



Buckinghamshire New University

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Council

Minutes

date: **24 November 2014**
time: **6.00 pm**
location: **Boardroom, High Wycombe**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)	Independent Council Member
Antonia Byatt	Independent Council Member
Baljit Dhillon	Independent Council Member
Ruth Farwell	Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Lori Flynn	Independent Council Member
Matt Gilbert	President, Students' Union
Lauren Griffiths	Elected Senate Member
Michael Hipkins (Deputy Chair)	Independent Council Member
Steve Hoole	Elected Staff Member (PSE)
Maggie James	Independent Council Member
Tim Marshall	Co-opted Council Member
Ken McCrea	Co-opted Council Member
Hilary Mullen	Elected Staff Member (Academic)
Jenny Newton	Independent Council Member
Simon Opie	Independent Council Member
Keith Ryan	Independent Council Member
Linsey Taylor	Elected Senate Member
Terri Teasdale	Independent Council Member

Officers:

Ellie Smith	Clerk to the Council
Vanessa Pilon	Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

Ian Plover	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Shân Wareing	PVC Learning & Teaching
Alison Chambers	PVC/Executive Dean (S&H)
Vicky Vass	PVC/Executive Dean (DMM)
David Bulbeck	Financial Controller
Steve Dewhurst	Director of Business Planning
John Cooper	Financial Consultant

Apologies:

Antony Bellekom	Independent Council Member
Ian Hillan	Independent Council Member

981 Welcome to new members

981.1 The Chair welcomed Lauren Griffiths, the newly elected Member of Senate, to the meeting.

982 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

982.1 No conflicts of interest were declared or identified.

983 Minutes of the Meetings held on 7 July 2014 and 14 October 2014

983.1 The minutes and confidential minutes of the meetings held on 7 July 2014 and 14 October 2014 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The progress on actions from these meetings was noted.

984 Matters Arising

984.1 959.1 Uxbridge Lease

The current position on the terms offered by the leaseholder for this lease was noted as the same as reported in July 2014 although attempts to negotiate a better position had been made. This left a lease term of ten years renewable for a further five years. There is no imperative to change this urgently.

Following discussion it was AGREED that a strategic plan is brought to the June 2015 meeting of Council identifying future plans for health courses at both High Wycombe and Uxbridge and the space required to accommodate future developments.

(Action: Senior Management Team)

985 Chair's Action

985.1 None had been taken since the last meeting.

986 Vice Chancellor's Report (including KPI's)

986.1 Vice Chancellor's Report (C/14/31)

This included commentary on:

- Progress against relevant academic objectives since the last meeting including improvements in some benchmarking indicators
- Sector Developments
 - HEFCE: number control removal, financial forecasts and business plan
 - HEFCE consultation on quality assurance and procurement process
 - HEFCE 'Cold Spots' research
 - Social mobility and Child Poverty Commission policy paper update
- Buckinghamshire Education, Skills & Training (BEST)
- Recent Successes
 - University receives commendations in Prospects Postgraduate Awards
 - Activities Week and Enterprise Festival
 - Pressure Ulcers App
 - New and improved campus at High Wycombe
- Appendix 1: Report on BEST Activities
 - Highlights including the appointment of a General Manager, HEFCE Catalyst Fund bid and a Parliamentary Review article
 - University Campus Aylesbury Vale including building and marketing
 - Financial matters including first annual accounts, future financial reporting and budget for 2014-15
- Minutes of the BEST Board of Directors held on 29 July 2014

Clarification was sought around the following:

- Potential opportunities arising from HEFCE's piloting of new approaches to student learning and

- work undertaken to improve retention of part time-students as flagged in the HEFCE business plan
- Aylesbury Vale University Campus – sub-letting position of the ground floor

986.2 Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators

The financial position for the year ending 2013-14 was strong with the University meeting or exceeding all KPI targets for income and growth. This produced an income growth of 3.7% and an operating surplus of 3.8%. Other KPI improvements included Estates & Facilities and employability. In relation to enrolment (which includes those at partner institutions) the University year end returns for 2013-14 exceeded both the HEFCE forecasts and NHS commission targets. Initial enrolment numbers for 2014-15 exceeded the budget numbers for full time but were lower than last year's intake. Changes to forecasted risk ratings were noted as including:

- Student Satisfaction – red and improving, amber forecast
- Employment – green and improving, green forecast
- Employee satisfaction – green and improving, amber forecast
- Employee efficiency – green and no overall change, amber forecast
- Financial sustainability – green and deteriorating, amber forecast
- Diversification – green and improving, amber forecast
- Investment - green and deteriorating, amber forecast
- Efficiency - amber and deteriorating, green forecast
- Space efficiency - amber and improving, green forecast

Consideration was given to league table standing in relation to the improved graduate employment position and in principle that could lead to an improved league table position assuming its weighting in the tables remains the same, as discussed with Council a year ago. However, most progress will be made in league table position, through NSS improvements.

987 PVC Learning & Teaching Report (C/14/32)

987.1 The report provides an update on all the projects prepared and implemented during the last year as well as on-going work, activities and targets proposed for the rest of the academic year. The latter included:

- Continued development of the Enhanced Student Experience Programme to support the Learning & Teaching Strategy and on-going work to improve NSS scores
- Staff Development to share and strengthen the use of best practice and innovation and improve and increase professional standards
- Enterprise and employability including the setting up of Bucks Temps to provide student placements in part time work within the University
- Assessment and monitoring of the three work turnaround of feedback to students as well as the provision of iPads to staff to support both marking and technology led teaching
- Technology enhanced learning supported by online tutorials and Student Learning Technology Ambassadors
- Research informed curriculum
- Access to facilities 24/7 during term time and through the Easter break
- Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement
- Data led developments provided by the Business Planning Office to inform all University activities

987.2 Clarification was sought regarding the current position with Coventry University which currently validates our research degrees. It was explained that Coventry University had decided and given notice to withdraw from all partnerships as of 31 December 2014. The University was currently having talks with potential new partners to offer research degrees from January 2015. All students enrolled on Coventry research degrees up to the end of December 2014 would continue to be supported by Coventry University to the completion of their degrees.

988 Student's Union Report (C/14/33)

988.1 The aims of the report were to share with Council key messages relating to plans and projects for the year ahead. It included:

- Students' Union Strategic Plan – progress includes a new website, customer relationship management system, a rebranded student newspaper as well as restructuring, additional staff and staff development
- Creating opportunities for training and upskilling for students, redevelopment of the sports offer to increase the range of recreational sports and student training to undertake committee working including charring meetings
- Improved stability through prudent management and cost control as well as investment in new commercial ventures to diversify income and reduce dependence on grant funding as well as provide alternative social activities for students
- Broadening participation through analysing the participation in activities and targeting marketing
- Enabling potential through an additional skills programme
- Building reputation through coherent identity
- Current year's progress includes a best ever attended fresher's fortnight but with a decline in student numbers and the lack of variety of diverse social activities within the town, additional work needs to be undertaken with the University to improve local social activities and make High Wycombe a true University Town

This was noted.

989 Resources Committee

989.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 November 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2014 were received without comment.

989.2 Bucks Students' Union Affiliations noted in the accounts for the year ending 31 July 2014 (C/14/34)

Council **RECEIVED and APPROVED** the Students' Union affiliations as circulated.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

989.3 Financial Position as at 30 September 2014 (C/14/35)

The Committee noted the management accounts of 30 September 2014 which clearly showed the position against budget for both income and expenditure to date. In addition the Budget, Cash Flow Forecast and KPI's and operating measures were provided. The forecast operating cash flow performance against bank covenant was noted as in line with budget.

Council **NOTED** the Financial Position for September 2014 as submitted

989.4 Centre of Excellence for Sports, Exercise and Wellbeing (C/14/36)

A full business case for the proposed Centre of Excellence for Sports, Exercise and Wellbeing was noted. This included:

- Full background and overview of the proposal
- Market analysis including competitor recruitment
- Full proposal for the Centre
- Potential academic portfolio
- Future Research
- Key external stakeholders
- Estate/infrastructure/equipment
- Staffing
- Detailed financial projections including cumulative cash flow and financial projection comparisons at three levels of recruitment

It was noted that Resources Committee had approved the plan to implement this new initiative at a cost of £279,000. It also recommended that Council give delegated powers to the Capital Projects Working Group to approve capital funding (approximately £1.75m) for the fit out of the area in South Wing to house the Centre.

Further detailed work was reported on the design and costs of this work and it was noted that with the additional detailed information this would now be completed within a capital budget of £1.9m.

Council **APPROVED** the proposals and agreed that Capital Projects Working Group have delegated powers to approve capital expenditure up to £1.9m once detailed costs are known.

(Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor/ Chair Resources Committee)

989.5 Further discussions took place relating to the fitting out of the ground floor of South Wing for the area known as the 'Room' and its access directly from the concourse. Members were reminded that they had approved a budget for this of £0.9m, based on the estimated cost of the basic fit out. The allocation of £0.9m for the 'Room' was informed by the agreed budget for the refurbishment of South Wing of £4.6m and that the work had been completed with a saving of £0.8m on the original allocation. At the time this was agreed Resources Committee had been shown graphics for a higher level specification for the 'Room', which the Committee wished to progress.

End user consultations have now taken place regarding the 'Room' and many different ideas for its use have been identified. Detailed costings have been obtained both for the basic fit out which came within the agreed budget of £0.9m and the higher specification consisting of a fully functional flexible space available at an extra cost of £295,000. Presentation slides showing the different scenarios were shown. The Students' Union supported this project which would enhance the student experience, create a space that could be accessed by the local community and because it would not be licenced would be used more widely by different groups.

Clarification was sought and points made as follows:

- Digital work could be undertaken
- Curation of the space would need to be closely managed
- Inspirational and adds to the aspirations of the University
- The £295k represents extra investment not overspend
- Detailed breakdown of costs of £295k already available

Council **APPROVED** the proposal for additional investment and agreed that Capital Projects Working Group have delegated powers to approve capital expenditure up to £295,000 on consideration of the detailed breakdown of costs.

(Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor/Chair of Resources Committee)

989.6 Tuition Fees for 2015-16: Part-time undergraduate, part-time and full-time postgraduate students (C/14/37)

The proposals as considered by Resources Committee were fully explained. A larger review of all the fees set by the University would be undertaken during the year with a view to making more comprehensive proposals for 2016-17 to take account fee levels within the sector.

It was **AGREED** that the fee charges for part time undergraduate courses, full and part time postgraduate courses as detailed in the report were approved.

(Action: Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment)

990 **Audit Committee**

990.1 Minutes of the Meetings held on 30 September 2014 and 13 November 2014

The minutes and confidential minutes of the meetings held on 30 September 2014 and 13 November 2014 were received without comment.

990.2 Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 July 2014 (C/14/38)

These included the following:

- Financial statements for the University and its subsidiary companies for the year ending 31 July 2014
- Annual Sustainability Assurance Report: December 2014

- Collaboration Agreement Commitments with Wycombe District Council

The Financial Controller presented the paper summarising key aspects of the University's accounts and its subsidiary companies. The performance reported was a good one. Income was £0.9m better than budget, with expenditure only £0.1m above budget. Attention was drawn to FRS17 commitments in relation to the Local Government Superannuation Scheme over which the University has no control and the dissolution of Thames Valley Training & Development. The External Auditors gave a positive opinion and a clean bill of health in relation to the accounts as circulated. A number of points were noted:

- The University must ensure that it obtains best value for money on procurement
- Resources and staff are now in place to manage procurement
- Contract Register is now in place for current and future contracts will be included on an on-going basis as well as large prior contracts
- Internal Auditors will undertake a review of the procurement process during February/March 2015

The Audit and Resources Committee recommend that Council:

- a. Conclude there is no requirement for an impairment provision to be made in respect of building asset values;
- b. Conclude that the going concern concept is appropriate for the University Accounts;
- c. Approve the signing of the letter of representation;
- d. Annual Sustainability Assurance Report: December 2014;
- e. Collaboration Agreement Commitments with Wycombe District Council;
- f. Adopt the annual accounts.

Council **APPROVED** the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2014 including the above recommendations.

(Action: Financial Controller)

990.3 Audit Committee Annual report 2013-14 (C/14/39)

The following reports were presented to Council for consideration and approval:

- a. Annual Report 2013-14 to the Council and Vice Chancellor as Designated Officer – for note and submission to HEFCE
- b. External Auditors Report and Key Issues Memorandum
- c. Internal Auditors Report
- d. External Auditor's Letter of Representation for signature
- e. Value for Money Report from the Vice Chancellor

It was noted that these were due to be sent to HEFCE by 1 December 2014.

The Annual Report included meetings held, Terms of Reference, Internal Audit, External Audit and Financial Statements (2013-14), opinion on data quality and management as well as significant issues considered during the year. In particular the report was very positive and concluded that the University were able to meet their financial commitments. Although the Internal Auditors report also gave a positive opinion on the effectiveness of the arrangements the University has in place to address risk, they also drew attention to areas where improvements could be made and these were noted. Attention was particularly drawn to the IT and Procurement areas where the University had undertaken some improvements and others were on-going.

It was agreed that the graphs in the Value for Money Report should be amended to read left to right with the dates running from the past to the present year.

Attention was drawn to the contingent liability included in the accounts relating to the commitment to fund road improvements around the student village at Hughenden in partnership with Wycombe District Council agreed in 2008. It was noted that the building of the road was considered to enhance the value of the student accommodation and ease of access for students.

Council **APPROVED** these reports with the above amendment to the Value for Money Report as circulated to be processed as detailed.

(Action: Financial Controller and Clerk to the Council)

990.4 Strategic Risk Assessment and Annual Report 2013-14 (C/14/40)

The report considered by the Audit Committee and presented for information noted both the increased and decreased risk scores. Significant control actions taken during the year were also noted. The top current risks for the University are 'Curriculum and Reputation' and 'Long Term Financial Sustainability' with specific issues and concerns around IT resilience and development and the heightened focus around meeting regulations and controls around international visas.

990.5 Audit Committee Review of the effectiveness of the Internal and External Auditors (Verbal)
See Confidential Minutes

991 Governance Matters

991.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 October 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2014 were received without comment. It was noted that a five yearly review of governance was due to be undertaken during 2015-16 and this would be informed by the publication of the Committee of University Chairs new Code of Practice due in March 2015.

991.2 Replacement/Recruitment of Council Members process/timescale (C/14/41)

Council was invited to consider and approve the replacement and recruitment strategy for 2014-15. The renewal of existing members was considered after they had left the meeting.

The proposals as detailed were **AGREED** as follows:

- a. Replacement of Members due to retire
- b. Renewal of Members completing their first term of office

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

992 Remuneration Committee

992.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2014

The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2014 were received without comment.

Other matters

993 Annual Reports 2013-14 (C/14/42)

993.1 Student Complaints Annual Report 2013-14

It was noted that the revised regulations and process for investigating student complaints has been implemented successfully across the University. Improvements continue to be made in the way investigations are undertaken and recorded. The Student Resolution Officer monitors best practice in the sector and regularly networks with colleagues across the sector through workshops and conferences. A programme of training and development is planned to be rolled out across the University during 2014-15.

This report was noted.

993.2 Academic Appeals 2013-14

Revised regulations were fully implemented during 2013-14 and, whilst the number of appeals submitted, were slightly lower than the previous year, the level had remained reasonably constant over the last few years. Comparisons were clearly shown across faculty, levels and courses as well as a percentage of enrolments. The outcomes of appeals and the level at which they were managed were also shown. Faculties showed more engagement with the process which continued to improve during the year. A more open approach to appeals with clear definitions for local and central appeal processes has ensured increasing transparency and

compliance to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) regulations. Correlations relating to ethnicity had not yet been made but further analysis in this area would be undertaken.

This report was noted.

993.3 Student non-academic Disciplinary Cases 2013-14

The procedures for investigating cases, was explained and included examples. The new revised regulations and process had been fully implemented across the University. The report showed that there had been a substantial increase in cases considered in comparison with the previous year and the reasons for this was explained. It was noted that responsibility for recording and monitoring disciplinary cases and emerging trends had now been centralised. A programme for the training of staff acting as investigating officers was planned for the current academic year.

This report was noted.

994 National Pay Bargaining August 2013 (Verbal)

994.1 National negotiations on pay awards for 2015 would begin in February for implementation in August 2015. It was noted that the University was not be affected by the current academic Union (UCU) industrial action relating to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

995 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms (C/13/44)

This report was received for information.

996 Vote of Thanks

This would be the last meeting of Council where Ruth Farwell would be presiding as Vice Chancellor before her retirement on 31 January 2015. The Chair expressed the appreciation of Council to the Vice Chancellor for her huge contribution and leadership in making the University the success it is today. Arrangements for celebrating Ruth's leadership were currently in hand and more information would be available shortly.

Private Council

997 Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 4 November 2014

997.1 See Confidential Minutes

998 Date of next meeting

998.1 The next meeting of Council is scheduled to take place on:

Tuesday 10 February 2015, commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey followed by dinner and Monday 23 March 2015 at 4.00pm at Uxbridge

The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.05pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 25 November 2014
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 28 November 2014
Confirmed by the Chair – 4 December 2014