



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Minutes Meeting of Council

Date: 14 October 2019

Present: Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair);
Mrs Hope and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors;
Professor Lamberts, President & Vice-Chancellor;
Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Professor Brazier, Ms Hague, Dr Kirby, Dr Layden,
Professor Maltby, Professor Morgan, Dr Nicholls, Professor Petley, Mr Sly,
Professor Valentine, Mr Verity

Secretary: Dr Tony Strike

In attendance: Mr Carling; Mrs Dingle; Mr Swinn; Ms Abrams (item 6)

Apologies: Mr Sutcliffe, Treasurer; Mr Wray

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the first Council meeting of 2019-20, including Professor Brazier and Dr Kirby, newly elected Class (4) Members.

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Mr Sly reported that he had been appointed to act as the alternate for the statutory adjudicator of any institutional challenges to the OfS' assessment of an institution's Access and Participation Plan.

No other conflicts were declared.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Meeting held on 8 July 2019)

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising on the Minutes

Matters arising on the Minutes were noted as follows:

- (a) Minute 7, Academic Assurance: Senate Academic Assurance Committee would propose a draft annual report to Senate in October, for submission to Council in November.
- (b) Minute 9, Financial Forecasts and Budgets: The University's draft financial results had been discussed by UEB and would be shared with Finance Committee, Audit Committee and Council, as well as internal groups, prior to the final audited accounts being considered at Council's November meeting and submission to the OfS.

4. Health and Safety Update

- 4.1 This item was deferred to Council's November meeting to enable the UEB Health & Safety Committee to meet for the first time in 2019-20.

5. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

5.1 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) UK Government and Immigration: Under Boris Johnson, the Government was taking a less rigid approach to immigration with a number of positive changes to visa rules, notably around the reintroduction of a post-study visa route for overseas graduates and an intended expansion of the Tier 1, Exceptional Talent, route. The University would be responding to a consultation by the Migration Advisory Committee, particularly around the potential impact of students and applicants of a 36 month temporary immigration status for EU students moving to the UK for the first time after the UK's EU exit date. It was noted that the University had hosted a constructive visit from Gavin Williamson, the new Secretary of State for Education.
- (b) National Student Survey: It was pleasing to note that the University's overall satisfaction rate had increased to 88%. This was the second highest in the Russell Group and was 4% higher than the sector average. The NSS was an important factor in student choice, and was also a measure used by the TEF.
- (c) Teaching Excellence: The OfS had announced the results of the 2019 TEF, with the University again receiving a silver award, valid for two years. The report of the independent review of the TEF was expected to be published in November. It was noted that the introduction of subject-level TEF would reduce the importance of the institutional award. A range of enhancement activity was already underway but it would take time for the benefits to be realised and captured by performance measures.
- (d) Unconditional Offers: The University did not make unconditional offers of the type which had been criticised by politicians and the media following a recent UCAS report. Only applicants who had completed their entry qualifications and obtained sufficiently high grades were eligible to receive an unconditional offer.
- (e) RISE Enhancement Project: Working in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield City Council, the University had secured funding from the European Regional Development Fund to expand the work of the RISE scheme. The scheme connects SMEs with graduate talent to facilitate business growth and talent retention. A recent evaluation found that it had had appositive economic impact of over £7.7m in GVA with a return on investment of £14 per £1 spent.
- (f) Research Awards: Although the value of new awards for the last twelve months had decreased by 7.6% compared to the previous year, largely due to a slowdown in the release of funding, the number of new awards had increased. Attention was drawn to the award of funding for three significant Capital research projects funded by ERDF, BEIS and Innovate UK, respectively. A related positive development was a pledge of further significant funding for the Grantham Centre. Clarification was provided that the Government's proposal to increase research expenditure to 2.4% of GDP represented a c.50% increase on the current level of 1.69%. While this was positive, there were implications for delivery, e.g. the increase in PhD students that would be needed and how they might be funded. It was noted that Industrial Challenge funding had been released more slowly than expected but there was likely to be a significant increase in funding calls over the next 18 months; UKRI had committed £900m.

- (g) Research Excellence: The final annual stocktake had concluded and UEB had approved an action plan, in readiness for the final submission by November 2020. The effectiveness of the University's preparations had been enhanced through greater central coordination than the previous REF.
- (h) Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange: The University was using its experience of participating in the KEF pilot to ensure that it was well positioned for the first full KEF, details of which were expected to be released before the end of 2019. It was noted that institutional KEF performance would inform financial allocations for engagement activity. A more detailed update on the University's Intellectual Property Development and Commercialisation funding and wider opportunities would be provided to Council at a future meeting.
- (i) Financial Performance: The financial results for the year ended 31 July 2019 would be presented to Council at its November meeting, as part of the annual accountability return. The draft results showed a strong institutional position, an underlying operating surplus and strong cash generation from operations. Council noted the level of volatility caused by the application of accounting standards for a number of non-cash items, which would have a material impact on the total results.
- (j) Pay and Pensions: It was reported that the 2018 USS valuation had now concluded and the sector and audit firms were in the process of agreeing a consistent method of recording this in the 2018-19 results, which were based on the 2017 figure. Council noted the increased contribution rates under the 2018 valuation and the position of the Trade Unions, who were holding a series of aggregated and disaggregated ballots over the pensions dispute. With respect to pay, the 2019-20 national pay negotiations had been concluded and the University had implemented the final offer from 1 August 2019. The Trade Unions had rejected the final offer and were balloting members over industrial action.
- (k) Media Coverage: Attention was to recent coverage of certain Students' Union activity as part of the Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan (see Minute, 9, below). The work in question was part of a broader strategic approach, which was not reflected in press coverage. In the context of ongoing political unrest in Hong Kong, the University and Students' Union were taking steps to minimise the risk of any potential tension between students whilst upholding the legal duty to ensure freedom of speech within the law.
- (l) Student Recruitment: Based on provisional registrations, ahead of the 1 December census date, overall student recruitment was positive and demonstrated the success of the institutional recruitment strategy. Although performance across the faculties was variable, and this presented financial and operational challenges in some cases, the overall position reflected positively on the University's flexibility and adaptability in exploiting opportunities.

6. University IT Strategy and Cyber Security

(Bella Abrams in attendance for this item)

- 6.1 Council received a presentation on the development of the University's IT Strategy and cyber and information security. Security was one of the most significant and complex risks currently facing IT services, with increasing and multiple threats from a range of sources; a Cyber Programme was underway to mitigate them. With respect to the Cyber Programme, members noted the level of initial investment and additional security controls established, as well as an exercise to pilot new technologies and processes for wider roll-out during 2020. The University's existing network of Information Champions would be used to support these activities, while an emergent Technology Enabled Strategy initiative was allowing further investment needs to be considered holistically, in

the wider context of the capital pipeline. An external review of the University's security arrangements had also been commissioned to inform further action and initial key findings were noted, including areas of vulnerability, the need for clear management and governance, and recognition that information security was the responsibility of all functional areas.

- 6.2 It was reported that UEB had approved a new governance model for information management and security, which would be supported by the introduction of a University-wide Information Security team led by a new Chief Information Security Officer. This structure would facilitate an appraisal of the potential value and level of risk for all institutional data and information, security controls and the creation of an overarching security architecture framework covering people, process and technology. Council was pleased to note the level of positive engagement with these initiatives from University staff, who appreciated the need for effective security controls, whilst supporting academic freedom; mandatory staff training had a completion rate of 99.9%.
- 6.3 During discussion it was clarified that the University's relative vulnerability was comparable to its peers and was subject to ongoing review and mitigation, with the external reviewer regarding universities as part of the critical national infrastructure. Further clarification was provided over the range of measures in place and planned to minimise the impact of any security breach, including contingency and business continuity planning. With respect to the sector, it was noted that the JISC service provided a cost effective means to share knowledge and experience.
- 6.4 Council agreed to receive further regular updates on information management and cyber security in due course.

7. University Vision Green Paper

- 7.1 Council received and noted an update on the development of a University Vision following the publication of a 'Green Paper' that was informing a range of staff and student engagement and consultation events during October and November. It was pleasing to note the level of staff engagement with events and online platforms. A Strategy Vision Steering Group was overseeing the consultation process, including engagement with external stakeholders. The next steps and timeline would be reviewed at the end of November. Council would have a further opportunity to discuss the Vision Green Paper over dinner.

8. Capital Report

- 8.1 Council received an update on progress of projects in the capital programme, including projects recently considered and approved by ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation. A capital prioritisation exercise had taken place over the summer followed by discussion at UEB Estates and Capital Sub-Group and UEB. A more detailed capital update would be provided to Finance Committee on 21 October and to Council in November.

9. Update on Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan

- 9.1 Council received a presentation in which updates were provided on the University's Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan and other priority areas for equality, diversity and inclusion. Attention was drawn to the internal and external drivers that had informed the Race Equality Action Plan, notably staff feedback and wider strategic intent to build an inclusive community, the benefits of which were supported by a significant evidence base; the OfS priority to address and eliminate the BAME attainment gap by 2024-25; a UUK report that found progress on race equality lagged behind gender equality; and a

forthcoming report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission into racial harassment in HE.

- 9.2 Council noted the key challenges that the Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan sought to address through a holistic approach. This considered all aspects of student and staff experience in order to foster a sense of shared responsibility and the Strategic Change Office would oversee implementation. Clarification was provided that complementary activity also formed part of the University's Widening Participation and Access work. The Strategy, which set out five objectives supported by 38 specific actions, was launched in March 2019 by the President & Vice-Chancellor and supported by a week of awareness raising activities that had received favourable feedback from both staff and students. In addition to specific actions, such as the use of specialist BAME recruiters for committee vacancies and the launch of new tool to encourage reporting of incidents and supporting victims of all types of harassment, a new Race Equality Steering Group had been established to set targets and support activity, reporting to the Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC).
- 9.3 With respect to other priority areas, the University had been recognised by Stonewall for its LGBT+ equality and inclusion initiatives, achieving its highest ever position in the Workplace Equality Index and LGBT+ Staff Network of the Year Award. The University was also actively engaging with community and charitable organisations and 2500 staff had signed up to the 'Open@TUOS' support scheme. It was also noted that the University continued to perform well against the Athena Swan Charter, and departmental engagement with equality issues continued to increase. Additional work was underway to address the structural drivers for the gender pay gap, which was reducing and, more generally, to promote equality, diversity and inclusion matters within Professional Services as well faculties. The Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee had also agreed that disability would be a priority for 2019-20 in order to address previously identified issues and build on existing initiatives; it was noted that the OfS had recently established a disabled student commission.
- 9.4 It was reported that the University was working with the NHS and Sheffield Hallam University to share knowledge and good practice and to collaborate in relevant areas, for example around BAME recruitment. The importance of a holistic approach was noted, and it was confirmed that institutional initiatives such as Programme Level Approach provided the means by which to embed equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives in core processes. Council would consider Access and Participation at its February meeting, which provided an opportunity to consider how the University was addressing areas of disadvantage not directly covered by protected characteristics under the remit of EDIC, particularly raising aspiration and increasing recruitment from Low Participation Neighbourhoods.

10. Report on Student Mental Health

- 10.1 Council received and noted an update on work undertaken under the Student Mental Health Strategy in the context of national focus at sector level. A number of developments were expected in December: the University had been actively involved in the development of a forthcoming Student Mental Health Charter; UUK would publish recommendations on information-sharing with parents and trusted others and was refreshing its #stepchange framework. The University would evaluate its student support arrangements against these publications but was expected to be well-placed due to previous action taken. In particular, a two year collaborative project with six universities would establish a series of regional hubs offering a care pathway; academics from the Department of Psychology were investigating ways to increase research and clinical resources for students; participation in a new £1.5m partnership launched between Goldman Sachs and Mind; and a new Suicide Prevention Strategy had been approved by the UEB Mental Health Strategy Group. Internationally, the University was participating in the WHO World Mental Health International College Student initiative with White Rose partners and

universities from twenty countries to produce an evidence base to inform future prevention and intervention priorities.

- 10.2 The Student Access to Mental Health Support service had seen an 8% increase in registrations, following a similar increase in 2018. In part this was due to awareness raising, which was positive, as was the 13 day average triage period, against a 15 day target. Members noted an awareness-raising campaign for World Mental Health Day, which involved a week of activity in collaboration with the Students' Union. The University provided accredited staff training and had also been invited to deliver its specific training for security staff at other institutions. A wider Wellbeing Service had been developed in conjunction with a range of staff and students and launched in 2019, encouraging good general health through a wider set of activities beyond crisis support.
- 10.3 Having welcomed the promotion of a wider culture of wellbeing and noted the forthcoming student survey, Council agreed to receive a summary of the outcomes, which could include relevant comparative information with previous years.

11. Brexit

- 11.1 Council received and noted an update from the University's Brexit Co-ordination Group, which had been reconvened in September to review and refine the University's preparations for a 'No Deal' Brexit, and the No Deal risk register. A further evaluation against a UUK readiness checklist had been undertaken, and attention was drawn to a number of key activities, including updated communications that were more specifically targeted at different staff and student groups; financial support; capital projects; and procurement.

12. Closed Minute

13. Annual Review of the Code of Ethics

- 13.1 Council received and endorsed the findings of the annual review of the Code of Ethics and an update on actions from the 2018 review, and confirmed that the Code itself did not require any amendment. It was pleasing that the review had found no substantive issues or concerns but action was proposed to enhance processes, monitoring and reporting of ethical matters within the framework of the Code and underlying policies. Audit Committee would receive a copy of the report for information.

14. Annual Council Effectiveness Questionnaire

- 14.1 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. The importance of achieving an appropriate balance between the content of papers and any supporting or supplementary information was noted.

15. Council Effectiveness Review

Council considered a proposed process and timeline for a review of Council effectiveness, to be undertaken in 2020 in line with the requirement in the CUC Code for such a review every four years. The previous review was undertaken in 2016, with Pinsent Masons LLP acting as external facilitator. Council agreed:

- (a) That a review of Council Effectiveness would take place in 2020.
- (b) To receive proposals to establish a task and finish group oversee the review process.
- (c) To approve the timeline set out the related paper.

- (d) To delegate to the Chair of Council, President & Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary the authority to identify and appoint an external facilitator to lead the review. Members were invited to send any suggestions to the University Secretary.

16. Reappointment of the Chancellor

- 16.1 Council discussed a proposal to reappoint Dame Anne Rafferty DBE as the University Chancellor from November 2020 for a period of five years, as provided by the University's Regulations. The reappointment was approved unanimously and would be confirmed in writing by the Chair of Council.

17. Council Membership Succession Planning and Recruitment

- 17.1 Council received and noted an overview of plans to ensure that effective succession plans were in place for current Class (3) Council members whose terms of office would expire in 2020 and 2021, and for the Chair, whose final terms of office would end on 31 July 2021. There was also an existing Class (3) vacancy to be filled, *vice* Katherine Whitton. Council Nominations Committee would lead the process and make recommendations to Council, taking into account the balance of Council members' skills and equality, diversity and inclusion considerations. Class (3) members whose current terms of office expired in 2020 or 2021 would be contacted to discuss their future intentions in the first instance.

18. Office for Students

18.1 Compliance Register

Council received and noted the register of compliance with registration conditions.

18.2 Response to the University Access and Participation Plan

Council received and noted the OfS' response to the University's Access and Participation Plan.

19. Council Business Plan 2019-20

- 19.1 Council received and noted the Business plan which would be updated regularly to inform future agenda planning.

20. Public Availability of Council papers

- 20.1 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.