UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2017

Present: The Chair of Council
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Treasurer
Pro-Chancellor (Mrs J McAleese)
Pro-Chancellor (Ms J Unwin)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D Smith)

Mr C Cecil
Professor A Field
Mr M Galloway
Mr R Hide
Mrs D Jagger
Mr G Lemos

Mr J Lister
Professor Q Summerfield
Mr C Thompson
Mrs C Thomson
Mr A Urquart (SU)
Mrs S Wadsworth

In attendance: Registrar & Secretary, Ms J Horsburgh
Director of Finance, Mr J Lindley
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
Governance Administrator, Ms B Carter Ellis
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Ms H Brian
Director of Estates & Campus Services, Mr S Talboys (for M16-17/77 & 90)
Acting Director of HR, Mrs Paula Tunbridge (for M16-17/78)
Director of Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni, Mrs Mary Haworth (for M16-17/79)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr B Szczepek Reed and Dr R Ibrahim (GSA).

16-17/75 Membership

Council welcomed Jo Horsburgh (Registrar & Secretary) and Alex Urquart (SU President) to their first meeting.

The Chair also thanked the following outgoing members who were attending their last meeting:
• Jenny McAleese (Pro-Chancellor)
• Charles Cecil (lay member)
• Dr Beatrice Szczepk Reed (elected by Senate)
• Bob Hide (elected by support staff)
• Dr Rasha Ibrahim (GSA President)

16-17/76 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. The following matters were declared:

• the Chair and Mrs McAleese were nominated for membership of the University Court (M16-17/95 below refers);
• the offices of Mrs Wadsworth and Mr Urquart were tenants in the Market Square building (M16-17/77 below refers).

16-17/77 Market Square Building

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

16-17/78 Executive Report: HR Director

Council considered the annual executive report from the HR Director (C.16-17/84).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Acting Director of HR (Paula Tunbridge) drew attention to the following:

• progress in the key themes of the HR Strategy;
• headline results of the 2017 staff survey (M16-17/96 below refers);
• generally positive feedback on new performance management processes;
• further development of learning and development activities, especially in collaboration with Careers to support student employability (e.g. York Futures programme);
• appointment of new HR Director (Dr Joss Ivory) to take up post from 11 September 2017.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) Noting that the Remuneration Committee had requested an ambitious strategy to reduce the gender pay gap following consideration of the Equal Pay Report (M16-17/95 below refers), the Acting Director reported that an action plan on this matter had been drafted for consideration by UEB. It was noted that the gap was largely a ‘pipeline’ issue relating to the proportion of women in senior roles, especially the professoriate. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged
that there was a risk of merely addressing the underlying symptoms rather than the deep-rooted underlying structural difficulties (e.g. unbalanced distributions across different grades), which partly explained why some initiatives had not been as effective in reducing the gap as intended. It was suggested that target-setting in this area, although a somewhat blunt tool, should be considered as a possible impetus for improvement. Comments were also made on the importance of monitoring the gender composition of selection panels, especially for professorial appointments, and the gains that could be made by linking equal pay considerations to the performance review objectives of staff in management roles. Noting that the matter of equal pay was a potential reputational risk for the University, Council decided to request a more detailed report for its next meeting.

(b) As the main cause of sickness absence highlighted in the MI data was stress and other mental health issues, a number of initiatives were in train to take a preventative and proactive approach (e.g. introduction of a Mental Health First Contact Network for staff). Council acknowledged the importance of this matter to both staff engagement and delivery of a high quality student experience.

(c) Given that that there was no direct route to individual promotion within role for support staff as there was for academics, it was noted that career development for such staff was achieved by other means such as coaching, secondment opportunities, assessment centres and taking opportunities to broaden careers by moving role within the University. Acknowledging that this could be harder to achieve in smaller departments and units, the Registrar reported that she would be working with HR to enhance support staff opportunities in this area.

(d) The Acting Director confirmed that two key areas for HR focus included responsiveness to the rapidly changing external environment in order to remain an ‘employer of choice’ and ensuring institutional compliance with visa restrictions for international staff.

(e) In terms of the academic response to the new performance management processes, this would be captured through detailed analysis of the staff survey results as there was a range of views, especially as regards interactions with the separate academic promotion process. It was suggested that, although welcomed by the majority of academics, there remained some work to be done to persuade academic colleagues of the positive benefits of appraisal and objective setting.

On behalf of Council the Chair thanked the Acting HR Director for the annual report, noting that it would be useful in future reports to highlight...
in more detail the Directorate’s support for equality and diversity initiatives (M16-17/91 below refers).

16-17/79 **Institutional Fundraising Campaign**

Council considered a report on the institutional fundraising campaign (C.16-17/85).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni (Mary Haworth) drew attention to the following:

- Following detailed initial work to develop the underlying processes of the campaign, more creative work would now be taken forward with stakeholders in collaboration with a market research company (Message House).
- The Chair was thanked for his highly valuable contribution to the development of the campaign.
- There were a number of ways in which Council members could lend their support, including by acting as advocates, participating in focus groups and influencing potential donors.

The following points were noted in discussion:

(a) Given that the University was relatively young compared to others (with associated implications for alumni giving), detailed analysis had been undertaken to gain a sense of a realistically achievable target (estimated at ca. £100m in the period to 2021). With an expectation that approximately 70% of the target figure would be achieved via a small pool of donors, there would be strong reliance on existing networks and mobilisation of support. It was noted in this context that the University Chancellor had already been proactive in his engagement with possible donors.

(b) Rather than focusing on a single campaign target (e.g. capital investments), the intention was to link giving to specific projects that reflected the University’s values and were able to galvanise support among different target audiences.

(c) The newly established Fundraising Campaign Steering Group (to be chaired from August 2017 by the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange, Professor Jon Timmis) included student representation in order to help shape the sort of projects likely to attract alumni support (e.g. student scholarships).

(d) Given recent discussions by the Nominations Committee on the criteria for award of Morrell Fellowships to benefactors (M16-17/95 below refers), it was generally agreed that an effective and
comprehensive Due Diligence Policy was required to ensure appropriate ethical consideration of funding sources. It was reported in this context that a recently developed policy in this area would be subject to internal audit review during 2017/18 in order to ensure it was fit for purpose before the campaign was fully launched.

(e) Noting the importance of the campaign in the current uncertain funding environment for higher education, it was agreed that Council members should take an active role in shaping specific projects, identifying potential donors and generally helping to demonstrate the support of the University’s leadership for the campaign.

16-17/80 Election of Chair

Further to M15-16/76 from its meeting in July 2016 and in accordance with University Statute 11.7(a), Council formally elected Mr Gerard Lemos as its Chair from 1 August 2017 for three years in the first instance.

[Secretary’s Note: Mr Lemos left the meeting for consideration of this item of business.]

16-17/81 Appointment of Lay Member

Further to M16-17/63 (Nominations Committee), Council considered a recommendation from the new Appointments Committee (tabled).

It was noted that following a search process undertaken by a search firm (Saxton Bampfylde), the new Committee had interviewed a number of candidates in order to identify nominees for the four forthcoming lay member vacancies on Council. It was also noted that this process would be ongoing over the summer months, but that the Committee had already agreed one nomination and had therefore decided to recommend that Mr Philip Carpenter (former Executive Vice-President/Research at Wiley Publishing) be appointed as a new lay member of Council from 1 August 2017 for two years in the first instance. Council approved the recommendation.

In response to a query about potential female candidates, it was reported that the search firm had been further encouraged to pay closer attention to gender balance in its ongoing search and shortlisting activities, this having been a key factor raised in the University’s earlier engagement with them.

16-17/82 Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2017 (C.16-17/75) and the associated appendix relating to re-financing of Goodricke
College (tabled) were approved, subject to the following minor corrections and clarifications in respect of M16-17/63 (Nominations Committee):

- the new ‘Honorary Titles Committee’ would retain the name ‘Nominations Committee’;
- the SU President would become an ex officio member of the Nominations Committee (not the new Appointments Committee).

Council also noted the action-schedule based on the minutes (C.16-17/76), in particular the items that were to be considered at the current meeting.

16-17/83 New Student Residences

Further to M16-17/57 (New Student Residences), it was noted that the OJEU procurement process was currently underway, with a preferred bidder to be identified by January 2018.

16-17/84 Key Performance Indicators

Further to M16-17/58 (Key Performance Indicators), Council received the latest RAG (Red, Amber and Green) summary sheet, noting that there had been no changes since the previous meeting. It also welcomed the addition of a timeline indicating when new data would be released and the associated indicators updated for reporting to Council.

16-17/85 Lloyds Register Foundation

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

16-17/86 International Strategy

Further to M16-17/66 (International Strategy), Council received an oral report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who confirmed that greater detail in respect of targets would be provided in his annual executive report during 2017/18. It was also reported that positive discussions had been held with the SU in respect of additions to the strategy in respect of the international student experience and that the SU President would attend meetings of the International Committee on a pilot basis.

In response to a query about the growth figures for the International Pathway College (IPC) included in the budget and forecasts (M16-17/88 below refers), the Finance Director confirmed that these figures were in accordance with the agreement with the external partner (Kaplan International Pathways).
Executive Report from the Vice-Chancellor

Council received an Executive Report from the Vice-Chancellor (C.16-17/78) covering the following matters:

- general election result;
- Russell Group (RG) delegation to Brussels;
- appointment of founding Chief Executive of the new Office for Students (OFS);
- appeal against Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) outcome;
- planning for REF2021;
- review of University Strategy by UEB;
- student numbers;
- campus masterplan;
- online learning;
- building fire safety checks.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) Although the minority Conservative government’s approach to Brexit, immigration and tuition fees remained unclear, the University would continue to make appropriate representations through the RG, especially as regards international recruitment and immigration targets. The Vice-Chancellor commented that it was challenging to establish a unified view and unity of purpose in such a grouping of twenty-four different universities, but supported the view expressed by some Council members that it was preferable to maintain a constructive relationship with government as far as possible, including through engagement with longer term thinking about the future funding of the sector and broader government priorities. It was also suggested that the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) might usefully play a more influential role with government, as being longer term trustee representatives of universities.

(b) Recent RG meetings with MEPs and EU negotiators in Brussels had been characterised by a tougher stance on the EU side and confirmation that there would be no “special deals” for science and research.

(c) The University’s decision to lodge an appeal against its ‘silver’ TEF designation was based on strong evidence that the panel had not followed its own guidelines. As well as the evident deficiencies of the benchmarking element of the exercise, it was also noted that some of the NSS metrics employed were out of date and did not reflect the University’s current performance. The Vice-Chancellor supported the view that it was necessary to keep reiterating the faults in the assessment framework to make it clear that the chosen metrics were
not a valid or reliable indicator of teaching quality. As regards the potential influence of the ratings on applicant behaviour, there was no clear evidence of any impact thus far, although it was possible this could change over time, especially in the international arena as the ratings were used by overseas recruitment agents.

(d) Informal guidance had confirmed a number of the arrangements for REF2021, with the most significant new element being a requirement to return all staff defined as research active (on a basis still to be determined). The University would be expected to declare during 2017/18 the number of FTE staff it would be submitting, which would turn lead to confirmation of the total number of research outputs and impact case studies it would be required to return. Further detailed guidance was expected over the summer.

(e) Following the Grenfell Tower disaster in London, the University had reviewed the external cladding on all premises it owned and managed, as well as seeking appropriate assurances from private providers in York where some students were also accommodated. Council was assured that there were no residential buildings over eighteen metres high, that none of the cladding on residential buildings was of the type identified in the Grenfell Tower disaster and that appropriate building certification was in place.

16-17/88  Budget and Medium-Term Plan
[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

16-17/89  Cryo-EM Investment Proposal

Council considered a proposal to invest in a Cryo-Electron Microscope and the provision of a building to house the equipment (C.16-17/82).

Presenting the proposal, the Finance Director noted that £3.3m of the total £4.3m funding required had been externally sourced (Wellcome Trust, Wolfson and alumnus donation), leaving an investment of £1m required from the University if the project was to proceed.

In response to comments and queries from Council members, the following points were noted:

(a) The equipment in question was a high-resolution microscope capable of viewing the structure of protein and DNA, and as such represented an important strategic investment in the work of the York Structural Biology Laboratory (YSBL). The full academic rationale for the investment had been considered and approved by UEB.
(b) Only four such grants had been made by the Wellcome Trust, which indicated the prestigious nature of the award in recognition of YSBL’s world-leading research in this area.

(c) The proposal had been considered and approved by a sub-group of the Finance and Policy Committee, which had noted that it would strengthen the competitive position of the Departments of Biology and Chemistry.

(d) As regards the general question of resourcing for capital equipment in the sciences, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) noted that £700k had been awarded in this area from the University’s Research Priming Fund.

(e) In response to a query about the extent of access to the state-of-the-art equipment, it was noted that YSBL was a consortium comprising around 70 staff and PhD students and as such provided considerable access, including to undergraduate groups.

Following discussion Council approved the gross expenditure of the project (£4,351k), with a capital investment from the University not exceeding £1,000k.

16-17/90 Investment in Former Smith & Nephew Building

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

16-17/91 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Council considered the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (C.16-17/83).

Presenting the strategy as interim Chair of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) during 2016/17, the Vice-Chancellor drew Council’s attention to its four main objectives, which were consonant with the values and principles expressed in the overarching University Strategy. It was also noted that a supporting implementation plan was currently under development and would be considered by the EDIC in 2017/18, when the Registrar would assume the Chair of the committee.

Although the brevity and clarity of the strategy was generally welcomed by Council members, it was suggested that the opening preamble seemed somewhat understated and might be strengthened by more affirmative statements of the University’s active promotion of equality and diversity. It was agreed in this context that diversity was a key asset for the University and the benefits and strengths it brought to the institution might be emphasised more strongly. The SU President
supported this view and also expressed gratitude for the high level of consultation with the student body in developing the strategy.

Council approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, subject to further consideration of the points raised in discussion.

16-17/92 Online Learning Project

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

16-17/93 Annual Feedback Questionnaire

Council considered a report on the response from Council members to the annual feedback questionnaire (C.16-17/87).

The following points were noted:

- The enhanced induction programme for new members had been well received during 2017/18.
- Some comments had been made on the importance of maintaining oversight of student welfare issues.
- Corporate governance was subject to mandatory annual review by internal audit in accordance with HEFCE requirements, with recent reports confirming a positive assessment of the University’s current arrangements and assigning a ‘green’ (low risk) rating (M16-17/17 refers).
- It was suggested that it might be useful for lay members to serve on Departmental Advisory Boards to enable them to gain a better understanding of departmental and student issues.
- The Chair Elect reported his intention to increase governor involvement in the specific areas of student life, fundraising, careers/employability and public engagement.

Following discussion it was noted that the Chair Elect and Registrar would consider the outcome of the annual survey in greater detail with a view to developing appropriate responsive actions, including review of the annual questionnaire’s content and format.

16-17/94 Financial Performance Data

Council received for information financial performance data for the period ended 31 May 2017 (C.16-17/88).

16-17/95 Business from Committees

Business from the following committee meetings was noted and/or approved (C.16-17/89):
(a) Remuneration Committee: 15 May 2017  
(b) Audit Committee: 19 May 2017  
(c) Health, Safety and Welfare Committee: 23 May 2017  
(d) Finance & Policy Committee: 9 June 2017  
(e) Student Life Committee: 15 June 2017  
(f) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee: 15 June 2017  
(g) Nominations Committee: 30 June 2017  
(h) Ethics Committee

16-17/96  2017 Staff Survey

Council received for information a report on the top-level results of the 2017 staff survey (C.16-17/90).

16-17/97  Unreserved Business from Senate

Council noted the following unreserved business from the meeting of the Senate held on 11 July 2017:

➢ annual statistical reports on UG/PGT degree outcomes and PGR submission rates (C.16-17/91)

16-17/98  Development and Alumni Activities

Council received for information the annual report on development and alumni activities (C.16-17/92).

16-17/99  Research Integrity

Council received for information the annual statement on research integrity (C.16-17/93).

16-17/100  Graduation Arrangements

Council received for information notification of Chair’s Action in relation to graduation arrangements [inclusion of Student Orators] (C.16-17/94).

16-17/101  Use of Seal

Council approved the use of the Common Seal of the University (details available in the Registrar and Secretary’s office).

16-17/102  Dates of Meetings in 2017/18

The dates of meetings in 2017/18 were noted as follows:
Away Day: Thursday 28 September 2017 [9am-3.15pm, Lakehouse Room, RCH, with dinner the evening before on Wednesday 27 September 2017]

Wednesday 8 November 2017  
Wednesday 24 January 2018 [additional meeting]  
Wednesday 7 March 2018  
Wednesday 23 May 2018  
Wednesday 18 July 2018  
[all 12:00 midday, room H/G15, Heslington Hall]

16-17/103 Outgoing Chair

As this was his last meeting Council’s appreciation and thanks were expressed to Sir Christopher O’Donnell for his judicious and effective chairmanship of the Council and for his considerable contribution to the development of the University over the last ten years.