



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Minutes Meeting of Council

Date: 24 February 2020

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

Secretary: Dr Tony Strike

In attendance: Mr Carling; Mrs Jones; Mr Swinn; Mr Wright (item 8);
Mrs Grocutt (items 9 and 10); Mr Taylor (DLA Piper) (item 10)

Apologies: Ms Hague, Professor Valentine

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Dr Forrest, recently elected to Class (4) membership, who was attending his first meeting of the Council, and Mrs Jones, Chief Financial Officer, who was also attending her first meeting.

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts were declared in addition to those disclosed previously.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Meeting held on 25 November 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 6, IT Enabled Strategy: The Director of IT was working with the UEB IT Sub-Group to develop an overarching business case for the first phase of projects, which would be presented to Finance Committee and Council in due course, subject to recommendations being made by UEB IT Sub-Group and UEB (see also Minute 13, below). It was noted that Corporate Information and Communication Systems (CICS) was formally relaunched as IT Services in February 2020.
- (b) Minute 7, Science Estates Development Framework: Business Cases were in development, to be proposed to UEB Estates and Capital Sub-Group and UEB, subject to which recommendations would be made to Finance Committee and Council as appropriate.
- (c) Minute 8, Annual report on Fundraising and Development: The University took delivery of the new PET-MRI Scanner on 2 February, and the facility was close to completion. The scanner was expected to be operational in March following a

period of testing and commissioning. An opening ceremony would take place later in the year.

- (d) Minutes 9 and 10, Annual Report and Financial Statements and Other Accountability Returns: The University had submitted its annual accountability information to the Office for Students, and where required published information online.

4. Health and Safety Update

- 4.1 Council received and noted the update, in particular additional information and further evaluation of high risk sports clubs which Council had requested at its previous meeting. It was reported that the University was legally liable for the activities of those clubs that operated under the auspices of Sports Sheffield, while student societies and a number of other sporting activities were the responsibility of the Student's Union. Council recommended that the University work with the Students' Union to review the current structures around sporting activities to ensure that the resultant legal and moral obligations were appropriate. Clarification was also provided about the extent of the University's insurance cover.

5. Category C Matters

- 5.1 Council considered Category C business, which are covered in Minutes 15-24, below.

6. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 6.1 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. The following points were noted:
 - (a) Brexit: Following the UK's formal withdrawal from the EU on 31 January, the University had revised its approach to planning and risk mitigation (See Minute 17, below).
 - (b) Immigration: The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) had published proposals on future UK immigration policy and salary thresholds for various entry routes. The University had responded to the MAC's initial consultation and it was pleasing that the recommendations included a reduction in salary thresholds and recognition for holders of a PhD. However, a number of issues persisted, including differences in thresholds for different disciplines; and a widely held belief in the sector that salary thresholds should be further reduced in order not to hamper recruitment of international academics.
 - (c) OfS Consultation on harassment and sexual misconduct: Attention was drawn to the recently published consultation, to which the University would submit a response. Council would receive a further update when the OfS' had set out its expectations and any specific requirements. In the meantime, it was noted that the University had been proactive in taking steps to foster an inclusive and tolerant community, with dedicated support available for staff and students to report and access support about harassment, abuse, bullying, sexual violence and discrimination.
 - (d) Longitudinal Earnings Data: Following lobbying by the University and other institutions, regionally adjusted longitudinal earnings data had been published. Although the University performed well in retaining graduates in the Yorkshire and Humber region, the retention rate five years after graduation was significantly lower than institutions in several other regions. The University's overall position

relative to the Russell Group was largely unchanged as a result of the regional adjustment.

- (e) Student Recruitment and Covid-19: Council noted an update on student registrations in all categories as at the 1 December census date and the current applications position for 2020 entry. Although overseas applications remained strong, attention was drawn to the significant risks presented by the global outbreak of Covid-19 and the potential implications for recruitment of overseas students, which affected the University's planning and financial forecasting processes in what was a critical six to eight week period in the recruitment cycle. Key risks included the impact of travel restrictions both internationally but also within China, which could affect recruitment of USIC students, the ability of applicants to undertake English language tests, and the visa application process.

The University was considering how to mitigate any adverse effects, informed by detailed scenario modelling to evaluate the level of risk exposure and potential responses to what remained a fast-changing and uncertain situation. UUK had established a National Coordinating Group as a conduit to the Home Office and UKVI. The University was closely monitoring the situation and continued to apply Public Health England guidance. In the meantime, the University continued to prioritise work to further diversify its student intake, and was taking steps to establish a greater presence in areas of significant opportunities.
- (f) Research Excellence: The University was in the final ten months' preparation for the REF2020 submission, focusing on finalising and refining the selections, case studies and supporting narrative. It was pleasing to report that the University had been awarded an additional £1m of QR funding, as part of a national drive to accelerate policy-related research. In future, it was expected that this approach, whereby QR funding was hypothecated to deliver Government priorities, would become increasingly common.
- (g) AMRC: AMRC had attracted significant positive Government attention and media coverage, including two ministerial visits. The University had submitted a pre-budget case to the Treasury for investment in the North and was in discussion with several institutions about possible joint initiatives.
- (hi) Financial results to 31 October 2019: The University continued to report strong underlying performance, which was ahead of the year to date budget. The revised forecast outturn position compared to the budget was noted. It was reported that UEB had established a dedicated sub-group to review the University's student residences strategy in the context of changes in the student population and the wider local market for student accommodation.
- (i) Industrial Relations: The UCU dispute over pensions and the 2019 national pay settlement was ongoing, with the University one of 74 institutions in the middle of a period of 14 days strike action over four weeks. A range of actions were being taken to mitigate the impact and minimise disruption to students and staff. The University was responding to student enquiries on an individual basis; attention was drawn to media coverage of students across the sector who were seeking compensation for disruption to teaching as a result of the strike.
- (j) Stonewall: It was pleasing to report that the University had achieved its highest ever ranking (11th) in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, was named Top Trans Inclusive Employer for the second consecutive year, and was also the Regional Employer of the Year. Specifically, Council congratulated Professor Valentine, who had been named Senior Champion of the Year.

- (k) Senior Appointments: Members noted a number of recent senior appointments, in particular those of Sue Hartley, as Vice-President for Research, and Jo Jones, as Chief Financial Officer.

7. University Vision and Strategy

- 7.1 Council received a presentation from the President & Vice-Chancellor in which he provided an update on the development of a new University Vision and Strategy, following comprehensive consultation on the Vision Green Paper. Attention was drawn to the positive level of staff and student engagement, including the use of an online platform to provide additional suggestions. There was a high level of consistency in feedback about the most important and relevant institutional values, with an emphasis on inclusivity alongside ambition and global excellence. Members noted detailed feedback on specific elements of the Green Paper, and how these would be addressed- either to respond to particular points or to increase overall distinctiveness. The outcome of recent UEB Away day discussions were noted, together with proposed next steps to develop a refined draft Vision and Strategy, supporting plans and an underpinning framework, as well as performance measuring and reporting. The strategy would be structured around four overarching themes, each with more detailed supporting propositions, and would be presented to Council in April for approval.
- 7.2 During discussion Council noted the importance of ensuring that there was sufficient capacity to undertake and deliver priority activities. Clarification was provided about the nature of proposals around research partnerships and wider collaboration, and those around digital support for learning and teaching. Council also discussed opportunities to identify and communicate differentiators, as well as the importance of sustainability setting appropriately ambitious but realistic targets.

8. Closed Minute and Paper

9. Closed Minute and Paper

10. Closed Minute and Paper

11. Corporate Risk Register 2019-20

- 11.1 Council received and approved the most recent iteration of the 2019-20 Corporate Risk Register and noted an accompanying report from the UEB Risk Review Group.

12. Council Effectiveness Review

- 12.1 Following discussion and agreement in October 2019, Council considered a further update on the process and timetable for a review of Council effectiveness to be conducted in 2020. It was noted that the Chair of Council, President & Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary had exercised the delegated authority granted by Council to appoint Shakespeare Martineau as external facilitator for the review, following a competitive selection process. Council also approved the initial membership of a Task and Finish Group to oversee the review and which would work with Shakespeare Martineau to finalise a proposed scope and terms of reference, for approval at Council's next meeting.

13. Amendments to the Council Scheme of Delegation and Senate Delegations

- 13.1 Council considered and approved proposed amendments to the Regulations of Council, as follows:
- (a) Amendments to Regulation III, the Scheme of Council Delegation, to provide greater flexibility in the process of approving IT-related capital projects, with the involvement of the UEB IT Sub-Group. It was clarified that this change reflected the

different expertise required to properly evaluate and scrutinise IT capital business cases, as distinct from the role of the UEB Estates and Capital Sub-Group, but that UEB would retain overall oversight to ensure that all capital proposals were aligned and included in the overall capital pipeline.

- (b) Amendments to Regulation IX: The Senate with respect to the delegation of Senate's powers to withdraw a degree, to provide flexibility to the President & Vice-Chancellor whilst retaining the necessary levels of seniority and independence, subject to the addition of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to the proposed new wording. It was noted that this approval was subject to consultation with the Senate, which would be sought in March.

14. Regulatory Matters

14.1 Widening Participation and Access & Participation Plan

Council considered an update on progress against the University's 2018-19 Access Agreement, and a further report on the extent of positive institutional engagement with local schools. Council noted and endorsed the contents of the OfS monitoring return, which would be submitted to the OfS by the deadline of 28 February 2020. It was noted that the University now had an approved Access and Participation Plan in place, which would be subject to monitoring in 2021.

14.2 Degree Outcomes Statement

Council received and noted an update on the University's plans to develop and publish a degree outcomes statement before the end of the 2019-20 academic year, in line with a requirement from the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment. It was noted that the statement would reflect on trends over a five year period with comparisons against the sector; the final version would be shared with Council in due course.

14.3 Student Transfer Arrangements Statement

Council received and noted the University's statement on arrangements for students to transfer between courses or to and from another provider, which had been published online in accordance with OfS registration conditions. It was noted that UK universities had a strong record of facilitating student transfers but the new requirement was intended to make information more readily accessible to students. The University had also demonstrated leadership in this area, and the new requirement was based on a 2017 report, entitled *Should I Stay or Should I Go*, which followed a review led by the University as part of a consortium of seven institutions.

15. Report of the Council Nominations Committee

- 15.1 Council approved the Report, including the appointment of Ms Claire Brownlie as a Class (3) member of Council with immediate effect for the period 2020-22.

16. Capital Report

- 16.1 Council received and noted the update on capital projects.

17. Update on Brexit Preparations

- 17.1 Council received and noted the update, including the Brexit Coordination Group changing its focus to matters relevant to HE during the development of a UK-EU Free Trade Agreement. It was noted that the University would continue to monitor risk as

negotiations progressed in order to review mitigating actions identified previously if necessary.

18. Report of the Senate

18.1 Council received and approved the Report.

19. Report of the Finance Committee

19.1 Council received and approved the Report, including an amendment to the University's Ethical Investment Policy.

20. Reports of the Audit Committee

20.1 Council received and approved the Report, including amendments to the Committee's terms of reference.

21. Office for Students Compliance Register

21.1 Council received and noted the latest iteration of the Register, including a recent notification to the OfS and the options available to the University.

22. Council Business Plan 2019-20

22.1 Council received and noted the latest iteration of the Business Plan.

23. Use of the University Seal

23.1 Council received and noted a summary of the application of the University Seal since the previous Council meeting.

24. Public Availability of Council Papers

24.1 Council approved arrangements for the online publication of Council papers.

These Minutes were confirmed

at a meeting held on 27 April 2020

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