NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
16 June 2014

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), Professor Brink (Vice-Chancellor), Dr Peter Andras, Dr John Appleby, Ms Eve Berwin (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Vicki Bruce, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Robert Hull, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mr Calum Mackenzie (President, Students’ Union), and Professor Ella Ritchie. (Note: Professor Ritchie did not participate in any decision to ensure the meeting was quorate).

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Chris Day, Professor Charles Harvey, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Tony Stevenson and Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Mrs Sam Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Professor Alan Boddy, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Mr Simon Pleydell, and Mr Paul Walker.

Ms Claire Bootham, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr David Morris, and Dr Ole Pedersen attended the meeting as observers.

Mr Steve Williams, Director of Information Systems & Services, attended for item 126.

M I N U T E S

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

114. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Claire Bootham, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr David Morris and Dr Ole Pedersen to the meeting as observers.

115. RETIRING MEMBERS

The Chair thanked Dr Peter Andras, Ms Eve Berwin, Professor Alan Boddy, Professor Vicki Bruce and Mr Calum Mackenzie for their contribution to the work of Council and wished them every success in the future.

The Chair thanked Professor Ella Ritchie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for her services to the University and to Council and wished her well for her forthcoming retirement.


Noted that:

An amendment to Minute 88 – noted that the discussions on pension provision were in relation to the Fire Service.

Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 28 April 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed.
117. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Noted that following previous discussions at meetings of Nominations Committee and Council, it was agreed that an advertorial would be placed for future lay members to join Advisory Boards. The advertorial had been published in the Northern Echo, the Journal, NU Connections and the University website. To date there had been 9 responses received for consideration.

118. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an oral report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on the current health and safety issues affecting the University.

Noted that:

1. There had been a fire at Castle Leazes on 29 May, which was caused by kitchen electrical equipment. The alarm system had activated correctly and the damage was limited to the kitchen area of the building.

2. Strike action by the Fire Service had taken place on 12 June and further planned action was due to take place on 21 June. The Safety team are continuing to ensure precautionary safety measures are in place.

119. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Council Briefing Sessions

Council members were reminded of the forthcoming Council Briefing sessions:

- 3 July 2014, 10am-11am – Tour of Science Central (meet at level 1 Reception area of King’s Gate.)

Council members were asked to inform Sam Taylor if they planned to attend this session.

Council Effectiveness Review

Members of Council were reminded that the Effectiveness of Council Review is underway; the closing date for completion of the online survey is 31 August 2014. The outcome of the review will be reported to a future meeting of Council.

120. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document B. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted:

1. Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

Resolved that Council record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.
2. **Student Recruitment**

Noted that:

(i) Work has been undertaken to identify any areas which may be potentially at risk due to the number of applications and/or if the conversion rate is lower than anticipated. There are a number of factors which can affect the outcome including the quality of ‘near miss’ applications.

(ii) The number of ABB or better students who have a firm acceptance is showing an 8% increase on the same period for last year.

3. **Late News**

(a) **Incident at Newcastle University**

Noted that following initial concern, police attended a bedroom in the halls of residence on 10 June, where a number of items were seen which gave cause for concern.

As a result of this, the police response plans were implemented which included the evacuation of buildings and the implementation of safety cordons.

Counter Terrorism Officers attended the scene and a military Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit identified items as explosives and carried out a controlled explosion on the Town Moor.

Two students were arrested.

On 12 June subsequent searches led to the discovery of a further item which gave cause for concern. This resulted in the evacuation of the building and 80 students being rehoused to alternative accommodation. The items were later declared safe and building re-opened.

The events caused some disruption and social media comment. Steps are in place to manage the formal and informal media responses.

(b) **Queen’s Birthday Honours List 2014**

The following were congratulated in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List:

(i) Nigel Sherlock, OBE, JP, Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, former Chair of Council and a member of Court, who received a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Resolved that the Vice-Chancellor will write to Sir Nigel to congratulate him on behalf of the University.

(ii) Lucy Winskell, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Business and Engagement at Northumbria University, a former graduate of Newcastle University, received an OBE for services to higher education.

(c) **Vice-Chancellor’s visit**

The Vice-Chancellor had recently visited Groningen University to commemorate its 400th anniversary.
Executive Board had approved the Terms of Reference for the Sports Facilities Project, including the Sports Strategy and development plan, and the development of the Richardson Road site. Professor Clyde Williams, OBE Professor of Sports Science from Loughborough University has been appointed as a consultant to advise on the development of the Sports and Exercise Medicine degree which has a proposed start date of 2017.

It is intended that the Sports Facilities Project will report to Executive Board in the Autumn.

4. Early Warnings

(a) Scottish Referendum on independence

The Scottish independence referendum will take place on 18 September. There are potential implications for the University if there is a ‘yes’ vote for Scottish Independence including:

- Staff, whose primary residence will then be in another country being subject to differential rates of income tax from 2016 onwards. This will result in an HR and payroll project to adapt current systems to handle dual tax regimes.

- Issues relating to the USS pension scheme, under European cross border pension scheme law.

- Under current EU law, Scottish universities would be obliged to offer free places to English students which could destabilise student recruitment.

- If Scotland were to withdraw from UCAS, we would need to establish a way to continue to recruit Scottish students.

- The assumption that UK Research Councils would not cover an independent Scotland would present both risk and opportunity. The opportunity is that academic colleagues at Scottish universities may seek to move to England in pursuit of better research funding. The main risk would be to RCUK funded collaborative research between Newcastle and Scottish institutions.

121. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER SUMMARY

Received: The Strategic Risk Register Summary.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents C. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that the Executive is reviewing the Risk Management process, which will be reported to Audit Committee at a future meeting.

122. VISION 2021: INSTITUTIONAL KPI REPORT

Received a report on the Institutional Strategic Objectives and KPIs from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that the focus on the Societal Challenge Theme for Social Renewal has changed from AmberGreen to Green; the remainder of the ratings in the report remain the same as they were in the April report.
123. UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2014-15 AND 2014-16 PLAN

Considered a report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

‘Commercial in confidence’ Minute, filed in the Minute Book.

124. FIVE YEAR FORECAST

Considered a report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

‘Commercial in confidence’ Minute, filed in the Minute Book.

125. PROPOSAL FOR A NEWCASTLE CAMPUS IN LONDON

Considered a report Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

‘Commercial in confidence’ Minute, filed in the Minute Book.

126. DIGITAL CAMPUS UPDATE

Considered a report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. An updated IT strategy will be presented to Council in the next academic year.

2. Discussions are still ongoing with Newcastle City Council with regard to the arrangements for a data centre to determine the most cost effective way to relocate the primary data centre. This may include a move to a third party data management provider.

3. Two of the three Faculty IT managers have now been recruited and it is proposed that NUIT will be live from 1 August 2014.

Resolved that Council note the progress made on the four main strands of the Digital Campus Programme.

127. FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES STRATEGIC REVIEW

Received a report from Professor Charles Harvey, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Received a presentation from Professor Charles Harvey, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

[A copy of the slides filed in the Minute Book]
Resolved that Council record its thanks to Professor Harvey for an informative presentation.

128. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY

Considered the refreshed report from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. Council members are invited to submit input and feedback for the refreshed Research and Innovation Strategy, with particular focus in the following areas:
   
   (a) Institutional Objectives and Strategy: should the target be raised to Top 15 in the UK for research quality and power?

   (b) Grow areas of strength and address areas of weakness to achieve international excellence in all we do: with an emphasis on reputation and rankings, the University should aim to have at least ten subjects in the top 50 worldwide.

   (c) Research Investment Planning: this should be transparent.

2. There are different metrics available to determine the position of Newcastle University in the UK for research quality and power; the reported figure of 18th position is a balanced analysis and one which represents an improvement. Consideration should be given before the target is moved from Top 20 to Top 15 in the UK.

3. It was suggested that an amendment to the statement ‘Grow areas of strength and address areas of weakness to achieve international excellence in all we do’ be made to read ‘Grow areas of strength and look for areas of potential to achieve international excellence in all we do’.

4. It was recognised that there is more to be done in the creation of spin out companies and, where appropriate, active collaboration with partners to commercialise our expertise through licensing agreements and other suitable arrangements.

Resolved that the feedback received from Council members and from Senate, when it is presented at its meeting on 1 July, will be considered for inclusion in the refreshed Research and Innovation Strategy, to be presented at a future meeting of Council and Senate for approval.

129. RESPONSE FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF SENATE AND COUNCIL

Considered the Executive Board response from the Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. The joint meeting of Senate and Council allowed members to receive a holistic overview and understanding of projects encompassed in Raising the Bar paper.

2. The Raising the Bar: Project Summary report can be revised on an ongoing basis, and items marked as ‘under consideration’ will either proceed to ‘planned’ or will be removed if the decision is taken not to continue.
3. The Raising the Bar: Project Summary report should be revised to show timings.

4. The bullet point 'only borrow money against a project that will produce a net revenue stream' should be revised to include 'a positive net present value'.

**Resolved that:**

(i) **Executive Board were thanked for the quick response following the joint meeting of Senate and Council on 28 April, and the feedback received from the meeting of Senate on 20 May 2014.**

(ii) **The Raising the Bar: Project Summary report was agreed as a working document to be revised as necessary.**

130. **REVIEW OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

Received a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

1. Executive Board consider the use of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to be of value in the decision making process of policies and strategies, and the involvement of lay members enhance this process before papers were presented to Council for consideration.

2. In the Council Effectiveness Review 2013, 62.5% of respondents agreed that the SIGs were appropriate, with positive comments received.

3. The Estates SIG has now been established since July 2011. Consideration should be given as to the continuance of this SIG, or if this needs to be recognised in a more formal committee.

4. The five yearly Governance Review is due to be completed in 2015, and Council will be asked to appoint lay members to undertake this review. The CUC Code of Practice is due to be revised which could include advice on the process for governance review.

**Resolved that the continuance of the Estates SIG should be considered as part of the five yearly Governance Review.**

131. **REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 4 June 2014.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

‘Commercial in confidence’ Minute, filed in the Minute Book.

132. **PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR ENGAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONALISATION**

Received the report from the Joint Selection Committee on the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

**Resolved that Professor Richard Davies be appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, with effect from 11 August 2014 until 31 July 2019.**

133. **REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**
Council 16 June 2014

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee, held on 12 May 2014. [Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

134. REPORTED BUSINESS

Received a report of action taken in accordance with agreed procedures, approved where necessary by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate and/or Chair of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairs. [Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

135. CHAIR'S CIRCULAR

Chair's circulars of routine business were sent to members on 28 May 2014.

Approved Business:

There were no items of business to approve.

Items for information:

(i) Date of Meetings for 2014-15.
(iii) Access Agreement
(iv) Maximising Brand Reputation
(v) Reported Business