NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
11 July 2011

Present: Mrs M O Grant (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Professor E Ritchie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mr N Blezard, Mr N E Braithwaite, Ms E Collingham (Education Officer), Professor M F Cross, Mr M Davison, Mr T Delamere (President, Union Society), Mr J C FitzPatrick, Dr F Harvey, Ms J Henderson, Mr R Hull, Mr M I’Anson, Sir Miles Irving, Mr P M Johnson, Mr S Lightley, Dr L Y J Liu, Professor D A C Manning, Mr S D Pallett, Professor D Parker and Ms K Priestley.

In attendance: Professor S Cholerton, Professor C P Day, Professor C Harvey, Professor O R Hinton, Professor A C Stevenson and Professor N G Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors).

Dr P E Andras, Professor V G Bruce, Mr L Dale, Ms L Perry and Ms A Woodburn attended the meeting as observers.

MINUTES

136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

137. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Dr Peter Andras, Professor Vicki Bruce, Mr Liam Dale, Ms Laura Perry and Ms Angela Woodburn to the meeting as observers.

138. CHAIR OF COUNCIL

Mr Mark I’Anson, Chair of Council elect, thanked Mrs Olivia Grant, whose term of office as Chair of Council would end on 31 July 2011, for her substantial contribution to the work of Council and the affairs of the University over many years and wished her every happiness for the future.

139. RETIRING MEMBERS

The Chairman thanked Mr Nick Blezard, Dr Felicity Harvey, Sir Miles Irving, Mr Stephen Lightley, Professor Máire Cross, Dr Lana Liu, Mr Tom Delamere and Ms Lil Collingham for their contribution to the work of Council and wished them every success in the future.

140. MINUTES

Noted that it was clarified under minute 114 – Report from Audit Committee – that the review of support staff requested by Audit Committee was focused on the processes that were in place to ensure that the University received value for money from its support staff.

Subject to the above point of clarification the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 6 June 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed.
141. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

Noted that:

1. An external audit of the University’s safety arrangements had been conducted and Council would receive the results of this audit together with an action plan at its autumn meeting.

2. A recent meeting between Mr Ian Shott and staff within the Safety Office had produced some useful outcomes to assist with the production of Health and Safety and accident reports. Mr Shott was thanked for his contribution.

142. MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Received a business tracking form.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document B. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

143. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

(i) Chair’s Retirement Dinner

The Chair recorded her thanks to the University and to the members of Council for the dinner which had been held in her honour on 4 July 2011.

(ii) Observation on Governance

It was the Chair’s view that the Higher Education environment would become increasingly challenging over the next five years and it would be necessary to maintain a degree of flexibility with regards to the governance functions. The University was advised to consider how it engaged with both lay and academic members of Council. Council members were advised that they might be required to increase their commitment to the work of the University in future.

144. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(i) General Medical Council and NUMed

Council had previously been informed that the General Medical Council (GMC) was seeking a change in legislation to remove the requirement for it to quality assure medical programmes which were delivered overseas. The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that this issue had now been resolved. The GMC would continue to quality assure programmes but would introduce a mechanism which would enable it to recover its costs.
Government Higher Education White Paper and HEFCE Consultation Paper

Noted that:

1. The Government’s White Paper on Higher Education and the HEFCE consultation paper on teaching funding and student number controls were published in June. The HEFCE paper provided details of the transition arrangements that would be put in place from 2012-13 in light of the changes proposed by the Government in its White Paper.

2. The White Paper proposed a ‘core and margin’ model for student numbers from 2012 onwards. A core allocation would be maintained but at a reduced level and institutions would be required to compete for an increasing number of places each year. Recruitment of students with A-level results of AAB or better would be unrestricted and such students would not be included in an institution’s core allocation. 20,000 student places would be taken from current allocations and made available to providers with average fees of less than £7,500 with the intention that this would encourage increased competition on price.

3. A process was underway within the University to examine the position in each faculty and to determine whether there were subject areas where an expansion in numbers was desirable. It was hoped that this would be completed by September 2011 in time for the next admissions cycle.

4. The implications of the Government’s proposals for widening participation were unclear. It was thought that the proposals would strengthen the trend towards sectoral differentiation between and inside institutions.

5. In terms of the numbers of students admitted to the University with scores of AAB, it was thought that they accounted for 55%, which was low in comparison with some other institutions in the Russell Group but significantly higher when considered in relation to the sector as a whole.

6. It was assumed that the proposals contained within the White Paper would be implemented. The deadline for responses to the HEFCE consultation was 2 September and the final policy decision was not expected before the end of October. Executive Board was considering its response to the proposed changes and it was expected that a paper on the strategy and tactics associated with the AAB position would be ready by 2 August. It was suggested that, once Executive Board had determined its position, a paper should be circulated to Council.

7. It was considered that the Government’s proposals signalled a change of direction which would take place over a number of years. It was possible that in future years, the margin could be expanded to include students with scores of ABB and BBB.

8. It was suggested that the University should seek to quantify the risks associated with the proposed changes.

9. The University was advised to consider the implications of the changes for the induction and training of Council members.
Resolved that:

(i) Executive Board should keep Council members informed of developments in this area over the summer period.

(ii) The Chair’s Group would consider the University’s formal response to the white paper on behalf of Council.

(iii) University Technical College

Noted that Newcastle College had approached the University with a proposal that it become co-sponsor of a University Technical College, together with the Centre for Life. The Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor were due to meet with Jackie Fisher, Principal and Chief Executive of Newcastle College, on 22 July to discuss the proposal.

(iv) Awards

The Vice-Chancellor noted that a number of awards had been received across the University.

The Estate Support Service and the Library had received the awards for “Outstanding Estates Team” and “Outstanding Library Team” respectively in the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards 2011.

Dr John Meechan, Senior Lecturer in Dentistry, Mr Chris Lawrence, Assistant Director of Engineering in the Regional Centre for Innovation in Design and Professor Janet Eyre, Professor of Paediatric Neuroscience had each achieved success in the Medical Futures Innovation Awards.

Simon Barker, a PhD student supervised by Professor Nick Wright and Dr Alton Horsfall in the School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering, had won the postgraduate award at the Santander Awards of Entrepreneurship held at the Spanish Embassy in London.

Resolved that a letter should be sent to each of the above individuals to congratulate them on their achievements on behalf of Council.

(v) Times Good University Guide

The University had improved its overall score and had maintained 25<sup>th</sup> position in the Times Good University Guide.

(vi) People and Planet Green League

The University had improved from 104<sup>th</sup> to joint-63<sup>rd</sup> position in the People and Planet Green League, which placed it in 5<sup>th</sup> place in terms of the Russell Group institutions.

(vii) Local Enterprise Partnership

The Local Enterprise Partnership was now fully constituted and would be chaired by Paul Woolston, senior partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers. The LEP was currently preparing a bid for an enterprise zone.
(viii) Regional Growth Fund

A submission to the second round of the Regional Growth Fund was being prepared. Downings was to be included as a partner and it was hoped that this would help to strengthen the bid.

145. POSTGRADUATE TUITION FEES

Received an extract from the draft Senate Minutes of 14 June 2011 on Senate’s consideration of this item.

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

Considered a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching and Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources on behalf of the Tuition Fees Working Group.

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

After noting that:

1. The University had given consideration to the postgraduate taught tuition fee to be charged to home students following the significant rise in the undergraduate tuition fee which would be implemented from September 2012.

2. Document E provided an explanation as to why it was considered inappropriate to align the postgraduate fee to the undergraduate fee. It also detailed the level of support that was available to postgraduate students and highlighted the fact that, currently, 50% of the total home postgraduate taught fee income was paid as fee reductions.

3. A minimum fee of £5,500 was proposed for home postgraduate taught (PGT) students for 2012-13. This recommendation had been considered by Senate on two occasions. It would be possible for a premium fee to be charged for individual programmes subject to the approval of the Student Finance Committee.

4. It was noted that, in many cases, there was a significant difference in the fee charged to home students compared with that charged to international students. This difference could be justified through the funding historically provided by the Government which enabled institutions to invest in their infrastructure.

5. Document E contained no estimates of the cost of provision and the process of costing courses individually was complex and costly. The University needed to maintain the proportion of home PGT students in order to help provide a high quality experience to international students. If the home PGT fee was set at too high a level, this could discourage home students from applying and, in turn, affect the quality of experience of international students.

6. Whilst it was important to be aware of the cost of provision, in a competitive environment, it was also important to be aware of what fees the market would bear. The University had to satisfy itself that its postgraduate courses were worth the fees that were charged.

7. It was considered that the fee of £5,500 was pitched at the appropriate level for the current market given the uncertainties created by the increase in the undergraduate fee. PGT students often went on to become postgraduate research students and, later, members of academic staff, and it was important for the University to do what it could
to support these activities. It was agreed that the postgraduate taught offer should be reviewed to ensure students received a good deal.

8. The sabbatical officers asked for their objections to the increase in the home PGT tuition fee to be noted. It was suggested that such an increase would harm attempts to widen participation amongst under-represented groups. The proposal to increase the alumni discount to 20% was welcomed but it was recommended that this be communicated to undergraduate students as early as possible to allow them to take this into account when making plans beyond graduation.

9. Project 2012 was underway to ensure the quality of provision for undergraduates at the point at which the higher fee would come into effect. It was proposed that a similar review should be conducted for the University’s postgraduate provision.

Resolved that:

(i) The proposal to charge a minimum of £5,500 for home postgraduate taught fees from 2012-13 be accepted.

(ii) The abstentions of the sabbatical officers from the above decision be noted.

146. NEWCASTLE INTO LONDON

['commercial in confidence’ minute, filed in the Minute Book.]

147. HEALTH AND SAFETY

(i) Annual Health and Safety Report

Received the Annual Health and Safety Report for 2009-10, endorsed by Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. As mentioned above (Minute 141), Mr Ian Shott had met recently with staff in the Safety Office to discuss the production of health and safety reports and had been reassured by the policy and the structures that were in place.

2. The visibility of ownership for health and safety matters remained a concern. In order to improve this, the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors and the Registrar would each review the awareness and understanding of safety matters in their area of responsibility.

3. In future, should a significant incident occur, the relevant Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor or the Registrar would be responsible for reporting the matter to Executive Board and Council rather than the Executive Director of Human Resources.

4. Slips/ Trips/ Falls was an area where little progress had been made and the Safety Office was to consider this in further detail. It was hoped that by analysing the records of all incidents it would be possible to draw some conclusions which could help to reduce the number of incidents.
(ii) Summary accident report

Received the summary accident report for 2010.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Safety Office had been advised that where statistics showed that a particular type of accident was increasing in frequency, then this should be investigated.

2. The number of manual handling incidents had declined during the final three quarters of 2010, which was attributed to a recent awareness campaign.

Resolved that the Executive Director of Human Resources and staff in the Safety Office be thanked for their work.

148. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – KPIs: SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THEMES

Considered a paper from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation on behalf of Executive Board, on the KPI ‘Societal Challenge Themes’.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The Sustainability societal challenge theme was underway and a full list of events and activities was available on the Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability (NIReS) website. The Institute was working hard to ensure a balance of attendees including staff, students and members of the public.

2. Quantifying the success of the societal challenge themes in numerical terms was difficult to achieve. Positive feedback had been received from those who had participated in the University Catalytic Campus event which, amongst other objectives, had aimed to make the campus more accessible.

3. The budget of £150k for each of the societal challenge themes was small in comparison with the University’s turnover. For this expenditure the University had succeeded in generating a substantial amount of press coverage. It was suggested that, if an attempt was made to quantify the value gained from the events in terms of harder measures, this could serve to diminish the enthusiasm of the staff and students whose participation was required in order for the events to be a success.

4. The societal challenge themes had succeeded in increasing the number of grants received for multidisciplinary research and also enabling and promoting cross-faculty research.

149. SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THEMES: REPORT ON LAUNCH YEAR FOR AGEING AND HEALTH

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.]

Noted that it was considered that the launch of the Ageing and Health societal challenge theme had helped to enhance relationships with third party organisations.
150. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS : ANNUAL SUMMARY 2010-11

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. The year end review proposed revised targets for three of the institutional KPIs.

2. The University had invested heavily in its estate during recent years and it was, therefore, surprising to note that its ranking for this measure had declined from 13th to 32nd place when compared with the performance of the Russell Group and 94 Group institutions. It was explained that the data used to prepare the rankings was taken from 2008 which was a year in which the University’s capital developments were not as extensive as they had been more recently.

3. It was suggested that consideration should be given to using alternative wording for the measurement of the reduction in the University’s carbon emissions as the current wording was considered to be ambiguous.

151. OVERVIEW REPORT : HR STRATEGY

Reported that the Working Group on Governance had recommended that Executive Board should ensure that at least once a year Council and Senate should receive overview reports on the key strategies within Vision 2021, in addition to the current reports on finance.

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

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

Noted that:

1. The report sought to identify HR priorities for 2012. Preparing for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Project 2012 would make demands on staff and during this period it would be essential to communicate key messages clearly across the University. It would also be important to ensure that the contribution of staff was recognised appropriately.

2. It was proposed that a follow-up report should be prepared for the October 2012 meeting of Council at which point a set of statistics for the full academic year would be available.

3. Equal Pay Audits and pension auto-enrolment had led to a significant increase in costs for the NHS and many local authorities but these developments were not expected to have as great an impact on the University due to the existing high level of participation in the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The University would be required to give some consideration to the affordability of participation in pension schemes for some lower paid or part-time members of staff.

152. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT

Received the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2010-11.

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

1. The diversity agenda across the University was broad and encompassed the activities of staff, students and the wider community.

2. It was important to acknowledge the contribution of the Students' Union in helping to promote the diversity agenda which, this year, had included the passing of a motion to become a 'Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment' Union.

3. A project was to be initiated to consider degree classifications and the ethnicity of recipients. The committee was considering action which could be taken to increase disability disclosures by staff. Action would also be taken to enhance the perception of the University as an employer amongst black and ethnic minority groups through engagement with community groups.

4. Obtaining more comparator data was an additional task for the forthcoming academic year.

153. KENSINGTON/PARK TERRACE DEVELOPMENT : BUSINESS CASE

Considered a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Council approve the provision of 346 additional student bedrooms through the redevelopment of Kensington Terrace and the demolition and rebuild of Park Terrace at an estimated capital cost of £18.2m.

154. REPORT FROM THE ETHICAL INVESTMENT WORKING GROUP

Considered a report from the Ethical Investment Working Group.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that:

1. The decision to establish the Ethical Investment Working Group had been prompted by an issue raised by the students’ group ‘Newcastle University Campaign Against the Arms Trade’. In discussions, however, the working group had noted that the arms trade was only one of many issues which raised ethical considerations.

2. It was the group’s recommendation that the University should introduce a mechanism which would allow it to ban investments in individual companies. It was also recommended that the University should use its voting power to encourage a more ethical trading environment.

3. It was noted that the proposed policy required the publication of the University’s investments on an annual basis. The University’s investments could change frequently, depending on the decisions of its investment managers, and annual publication of the investments would not necessarily give an accurate picture of the University’s investments throughout the year. To publicise the investments at each point the position changed was considered to be impractical.

4. It was considered desirable for the University’s investments to become more visible as this would help to reduce the amount of work required in response to certain Freedom of Information requests.
5. The proposal to make use of the voting rights was welcomed and it was agreed that the University should be encouraged to do this.

6. It was noted that ethical issues were subject to frequently changing viewpoints. The recommendation from the working group provided a process which would allow issues to be considered as they arose.

Resolved that:

(i) The University adopt a Socially Responsible Investment Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to Document Q.

(ii) Prior to the implementation of the policy, further consideration be given to the most appropriate method of publishing the University’s investments to ensure that an accurate record was portrayed. Further consideration should also be given to the methods of publicising the policy to staff and students within the University.

155. UK BRIBERY ACT 2010

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

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

Noted that:

1. In light of the introduction of the Bribery Act 2010, which came into force on 1 July 2011, the University had reviewed its operations and prepared a high level risk assessment.

2. It was hoped that all outstanding issues identified in the risk assessment would be resolved before the next Council meeting.

3. Council members were reminded that they were individually liable under the Act.

156. NEWCASTLE SCIENCE CITY

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

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

157. REPORT FROM THE COUNCIL PROCESS WORKING GROUP

Considered a report from the Council Process Working Group.

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

Noted that:

1. At its second meeting, the Council Process Working Group had considered an effectiveness questionnaire prepared by the Leadership Foundation and the Committee of University Chairs. The Working Group proposed that this questionnaire should be used to conduct the annual effectiveness review of Council and members of Council and should replace the version that was used previously.

2. The Working Group intended to prepare a further report following its next meeting to be submitted to Council at its meeting in October 2011.
Resolved that an edited version of the Leadership Foundation’s effectiveness questionnaire be used for the 2010-11 Council effectiveness review, as set out in the Appendix to Document T.

158. DISPOSALS : 26 CLAREMONT PLACE

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

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

Resolved that 26 Claremont Place be declared surplus to operational requirements and included in the portfolio of surplus buildings being marketed by GVA on behalf of the University.

159. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Considered a report from Nominations Committee.

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

Resolved that:

(i) Mr J C FitzPatrick be re-appointed as Chair of Audit Committee from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012.

(ii) Mr A Newman be re-appointed as Chair of Safety Committee from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2014.

(iii) Professor R J Lewis be re-appointed as Chair of the Radiation Protection Sub-Committee from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2014.

Council noted the remaining item in the report.

160. FACULTY APPOINTMENT BOARDS : CHANGE TO CONSTITUTION

Considered a proposed amendment to the constitution of Faculty Appointment Boards.

Resolved that the following amendment to the constitution of Faculty Appointment Boards be approved, subject to the agreement of Senate:

delete: (b) Any two of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (or their nominees)

substitute: (b) Any two from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors (or their nominees)

161. FINANCE COMMITTEE : CHANGE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Considered a proposed amendment to the terms of reference of Finance Committee.

Resolved that the following amendment to the terms of reference of Finance Committee be approved:

delete: (h) To keep under review the University’s insurance policies, insured risks, premiums payable and arrangements for effecting the required cover.
substitute: (h) To keep under review the University’s strategies for insurance policies.

162. THE NEWCASTLE OFFER

Reported that Senate, at its meeting on 14 June 2011, had approved the recommendation in a report from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Received an extract from the draft Senate Minutes of 14 June 2011 on Senate’s consideration of this item.

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

163. HEFCE’S ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK

Received a paper from the Executive Director of Finance.

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

164. APPOINTMENTS TO CHAIRS AND READERSHIPS

Received a report from Executive Board on appointments to Chairs and Readerships.

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

165. REPORT FROM THE SAGE FACULTY APPOINTMENT BOARD

Reported that, in accordance with agreed procedures, the Chair of Council, acting on behalf of Council, had approved the recommendation in a report from the SAgE Faculty Appointment Board.

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

166. REPORT FROM FACULTY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEES

Reported that, in accordance with agreed procedures, the Chair of Council, acting on behalf of Council, had approved the recommendations in a report from Faculty Promotions Committees.

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

167. 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 the Chair of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairs.

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