



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

## Minutes Meeting of Council

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| <b>Date:</b>          | 16 October 2017   |
| <b>Present:</b>       | Mr Pedder, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair);<br>Mrs Hope and Mr Mayson, Pro-Chancellors;<br>Mr Young, Treasurer;<br>Professor Sir Keith Burnett, President & Vice-Chancellor;<br>Professor Valentine, interim Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor;<br>Mr Bagley, Mr Belton, Professor Clarke, Dr Eden, Ms Hague,<br>Professor Maltby, Mr Maxwell, Dr Nicholls,<br>Professor Siva-Jothy, Mr Sly, Mr Sykes, Mr Wray |
| <b>Secretary:</b>     | Dr Strike   |
| <b>In attendance:</b> | Mrs Arnold, Ms S Bridgeford, Mrs Dingle, Mr Dodman, Ms McGrath,<br>Professor Morgan, Professor Petley, Ms Stephens,   |
| <b>Apologies:</b>     | Dr Layden, Mr Sutcliffe   |

### WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Dr Jonathan Nicholls, Mr Tony Wray, Professor Nigel Clarke, Professor Lorraine Maltby and Professor Mike Siva-Jothy as newly appointed members of Council. Also welcomed were Professor Wyn Morgan (Vice-President, Education), Professor Dave Petley (Vice-President, Research & Innovation) and Ms Susan Bridgeford (Director of Student Support Services), who were attending for specific items; and Mrs Ruth Arnold (Director of Strategic Projects & Communications), who was attending as an observer.

### AGENDA

#### 1. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

#### 2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2017, having been circulated, were approved and signed.

#### 3. MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES

Matters arising on the Minutes were noted as follows:

- (a) Closed Minute.
- (b) Minute 3(b), MRI-PET scanner fundraising campaign: An update on the fundraising campaign had been provided in the President & Vice-Chancellor's Report.
- (c) Minute 3(e), Council Effectiveness Review implementation: A report from Pinsent Masons LLP on the implementation of recommendations arising from the Review appeared as a separate item on the Council agenda (see Minute 9.2 below).

- (d) Minute 4(g), Fire safety: It was reported that a full report of fire safety had been prepared for consideration by the Health and Safety Committee. It was confirmed that action was being taken to ensure that accommodation provided by third parties met the same standards as those applied to University accommodation, and that the question of liability in respect of these third party properties was being pursued.
- (e) Minute 7, Social Sciences Hub: It was anticipated that a full business case would be presented to Council in November 2017. A briefing on the proposal would be provided by the Vice-President & Head of the Faculty of Social Sciences prior to the Council meeting. The business case for the Psychology building had been deferred for the time being due to site issues.
- (f) Minute 8, Ethical governance: Following Council's approval of a revised approach to the governance of ethical matters, dedicated web pages had been published.
- (g) Minute 9, Student mental health: A detailed update on student mental health appeared as a separate item on the Council agenda (see Minute 7 below). Oversight of a new Mental Health Strategy would be undertaken by a new Mental Health Strategy Group, and regular reports provided to Council.
- (h) Minute 11, Student Lifecycle Project: The Council sub-group established under the chairmanship of Mr Belton to have oversight of the project on behalf of Council had met for the second time on 2 October. Mr Belton reported that the sub-group considered the project to be proceeding on track and to budget, and that a full report would be provided to the next meeting of Council.

#### **4. PRESIDENT & VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

Council received and discussed the President & Vice-Chancellor's report and accompanying presentation, in which he provided information on key current and forthcoming developments across a range of areas. Points noted in particular included the following:

- (a) University funding and tuition fees: These were currently receiving considerable attention, but debate was highly polarised, party political and narrow. Recent developments included the Prime Minister's announcement of a cap on tuition fees and a major review of tuition fees, as well as confirmation by the Labour Party of its intention to abolish fees.
- (b) The Sheffield HE Commission: The President & Vice-Chancellor reported on the recent launch of a Sheffield-hosted Higher Education Commission, involving students, academics, graduates, industry, employers and policy makers and informing government and the public based on an open, holistic and long-term approach focused on educational purpose. The views of Council members would be particularly important in shaping and progressing the debate.
- (c) Office for Students: A new regulatory framework would be established under the aegis of a new Office for Students (OfS), with a strong focus on HE as a market and on student outcomes, value for money and graduate earnings. Following a transitional period during which HEFCE would continue to exist and the Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability still apply, the OfS and the associated regulations would be fully implemented in 2019-20. All universities, including those established under Royal Charters, would be required to register as degree providers. Further information would be available shortly, with the publication by the DfE of a consultation on the operation of the OfS and the proposed regulatory framework.

- (d) Threats and opportunities: At this time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, careful consideration would need to be given to how best to preserve what was most important, while identifying where change might be necessary and mitigating against likely threats. These included potential reductions in traditional sources of income, as well as in international staff and student numbers as a result of immigration restrictions; and the impact of Brexit, which might further dampen the UK economy and reduce the public funds available to HE. The sector was thus likely to be operating in a far more constrained financial context, in which developments, including capital projects, would be more difficult to progress. Areas of opportunity did, however, exist, and the University would seek to build on its strong record in both teaching and research, as well as its global reputation, which was creating increased opportunities to work with companies and organisations not dependent on government funding. The University was recognised as progressive in its approach to education and training and had the opportunity to diversify its work overseas (especially in China), particularly with companies and training.
- (e) Industrial strategy: Universities and CATAPULT centres were seen as crucial elements of the government's Industrial Strategy, and the University was well placed in this area, due to the AMRC and other partnerships with industry. However, the establishment of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) , bringing together the seven research councils, Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England, created uncertainty. A new framework to measure Knowledge Exchange in research was a possibility.
- (f) Partnerships: Recent new developments included the launch of the MindSphere partnership with Siemens at The Diamond, and the AMRC's announcement of Boeing Sheffield, as well as new partnerships in Korea and Malaysia. The University had recently hosted the first visit to Sheffield of the Chinese Ambassador, and discussion was taking place with the Chinese Ministry for Industry concerning a new form of partnership in advanced manufacturing. Partnerships had been confirmed with four top Chinese universities, and opportunities for increased collaboration agreements with top international universities were also being explored, supporting staff and student exchange as well as shared research. Possibilities existed for a range of high-profile partnerships, and the challenge for the University would be to convert these to sustainable income streams. It was noted in discussion that in pursuing opportunities that might contribute to the University's ability to survive and thrive, consideration should be given to the current risk appetite and the extent to which this remained appropriate. The wider implications of such developments should also be taken into account, including for example the views of students.
- (g) Reputation and rankings: The University's position in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings had increased by four places, with Social Sciences ranked 63<sup>rd</sup> globally and Arts & Humanities 67<sup>th</sup>. The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018 had recently ranked the University top in the North of England for producing 'the most employable' graduates. Attention was also drawn to the contribution of Dr Ed Daw (Physics) to Nobel Prize winning work on gravitational waves.
- (h) New initiatives: These included Education 4.0, an initiative using new technologies and augmented learning to develop new approaches to HE and technical education to support Industry 4.0, and Confucius Industries, involving new forms of collaboration with Chinese industry and universities. The President & Vice-Chancellor would welcome the opportunity for more detailed discussion with Council on both initiatives, and papers would be brought to Council in due

course.

- (i) International staff and students: Despite recent positive assertions in the Prime Minister's conference speech, the sector remained concerned about the position of EU and overseas staff and students in the context of Brexit and a proposed Immigration Bill. The University continued to lead the #WeAreInternational campaign and would be submitting evidence to a Home Office review concerning the benefits of international students to UK society, culture and economic growth. In response to a question concerning the impact of Brexit on the continuing attractiveness of UK HE to international students and particularly those from China, it was noted that recruitment currently remained buoyant, due in significant measure to the University's strong profile and reputation among northern universities. However, the future remained uncertain, and could be affected by factors other than Brexit, including the increasing number of EU universities offering programmes taught in English.
- (j) Student recruitment and financial forecasts: The President & Vice-Chancellor's report included provisional student intake numbers for 2018. An update would be provided in the next report, when the registration position would be more complete. Clarification was provided on a significant increase in students commencing taught postgraduate programmes of study, which was due to a number of factors, including strong performance in international markets and, in the case of Home/EU students, the availability of loans for postgraduate study. A fall in overseas undergraduate numbers was due in part to changes in the Malaysian government's arrangements for student support. It was confirmed that the revised financial forecasts, also to be presented at the next meeting, would reflect the recently announced freeze on tuition fees and more current information on student recruitment.

## 5. **STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021: ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

Council received an evaluation of institutional-level performance to date against the seven themes of the University's current Strategic Plan, based on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) previously agreed by Council. The ratings indicated for each theme were the result of internal consultation, informed by the available data and relevant qualitative factors. The report was retrospective, and where possible used external comparative data to provide a comparison with other members of the Russell Group. The annual KPI assessment, in addition to informing Council, was intended to facilitate self-appraisal by individual theme owners and to support University and faculty action planning and prioritisation.

### 5.1 **Key Performance Indicators 2017: Our Research and its Impact**

The Vice-President for Research & Innovation provided a summary of progress against the three KPIs supporting the Research and Impact theme of the Strategic Plan, supplementing the retrospective KPI data to reflect the current position.

- (a) Research income: With respect to research income, an upward trend in securing new research grants was noted, and represented the highest value ever achieved by the University. The research 'order book' of work in progress was also positive, with exceptional performance in the Faculty of Engineering and improvements in other areas. Future challenges were noted, including the potential loss of EU research grants and changes in domestic research funding due to changes arising from the establishment of UKRI.

- (b) PhD recruitment: The position with respect to PhD student recruitment was also positive, but was expected to become more challenging, with fewer EU students and cuts in government sponsorship by a number of important overseas countries.
- (c) Research quality: In terms of research quality, the results of a stock-take undertaken in preparation for the next Research Excellence Framework indicated that while much research of high quality was undertaken, the proportion of outputs likely to achieve the highest REF grade was insufficient, and that some staff had yet to produce an output graded 3\* or higher. Steps were being taken to address both issues.

Points noted in discussion included the following:

- the impact in terms of longer term sustainability of the growing tendency for non-standard funding initiatives (such as the government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund) to require matched funding from the university concerned, drawing on QR income or fee income from international students;
- the retrospective nature of the data available to benchmark the University's performance, and the fact that the effects of any mitigating actions by the University on its comparative position based on this data would be subject to a time lag;
- the constraints inherent in the national methodology for costing research, whereby research was funded at 80% of cost, with no mechanism to increase funding by reducing cost;
- a suggestion that a new regulatory framework might incentivise institutions to win more research grants by delivering high-quality research at lower cost;
- the scope to increase research funding from industry, which although attracting a higher recovery rate was also subject to cost pressures.

## **5.2 Key Performance Indicators 2017: Our Education and Student Experience**

The Vice-President for Education provided a summary of progress against the six KPIs supporting the Our Education and Student Experience theme of the Strategic Plan, drawing particular attention to those relating to student recruitment and the student experience.

- (a) Student recruitment: Despite significant increases in some areas (see Minute 4(j) above), student recruitment presented a number of challenges, including a demographic dip in the 18-year-old population and the impact of Brexit and the government's immigration policy on international students. A new University Recruitment Strategy was being implemented, focusing on quality and tariff, and work was underway to maximise the University's offer, especially at Master's level and in CPD, and using non-standard methods of delivery where appropriate. Work to develop alternative pathways into HE was continuing and covered BTEC and other qualifications, as well as apprenticeships. Undergraduate recruitment would involve a new emphasis on Confirmation, Adjustment & Clearing as a key point in the recruitment cycle, and a review of scholarships aimed to ensure that these were effective in attracting high quality students. The University's programme of open days for prospective undergraduate students had been revised, such that most would take place on Saturdays, supported by recent enhancements to marketing and branding.

- (b) Student experience: The boycott of the 2017 National Student Survey (NSS) by students' unions at Sheffield and a number of other universities meant that the overall response rate required for results to be published had not been met. Trend analysis and external benchmarking were therefore problematic. Moving towards a 'programme level approach' was one of three priorities identified for 2017-18 and would seek to address recognised issues of compartmentalisation in learning and assessment, thus improving programme coherence and providing students with a clearer understanding of their programme of study and the options and opportunities available. Other areas of focus included student wellbeing and employability.

Points noted in discussion included the role of 'programme level approach' both in terms of improving the University's competitive position and differentiating its offer by articulating a clearer, value-driven focus. In this context, work on marketing and branding would be important in promoting a coherent message about purpose and value. The willingness of the Students' Union to support and participate in this work was noted and welcomed.

## **5.2 Strategy Delivery Group**

The interim Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Operating Officer provided an update on the work of the Strategy Delivery Group (SDG), drawing attention to:

- the SDG's purpose, objectives and key themes, which comprised University-wide reviews of a range of cross-cutting activities; a cost management review; and a professional services functional review;
- work to date and its impacts, including a University-level restructure; a staff recruitment pause; a Staff Release Scheme; a review of Research Services; a review of Student Services; and a recently completed Faculty Reflections exercise;
- the action plan arising from the Faculty Reflections exercise, which included: retention of the current five-faculty structure; clarification of organisational purpose; promotion of a single, strong University brand; a review of the financial resource allocation model; further professional services developments; a review of research institutes and centres; and implementation of the programme level approach outlined above (see Minute 5.2).
- the SDG's programme for 2017-18, which would continue to reflect the Group's original purpose of promoting a collective focus on delivery of the Strategic Plan and had as its key priority the ongoing development and delivery of an integrated leadership and management programme. This included the alignment of Vice-Presidents' objectives with the Strategic Plan; line management and team building; and an academic career pathways project to define expectations and promote enhanced performance at all levels. At the same time, action to implement the outcomes of earlier SDG reviews would continue.

Points noted in discussion included the desirability of a matrix presenting the SDG programme in terms of priority, phasing, timescale, achievability and outcomes, and it was noted that these elements of the programme would be considered by UEB at an away day in December, with further updates provided to Council. Clarification was provided on the current approach to financial planning and budget setting, including the use of recruitment targets for departments, as well as the approach to controlling departmental deficits. It was noted that

cross-subsidisation between faculties and departments was necessary in some cases, and was likely to remain so; however, the need to achieve an appropriate balance was noted.

## **6. CAPITAL UPDATE**

Council considered a report on the status of capital projects within the current (to 2021) estates strategy and noted that the results of an exercise to profile project cashflows would form part of a separate report to Council in November 2017. Details of a number of projects provisionally expected to be presented for approval during the current financial year were noted, as was Finance Committee's approval by correspondence in September 2017 of the sale to Boeing of land on the Sheffield Business Park. In presenting the report, the Director of Finance drew attention to the fact that delivery of the current capital programme would require additional borrowing, that efforts would be made to spread its impact on cashflow, and that the forward look as currently presented was likely to change. As previously reported (Minute 3(e) above), the proposed Psychology building would need to be deferred due to site issues. Clarification was provided on debt servicing costs, which would be attributed on a University rather than an individual project basis.

## **7. UPDATE ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH**

7.1 Following discussion at its previous meeting, Council considered an update on student mental health provision. A number of developments were noted, including the establishment of a Mental Health Strategy Group, the introduction of a new service (Student Access to Mental Health Support) to provide students with a single point of access to mental health support, and work to develop a new mental health strategy. The strategy was provided in draft to Council, had been informed by relevant UUK guidance and would be underpinned by detailed action plans, targets and timescales. Implementation and progress would be overseen by the Mental Health Strategy Group, which would report, via Senate and its Learning & Teaching Committee, to Council.

7.2 In endorsing the work undertaken to date and the planned approach, Council requested that measures be developed by which to monitor the implementation of the strategy and progress in meeting agreed targets. Noting that across the UK, postgraduate research students were the highest users of mental health services, Council also requested that the membership of the Mental Health Strategy Group be reviewed to ensure that the needs of this group were covered. Clarification was provided concerning the provision of mental health support for staff, and it was noted that discussion was taking place to ensure that services for staff and students were appropriately aligned. It was confirmed that services for students included out-of-hours support. Thanks were expressed to the Students' Union for its contribution to the development of the strategy and the work of the Group.

## **8. ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Council approved a proposal to establish a joint Council and Senate task and finish group on academic quality assurance, to be chaired by Dr Layden. Members were reminded that establishing such a group had been one of the recommendations of the recent Council effectiveness review, in light of the increased responsibility now being placed on governing bodies to provide annual assurance in respect of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the standard of awards. The group would review the arrangements underpinning the new annual assurance requirements and make recommendations for any necessary changes. In doing this, it would be informed by a separate Senate effectiveness review and by the findings of a project being undertaken by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education to review current approaches to academic governance across a range of HE providers and provide guidance for governing bodies. It was noted in discussion that the issue of governing

bodies' role in academic quality assurance had a significance beyond the purely procedural, and had implications for the current bicameral system of shared governance, which emphasised the role of senates or academic boards in decision making on academic matters. It was thus helpful that a review of Senate itself was taking place at the same time.

**9. COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS**

**9.1 Annual effectiveness questionnaire**

Council received a summary of responses to the annual effectiveness questionnaire and endorsed proposed actions. It was agreed that consideration would be given as to the best way to provide feedback to Council following away day discussions.

**9.2 Periodic Council effectiveness review: report on progress against action plan**

Council received and noted a report from Pinsent Masons LLP endorsing the progress made against the action plan agreed in response to the recent effectiveness review. It was suggested in discussion that further consideration should be given to the extent to which matters currently referred to Council for discussion and decision could be dealt with elsewhere, thus allowing Council to focus more effectively on strategic matters. This was a matter that might usefully be taken into account as the University prepared itself for the new regulatory framework being established under the Office for Students. However, recent developments had emphasised the direct responsibility of governing bodies, and this trend was likely to continue.

**10. COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN 2017-18**

Council received and noted a draft business plan for 2017-18, noting that this was intended as a reference point for planning Council agendas and arranging associated events and communications. The plan would be regularly updated and included in the papers for each Council meeting. Members wishing to propose additional items were invited to contact the Secretary.

**11. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF COUNCIL PAPERS**

Council received and approved recommendations concerning the publication on the web of papers presented at the meeting, in accordance with previously agreed proposals on the disclosure of information. It was noted that a number of papers were confidential and would not be made publicly available.

These Minutes were confirmed

at a meeting held on 27 November 2017

..... Chair