



Buckinghamshire New University

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Council

Minutes

date: **25 November 2013**
time: **6.00 pm**
location: **Boardroom, High Wycombe**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)	Independent Council Member
Antony Bellekom	Independent Council Member
Antonia Byatt	Independent Council Member
Baljit Dhillon	Independent Council Member
Ruth Farwell	Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Naomi Franco	President, Students' Union
Ian Hillan	Independent Council Member
Michael Hipkins	Independent Council Member
Julie Irwin	Elected Senate Member
Maggie James	Independent Council Member
Tim Marshall	Co-opted Council Member
Sukhie Mattu	Elected Staff Member (PSE)
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:

John Cooper	Director of Finance
Derek Godfrey	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Ian Plover	Director of DMM
David Sines	PVC/Executive Dean (S&H)
Shân Wareing	PVC Learning & Teaching

Apologies:

Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair)	Independent Council Member
Lori Flynn	Independent Council Member

891 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

891.1 No conflicts of interest were declared or identified.

892 Minutes of the Meetings held on 8 July 2013 and 15 October 2013

892.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2013 and 15 October 2013 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The progress on actions from these meetings was noted.

893 Matters Arising

893.1 There were none brought forward or raised at the meeting.

894 Chair's Action

894.1 None had been taken since the last meeting.

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

895.1 Vice Chancellor's Report (C/13/32)

This included commentary on:

- Guild HE Policy Update, November 2013 – a report on the Annual Conference was included
- Operating Framework for Higher Education in England – how HEFCE meets its obligations
- Revisions to the HEFCE Financial Memorandum – including the publication in the summer of 2014 of a Register of Higher Education Providers
- Student number control for 2013 – flexibility on under and over recruitment
- Enrolments – improved over 2012-13 and within the flexible SNC
- Buckinghamshire Education, Skills & Training (BEST) – reported the up to date position, including the implementation of the Operating Plan and potential recruitment
- Recent successes and news
 - Buckinghamshire New University in Reading & Slough
 - Research Excellence Framework (REF)
 - New Professors and Readers
 - Buckinghamshire New University among the safest of all Universities
 - One of the top creative universities
 - Royal College of Nursing accreditation
 - Buckinghamshire UTC now in operation
 - Graduation Ceremonies
- BEST report on student recruitment & associated income

A number of other new funding streams achieved within the Faculty of Society & Health were noted both for the Thames Valley and North West London Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs) in the areas of widening participation, social care and professional development amounting to in excess of £1.3m. It was explained that this is in addition to the current budget. The Faculty were congratulated on their achievement.

895.2 Key Performance Indicators (C/13/32)

The forecasted strong income performance for 2012-13 has been achieved and an improvement on last year's recruitment has resulted in the University meeting its flexible student number control for 2013-14 with recruitment in Health and through BEST during the rest of the year still to be included. Risk ratings have improved in a small number of KPI's and these include:

- Student Satisfaction – improved to amber
- Employment – amber
- Student Numbers and Recruitment – green
- Progression and Achievement – green
- Managing Performance – green
- Diversification – amber
- Facilities Performance - green

Responses to questions asked for further information and clarification were:

- Facilities management is of more concern currently because of the issues surrounding the provision of IT – this is being addressed and monitored closely both through the executive and Audit Committee.

- Academic productivity although green is deteriorating from the point of view of efficiency – this reflects the increasing numbers of academic staff which also has positive benefits. A related comment was made at the last Audit Committee and as a consequence part of the February Council meeting will consider how the University benchmarks against its comparator set of universities with regard to expenditure of staff among other things.

896 PVC Learning & Teaching Report (C/13/33)

896.1 The report detailed 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:

- On-going work relating to the NSS
- Developed and implemented a whole week of activities for new students entitled Bucks Welcome
- Bucks Activity Week – analysis of the first one and future plans
- New University Learning & Teaching Committee
- New Bucks Home page goes live
- Developments in e learning and on-line course delivery
- Development of a strategy for digital learning
- Developing a framework for implementing employability in the curriculum

Attention was drawn particularly to Learning & Teaching Strategy which was developed and approved during the year.

Questions and responses were made in the following areas:

- The planning was great, the sessions well organised for activity week and provided both interest, excitement as well as sessions to support future employment – however further work is needed to build support from students
- Ensure that all academic staff are brought into the HEA Change Academic Programme on professional standards and time is made available to do this

Members welcomed the clear succinct format of the report.

897 Student's Union Report (C/13/34)

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

- Welcome Week
- Activities Week
- Outrageous Ambition
- The decline of Wycombe's night time economy, campus feel and their impact on the overall student experience
- Partner College Higher Education Review
- NUS Funding
- Sports for Fun

897.2 The President reported on visits to other universities, the SU officers recent trip to the US and how the experience is different for students and academics both in terms of community feel and facilities inside and outside of formal teaching. Suggestions for improvements included:

- Access to sports facilities within the town
- A wider variety of facilities to encourage students to stay in the area both within the university and within the town
- The University is open in the evenings and weekends for socialising, workshops, cafes, film screening room, skittle alley and stage
- Student social space outside the Students' Union to meet and greet with pool and table tennis and hanging around
- More innovative, community/family friendly welcoming decor

It was reported that a number of plans for social space had been built into the development of south wing and a consultation exercise for both staff and students on the redevelopment of the

campus was currently being finalised. A wish list of quick win solutions to make the campus more vibrant and a reminder that the university is a creative university with the know how to create an exciting and vibrant place to study were noted. The idea of the 'outrageous ambition' is important in inspiring staff to enhance current activities. This includes aspiring to deliver improvements in facilities and services including accessibility throughout the seven day week. Attention was also drawn to the use of outside space including the town itself where students could contribute to the life and community of the area as well.

(Action: Senior Management Team/Students' Union)

898 Proposals for HE Centre in Aylesbury (C/13/35)

898.1 See Confidential Appendix.

899 Resources Committee

899.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 November 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2013 were received without comment.

899.2 Bucks Students' Union Affiliations noted in the accounts for the year ending 31 July 2013 (C/13/36)

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

899.3 Financial Position as at September 2013 (C/13/37)

The Committee noted the management accounts of 30 September 2013, 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. A shortfall in the FT UG fee budget was explained as a processing delay which had now been resolved. Although the capital reserves were both higher and healthier than previously attention was drawn to the amount of capital funding committed already for 2013-14.

Council **NOTED** the Financial Position for September 2013 as submitted

900 Audit Committee

900.1 Minutes of the Meetings held on 1 October 2013 and 14 November 2013

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 October 2013 and 14 November 2013 were received without comment.

900.2 Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 July 2013 (C/13/38)

Attention was drawn to the Impairment Review, the Going Concern and Liquidity as well as the position on long term sustainability. It was noted that following representations received from other universities it was no longer a requirement to include the Annual Sustainability KPI's and Assessments in the Annual Sustainability Report to HEFCE.

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. Adopt the annual accounts.

Council **APPROVED** the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2013 including the above recommendations.

(Action: Director of Finance)

900.3 Audit Committee Annual report 2012-13 (C/13/39)

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

- a. Annual Report 2012-13 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 2013.

The Annual Report included meetings held, Terms of Reference, Internal Audit, External Audit and Financial Statements (2012-13), 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 area where the University is currently reviewing the IT Strategy and developing new governance arrangements in accordance with the capital investment decisions agreed by Council in March 2013 to start to address the identified deficiencies. It was stressed that this would take time to implement and the University were not, yet, in a position to finalise the cost implications. However improvements have already been made in terms of restructuring and services. Members stressed the urgency of this as well as the opportunity to place the University at the top of the IT agenda within the sector. The Senior Management Team would be considering the action plan for approval before the end of December and developments would continue to take place within this context. A full report of the current position would be brought to Audit Committee in January 2014.

Council **APPROVED** these reports as circulated to be processed as detailed.

(Action: Director of Finance and Clerk to the Council)

900.4 Strategic Risk Assessment and Annual Report 2012-13 (C/13/40)

The report considered by the Audit Committee and presented for information noted that despite improvements noted in many areas and in view of the anticipated risks identified, a conservative approach to risk had been adopted with only one change to the previous score identified. This was in relation to Employee Development and Scholarship where a reduction in probability under risk 6 has given an overall risk score of 6 (Green). Full details of the Strategic Risk Appetite and Treatment were clearly shown.

901 Governance Matters

901.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2013 were received without comment.

901.2 Replacement/Recruitment of Council Members (C/13/41)

Council was invited to consider and approve the replacement and recruitment strategy for 2013-14. The proposals as detailed were **AGREED** as follows:

- a. Election of Chair
- b. Retirement of Deputy and election of new Deputy Chair
- c. Replacement of one Professional Services Employee (elected) member

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

902 Remuneration Committee

902.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 July 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2013 were received without comment.

903 Other matters

903.1 Student Complaints Annual Report 2012-13 (C/13/43)

It was noted that an updated Student Complaints Procedure was implemented in February 2013. The report was, therefore, based on two different versions of the procedure. Data showed there

to be no increase in the level of complaints comparative to previous years. Improvements on implementing the new process for 2013-14 were noted together with proposals to implement and share good practice. Attached to the report was the annual letter from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). It was noted that this included both complaints and appeals and could not be directly related to the above report. A number of questions were asked around the high numbers of nursing students making complaints (this related to the impact that failure had on students' future careers), high student satisfaction in the health care area and a small number of high compensation claims where courses had now been revalidated to improve delivery and experience to students.

This report was noted.

903.2 National Pay Bargaining August 2013 (Verbal)

Although the national negotiation process is deemed to be closed with the employers' final offer being a 1% increase, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) has recommended that it should be paid (including backdating) in December. Nationally the unions have continued to ballot for strike action on 3 December 2013. The usual processes for this will be put in place to manage the situation. In accordance with Council's decision, the University will be implementing UCEA's recommendation and making the pay award in December.

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

This report was received for information.

904 **Date of next meeting**

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

Tuesday 18 February 2014, commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey and
Monday 31 March 2014 at 4.00pm at Uxbridge

The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.30pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chair of Council)

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 27 November 2013
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 28 November 2013
Confirmed by the Chair – 2 January 2014