NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

11 March 2013

Present:  Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Peter Andras, Dr John Appleby, Professor Alan Boddy, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Vicki Bruce, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Colin FitzPatrick, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Peter Johnson, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Ms Laura Perry (President, Students’ Union), Mr Simon Pleydell, Ms Rachael Thornton (Education Officer), and Mr Paul Walker.

In attendance:  Professor Suzanne Cholerton, 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 Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies:  Mr Robert Hull, Ms Kate Priestley, Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and Professor Chris Day.

MINUTES

66.  DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

67.  MINUTES

Noted that under Minute 60, Point 5, it should be noted that the Athletics Union Officer had not been consulted when the document proposing the Sports Centre expansion was prepared.

Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 December 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed.

68.  MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Noted the following actions carried forward from previous meetings:

Date of meeting:  10.12.12
Item:  Project 2012
Action:  It would be useful for Council to receive a report at a future date on how the University is performing in relation to the obligations set out in its agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).
Responsibility:  Professor Suzanne Cholerton
Status:  To be included as part of the Student Recruitment Strategy progress report to be presented to Council in December 2013.

Date of meeting:  10.12.12
Item:  University Sports Centre
Action:  Council should receive a presentation on Sports activities across the University at a future meeting.
Responsibility:  Professor Charles Harvey
Status:  Report to be presented to Council at its meeting on 17 June 2013.
69. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Received:

(i) An oral report from the Executive Director of Human Resources on current health and safety issues affecting the University.

(ii) A Safety Incident Trends Report from the 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. Two incidents were reported. The first concerned the Great North Museum where an elderly gentleman had fallen on a flight of stairs. The incident occurred in February and the man remains in intensive care. The University owns the building but Tyne & Wear Museums is responsible for the management of health and safety arrangements in the museum. A full investigation took place following the incident which found that the stairs were in a good state of repair. No obvious cause was identified. The incident will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

2. The second incident concerned a member of staff from the Law School who was injured in a hit and run on Claremont Road. The police are investigating this incident. The University is to consult with the City Council on safety measures which could be introduced on Claremont Road.

3. Document B presents the outcome of a review of the systems that are in place to manage safety incidents. The University’s performance in this area has been reviewed alongside that of Northumbria Water and a number of other Russell Group universities. The report has been discussed at Executive Board and at the University, Faculty and Professional Support Services safety committees. A number of key process gaps have been identified which are to be addressed by requiring line managers or designated responsible persons with management authority to be allocated the lead role for all stages in the management of safety incidents.

4. Some concerns have been raised at the possibility of an increase in workload due to the new arrangements. Adjustments have been made to address this but it is anticipated that, in the long term, the new procedures should lead to a reduced workload since they should result in the prevention of future accidents.

5. An implementation date for the new arrangements has been set at July 2014, to allow training to take place following completion of the REF submission. Sufficient time is also needed to develop a new reporting system and database.

6. Due to the lengthy implementation period it is hoped that it will be possible to progress some quick wins in the short term. It was suggested that responsibility for safety arrangements where the University was involved in a dual management arrangement, such as in the case of the Great North Museum, should be clarified. It was noted that this was a key consideration for the Head of the Occupational Health and Safety Service.

7. It was considered that Document B sets out appropriate arrangements but that persistence will be required to ensure they are implemented in full.

8. Document B refers to both ‘significant’ and ‘appropriate’ incidents. It was suggested that these terms should be defined in such a way to ensure they do not lead to unnecessary and complex investigations. It was proposed that consideration should be given to identifying
‘families of incidents’ and that incidents should be analysed according to a risk assessment framework to determine severity.

Resolved that Council approve the recommendations included in Document B for implementation by July 2014.

70. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

1. Council Briefing Sessions

The Chair reminded members of the Council Briefing Sessions and encouraged members to attend.

The forthcoming meetings from the programme are:

8 April 2013, 10.30-11.15am, L5.18, King’s Gate – Executive Director of Human Resources, Human Resources Strategy: overview of current projects and issues.

25 April 2013, 9am-12noon, L5.15, King’s Gate – Meeting of Audit Committee.

Members of Council who would like to attend any of the above sessions are asked to inform Lizzie Taylor (Lizzie.Taylor@ncl.ac.uk).

71. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

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

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

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. Dr Alan Reece DSc

The University has received a donation of £1m from the Reece Foundation which had been made to the Institute of Neuroscience’s new Centre for Translational Neuroscience. Under the ‘Ethical Policy for the Acceptance of Gifts and Donations: Major Gifts’ Council must authorise the acceptance of all donations in excess of £500,000.

Resolved that Council authorise the acceptance of the £1m donation from the Reece Foundation.

3. Sporting Successes

The 29th staging of the Stan Calvert Memorial Cup took place on Sunday 10 March 2013. A Newcastle victory over Northumbria University by 78.75 to 63.25 secured Newcastle’s 6th victory in a row and its 13th success overall.

The Women’s Head of the River Race took place on 9 March 2013 in which three University crews were entered. The University’s 1st Eight Crew started in 8th place and finished 5th overall, winning the University pennant in record time and beating the record set by Oxford University by 20 seconds.
Council recorded its congratulations to the University’s sports teams on these achievements.

4. **Local Enterprise Partnership**

   It is understood that the outcome of the Independent Economic Review commissioned by the Local Enterprise Partnership and led by Lord Adonis, is likely to place an emphasis on skills development. The four regional universities are keen for this to include recognition of the need for higher level and postgraduate skills and not solely the skills acquired via apprenticeships. The Vice-Chancellor has made a submission to the review panel on behalf of the four regional universities, emphasising the importance of higher level skills.

   It was confirmed that the Adonis review is seeking to cover all parts of the educational spectrum but it was limited in the number of recommendations it could make. The panel are aware of the importance of higher level skills.

5. **Spending Review 2014-15**

   The forthcoming spending review for the period 2014-15 was discussed at a recent Russell Group Away Day. It is understood that, in the view of the Treasury, the Higher Education sector has not suffered as severe cuts as other sectors and that many universities have cash available to them. In many cases, the available finances have been generated through prudence in light of the uncertainty caused by the new fees regime and much of this money is already committed to future capital projects. It has been agreed that the Russell Group universities will collectively set out the plans for their future capital projects to demonstrate that much of the funding held in reserve is already committed. It is expected that this action will show that several billion of pounds will be spent on infrastructure projects which, in turn, will contribute to growth elsewhere in the economy through job creation.

6. **Reputation and Rankings**

   Citations account for 30% of the Times Higher Education international survey and, in comparison with other members of the Russell Group, this is an area where the University’s performance is modest. A second aspect of the survey is the reputation survey of ca. 15,000 academics. It is thought that relatively small improvements in the survey responses will result in a more significant impact on the University’s position in the results. It was noted that reputation surveys could often focus on classic disciplines and it was important to emphasise the University’s offering in this respect.

7. **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER SUMMARY**

   Received the Strategic Risk Register Summary.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

   Noted that in terms risk SR5F – Failure to recruit, develop, retain and reward staff of an appropriate calibre, it was considered useful to take a holistic view of the pay arrangements to ensure they were appropriate to motivate staff at all levels. It was also suggested that the annual pay review process could make it harder to respond to retention needs which occurred throughout the year. It was noted that, whilst these issues could be discussed, pay was not always the most important factor for motivating some staff and for recognising and rewarding excellent performance.
73. **INSITUTIONAL KPI SUMMARY REPORT**

Received the summary KPI report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

74. **STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE FACULTY OF SAGE**

Received the strategic progress report for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering and a PowerPoint presentation from Professor Steve Homans, Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

[Copy of the slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Details of the extent to which the loss of HEFCE QR Funding for 2* research would impact upon the Faculty of SAgE was requested. It was noted that the Faculty received only a small amount of funding for 2* research. Across the University as a whole, the funding for 2* research accounts for £1.5m-£2m of the total QR allocation of £24m per annum. Should the Government decide to reduce the budget for higher education in its next spending review, it is possible that it could consider altering the ratio of funding provided for all grades of research. It was important for the University to be mindful of this potential risk.

2. The Faculty of SAgE is addressing the above issues by considering the activities in which it will invest and which it will no longer support. The message is to be emphasised within the Faculty that research should be supported by a research grant.

3. Document F does not currently include a reference to Athena Swan, the Charter prepared to advance the representation of women in science, engineering and technology subjects. Increasingly, the Research Councils are requiring universities to state how they are responding to the Athena Swan agenda. It was proposed that a KPI should be added to the document to monitor the Faculty’s response to the Athena Swan agenda.

4. The NSS performance of the subject of Agriculture has declined steadily since 2007. This is being addressed via regular meetings with the School. The importance of meeting the reasonable needs of every student was acknowledged.

5. It was noted that introducing radical innovations in the curriculum can be difficult to achieve on an annual basis and can have a negative impact on NSS scores, particularly in the short-term, due to the difficulties associated with embedding changes.

6. The question was raised as to whether the target of 75% of PGR submissions within 4 years was set at a sufficiently high level. Schools where submission rates are particularly low are being targeted. It was noted that low PGR submission rates could have an impact upon the amount of funding received from certain funding providers.

Resolved the Professor Homans be thanked for an informative presentation.

75. **ESTATES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

Received:

(i) The progress report for the Estates and Environmental Sustainability Strategy and a PowerPoint presentation from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.
(ii) The revised Environmental Sustainability Policy which has been approved by Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G & H. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

[Copy of the slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University has set itself a target of a 43% reduction in carbon emissions against a 2005/06 baseline which is proving difficult to achieve. Key to achieving this target is the greening of the energy supply, which is the responsibility of the Government, and progress in this area has been slow.

2. A number of spaces on campus have been refurbished recently and tours of these sites can be arranged for members of Council on request.

3. Smartworking has been introduced within the Estate Support Service following its relocation to the Agriculture Building. This has successfully reduced the size of the office space required by the service. The possibility of introducing smartworking on the Science Central site could be considered although there remain questions over whether this form of working is appropriate for the activities undertaken by academic staff.

4. Four floors of Claremont Tower will be vacated once the School of Computing Science moves to the Science Central site as the anchor tenant. The Estate and Sustainability Special Interest Group will be asked to consider future uses for the vacant space.

5. It was proposed that the University should seek to prioritise the estate activities alongside its wider strategy and identify the key issues to be addressed.

Resolved that:

(i) The revised Environmental Sustainability Policy as set out in Document H be approved.

(ii) Professor Stevenson be thanked for an informative presentation.

76. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

Received the progress report for the Human Resources Strategy Progress Report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Participation in and reporting of PDR completion has improved to 80.7% but further work is needed in order to achieve the target of 90%. Work is underway to maximise the effectiveness of the PDR process.

2. The absence rate for operational staff has been reduced from 6.9% in 2010/11 to 5.6% in 2011/12 and is on a steady downward trend. The rate of long-term absence for this group remains high at 62% compared with the HE average of 41% and is proving more difficult to address.

3. Good progress is being made in the area of diversity with a number of the targets set having already been achieved.
4. Continuing challenges include the introduction of the auto-enrolment pension scheme, which is proving difficult to implement, and the retention of staff in the run up to the Research Excellence Framework.

5. The next Employee Opinion Survey is due to take place in May. The last survey was conducted in 2010 the response to which produced positive results. Since then there have been significant changes in the economic environment and also in the Higher Education sector, many of which have proven challenging for staff, and it is possible that this could result in less positive responses when compared with those from the previous survey.

6. The issue of the timing of PDRs was discussed. It was noted that most PDRs are scheduled so as to allow objectives to be set which will feed into the planning process but some flexibility is allowed to ensure they are conducted at the most appropriate time, particularly for service units.

7. It was suggested that it should not be possible for an individual to be submitted into the Pay Review process without them having had a PDR within the previous twelve months. It was noted, however, that the Pay Review form asked for evidence of achievements and successes to be set out, together with the date of the most recent PDR.

8. The risk concerning the promotion of a safe and healthy environment was rated as amber and the reason for this was requested, particularly since it was noted that the majority of the targets set had been achieved or exceeded. It was explained that the accident rate was still considered to be too high as was the rate of absence amongst operational staff (5.6%) and it was for these reasons that the KPI was rated as amber.

9. Further information was requested on the success of the Chameleon Project in helping to develop staff and the value of the work that was produced. It was noted that staff participating in the project had been asked to consider a number of cross-University issues and to identify process improvements. The outcome of a number of these projects has resulted in efficiencies and some were included in the Value for Money Report. It was agreed that further information on the Chameleon Project could be provided.

10. The individual KPIs that are prepared as part of each strategy report are required to relate to the five Institutional Strategic Objectives. The objectives included in the Human Resources progress report have been developed to support the specific objectives included in Vision 2021.

11. Public sector pay has been held down for a number of years during a period where there have been increases in the level of private sector pay. It is thought that this position cannot be maintained in the long-term and it was suggested that increases in public sector pay should be expected. The University should prepare for this eventuality, since it will have a significant impact upon its costs.

12. The absence rate of 5.6% for operational staff is considered to be high and should be acknowledged as such. Good quality support from the Occupational Health Service is considered to be essential in helping managers to address this issue.

Resolved that Mrs Johnston be thanked for an informative presentation.

77. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Minute classified as ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

78. TRAC RESULTS 2011-12
Received a report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The TRAC results were similar to those from previous years.

2. The deficit generated on publicly funded research is offset by the surplus generated by the University’s teaching activities. The University also has the opportunity to increase its income from ‘other activities’ to further offset the deficit.

79. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on the 10 January 2013.

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

Noted that Audit Committee had considered a report on spin out companies and it was proposed that the document detailing the actions taken in response to this report should be considered at a future meeting of the Equity Casework Committee.

80. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received an oral report from the Chair of Nominations Committee regarding the appointment of the Honorary Treasurer.

Noted that:

1. At its meeting on 12 November 2012, Nominations Committee considered the proposal that Mr Stephen Lightley, a former member of Council, be appointed as Honorary Treasurer. The committee had agreed that it should be identified whether Mr Lightley would be willing to serve before any formal recommendation was made to Council.

2. Mr Lightley has now been consulted and has agreed to be appointed, subject to the approval of Council.

Resolved that Mr S J Lightley be appointed as Honorary Treasurer from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016.

81. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on the 13 December 2012.

[Tabled at the meeting as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Remuneration Committee has observed that it is occasionally called upon to consider matters which are beyond its current Terms of Reference but it is increasingly common practice for Remuneration Committees to engage in broader remuneration issues and for them to provide advice to CEOs and Human Resources Directors.
2. In light of the above, Remuneration Committee has amended its Terms of Reference to allow for broader remuneration issues to be discussed and for the Committee to provide advice and guidance to the Vice-Chancellor.

Resolved that the amended Terms of Reference, as set out as Appendix I of Document N be approved.

82. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 10 December 2012.  

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

Noted that:

1. Document O noted that the number of project bids from societies has increased and, as a result, the existing grant available to support societies has been spent. The Executive Director of Finance has approved a proposal from the Students’ Union for an in-year uplift. It was agreed that the Students’ Union should be congratulated on this development since the increased number of bids from societies represented an increase in student engagement with the Union.

2. It was noted that charity accounting rules were applied to the Students’ Union accounts. The Students’ Union received a capital grant of £8m from the University several years ago but depreciation on this will be reflected in the accounts in subsequent years until the value of the grant returns to zero. There is evidence to suggest that the Students’ Union will make larger surpluses during 2012-13 which will help to improve the balance sheet position.

3. The Students’ Union is seeking to repay its debts gradually over a number of years so as not to impact negatively upon the student experience in one particular year.

Resolved that the audited financial statements for the Students’ Union for the year ending 31 July 2012 be noted.

[Secretary’s Note: Following the meeting it was clarified that the Education Act 1994, required the financial reports of the Students’ Union to ‘be made available to the governing body and to all students’ but Council was not formally required to accept or approve the accounts.]

83. APPLICATION STATISTICS FOR SEPTEMBER 2013

Received a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching on the current position regarding undergraduate and postgraduate applications for 2013, on behalf of Executive Board.  

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

Noted that:

1. In light of positive application figures, the emphasis remains on encouraging conversions and making as many ABB offers as possible.

2. The figures for all measures of applications and acceptances are positive when compared with the previous year, with the exception of home postgraduate research acceptances.
3. It will not be clear before the end of May as to whether the University is the first or second choice option for applicants.

4. There is significant variability in the postgraduate taught home market and the University is seeking to address this in its recruitment strategy.

84. **CHAIR’S CIRCULAR**

Two Chair’s circulars of routine business were sent to members on 28 January and 19 February 2013.

**Chair’s Circular 28 January 2013:**

*Approved business:*

(i) Naming of Buildings: Kensington and Park Terrace

*Items for information:*

(ii) Times Higher Education Supplement Advertorial

(iii) Application Statistics for September 2013

(iv) Student Attendance Monitoring

(v) Annual Report from Ethics Committee

(vi) Reported Business

No issues on the circular were raised by members and the business was, therefore, deemed to have been approved by Council.

**Chair’s Circular 19 February 2013:**

*Approved business:*

(i) Fees Schedule

Noted that, following a comment from a member of Council, an updated version of the Fees Schedule was prepared for Council’s approval and circulated with the agenda. [Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

The updated version includes the fees which were to be agreed by the Student Finance Working Group at its meeting in February 2013.

The updated version of the Fees Schedule was approved by Senate at its meeting on 5 March 2013 and was deemed to have been approved by Council at its meeting on 11 March 2013.

*Items for information:*

(ii) Dates of meetings 2013-14

Council will meet on the following dates in 2013-14:

2pm 16 September 2013
2pm  28 October 2013
2pm  9 December 2013
2pm  24 February 2014
10:30am  28 April 2014 (Council meeting in the morning, joint meeting with Senate in the afternoon at 2pm)
3pm  16 June 2014 (followed by dinner).

(iii) Development Trust Annual Report

(iv) Reported Business

The remaining items in the Chair’s Circular were deemed to have been approved by Council.