NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
13 December 2010

Present: Mrs M O Grant (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, 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, 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 Mr I Shott.

In attendance: Professor C Day, Professor C Harvey, Professor E Ritchie, Professor A C Stevenson and Professor N G Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr J V Hogan (Registrar), Mr R C Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Mrs V S Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources) and Miss E M Niven (Administrative Officer).

The members of Council concerned were not present for item 50.

MINUTES

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

28. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Mr Mike Davison to his first meeting as a member of Council.

29. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 18 October 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed.

30. 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 summary accident report for the first and second quarters of 2010.

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

Noted that:

1. Mr Ian Shott had recently arranged for staff from the University Safety Office to visit a pharmaceutical organisation to gain insight into the health and safety procedures that were in operation there. The visit was considered to have been extremely valuable and Mr Shott was thanked for having arranged this.
2. The summary accident report (Document B), which included accident statistics for the first six months of 2010, was considered to show a gradual reduction in overall accident rates. It was suggested, however, that the interpretation of some of the trends during the last three quarters was over-optimistic and that the direction of travel indicated by the red lines on the graphs should be reviewed.

3. Reporting rates had improved and there had been a gradual reduction in the number of sports related accidents, which was welcomed. The number of staff manual handling incidents was beginning to show a decline which was thought to be due to a recent focus of attention in this area and additional training being offered.

4. There had been a serious RIDDOR incident in Quarter 2 which had led to a student being interviewed by police. The incident had been handled well by University security staff and although the police had taken no action, the student had been disciplined under University procedures.

31. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Progress of business

Received a business tracking form.

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

(ii) Financial Forecasts (Minute 13, 18.10.2010)

Reported that:

(a) At its last meeting, Council had approved a five year financial forecast for submission to HEFCE as part of its ‘Single Conversation’ submission.

(b) Subsequent to the meeting, HEFCE had amended its requirements to allow Governing Bodies the option to submit forecasts for 2010/11 only with a full five year forecast to be submitted in April 2011.

(c) With the agreement of the Chairman of Council and the Honorary Treasurer, the Executive Director of Finance had exercised this option on the grounds that the previous forecast had been rendered invalid by the Browne Review and the CSR. A revised five year forecast would be submitted to Council, via Executive Board and Finance Committee, in March 2011 when there should be a much clearer understanding of the University’s fees strategy and the medium term funding environment.

32. CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS

(i) HEFCE Annual Conference

Ms Jacqui Henderson had attended the HEFCE Annual Conference on 26 November 2010.

(ii) Leadership Foundation Seminar

At the seminar Stephen Marston, Director General, Universities and Skills Group at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, had explained that it would be the widening participation criteria set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that would be used to determine whether or not a University could charge a fee up to £9,000.

Handouts from the seminar were available which could be circulated to Council members.

(iii) Student Occupation

On behalf of Council the Chairman congratulated the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, the Academic Registrar, the sabbatical officers and the security staff on the peaceful ending of the student occupation on 12 December after 18 days.

(iv) Congratulations

On behalf of Council the Chairman congratulated Professor Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences on his appointment as the Chair of the Main Research Excellence Framework (REF) Panel for Clinical Medicine.

33. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

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

(i) Deaths

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

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

(ii) Student action

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the sabbatical officers for the mature way in which they had dealt with the student discontent. Good levels of communication had been maintained between the sabbatical officers and the senior management team during this time, which had helped to facilitate a successful resolution.

(iii) The Urban Traffic Management Control Unit

Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, and Professor David Parker were congratulated on their work which had led to the decision by Newcastle City Council to relocate their Urban Traffic Management Control Unit to the University.

(iv) Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

On behalf of Council, the Chairman had approved the appointment of Professor Suzanne Cholerton, currently Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Medical Sciences Faculty Office, as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) for an initial period of appointment of five years with effect from 1 February 2011 to 31 July 2016. The appointment would be announced once Senate’s approval had been obtained.

[Secretary’s note: Senate members were subsequently consulted by email and the appointment was approved.]
34. RISK MANAGEMENT

Reported that:

(a) Executive Board, at its meeting on 21 September 2010, had carried out its annual review of the University’s Strategic Risk Register, alongside the individual risk registers from the central services and the three faculties.

(b) Audit Committee, on 12 November 2010, had also considered this matter. [See Minute 36.]

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

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

Noted that:

1. The risk register had been updated prior to the publication of the Browne Report and the Comprehensive Spending Review and a further update of certain risks was now required.

2. In its report to Council (Document G), Audit Committee had noted that the University’s international student recruitment was heavily dependent upon one country, China. Recent student recruitment figures showed that the proportion of Chinese students had increased further whilst the number of students from countries such as India had decreased. It was suggested that the recent student action could send a poor message to overseas students which could have consequence for future recruitment.

*Resolved that Council note Executive Board’s current assessment of the top strategic risks and controls as set out in Document E.*

35. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – KPIs : RESEARCH QUALITY AND POWER

Considered a paper from Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, on the KPI ‘Research Quality and Power’.

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

Noted that:

1. It was likely that the rating of the Research Quality and Power KPI would move from Amber-Green to Amber over the next year due to funding cutbacks which would make research awards more difficult to obtain.

2. The University had filed a total of 222 patents. Patents could make an important contribution to the academic standing of a discipline. The budget for patent management was small and the University had to consider both academic and commercial factors before taking the decision to file a patent.

3. The figures for research grants and contracts income per academic staff FTE within the comparator group were variable and the University’s target of achieving >£44k per FTE was considered to be modest in comparison with the figures achieved by other institutions. The amount of research income achieved by an institution was influenced by its subject mix and also by academic staff numbers. The institutions in the group had been chosen carefully to allow appropriate comparisons to be made. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to the current target of >£44k.
4. Where two or more KPIs were linked it was suggested that they should be presented to Council at the same meeting. It was also suggested that details of the trajectory of performance in relation to the KPI should be provided.

5. Heads of Academic Units received more detailed information which helped to inform management discussions. It was suggested that the higher level measures presented to Council should be reviewed in light of the operational level discussions. Revised data could be presented to Council in due course.

Resolved that further consideration would be given to the target for research grants and contracts income per academic FTE.

36. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 12 November 2010.

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

Noted that:

1. Audit Committee had noted the apparent success of the reorganisation of Information Systems and Services (ISS) and had suggested that future reorganisations elsewhere in the University should adopt a similar approach.

2. Concern was expressed by one Council member at the suggestion that local computing officers could be centralised. It was confirmed that it was intended to retain computing officers in areas where there was a clear requirement but there was a need for greater coordination of generic support. The impact of the recent restructure would be monitored for a period before any changes were made. It was also necessary to improve the level of desktop support and the support for teaching and learning before any changes to the roles of computing officers were introduced.

3. At its meeting on 14 January 2011, Audit Committee would receive a report on the fees strategy and the process for determining new fee levels. Any member of Council who wished to attend this meeting was invited to inform the Chairman of Audit Committee.

37. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 10 December 2010.

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

Noted that:

1. During the first quarter (to 31 October 2010) the University had performed well and had achieved an operating surplus of £5.4m which was £4.6m above budget.

2. Finance Committee had approved the budget strategy for 2011/12 which allowed funding to be made available to support appropriate transition costs for the new student regime. Finance Committee recognised that this could result in a temporary dip in surplus in 2011/12 (set at 2% of income).

3. Finance Committee had been advised of a potential overspend on the fit out of the Business School development which had been caused by the elevation of the specification. Work was underway to reduce the overspend but it was unlikely that it would reach the authorised amount. This matter will return to Council.
38. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY’S PERFORMANCE

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

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

Noted that:

1. The Annual Review of the University’s Performance document had been requested by Senate. Previous years’ reports had been much longer and the revised version of the report presented to Council was considered to present the University’s performance on a wide range of measures in a more accessible format.

2. It was noted that, while the University’s performance in certain areas was strong, such as International Profile, its performance in relation to some key areas, for example, undergraduate degree applications, mean entry tariff and entrants from low participation areas, displayed a declining trajectory.

3. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to obtain comparator data for the area of Engagement. A review of the Engagement Strategy and the current KPIs would be undertaken with a view to presenting a more appropriate set in future. It was suggested that future versions of the report could compare the University’s performance against the targets set in the strategy document.

Resolved that in future Council should also be provided with Senate’s views on the Annual Review of the University’s Performance document.

39. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES

Reported that:

(a) As a result of proposed revisions to the University Statutes and, in particular, the proposed removal of employment procedures from Statute 57, existing procedures had been revised following discussions with UCU and other campus unions.

(b) Senate, at its meeting on 5 October 2010, after noting that:

1. The new procedures, which complied with ACAS guidance, were intended to be easier for all parties to implement;

2. The UCU had indicated that it was content with the new procedures, subject to some minor textual amendments. A member of Senate who was also a member of the UCU committee involved in the consultation process had confirmed that the meetings held with the University officers had been constructive;

3. The new procedures represented an important change to the contract of employment and, as a result, the UCU were obliged to ballot its members on the proposed changes;

4. Management guidance was to be prepared to assist staff with the application of the new procedures which would be implemented once the Privy Council had approved the amendments to the Statutes,
had endorsed the revised procedures and delegated authority to the Executive Director of Human Resources to finalise the detailed wording after any further discussions with the campus unions and subject to the agreement of Council.

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

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

After noting that:

1. The ballot of UCU members had been completed and the Union had confirmed that a significant majority of its members had voted in favour of the procedures.

2. The Executive Director of Human Resources expressed her thanks to the Registrar, the Assistant Directors of Human Resources and Dr John Appleby and the other UCU committee members who had participated in the negotiations. The negotiations had progressed well and had helped to establish good relations with the union which would be helpful for the future.

3. It was suggested that the procedures should be reviewed to ensure they were consistent with the Single Equality Scheme. It was confirmed that an impact assessment would be conducted.

4. The redundancy procedures granted individuals a right to appeal which was in line with ACAS guidance but without specifying the grounds for appeal. It was agreed that consideration should be given to the provision of guidance on the grounds on which an appeal should be based.

5. It was important to take account of the potential risk posed to the University by aggrieved individuals who have access to the University’s systems and to take action to mitigate the risk.

6. It was necessary to ensure the procedures were applied consistently across the University but it was also important for Heads of Units to take ownership of the process. Members of HR staff would be involved and random sampling would be undertaken at appropriate points to monitor consistency. It was important to ensure Heads of Units were given appropriate support in order to familiarise themselves with the new procedures. It was confirmed that briefings would be provided for staff involved in implementing the new employment procedures and support would be available from the faculty and central HR teams.

Resolved that Council approve the revised procedures, attached as Appendices A – D to Document K, for implementation once the revised Statutes had been approved by the Privy Council.

40. STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received the Students’ Union Impact Report from Mr Tom Delamere, President of the Union Society.

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

Noted that:

1. The report was intended to increase awareness of the activities of the Students’ Union and to improve links with the student, University and local communities. The report would be
distributed to key stakeholders within the local community and publicised to students via The Courier and the Students’ Union website.

2. Recent changes, including the establishment of an International Forum, had resulted in increased engagement with international students, which was welcomed.

3. It would be important to continue to improve the integration between the University and the Union Society as this had an impact upon the student experience which would become increasingly important once higher tuition fees were introduced.

Resolved that Council record its thanks and congratulations to the sabbatical officers on having prepared a well-conceived and well-constructed report.

41. SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY : BUSINESS CASE

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

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

After noting that:

1. The business case proposed an extension of the University’s collaborative teaching arrangements from one subject area to four subject areas which would result in it being one of the largest overseas academic institutions in Singapore.

2. Failure to recruit and retain appropriately qualified staff was seen as the main key risk and to mitigate this it was necessary to commence recruitment as soon as possible once the agreement had been signed.

3. It was now unlikely that the final agreement would be signed on 14 December but it was still hoped that it would be signed before the end of the calendar year.

4. The University would retain control of the quality assurance of the programmes offered.

Resolved that Council approve extension of the existing collaborative teaching arrangements in Singapore from one subject area to four subject areas and authorise the Vice-Chancellor, on the advice of the Executive Director of Finance, to sign the proposed revised agreement between the University and the Singapore Institute of Technology, subject to any comments from Senate.

42. 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 N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Work was continuing on the Masterplan for the Science Central site and the three issues of concern identified by the University were heading towards satisfactory resolutions.

Resolved that the Chairman of Council should be granted delegated authority to sign off the final Science Central Masterplan should it become available prior to the meeting of Council on 7 February.
43. **MEMBERSHIP**

   Reported that the Chairman of Council, acting on behalf of Council, had approved the appointment of Mr Mike Davison as a member of Council with immediate effect to 31 July 2013.

44. **TRAC RESULTS 2009-10**

   Received a paper from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.
   
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

45. **SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME**

   Considered a report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.
   
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

   **Resolved that the Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan be approved.**

46. **SUSTAINABILITY : UPDATE ON LAUNCH YEAR ARRANGEMENTS**

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

47. **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

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

   **Resolved that the revised Environmental Sustainability Policy be approved.**

48. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY (AHEAD 2011)**

   Received the University’s annual report.
   
   [Circulated with the agenda. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

49. **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 Chairman of Council on behalf of Council, and by other University bodies and Chairmen.
   
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document T. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
RESERVED BUSINESS

50. CHAIR OF COUNCIL (Minute 25, 18.10.2010)

[Note: The candidates concerned were not present for this item.]

Considered a report from the meeting of Nominations Committee held on 22 November 2010. [Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

After noting that:

1. The skills matrix for lay members of Council would be reviewed by Nominations Committee at its meeting on 14 February 2011 and presented to Council for consideration.

2. Appointing new members to Council provided a good PR opportunity which could help to increase the University’s engagement with the wider community. The possibility of advertising for lay members of Council was acknowledged but, with regards to the Chair of Council, Nominations Committee had considered that prior knowledge of and involvement with the University and Council was necessary.

3. Two expressions of interest had been received from current lay members of Council in response to a letter sent by the Honorary Treasurer earlier in the year. It was proposed that each candidate should be asked to prepare a brief biography and a statement of intent to cover a description of their experience and achievements, what they could bring to the role of Chair of Council and their view of the future development of Council. It was suggested the statement of intent should also cover their view of the future development of the University.

4. Nominations Committee proposed that the Chair of Council should be selected by means of a postal vote. It was suggested that the job description for the Chair of Council should be circulated to members of Council with the ballot papers

Resolved that:

(i) The position of Chair of Council should not be advertised further and no further nominations should be invited.

(ii) The candidates who had submitted an expression of interest should be asked to prepare a brief biography and a statement of intent to cover the points listed in point 3 above. These documents should be submitted to the Registrar by 7 January 2011.

(iii) A postal vote should take place. The biographies and the statements of intent should be circulated with the ballot papers, together with the role description for the Chair of Council. Ballot papers should be submitted to the Registrar no later than 31 January 2011.

(iv) The result of the vote should be announced at the meeting of Council on 7 February 2011. The number of votes received by each candidate should not be announced.