NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

9 July 2012

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Dr Peter Andras, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Vicki Bruce, Mr Liam Dale (Education Officer), Mr Colin FitzPatrick, Ms Jacqui Henderson, Mr Robert Hull, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Professor David Manning, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Mr Simon Pallet, Mrs Kate Priestley, Professor David Parker, Ms Laura Perry (President, Students’ Union), Mr Ian Shott.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Chris Day, Professor Charles Harvey, and Professor Tony Stevenson (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources) and Miss Lizzie Niven (Administrative Officer).

Apologies: Mr Mike Davison, Mr Peter Johnson, Mr Simon Pleydell, Mr Paul Walker, Professor Steve Homans and Professor Nick Wright.

Dr John Appleby, Professor Alan Boddy and Ms Rachel Thornton attended the meeting as observers.

M I N U T E S

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

124. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Dr John Appleby, Professor Alan Boddy and Ms Rachel Thornton to the meeting as observers.

125. RETIRING MEMBERS

The Chair thanked Mr Ian Shott, Professor David Manning, Mr Simon Pallet, Professor David Parker and Mr Liam Dale for their contribution to the work of Council and wished them every success in the future.

126. MINUTES

Noted that in relation to Minute 102, Item 8 – Student Attendance Monitoring – the Sabbatical Officers requested that the minute be amended as follows:

‘Feedback received from the student members raised concerns that biometric monitoring may not be well received by the students. The Sabbatical Officers asked for their opposition to biometric monitoring to be noted.’

Subject to the above amendment the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 28 May 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed.

127. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

1. Council representative on Senate [Minute 101, 28.05.2012]
At the meeting of Council on 28 May 2012, the Chair had made a request for volunteers from lay members of Council to act as the Council representative at meetings of Senate. The term of office of the current representative, the Deputy Chair of Council, will end on 31 July 2012. Expressions of interest were to be sent to the Chair directly.

Noted that the Chair of Council had received one expression of interest in relation to the above request which would be taken forward.


At the meeting on 28 May 2012 members of Council had requested a tour of the Estate prior to one of its future meetings.

Noted that the tour of the Estate had taken place immediately before the meeting of Council on 9 July 2012.

128. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

Noted that:

1. The extreme weather which occurred in the city on 28 June had resulted in approximately £300k worth of damage across the campus. The Registrar thanked staff in the Estate Support Service, the Accommodation Service and others, some of whom had worked throughout the night to ensure the undergraduate open days on 29 and 30 June could go ahead as planned.

2. During the night of 28 June it had been necessary to evacuate students from Richardson Road following the loss of power as a result of an electricity sub-station being flooded. The students had been relocated to vacant rooms in Castle Leazes.

129. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT AND STATISTICS

Considered a report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The new Head of Health and Safety, Brian McBride, will take up his post from 1 August 2012.

2. All RIDDOR accidents are investigated by staff within the Safety Office and Faculty Safety teams are required to ensure that all recommendations made by the HSE following a RIDDOR report are enacted. Heads of Institutes are also conducting more regular spot checks.

3. Efforts are underway to reduce the number of slips, trips and falls across campus. All staff are being asked to follow a brief training video available on the HSE website.
4. Document B includes graphs which show the University’s accident statistics over a period of time and also compares them with other universities that are members of the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) and the Russell Group. The University intends to take action to improve its performance in these comparisons.

5. It was noted that the University’s record on RIDDOR accident rates was significantly higher than that of Northumbrian Water. Mrs Mottram, Chief Executive of Northumbria Water, invited University staff to visit her company to determine where areas of good practice could be transferred to the University's health and safety arrangements. Data on the ROSPA website also provides a useful source of comparative data for different industries and it was suggested that the University might find it helpful to review this data.

6. The University should reinforce the message that health and safety matters are the responsibility of all staff and especially managers rather than being the sole responsibility of staff in the Safety Office. Such issues should be addressed via performance management arrangements and Heads of Units should demonstrate leadership in this area. The health and safety arrangements at the University’s overseas sites should be kept under close review.

7. Improvements in the rate of manual handling incidents have been witnessed which was welcomed but regular reminders should be sent to staff to ensure continued improvement in this area.

130. **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

1. **Council induction programme**

   The Chair reminded members about the forthcoming meeting of Audit Committee (19 April), and the recently issued 2012-13 Council Induction Programme, and encouraged members to attend.

2. **Effectiveness of Council**

   The Chair reported that in line with guidance from the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) and best practice in corporate governance, a review of the effectiveness of Council and of individual members is conducted annually.

   It was noted that the on-line questionnaire is now available for completion by 31 August 2012. The outcome of the questionnaire will be reported to a future meeting of Council.

3. **External Auditors**

   The Chair requested delegated authority from Council to approve the appointment of the external auditors, following receipt of a recommendation from Audit Committee.

   **Resolved that the Chair be granted delegated authority to approve the appointment of the external auditors, following receipt of a recommendation from Audit Committee.**

4. **Statutory Data Returns to HEFCE**

   HEFCE requires the University to make a number of statutory data returns throughout the academic year. It was proposed to improve the sign off process for these data returns by delegating responsibility to Audit Committee to approve the returns on Council’s behalf.
Resolved that the Audit Committee be granted delegated authority to approve statutory data returns to HEFCE on behalf of Council.

5. Cyclone Challenge

The Chair thanked members of Council for supporting his participation in the Virgin Money Cyclone Challenge which to date had raised in excess of £5k (including gift aid) to support students and research at the University.

131. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor's report. Highlights of this report were discussed below.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

1. UK Research Partnership Investment Fund: 2012-15

Following the government’s Budget announcement of £100 million for research facilities, HEFCE circulated a publication outlining its UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF), inviting universities to apply for between £10 million and £35 million per project. As part of their application, universities must be able to demonstrate that they can attract at least double the amount in private investment. Applications will be judged on the value for money and how much they build on existing strong research capability.

Newcastle University has submitted an application, which is currently at the ‘expression of interest’ stage of the process.

2. George Brown Endowment Fund

This endowment was created some years ago to fund educational activities within the University. Use of the fund requires approval of Council and Senate following a proposal by the Vice-Chancellor. A request has been received to use £30k p.a. of the fund to increase the number of vacation scholarships awarded by the University.

Resolved that following the approval of Senate at its meeting 28 May 2012, Council approve the request to use £30k p.a. to increase the number of Vacation Research Scholarships, beginning academic year 2012-13.

3. Recruitment Campaign

The University is to roll out a recruitment campaign in the coming months to attract top talent to Newcastle and to raise the profile of our research and teaching strengths. This began with high-profile adverts in the Times Higher and the Sunday Times for the Directors of the Newcastle University Business School (NUBS) and the Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability (NIReS) and would continue with a series of adverts highlighting more general opportunities at Newcastle.

4. Syria

The University currently has 32 Syrian students who are studying PG taught or research degrees. This is a worrying time for the students due to the current troubles in Syria. Support has been put into place for the students who have financial or visa difficulties and guidance has been given to staff members on how to support students who feel the effects of unstable international conditions. The situation is being monitored and the University is in close contact with UUK.
5. **HEFCE Assurance**

On a cyclical basis the HEFCE Assurance Service visits institutions to discuss the accountability reports that they submit to HEFCE as part of the accountability process.

These high level HEFCE assurance reviews (HARs) focus on institutions' accountability for the public funding they receive. They discuss the institutions' processes and supporting evidence for the information and assurances that we given them each year. The HARs are required as part of the Financial Memorandum and are a condition of the HEFCE grant.

Our HEFCE Assurance review has recently been completed and initial feedback has indicated that the outcome is expected to be a top grade, which in HEFCE language will be a satisfactory level of assurance.

6. **Xiamen University**

A delegation from Xiamen University and Xiamen Tan Kah Kee College from the People’s Republic of China visited the University in June. The purpose of the visit was to explore opportunities for collaboration between the two universities in a similar way to the partnerships that Newcastle University has with Monash University and the University of Groningen. This follows the Vice-Chancellor’s successful visit to Xiamen in February 2012, during which time he signed an agreement with Xiamen for Newcastle University to establish a Confucius Institute.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Melanie Reed, Senior PR and Events Manager and the Courtyard Restaurant for the arrangements surrounding the visit.

7. **British Science Festival 2013**

The Vice-Chancellor expressed his thanks to Mr Paul Walker for having co-hosted a business dinner for the British Science Festival.

8. **Fairness Commission**

The Vice-Chancellor has previously reported to members of Council that he is Chair of the Fairness Commission, set up by Newcastle City to gather evidence, consult widely and recommend how fairness can underpin decisions which affect communities.

The report, ‘Fair Share, Fair Play, Fair Go, Fair Say’ will be launched in July. It sets out ten principles of fairness and addresses a number of public services dilemmas by applying the principles.

The purpose is to try and ensure that decisions – taken in the face of unprecedented spending cuts - are fair; to take into account the views of the less articulate as well as the confident and instil public confidence in decision makers who have to choose how diminishing resources should be deployed.

9. **N8: Asset Sharing**

The Vice-Chancellor has previously reported to members of Council, that he is Chair of the N8 Research Partnership This is a collaboration between the universities of Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York, which utilises the combined expertise and capabilities of these research intensive universities.
Following an initiative originally suggested by the Research PVCs, the N8 has been working on a project, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), to look at the possibility of asset sharing amongst the N8 universities.

The report, ‘Sharing for Excellence and Growth’ was launched at an event on 20 June at York University, attended by key government officials, including Technology Strategy Board and leaders from industry. It identified opportunities for sharing the unique research equipment housed in each institution and wider benefits arising from this include: better training and recruitment of world class research talent; new and novel research ideas; and the development of leading-edge equipment through strategic relationships with technology manufacturers and suppliers.

10. Sport

The University has achieved 10th place (out of 161 institutions) in the 2011/12 BUCS Championship which, given that the University does not offer degrees in sport, is considered to be a significant achievement. The achievements of the women’s teams are considered to be particularly noteworthy.

The Sabbatical Officers noted that it would be helpful for the University to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in sporting activities on Wednesday afternoons. Under current arrangements, some students are prevented from travelling to sporting fixtures due to teaching taking place on Wednesday mornings.

11 Late News

Leave to Remain

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to inform Council that he and his family have been granted leave to remain by the Home Office.

Telegraph Article on International Student Recruitment Agents

A recent article in the Telegraph newspaper had suggested that international recruitment agents were securing places on course for international students with lower grades than would be required by home students. It suggested that the universities are encouraged to do this as they are able to charge international students much higher fees than their UK counterparts. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University had provided a robust response to the claims contained within the report.

12. Early Warnings

University Technical College:

It was reported that this project would not be proceeding, as was originally envisaged by Newcastle College, and that the University would no longer be part of the governance structure.

A-Levels

Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, has announced that he would like universities to become more involved in determining the content of A-level courses to ensure they prepare students properly for university. He has also suggested that formal control of A-levels should be taken away from exam boards and handed to universities, specifically those that are members of the Russell Group.
The Sabbatical Officers expressed concerns at the intention to allow universities to run A-levels and suggested that granting universities control over what and how a subject is studied could be viewed as unethical.

132. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER SUMMARY

Received the Strategic Risk Register Summary from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

133. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee, held on 31 May 2012.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Quarterly Financial Report to Council has been revised at the request of the Chair of Council with the intention of presenting a more holistic report.

2. The Executive Director of Finance expressed confidence that the University would achieve its budget at the year end.

3. Under the Staff section of the Quarterly report it was noted that, as well as the number of new starters, it would also be useful to include the number of staff who had left the University during the quarter.

134. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY / STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of University / Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 12 June 2012.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. At its recent meeting the partnership committee considered what action could be taken to improve the trading figures which were considered to be disappointing.

2. As noted under Minute 131, point 10 above, the committee welcomed the strong performance of the University’s sports teams.

3. 2011/12 was considered to be a baseline year for the Students’ Union following the reopening of the Union building. The Sabbatical Officers and Union staff intend to work to continually improve performance in future years.

135. OVERVIEW REPORT ON LEARNING, TEACHING AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Received the Annual report from the University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee (UTLSEC) for 2010-11, from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:
1. The report provided an overview of developments and achievements in terms of learning, teaching and the student experience during the 2010/11 academic year.

2. It was suggested that it would be helpful for future reports to include references to areas where performance had not been as strong as had been hoped for in order to provide learning points for the future.

3. A drop of 25% in the number of students participating in the Partners Assessed Summer School had been noted. It was explained that this was due to changes being made to the eligibility criteria. The criteria were being revised for future years but the data available prior to entry for determining whether a student met national criteria for widening participation remained poor.

4. It was noted that much of the information in the overview report was presented to Council as part of the Annual Financial Statement. The report sought to bring together quantitative data which had been presented to Council at various points throughout the academic year but it was acknowledged that much of it now appeared outdated and it was agreed that it should be scheduled to come to Council earlier in the academic year.

5. The question of grade inflation was raised and it was noted that this could have a negative impact for graduates in the job market. The University monitored its position by referring to benchmark data and there was a national debate underway as to whether a grade point average system should be introduced in place of the current degree classification scheme. It was noted that Council would look to Senate to take the lead in this area.

6. Assessment and feedback was an area where further improvement was required. It was noted that a number of schemes were underway to make improvements in this area and Council would continue to monitor the relevant KPIs.

136. **PROJECT 2012: SCORECARD**

Received the May 2012 Project 2012 scorecard from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. A programme of visits to all schools has been undertaken to assess progress in relation to recruitment targets, Key Information Sets (KIS) and the ‘offer’.

2. The data that is to be included in the KIS is to be submitted in August and much of this data will come from external sources. The University intends to review the data for inaccuracies once it is available.

3. The Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) will be issued to all graduates for the first time this year. The Student Charter, which sets out what students can expect and what is expected of them, has now been finalised. Policies for assessment and feedback have also been agreed.

137. **PROPOSED SALE OF 19-26 CLAREMONT PLACE**

Considered a report from Professor Tony Stevenson on behalf of Executive Board, on the proposed sale of 19-26 Claremont Place.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
138. VISION 2021: OBJECTIVES, KPIs AND TARGETS

Considered a report from Professor Tony Stevenson, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The KPIs and targets contained in the document are those which will be included in the annual overview reports to be presented to Council from September 2012 onwards.

2. Details of the new reporting process will be an agenda item for the meeting on 10 September 2012, alongside the first of the annual reports in the new format.

Resolves that Council endorse the revised version of the Vision 2021: Objectives, KPIs and Targets.

139. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE KPIs: SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THEME

Received a report from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

140. KPI ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT: 2011/12

Received a report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Document N provided a consolidated view of offers made to potential entrants in September 2012. Analysis of the figures suggests that there could be a shortfall in ‘core’ students, those that receive grades below AAB, of 288. This is not considered to be a concern since any vacant core places are expected to be filled during the clearing process.

2. It was suggested that there are now two markets of students, those that are AAB students and those that are not, but the University’s marketing activities have yet to address this. It is important to ensure that the University’s presentations to prospective students contain
messages which stand out, particularly since the market for students achieving AAB/ABB will become increasingly competitive in future years.

3. Students beginning their studies in September 2012 would have made their A level choice long before the £9k fee was introduced and, as a result, would have had limited ability to change their degree subject choices. Entrants from 2014 onwards will have had prior knowledge of the new fee regime and it will not be until this cohort completes their university applications that the full impact of the new fee regime on subject choice will be witnessed.

142. FACULTY OF HASS REVIEW INCLUDING SOCIAL RENEWAL

Received a PowerPoint presentation from Professor Charles Harvey, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy of the slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Professor Harvey be thanked for an informative presentation.

143. CHAIRS CIRCULAR

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 18 June 2012. No issues on the circular were raised by members and the business was, therefore deemed to have been approved by Council.
[The approved business and a copy of the circular are filed in the Minute Book.]

Approved business:

1. Report from University and Faculty Promotions Committee.
2. Procedures to follow in the event of the death of a student.

Items for information:

3. Appointment to Chairs and Readerships for 2011-12.
5. University Research Centres

The establishment of two new Research Centres:

University Research Centre for Integrated Research into Musculoskeletal Ageing (CIMA) ARUK Tissue Engineering Centre for Osteoarthritis.

The re-approval of six University Research Centres for a further three years from 01.08.2012 to 31.07.2015:

The Centre for the Literary Arts (NCLA) The Centre for Research in Linguistics & Language (CRiLLS) The Centre for Brain Ageing and Vitality The nanoLab Research Centre Newcastle Cancer Centre The Centre for Behaviour and Evolution
The re-approval of two University Research Centres for one year from 01.08.2012 to 31.07.2013:

The Centre for Earth Systems Engineering Research (CESER)
The Centre for Integrated Systems Biology of Ageing and Nutrition (CISBAN)


The schedule for Council Briefing Lunches was agreed as:

- 10 September 2012: Academic & Student Members
- 22 October 2012: Lay members
- 10 December 2012: Academic & Student Members
- 28 January 2013: No meeting – Chair’s Circular only
- 11 March 2013: Lay members
- 29 April 2013: No meeting – Chair’s Circular only
- 17 June 2013: Lay members (1:30pm lunch as the last meeting of Council)
- 29 July 2013: No meeting – Chair’s Circular only

The Council Briefing Lunches will take place at 12:30pm in the Bar area of the Courtyard Restaurant, unless otherwise indicated.

7. Results of the Council Election.

Dr John Appleby – School of Mechanical and Systems Engineering
Professor Deborah Henderson – Institute of Genetic Medicine

8. Paper of reported business.

The Chair of Council, acting on behalf of Council, had approved:

Professor Kate Chedgzoy as Head of School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics with effect from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2017.

Dr John Appleby be re-appointed as Head of School of Mechanical & Systems Engineering with effect from 1 August 2012 to 31 August 2017.