NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

11 April 2016

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tony Stevenson, (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Paul Christensen, Mr Dominic Fearon (President, Students’ Union), Dr Jonathan Galloway, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mrs Teresa Graham, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Ms Dianne Nelmes, Dr Ole Pedersen, Mr Simon Pleydell, Mr Matthew Price (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mr Paul Walker and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Phillip Wright, and Professor Nick Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland (Acting Director of Human Resources) and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Mr Mike Davison, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Professor Tom Joyce and Professor Neill Marshall.

The Vice-Chancellor was not present for Minute 99.

M I N U T E S

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

80. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8 February 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

81. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Commercialisation of Intellectual Property (Minute 68, 08.02.16)

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence

(ii) Science Central Update (Minute 69, 08.02.16)

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence

82. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an oral report from Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland, Acting Director of Human Resources, on the current health and safety issues affecting the University.

Noted that there were no significant health and safety issues to report. The University’s biohazard facilities had recently been subject to an audit by the Health and Safety Executive and a clean report had been received.
83. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Received an oral report from Mr Mark I’Anson, Chair of Council.

Noted that:

1. In her absence, the Chair of Council congratulated Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Vice-Chair of Council, on having received the Sunshine Fund’s Glass Slipper Lifetime Achievement award.

2. The Chair of Council had attended the Committee of University Chairs’ (CUC) Northern Group meeting on 4 April 2016. Topics of discussion had included a recent review of Vice-Chancellors’ pay by Grant Thornton which claimed that salaries for this group had increased by 6.1%. Data held by the CUC, which was considered to be more accurate, suggested the figure was just under 3%. It was thought that the Grant Thornton report was likely to be picked up by the media and could result in negative headlines for the sector.

3. Recruitment of lay members of Council had also been discussed and it was identified that a variety of approaches were adopted across the sector. Discussions had also focussed on the value of local, national and international members whilst acknowledging the practical difficulties this could present.

84. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report. Highlights of this report are discussed below.

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

1. Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

Council were informed of the death of Mr David Dixon (a graduate) who was confirmed as a victim of the recent terrorist attacks in Brussels.

Resolved that Council record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.

2. National Subsea Research Centre

Resolved that Council approve the change of name for the National Subsea Research Centre to ‘Tyne Subsea – National Centre for Subsea & Offshore Engineering’.

3. Business School Lease

There had been considerable interest in the sale of the Business School building following the University’s agreement to extend its lease to 30 years. The University expected to receive £13.9m on completion of the sale, a yield of 3.5%, which demonstrated the growing covenant of the higher education sector amongst organisations looking to invest surplus capital.
4. **Richardson Road Development and Renaming of the Student Accommodation**

Further consideration had been given to the naming proposal for the Richardson Road student accommodation development following concerns raised about the original proposal by Senate at its meeting on 8 March 2016. There were some doubts expressed about a subsequent proposal to name the accommodation blocks after peaks over 500ft in the Cheviots by some members of Council. Members of Council were invited to submit alternative suggestions to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

5. **International Student Recruitment**

Operational and strategic actions had been identified to address the downturn in the numbers of international students registering at the University in 2015-16. Anecdotal evidence suggested that performance in relation to international student recruitment across the sector was variable. The Business School presented particular challenges as it relied heavily on the Chinese market and was therefore vulnerable to any downturn in the Chinese economy.

6. **Research Council Funding**

The Government had announced the creation of a Global Challenge Research Fund using funding taken from the International Aid budget. This money is to be invested in British science projects and businesses looking to tackle some of the big challenges in developing countries. It was hoped that the University would be able to harness some of this funding to support its Societal Challenge Themes.

7. **Impact of European Union on Newcastle University**

The Students’ Union was advising students to ensure they were registered to vote in the forthcoming referendum. Students were being encouraged to consider where they were likely to be on 23 June 2016 and to register at the most appropriate place. The Sabbatical Officers were advised to ensure that they did not exceed the ‘permitted participant’ limit of £10k when undertaking activities linked to the referendum.

8. **Northern Powerhouse Conference**

The Northern Powerhouse was becoming increasingly focussed on the North West and South Yorkshire with transport infrastructure improvements being mooted to improve connectivity between Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds. The University was advised to prepare its own strategy to extract funding for innovation in view of the lack of a devolution agreement amongst local councils in the region.

It was noted that Mrs Heidi Mottram, lay member of Council and Chief Executive of Northumbria Water, had recently joined the board of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. The business community was also seeking to create a collective voice for the region through the establishment of Business North.

9. **Late News – Water Mains Burst, 11 April 2016**

Council was advised that teaching had been suspended in the Daysh Building, Claremont Tower and Claremont Bridge due to a burst water main. Although not unsafe, there was no water and subsequently no heating in these buildings and the decision had been taken to cancel all teaching for the day.
10. **Late News – Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards**

On 7 April it was confirmed that the University had been shortlisted for THE Leadership and Management Awards in the following categories:

- **THE Data Points Merit Award**;
- **Outstanding Library Team**;
- **Outstanding Student Admissions Team**.

The Data Points Merit Award was a new category for which no submission was required. According to THE, the award sought to recognise ‘institutions whose research excellence outpaces the recognition of their strength among the thousands of academics polled across the globe in our annual reputation survey.’ The awards would be announced at an event on 23 June 2016.

11. **Late News – EPSRC Awards**

**Council was advised that following news items were embargoed until after local elections on 5 May 2016 and before European Elections publicity restrictions came in on 26 May 2016:**

Professor Phil Taylor, Director of the Institute for Sustainability, for a Centre for Energy Systems Integration had been awarded £5m to bring ‘RCUK Energy Programme Centre for Energy Systems Integration’ to Newcastle for at least the next 5 years. It would bring together engineers and physical scientists from across the energy sector to tackle the research challenges involved in integrating the energy supply, storage, transmission and demand sectors. Newcastle was lead on the bid in collaboration with Durham, Heriot Watt, Edinburgh and Sussex universities. It also received significant support from industry including Siemens with whom we have Global Principal Partner status.

Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor of Town Planning had also been successful with his bid for one of the six RCUK Urban Living Partnership pilots to establish a “Newcastle City Futures Unit” to identify cross sectoral and multi-disciplinary project ideas that could be taken forward across the city region. This would be phase one of a £400k collaboration with over 20 partners, including Newcastle and Gateshead councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and Northumbria, IBM, Siemens, Nexus, Arjuna, and would feature nine co-investigators drawn from all our three faculties and Northumbria. The project would fund the appointment of a project manager and part time policy liaison officer, plus two research associates.

12. **Early Warnings – Durham University**

The Vice-Chancellor reported on continuing discussions with Durham University regarding the position of our medical students in their plans for the Queen’s Campus at Stockton. An options paper was due to be considered by Durham’s Council and a consultation exercise was in progress with the relevant staff at Durham. Further discussions were expected in the next few weeks.

13. **Early Warnings - UCU Action**

The UCU were understood to be preparing to ballot its members in advance of the completion of national pay negotiations (New JNCHES). Their actions, at both local and national level, suggested they were attempting to form the basis of a dispute to maximise the impact of strike action, timing it to coincide with the exam period. This approach had
been challenged by UCEA on the basis that no grounds had been given for the dispute and scope for progress through normal negotiations had not yet been exhausted (as required within the New JNCHES Agreement).


Council members were advised that the Quality Assurance Agency Higher Education Review would take place during the week commencing 18 April 2016.

85. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

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

Noted that there were concerns over staff: student ratios in some areas and this issue was to be reviewed in detail in the near future.

86. INSTITUTIONAL KPI REPORT

Received the summary KPI report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that there had been no change to the overall KPI ratings since they were reported to Council in February 2016.

87. APPOINTMENT STRATEGY FOR LAY MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Received the Appointment Strategy for Lay Members of Council prepared by Nominations Committee in response to a recommendation from the Governance Review 2015.

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

Noted that:

1. During the current academic year, all 10 of Council’s ex officio and elected members were male and this had an impact upon the gender balance which was difficult to offset through the lay member contingent.

2. It was suggested that the Appointment Strategy should include a specific statement on diversity in a broader context by including a target for black minority and ethnic members.

Resolved that the Appointment Strategy for Lay Members of Council, as set out in Document E, be approved.

88. SUMMARY REPORT FROM SENATE, 8 MARCH 2016

Received a summary report from the meeting of Senate that took place on 8 March 2016.

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

Noted that this report had been prepared in response to a recommendation from the Governance Review 2015. The report would be published on the web and a similar report from Council would be prepared for the meeting of Senate on 3 May 2016.
89. **FACULTY STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORTS**

Received the strategic progress reports and PowerPoint presentations from:

(i) The Faculty of Medical Sciences, presented by Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

(ii) The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, presented by Professor Julie Sanders, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

(iii) The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering presented by Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture and Engineering, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents G-J. Copies of Documents and PowerPoint slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. It was important for the work of the Faculty of Medical Sciences to have synergies with that of the NHS Trust. Three key research areas that had been identified as priorities for the Faculty alongside the Ageing Societal Challenge Theme were the brain, cancer and young people.

2. Public Health was the Faculty’s lowest performing unit of assessment in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF). A new, externally-recruited Director was to be appointed who would be tasked with bringing about a culture change. There was also a possibility that some of the research undertaken in the Institute could be submitted under alternative units of assessment in the next Research Excellence Framework (REF).

3. SAgE was in the process of reviewing its provision to determine how it could be improved to attract the best students. Other institutions had taken a holistic approach to their offering and had invested in new facilities. There were some actions that could be taken to achieve easy wins but investment would be required.

4. Increased cross-faculty activity was required in addition to that already undertaken as part of the Societal Challenge Themes. Cross-cutting activities would help to create greater leverage and through this the University might be able to access new sources of income, such as the Government’s new Global Challenges Fund.

5. Another priority area would be to improve the performance of the lowest ranked subject areas, or units of assessment, in preparation for the next REF.

6. The successful implementation of a number of the large infrastructure projects, as identified in the Project Summary sheet was essential for driving forward improvements. A review of the size and scale of some academic units, in particular the Business School, was required to reduce some of the pressures being experienced in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Resolved that the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors be thanked for their informative presentations.
90. **SCIENCE CENTRAL: PROPOSAL FOR A THIRD BUILDING**

Received a report from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, and Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

**Resolved that:**

(i) *Council grant approval to Executive Board to pursue the option of combining both the National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation (NASI) and the National Institute for Smart Data Innovation (NISDI) in the same building on plot 3 of the Science Central site.*

(ii) *Executive Board would submit a report to Council at its meeting on 23 May 2016 detailing approximate costs and initial thoughts on design and operation.*

91. **ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT CASEWORK**

Received a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that there had been a recent internal audit review of Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) arrangements. The recommendations from this audit were being addressed and some significant changes to the process were to be made.

92. **INSTITUTE OF CELLULAR MEDICINE CONSOLIDATION BUSINESS CASE**

Received a report from Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

**Resolved that Council endorse the major refurbishment of space on Level 3 of the Leech Building to provide space for the University’s internationally recognised Inflammation and Immunology Research Group, at a total cost of £3.75m.**

93. **HIGH PERFORMANCE COMPUTING BUSINESS CASE**

A report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

**Resolved that Council endorse the creation of a High Performance Computing (HPC) culture at Newcastle University, at a total cost of £2m over the 4 year project life.**

94. **REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Considered a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 2 March 2016.

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

Noted that steps were being taken to mitigate the impact of the reduction in UK and overseas fee income which in 2016-17 was forecast to be at least £6m below the last five year financial plan. The University’s strategy for the recruitment of international students was in the process
of being reviewed and details of best practice adopted elsewhere in the sector was being obtained. A longer term planning process was also being considered.

95. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 9 March 2016.

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

Noted that the lack of suitable locations in which societies could meet, particularly those with specific requirements, was becoming an issue. Discussions were taking place with the Director of Accommodation and Hospitality Services and the Academic Registrar to identify possible solutions.

96. HEFCE’S ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK

Received HEFCE’s Assessment of Institutional Risk.

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

97. FEES SCHEDULE

Received the fees schedule for 2016-17 which had been endorsed by Executive Board. Senate approved the fees schedule at its meeting on 8 March 2016, subject to the approval of Council.

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

Resolved that Council approve the fee schedule for 2016-17.

98. CHAIR’S CIRCULAR

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 21 March 2016.

Approved Business

(i) Residences Heating Policy
(ii) Research & Consultancy Policies

Items for Information

(i) Development Trust Annual Report
(ii) Dates of Meeting 2016-17
(iii) Reported Business

99. VICE-CHANCELLORSHIP

Received an oral update from Mr Mark I’Anson, Chair of Council, on the process being followed to appoint a new Vice-Chancellor.

Noted that:

1. The closing date for applications for the position of Vice-Chancellor had now passed.

2. The Chair of Council had received a briefing from the search agents, Perrett Laver, who had confirmed that there was a good range of candidates, including both UK
based and international applicants. Candidates also included some from outside of academia.

3. A longlist would be prepared at the end of April, shortlisting would take place at the beginning of June and interviews would be held at the end of June.

4. A joint meeting of Council and Senate would take place on 11 July to consider the recommendation from the Joint Selection Committee.