young full-time entrants from low participation neighbourhoods.
- (h) Research Awards: The University continued to demonstrate its strength in securing new research awards, which had increased by £7.4m for the 12 month period to February 2019 compared to the previous period.
- (i) Research Developments: The Senate PGR Committee was leading a significant programme of work to ensure and enhance the attractiveness and quality of institutional PGR provision. This vital area would form a key element of the new University strategy (see Minute 6, below). Activities included ensuring greater consistency in support for PGR students, both in academic and wellbeing matters.

In due course, the University would consider extending its access and WP activities to encompass postgraduate students. Departments were also being encouraged to be strategic in setting PGR student recruitment targets in order to ensure the vibrancy of departmental research communities and supporting students to complete their doctorate during the funded period.

- (j) University Research Institutes: The four flagship University Research Institutes were formally launched on 20 April. Follow-up work would ascertain how their respective activities would be evaluated. A total of 300 academics were associated with the URIs, demonstrating the strength of engagement with the scheme by the University community. However, it was important to recognise that the URIs did not represent the extent of institutional research excellence, rather they provided an initial means by which to develop and demonstrate institutional excellence in research. With respect to the REF, the University Code of Practice would be submitted in June, a draft having been discussed at Senate and with Campus Trade Unions.
- (k) Outbound Visits: The President & Vice-Chancellor had led a University visit to China to hold discussions potential collaborative opportunities with four prestigious institutions, with a further follow-up visit by the Vice-President for Research and Innovation. The University was highly regarded in China and had received specific proposals, and offer of supporting resource, about the potential to establish a presence in the country. Clarification was provided that the potential establishment of multiple connections should not risk the diverse range of other international academic connections and collaborations necessary.
- (l) Financial Results: Financial performance for the year to date, to 31 January 2019, was strong, with overall operating performance £15.0m ahead of budget. With respect to the Student Residences, clarification was provided that the University was actively considering its accommodation provision to maximise its attractiveness to different student groups; a number of options were being developed. There was a particular challenge in promoting accommodation to international students, who tended to prefer accommodation in the city centre, which was dominated by private providers. Clarification was provided that the research income position was adversely affected by delays in confirmed external funding being released to projects.
- (m) Immigration Changes – Spring 2019: The UKVI had announced changes to the immigration rules from 30 March 2019. Notably, the increase in minimum new entrant and experienced salary levels for Teaching and Research, and Research staff posed significant barriers to overseas staff recruitment to lower grade posts. This may have been an unintended consequence of Home Office changes and the University was engaged in lobbying through the Russell Group. As a matter of principle, the University had agreed to increase the range of financial support it provided to international staff to minimise the adverse impact of immigration-related costs on individuals.
- (n) USS Pensions Scheme: The USS Trustee Board had considered the UUK response to the consultation about the assumptions of the 2018 valuation and proposed contingent contributions. The outcome of that discussion was not yet known. It was noted that the final outcome was relevant to the financial forecast assumptions, which could be revised if necessary before budgets for 2019-20 were set. It was also reported that all USS employers must report their respective shares of the deficit in their annual financial results. The use of either the 2017 or 2018 valuation in the reported results for 2018-19 would have a significant adverse impact on reported staff costs and a large number of institutions could be expected to report deficits in their total reported performance. It was also noted that the wider sector was facing additional pensions costs pressure related to other schemes in operation. The impact of these factors would require careful stakeholder communications,

particularly given that they stemmed from accounting requirements and did not affect cashflow and liquidity.

5. Health and Safety Update including Annual Report

(Tom Fleming and Tracy Wray in attendance for this item)

Council received and noted the Annual Report and approved the Report of the Health and Safety Committee. A particular area of focus had been to embed health and safety within management systems, in accordance with a health safety plan and training programme plan that been developed and implemented with UEB support. Attention was drawn to the following:

- Improvements included: departmental health and safety committees largely chaired by the Head of Department; the level of specific training undertaken by staff working with hazardous substances; regular safety inspections; and particularly positive developments in the Faculty of Engineering.
- A significant increase in the number of staff completing face to face and online training and the range of other individuals completing fire awareness training, e.g. contractors, PGR students and temporary staff. All relevant staff had now completed training for senior managers.
- Biosafety and Radiation Safety processes were robust and had received positive feedback from the South Yorkshire Police Counter Terrorism team.
- Reporting of near misses continued to improve with and the numbers reported had now overtaken the number of reported accidents, indicating that awareness of risks was increasing.

Clarification was provided that the assessment of health and safety maturity on a Faculty or service basis had been agreed with the Health and Safety Executive, due to the difficulty in comparing different areas of the University. It was also confirmed that reported data related to staff, to whom the University owed a statutory duty as an employer. Nevertheless, students also received relevant information and training as part of their induction, with some elements often covered in curricula. Further clarification was provided that mental health and wellbeing was also covered, with dedicated groups and training in place and plans to evaluate and enhance this provision based on user feedback, including responses to the Staff Survey.

Council noted positive progress around processes and procedures but suggested that further focus should be placed on institutional culture and behaviour, thereby developing core legal compliance and becoming an exemplar for best practice. Members also recognised the importance of the Executive visibly leading these efforts.

6. A Review of the University Strategy

- 6.1 The President & Vice-Chancellor outlined proposals to review the University Strategy. A phased approach was proposed, whereby UEB would lead the development of a strategic vision and individual elements, with input from key stakeholders including Council, Senate and Trade Unions, in advance of wider staff and student consultations. Formal approvals and the launch of the new strategy would occur in early 2020. The University vision would focus on combining world-leading excellence with cultural distinctiveness, including diversity and inclusivity, and commonality of purpose. With respect to strategic priorities, the size and diversity of the University necessitated the development of thematic strategies at different levels of the organisation within the overall strategic framework, further supported by a number of distinct projects and workstreams. It was noted that the long-term financial sustainability of the University would be a key underpinning

element of the overall strategy, which provided an opportunity to refresh the University Financial Strategy.

- 6.2 The President & Vice-Chancellor would be writing to all staff to set out these plans and the associated timetable and Council have an opportunity to make an initial contribution at its Away Day on 18 June.

7. CLOSED MINUTE AND PAPER:

AMRC Governance Review

- 7.1 Council considered the report of the Review Group that set out findings and related recommendations against a number of key themes. The recommendations were informed by an independent report from the Good Governance Institute, which acted as an external consultant to the review, based on stakeholder interviews. Council noted that the recommendations were advisory to the President & Vice-Chancellor, and sought to reflect objectively the views of those interviewed and the documentation considered by the Review Group.
- 7.2 Council commended the report and recommendations, which built on those of the Council Task and Finish Group on the AMRC in July 2018. Council affirmed its support for the AMRC, and would continue to be vocal in demonstrating this. It was recognised that the key challenge would be to effect the levels of change sought, such that behaviour and practice was aligned with management and operational structures and processes, in both the AMRC and the rest of the University. The Vice-President for Innovation would work with AMRC to develop a long-term vision and strategy for innovation, including collaborative developments, communications and succession planning. In due course, it may be appropriate to hold a meeting of Council at AMRC and offer a further opportunity for Members to interact with senior AMRC colleagues. Council affirmed its support for the President & Vice-Chancellor in considering his response to the recommendations and requested an update in the early part of 2019/20.

8. Composition of the Senate

- 8.1 Council received and approved proposals from the Senate to amend the composition and membership of the Senate. These were based on a consultation exercise that was undertaken as part of the implementation of the recommendations of a Senate Effectiveness Review in 2017/18, and the related Council Task and Finish Group on Academic Standards and Quality. Council welcomed the proposals, which sought to maximise the effectiveness of Senate and thereby improve the quality of the Annual Academic Assurance report provided to Council in November.
- 8.2 Council agreed to amend Regulation IX: The Senate, Section 2: Composition of the Senate, as set out in Annex 1 to the related report.

9. Review of Council, Senate and Executive Committees

Council considered recommendations following a review of the sub-committees to Council, Senate and UEB, commissioned by the Chair of Council and the President & Vice-Chancellor and undertaken by the University Secretary. The purpose of the review was to ensure that formally constituted committees had clear delegated decision-making authority, within the scope of the parent body and consistent with the Charter, Statutes and Regulations, and that terms of reference and membership were appropriate to the delegations. In addition, in 2018, the Council and Senate Nominations Committees agreed to review aspects of membership of Council and Senate sub-committees and the report included a number of guiding principles that would be applied by the Nominations Committees from 2019.

It was noted that proposals relating to the Human Resources and Health Safety Committees were consistent with a recommendation from the previous Council Effectiveness Review and the proper discharge of executive responsibilities. Nevertheless, regular updates should be provided to Council by way of assurance and further consideration would be given to the potential benefit of retaining external representation on both groups. Members recognised that the abolition of the Sport Sheffield Board represented an opportunity for the University and Students' Union to consider, in broad terms, the most effective means by which they could collaborate around key themes.

Following discussion, Council agreed that, with effect from 2019/20:

- the Council Human Resources Committee and Council Health and Safety Committee would become executive committees reporting to the University Executive Board, with reporting to Council through the President & Vice-Chancellor.
- Given that it was no longer a committee of Council, the future and purpose of the existing Alumni Board would be reviewed and proposals made to the President and Vice-Chancellor.

Council also endorsed the guiding principles that would belong to and serve to guide the Nominations Committees in exercising their discretion in making changes to the membership of committees from 2019.

10. Staff Survey Results 2018

- 10.1 Council received and noted a report on the results of the staff survey and the subsequent development of a University-wide action plan, an overview of responses by Faculty and Professional Service, and plans to formulate institutional and local level actions. For the first time, Graduate Teaching Assistants and casual workers had been invited to complete the survey, and it was pleasing that responses from those groups were highly positive and provided additional narrative information.
- 10.2 Although the overall responses were less positive than the previous survey in 2016, this had been expected given that the survey was undertaken in October, before the President & Vice-Chancellor had taken up his post and against a backdrop of change in the internal and external environments, and following industrial action in Spring 2018. In response to previous feedback, the University had been less proactive in encouraging staff to complete the survey but the response rate had still exceeded the national average and overall responses remained positive. In particular, the measures of employee engagement in the Council KPIs remained positive and still compared favourably against the sector. However, there were significant variations in responses across different areas of the University and between academic and professional staff, often reflecting organisational change.
- 10.3 Attention was drawn to action taken to improve communications throughout the institution, particularly in relation to University leadership and strategic direction. The survey also served as the stress risk assessment for each department, with results discussed at a sub-group of Health and Safety Committee and informing departmental action plans. A similar process was being followed to consider to equality, diversity and inclusion matters highlighted by the survey responses.
- 10.4 Clarification was sought as to the implementation of actions agreed following the 2016 survey. UEB had received updates which should also be shared with Council. It was noted that the use of pulse surveys could help monitor progress in priority areas. Members also noted that analysis of EU and international staff responses could support wider activity to support these staff groups. Council agreed to receive an update on progress in due course.

11. Capital Programme Update

Council received an update on the progress of projects in the capital programme, including those recently considered and approved by ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation, and an update on cashflow and live projects. It was confirmed that cash flow forecasts did not yet include provision for potential projects that were in development and it was likely that the figure for 2021-22 would be comparable to the preceding periods. Council approved proposals to develop a revised strategy for the Campus East that would be presented for formal governance approvals, and approved related changes to the site that reflected developments since it was originally acquired. It was reported that Estates Committee was supportive of the proposals.

12. Borrowing Limits

- 12.1 Council considered a report on the University's borrowing limits dated 22 March 2019 alongside a proposal to increase the University's internal borrowing limit of £260,000,000, as provided for in Regulation II:7.12.10 and Regulation III to £330,000,000. The University was reviewing its short-term and potential longer-term borrowing requirements and had not revised the internal borrowing limit for several years. The proposed level of increase represented a realignment with historic levels, allowing for inflation. Council noted the rationale for the proposed new limit and alternative options considered, and the underlying calculations.
- 12.2 Clarification was provided that approval to increase the threshold did not necessarily mean that the University would increase its gearing or would increase its debt finance to the maximum permitted level. Any future borrowings would be subject to approval based on a detailed business case but the increased limit provided a framework within which the University could develop projects that matched its ambitions, reflected Council's appetite for financial risk, and were permitted by University Regulations. Further clarification was provided that the OfS was unlikely to be concerned with the proposed increase itself; any plans to increase actual levels of borrowings would be included in the financial forecasts. The University was targeting the same level of operating surplus, which would provide the capacity to service any future debt provision. The level of borrowings was reported to Finance Committee on an annual basis as one of the KPIs in the Financial Operating Strategy.
- 12.3 Council resolved to increase the University's internal borrowing limit from £260,000,000 to £330,000,000 and to amend Regulation II (7.12.10) and the corresponding reference in Regulation III, to replace the figure of £260,000,000 with the figure of £330,000,000, with immediate effect.

13. Corporate Risk Register

Council received and approved the updated Corporate Risk register, noting the accompanying report.

14. Senior Management Structure

Council noted the future structure for the University Executive Board and Professional Services.

15. Minutes of the Senior Remuneration Committee

(Meeting held on 25 February 2019)

Council received and approved the Minutes, noting that the External Activities and Income Policy was available to Members in the Reading Room.

16. Report of the Senate

(Meeting held on 20 March 2019)

Council received and approved the Report, including the creation of a Health Sciences School in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health from 2019/20 by reconfiguring the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Department of Human Communication Sciences and the Academic Unit of Orthoptics (from within the Department of Oncology and Metabolism) and the amendment of Regulation IX (2.1.7) relating to the composition of Senate, to reflect the change.

17. Report of the Audit Committee

(Meeting held on 11 March 2019)

Council received and approved the Report

18. Report of the Finance Committee

(Meetings held on 19 November 2018, 21 January, 19 February and 14 March 2019)

Council received and approved the Report.

19. Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

(Meeting held on 14 March 2019)

Council received and noted the Report.

20. Report of the Human Resources Committee

(Meetings held on 20 March 2019)

Council received and noted the Report.

21. OFS Regulatory Requirements

Council received and noted two letters from the OfS setting its requirements around transparency information under registration condition F1 and the positive outcomes of Prevent monitoring.

22. Use of the University Seal

Council received and noted the Report.

23. Council Business Plan 2018-19

Council received and noted the updated business plan.

24. 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.

These Minutes were confirmed

at a meeting held on 8 July 2019

..... Chair