U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   Y O R K

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2016

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

Ms M Beach (SU)  
Mr C Cecil  
Professor A Field  
Mr M Galloway  
Mr R Hide  

Mrs D Jagger  
Mr J Lister  
Professor Q Summerfield  
Dr B Szczepek Reed  
Ms J Unwin  

In attendance:  
The Registrar and Secretary, Dr D Duncan  
The Director of Finance, Mr J Lindley  
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans  
The HR Director, Mrs P Lofthouse (for M15-16/77)  

Apologies for absence were received from Ms R Ibrahim (GSA), Mrs M Loffill, Mr C Thompson, Mrs C Thomson and Mrs S Wadsworth.

15-16/67  EU Referendum

Council received a briefing from the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Registrar & Secretary and HR Director on the implications for the University of the UK referendum decision to leave the European Union (so-called ‘Brexit’). The presentations covered the following aspects:

- main risks in terms of student recruitment, staffing, access to funding sources and general economic uncertainty;
- initial actions taken in response by the University Executive Board (UEB);
- implications for research and exposure to risk;
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- current EU student numbers and fee income;
- analysis of current EU staff numbers, length of service and contract type;
- monitoring of staff recruitment and resignations;
- identification of principles that might trigger review of elements of current strategy;
- scenario-planning in respect of the coming round of student admissions;
- importance of a collective sectoral response to government on key matters and implications (e.g. in respect of scientific research and innovation).

Following discussion Council commended senior management for its provision of helpful information on this matter. It also decided formally to state that, having considered the implications, it believed Brexit to provide considerable strategic challenges for the University and the wider HE sector. Council therefore encouraged the Vice-Chancellor and his senior colleagues to continue making representations to government through the appropriate channels in a bid to mitigate the negative impacts as much as possible. It was agreed that such advisory input to UK government policy and planning would be essential in the context of the lengthy and complex negotiations with the EU that now lay ahead.

15-16/68 Membership

The Chair welcomed the newly elected SU President, Millie Beach, to her first meeting as an ex officio member. Council also offered its thanks for the valuable contribution made to its work over many years by two outgoing lay members, Deian Tecwyn and Maureen Loffill. It was noted that Mr Tecwyn would continue to be involved with University governance as Chair of the Audit Committee (in succession to Mr Graham Millar).

15-16/69 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were declared.

15-16/70 Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2016 were approved (C.15-16/61). Council also received the action-schedule
based on the minutes (C.15-16/51), noting the items on the current agenda and those to be presented at future meetings.

As regards plans for marketing the key features of the institutional pedagogy to prospective students, it was noted that this needed to be very factually based in order to meet with the requirements for data provided to prospective students. It was therefore related to development of a formal agreement between the University and student entrants, which would be considered by UEB and Senate during 2016/17. Council noted that admissions/marketing staff were collaborating with the teaching and learning team to draft an agreement that would be compliant with the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

15-16/71  Funding of Piazza Building

Further to M15-16/56 (Funding of Piazza Building), Council received an update (C.15-16/63) from the Director of Finance confirming that, following approval by the Finance and Policy Committee of an enhanced minute drafted by the University’s legal advisors, the Vice-Chancellor and Director of Finance had signed the necessary transaction documents relating to the loan from Kaplan. It was noted that once the building contract had been finalised between the University, the construction firm (Interserve) and the International Pathway College (expected to be concluded in mid-August 2016), the University would be able to start drawing down the loan funding.

Noting the target completion date of November 2017, with teaching planned to start in the new building in January 2018, Council offered its congratulations to all colleagues who had been involved in the complex and protracted loan negotiations.

15-16/72  Council Effectiveness Review

Further to M15-16/59 (Council Effectiveness Review), Council approved two enhanced recommendations from the review group (C.15-16/64) in respect of induction for new members and discussion of wider sectoral issues. It was noted that a work-plan would be drawn up for implementation of the various agreed actions during 2016/17.
Council received an Executive Report from the Vice-Chancellor (C.15-16/65) on the following key items of business:

- UEB had approved a number of capital projects and was currently exploring the possible purchase of the Smith & Nephew building on the Science Park.

- The three principal elements of the government White Paper were noted as follows:
  
  - opening up the market to new providers via relaxation of the requirements for granting degree-awarding powers and university status;
  - introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to drive up teaching standards and reward the institutions who achieved this (via inflation-linked fee increases);
  - a new regulatory framework via creation of the Office for Students (OFS) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to replace the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

After drawing attention to the likely effects of these developments on the sector, the Vice-Chancellor expressed the view that the University remained well placed to face the challenges presented by the new HE environment.

- The Academic Probation Policy had been updated and decoupled from the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) programme for new academics.

- Reviews of marketing and finance support has been undertaken in order to ensure balanced provision across all academic departments and to maximise operational efficiency. A review of admissions was currently in train and would report to UEB in October 2016.

- Financial modelling would be undertaken over the summer of various recruitment scenarios in order to generate robust plans for intervention in the event of any shortfalls against agreed targets.
• UEB had signed off the objectives for a public fundraising campaign that would run over the next 4-5 years, with the intention of generating an additional £35m income. Appeals for support and engagement would be directed across the whole University community.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) There was no indication that Brexit would affect the government’s plans to introduce a new apprenticeship programme and the University was considering options for how it might contribute to this agenda.

(b) It was possible that the fall-out from Brexit would require enhanced marketing activity in order to sustain target levels for international student recruitment. Other factors would be to ensure uniform best practice in admissions across departments and to make best use of the opportunities provided by the new IPC.

(c) It was noted that the scope of the marketing review had been broad, including website enhancements to reach different market segments. Further work had also been done on University branding, with input from external consultants, in order to ensure consistency of messages and market positioning. International and research-related marketing were also important in the increasingly competitive HE environment. It was decided that Council should receive a comprehensive update on branding and marketing during 2016/17.

(d) As regards UEB’s approval for additional staff resource in the Finance Department (in the context of current attempts to generate savings across the support departments), the Director of Finance drew attention to the efficiency savings that would be generated by greater automation of certain finance functions (e.g. payroll, procurement, invoicing etc.). It was also noted that the Department’s resources had remained constant through a period when staff and student numbers had grown.

(e) On the general question of resourcing reviews to generate efficiency savings, it was agreed that the heads of the affected departments needed to be sufficiently engaged in the process to
prevent loss of morale and staff willingness to deliver discretionary effort. Key elements here included clear explanation of the overarching rationale for the review and transparency about the methodology to be used, in order to allay uncertainty and misconceptions.

15-16/74 Estates Master-Planning

Council considered a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar on the estates master-planning project (C.15-16/66), noting that Make Architects had been contracted to deliver the project, starting with an initial feasibility study to be completed by December 2016.

The Chair requested that a further report be brought to the next meeting that responded to Council’s previous request for an indication of how the master-planning process intersected with the broader finance and estates strategies. It was also suggested that the City of York Council should be included among the stakeholder groups referenced in the report.

15-16/75 Budget 2016/17 and Medium-Term Plan to 2019/20

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

15-16/76 Appointment of Chair of Council

Council considered a recommendation from the Nominations Committee in respect of the appointment of the next Chair of Council (C.15-16/68).

Presenting the recommendation as co-Chair of the Committee’s selection working party, Ms Unwin described the search and selection process that had been undertaken, leading to panel interviews with three strong short-listed candidates. Arising from this process the working party had decided to recommend that Mr Gerard Lemos be nominated for appointment, a recommendation that had subsequently been endorsed by the Committee. The Vice-Chancellor had also met privately with Mr Lemos following the interview process and strongly endorsed the Committee’s recommendation.
Council approved the recommendation that Gerard Lemos be appointed to Council as an ordinary lay member for one year in the first instance from 1 August 2016. It was noted that Mr Lemos would serve during 2016/17 as ‘Chair Designate’ before being formally elected by Council as its new Chair in July 2017 (i.e. at the last meeting of the current Chair), in accordance with the requirements of University Statute 11.7.

15-16/77

Executive Report: HR Director

Council considered the annual executive report from the HR Director (C.15-16/69).

Attending the meeting to present her report, the Director drew attention to the following:

- reporting against the different projects that comprised the HR Strategy;
- 773 posts advertised in 2015;
- growing use of Tableau to present/analyse staffing data;
- training of 846 performance reviewers between July 2015 and February 2016;
- reviews of professorial/senior manager pay;
- development of health and wellbeing website and launch of mental health first-aid network for staff;
- successful ‘Professional@York’ conference for support staff;
- some increase in turnover among support staff (partly related to the voluntary severance scheme);
- development of an HR Strategy map and metrics to support the University Strategy.

During discussion Council noted the following points:

(a) UEB had approved a series of principles for workload modelling but did not feel from a pragmatic viewpoint that it would be sensible to impose a standardised unitary model across all departments as this might cause unnecessary distraction from teaching and research activities as well as damaging the goodwill and discretionary effort of staff.
(b) Following the reviewer training programme during 2016/17 the new performance review process was currently being rolled out. Although there had been resistance among some staff to the introduction of objectives and associated ratings, the majority of staff were beginning to take a positive view of the opportunities provided by the process. It was noted that in some cases the response of staff could also be affected by disjunctions between the roles of line manager and performance reviewer, which were not necessarily the same.

(c) It was hoped that the introduction of online reporting of sickness absence would improve data collection in this area.

15-16/78 Feedback from Members

Council considered a report summarising comments on its effectiveness submitted by members via the annual feedback questionnaire (C.15-16/70).

Presenting the report the Governance Officer commented that the outcome was not dissimilar to previous years, with some indication that members had become less certain about how Council might best gain assurance on matters of academic quality. It was noted that this echoed the outcome from the formal effectiveness review (M15-16/72 above refers) and as such would be addressed by implementation of the review group’s recommendations (including the plan to undertake a Senate effectiveness review in 2017). As regards monitoring of academic quality, it was noted that retention/drop-out rates would become a key TEF metric and that work was therefore underway to develop a retention strategy based on internal data and surveys (e.g. the recent Freshers’ Survey which had helped to identify students at risk of withdrawal). In this context, Council’s attention was also drawn to the detailed statistical reports on degree outcomes and PhD submission rates (M15-16/82(a) below refers).

Other matters raised in the feedback related to strategy input/monitoring, approaches to risk management (currently being considered by UEB) and induction for new members. In response to a comment from an academic member about only having one Pro-Vice-Chancellor among the four Senate-appointed members, it was agreed that appropriate input from the other Pro-Vice-
Chancellor could be achieved without amending Council’s statutory constituency (e.g. through continuation of the annual executive reporting cycle, use of the pre-lunch briefing slot, attendance for specific item of business etc).

15-16/79  **Financial Performance Data**

Council received for information financial performance data for the period ending April 2016 (C.15-16/71).

15-16/80  **Business from Committees**

Business from the following committee meetings was noted and/or approved (C.15-16/72):

(a) Remuneration Committee: 9 May 2016  
(b) Audit Committee: 13 May 2016  
(c) Health, Safety and Welfare Committee: 17 May 2016  
(d) Equality & Diversity Committee: 2 June 2016  
(e) Student Life Committee: 9 June 2016  
(f) Finance & Policy Committee: 3 and 24 June 2016  
(g) Nominations Committee: 24 June 2016  
(h) HYMS Joint Board: June 2015 and March 2016

15-16/81  **Schedule of Business**

Council received for information its Schedule of Business for 2016/17, including the schedule of executive reports (C.15-16/73).

15-16/82  **Unreserved Business from Senate**

Council noted the following unreserved business from the meeting of the Senate held on 5 July 2016:

(a) analysis of taught degree outcomes and postgraduate research submission rates (C.15-16/74)  
(b) preview of faculty structure (C.15-16/75)

15-16/83  **Development and Alumni Relations**

Council received for information the annual report on development and alumni fundraising (C.15-16/76).
15-16/84 Prevent Duty

Council received for information a letter from HEFCE (C.15-16/77) confirming the outcome of its monitoring of the Prevent duty documents submitted by the University.

15-16/85 Research Integrity

Council received for information the annual statement on research integrity (C.15-16/78).

15-16/86 Use of Seal

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

15-16/87 Dates of Meetings in 2016/17

The dates of meetings in 2016/17 were noted as follows:

Friday 11 November 2016
Friday 3 March 2017
Friday 26 May 2017
Friday 28 July 2017
(all 12:00, room H/G15, Heslington Hall)

[Away Day: Wednesday 12 October 2016, 2.30pm, followed by dinner, Ron Cooke Hub]