NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
14 December 2015

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tony Stevenson, (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Paul Christensen, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Dominic Fearon (President, Students’ Union), Dr Jonathan Galloway, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mrs Teresa Graham, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mr Jeff McIntosh, 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 Steve Homans, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Phillip Wright, 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 Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland (Deputy Director of Human Resources) and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Mrs Heidi Mottram and Professor Neill Marshall.

Professor Ian Postlethwaite, Director of Projects, attended for minute 40.
Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union, attended for minutes 45 and 46.
The Vice-Chancellor was not present for minute 48.
Professor Suzanne Cholerton was not present for minute 55.

MINUTES

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

30. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Mrs Teresa Graham, Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE Elect, and Mrs Louise Edwards-Holland, Deputy Director of Human Resources, to their first meeting of Council.

31. RETIRING MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

It was noted that this would be the last meeting for Professor Steve Homans, Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE, and Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, who would both be retiring from the University on 31 December 2015.

Council recorded its thanks to Professor Homans and Mrs Johnston for their contribution to the University over the past four and eighteen years respectively.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.
33. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Reserved Minute

34. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

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

Noted that:

1. Good progress was being made in relation to the Health and Safety Action Plan. A series of reviews of specific areas of activity were underway.

2. The Executive Director of Human Resources recorded her thanks to the following individuals for the assistance they provided with the monitoring of the University's health and safety arrangements:
   - Mr Neil Braithwaite, lay member of Health and Safety Committee
   - Professor William Maloney, Chair of the Radiation Protection Sub-Committee
   - Mr Andrew Newman, Chair of Health and Safety Committee
   - Professor Chris Rodgers, Chair of the Microbiological Hazards and Genetic Modification Safety Advisory Sub-Committee

35. **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

1. **Committee of University Chairs’ (CUC) meeting with BIS**

   The Chair of Council reported that he had attended a CUC meeting with BIS on 4 December 2015 at which the Green Paper on Higher Education was discussed. Attendees shared the view that there appeared to be limited scope for negotiation on much of the contents of the Green Paper. Concern was expressed at the language that was used which talked of ‘providers’ rather than ‘universities’ or ‘higher education institutions’. Council members were advised to review the Green Paper that was available on the BIS website. Universities UK would be co-ordinating to the response to the Government on behalf the sector.

2. **Vice-Chancellor’s Retirement**

   Following the Vice-Chancellor’s announcement that he would be bringing forward his retirement date from 31 July 2018 to 31 December 2016, it was necessary to accelerate the arrangements for identifying his successor.

   Statute 8 stated that ‘The Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by Council on the nomination of the Council and Senate acting jointly’.

   It was proposed that four of the members of the joint committee should be appointed by Senate and four should be appointed by Council. In addition, it was proposed that the Chair of Council should be the Chair of the joint selection committee. Members of Council who wished to suggest possible members of the joint selection committee were invited to contact the Chair of Council.

   **Resolved that:**

   (i) **Subject to any comments by Senate, the following joint committee be established to make a recommendation as to the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor:**
• The Chair of Council (Chair)
• 4 members appointed by Senate
• 4 members appointed by Council

(Members appointed by Senate and Council do not necessarily have to be currently members of those bodies)

(ii) The Chair of Council be granted delegated authority to approve the Council-appointed member of the joint committee.

(iii) The Chair of Council, Registrar and Acting Director of Human Resources, can act on behalf of Council in deciding which search consultants to appoint.

(iv) A report from Council should be submitted to Senate at its meeting on 19 January 2015.

36. 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. EQUIS Accreditation Visit

Following their recent visit to the University, the EQUIS accreditation panel had indicated that it was to recommend to its board that the Business School should be re-accredited for three years. The board would considered this recommendation at its meeting in April 2016. It was noted that the board did not always approve the accreditation panel’s recommendations.

In the panel’s view the Business School had made insufficient progress in relation to a number of recommendations from the previous accreditation visit and for this reason it was recommending accreditation for three years rather than five. An action plan was in place to address the outstanding recommendations from the previous accreditation visit.

3. Higher Education Green Paper

The Vice-Chancellor had hosted at dinner at the University for representatives of higher education institutions based in the north of England as part of the consultation process on the Higher Education Green Paper. The dinner had been attended by Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive of Universities UK.

Concern had been expressed at the assumptions upon which much of the Green Paper was based. It was considered important for these to be challenged. The immediate focus on detail was also concerning as was the possibility that the paper would lead to mechanistic processes being introduced that could be harmful for the sector.

The recommendations in relation to Students’ Unions that had been included in the Green Paper were considered to be receiving less attention. It was thought that all political parties
were hostile to the student movement at present so it would be important to keep developments in this area under review.

It was considered that the reorganisation of research funding proposed by the Nurse Review had the potential to be as harmful for the sector as many of the recommendations included in the Green Paper. Concern was expressed at the potential for a loss of independence from Government.

The Registrar was in the process of preparing the University’s individual response to the Green Paper consultation.

4. **Times Higher Awards 2015**

It was noted that the Times Higher Award that the University had received on 26 November 2015 was in recognition of its success in enabling learners with autism spectrum disorder to enjoy the full higher education experience through the introduction of three special initiatives. Funding for these initiatives had been raised from the Alumni Fund. It was noted that Dame Stephanie Shirley had established a foundation to support projects that related to autism and it was suggested that this might be a source of funding to which the University could apply. Mrs Teresa Graham offered to arrange to introduction.

5. **Raising the Bar**

The Raising the Bar project had now entered the implementation phase which had caused some disquiet amongst academic staff. The Executive team was continuing to work and communicate with the groups of staff who had articulated their concerns.

It was clear that the University should take action to improve its position in the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Analysis from the latest REF had identified that it was necessary to increase the quality of submissions. The majority of staff who would be entered into the 2019 REF were already in post.

The Raising the Bar exercise was the first time that the University had set out expectations at an individual level rather than via the PDR process. It was important to make clear to staff that there was funding and support available to help them to achieve at this higher level.

It was considered that the current disquiet amongst some members of staff was an inevitable part of the process. Providing discussions continued in a courteous and collegiate manner it was considered that the objectives of the Raising the Bar project would, ultimately, be accepted by the majority of academic staff.

Some academic units were already achieving and exceeding their research income targets due to the efforts of a small number of over-performing staff. To bring about a step change in overall performance and achieve a position in the top half of the Russell Group all members of academic staff would be expected to make an appropriate contribution.

It was important to ensure that the correct ‘spirit’ was adopted to bring about the proposed changes. The need for transparency was emphasised to ensure staff understood the message, the objectives and the contribution they were required to make to achieve these objectives. Erroneous messages should be corrected as soon as possible and a common terminology should be used to create confidence and remove any sense of distrust.

Within the Faculty of Medical Sciences there was considered to be less disquiet as target setting for research income had been in place for a number of years. The institute structure adopted by the Faculty was also considered to help support researchers to achieve their objectives.
The positive aspects of the Raising the Bar project should be emphasised, such as the availability of £47m to support staff with their research activity.

UCU had expressed the view that output based performance management was not effective. It was suggested that the University should seek to demonstrate that this was not the case and to highlight that this had been the basis of the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process that had been in place for approximately 10 years.

Maintaining and building on the advances made by the Raising the Bar project should be a key objective for the Vice-Chancellor’s successor.

The culture to be created around the Raising the Bar project was important. The key message to staff should be that the University wanted to support all staff to achieve and staff should be asked to identify the support arrangements that would assist them. This would be the key message communicated to staff in the New Year.

37. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

38. 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 E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

39. LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT

Received the progress report on the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The overall rating of the KPI for the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy had been reduced from Green to Amber/Green. This was in recognition of the changes that were taking place in the external environment as part of the Green Paper consultation. The introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) could result in different metrics being used to assess the quality of an institution’s teaching offer and the University would be required to make changes to address this once further detail was available.

2. The TEF was expected to include postgraduate teaching in its assessment of teaching quality. The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) provided two external indicators of the University’s performance as determined by student satisfaction scores. In both, the University outperformed the sector and the Russell Group in terms of overall satisfaction scores but failed to reach the internal benchmark of 90%. Academic units had prepared action plans to address performance and improving performance in relation to PGT was a specific objective.

3. The University’s performance for employability as measured by The Sunday Times Good University Guide (GUG) had declined from 12th position in 2013 to 24th in 2015. Whilst employment rates following graduation had improved this has been insufficient to maintain
the University’s position. Work was underway to address this. The timing of the data collection had been identified as a potential factor that had contributed to the decline in the University’s performance and this was to be reconsidered. The need to improve the sharing of accurate contact details within the University had also been identified as an action that could be taken to bring about improved performance.

4. It would be necessary to revisit the KPIs for this area of the University’s activity once the requirements of the Teaching Excellence Framework were available. It was suggested, in particular, that the measures used in relation to the KPI ‘to deliver and promote teaching of the highest standard’ should be reconsidered.

5. The variability of NSS scores between schools should be considered further. The University should consider changing what it was doing in areas of poor performance, particularly in relation to assessment and feedback. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching was undertaking visits to the school that had received the lowest NSS scores.

40. PARTNERSHIP WITH SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Received a report from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Internationalisation and Engagement, on behalf of Executive Board and Professor Ian Postlethwaite, Director of Projects.

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

Reserved Minute – ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

41. BUSINESS SCHOOL LEASE

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

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

Reserved Minute – ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

42. NOMINATIONS AGREEMENT

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

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

Noted that:

1. If planning approval was received on the 18/12/2015 Richardson Road would close for refurbishment at the end of the current academic year. It was necessary for the University to identify alternative accommodation from the private sector that could be offered under the University’s usual terms and conditions until Richardson Road reopened in September 2018. The ability to access University-managed accommodation had been identified as an important consideration for prospective undergraduate students.

2. The Students’ Union had been consulted on the proposal and it was confirmed that they were satisfied with the arrangements that were to be put in place.

Resolved that:

(i) Council approve the sourcing, through nominations agreements, of up to 1,100 rooms of additional student accommodation for two years from September 2016 to July 2018 to provide backfill accommodation during the redevelopment of the Richardson Road site.
(ii) Council authorise the Director of Accommodation and Hospitality Services, in conjunction with the Executive Director of Finance, to negotiate and execute the legal agreements required to complete this sourcing.

43. SCIENCE CENTRAL NEW PARTNER

Received:

(a) A report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document K. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(b) An updated Annex One to Document K. [Tabled at the Meeting. Copy filed in the Minute Book]

Reserved Minute – ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

44. CONFERENCE AND LEARNING CENTRE

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

Noted that:

1. It was necessary to provide additional teaching accommodation to support the anticipated expansion in student numbers in future years. The development of the Conference and Learning Centre next to the Business School would allow all business school teaching to be undertaken in close proximity rather than on two separate sites as was currently the case.

2. Council had previously approved a budget of £34.3m for the development of teaching accommodation next to the Business School. Following a suggestion from the City Council the possibility of enhancing this facility through the provision of conferencing and events space had been explored. It had also been identified that it would not be possible to meet the original space efficiency ratio of 70:30 and to achieve the same capacity as originally proposed it would be necessary to increase the budget to £41.4m. As a result, a number of options were presented to Council for consideration. Council were advised that a delay in a decision on this development could mean that it would not be available for the start of the 2019/20 academic year which would have consequences for the student experience.

3. Concern was expressed at the additional costs being presented and the absence of detailed information on the viability of a conferencing centre. It was proposed that the options proposed should be considered by the newly established Estates Capital Strategic Planning Committee for further consideration which should be asked to present a preferred option to the meeting of Council on 8 February 2016.

4. Additional infrastructure in the surrounding area, including hotel accommodation and good transport links, was required in order to make a conferencing venue a viable option and it was unclear whether the necessary facilities were available to support the University’s proposal. It was also unclear whether external conferencing and a full teaching timetable could take place within the same building.

5. The capacity that would be offered by option 3 – the enhanced conference and exhibition facilities – was considered to be insufficient to attract large national conferences. It was also suggested that such a facility would be in competition with the Sage Gateshead which could offer a similar capacity. The payback that would be achieved from the additional facilities should be established.
6. It was proposed to link the second building to an existing building on the site and it should be established whether it was necessary to provide social learning spaces in both buildings.

Resolved that:

(i) Further work should be undertaken to determine the academic case for the additional facilities that would be provided by an enhanced conference and exhibition space (Option 3 of Document L) and whether this would be worth the additional cost of £13.7m (based on the original budget approved by Council on 2 March 2015).

(ii) The proposals contained in Document L, together with the answers to the questions raised during the above discussion, should be considered by the Estates Capital Strategic Planning Committee and a recommendation from this Committee should be presented to the meeting of Council on 8 February 2015.

45. STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT

Received:

(a) The Students’ Union Impact Report from Mr Dominic Fearon, President, Students’ Union and Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

(b) A PowerPoint presentation from Mr Dominic Fearon, President, Students’ Union and Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union.
   [Copy of PowerPoint slides filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Mr Dominic Fearon and Mr Simon Gerry be thanked for an informative presentation.

46. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 22 October 2015.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that student engagement had been a top priority for the President during his election campaign. A series of visits to academic units were underway and permission was being sought from Heads of School to establish a permanent presence to promote Students’ Union activities in each academic unit.

47. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Nominations Committee held on 16 October 2015.
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that:

(i) The revised terms of reference for Nominations Committee be approved.

(ii) The proposal to appoint a second Vice-Chair of Council be approved.

(iii) The role description for the Vice-Chair of Council should be circulated to lay members of Council.

(iv) The following process to appoint a second Vice-Chair of Council be approved:
Expressions of interest to be invited from existing members of Council to be submitted by 14 January 2016.

Special meeting of Nominations Committee to be held to consider the expressions of interest and to determine whether to proceed with an appointment from the existing lay membership.

Nominations Committee to recommend an individual to be appointed as a second Vice-Chair of Council. The successful candidate should be appointed with immediate effect.

48. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on 23 November 2015. [Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Vice-Chair of Council and Chair of Remuneration Committee, recorded her thanks to Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, for her support and guidance in relation to the operation of Remuneration Committee.

2. It was confirmed that appropriate legal advice had been taken in relation to the arrangements to be made for the Vice-Chancellor following his retirement.

49. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 25 November 2015. [Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

50. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received:

(a) Report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 3 December 2015.

(b) The Quarter 1 Financial Statement, from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Documents R and S. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that Finance Committee and Council had received the financial results for Q1 which had been produced in line with new reporting standards FRS102.

51. ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS

Received the Annual Review and Accounts of the University. [Document tabled at the meeting. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

52. REVIEW OF STUDENT RENTS

Considered a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document T. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Reserved Minute – ‘Commercial in Confidence’.

53. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Considered the revised Environmental Sustainability Policy from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that consideration should be given to referencing the University’s divestment plans in future versions of the Environmental Sustainability Policy.

Resolved that the revised Environmental Sustainability Policy be approved.

54. ATHENA SWAN SUBMISSION

Reported that the University’s Athena SWAN silver award application was submitted on 30 November 2015. A copy of the application was available to view on the Council members’ secure website.

55. CHAIR’S CIRCULAR

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 23 November 2015.

Approved business:

(i) Renaming Proposal for the Robinson Library
(ii) Financial Regulations.

Items for information:

Reported Business

56. RE-APPOINTMENT OF A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

Senate Standing Order X states that ‘The Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the re-appointment of an existing Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the period of the appointment’.

Considered recommendations in a paper from the Vice-Chancellor.

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

Noted that the period of appointment should be until 31 July 2021 not 31 July 2020 as stated in Document V.

Resolved that, subject to the above amendment, the recommendations in Document V be approved, subject to the agreement of Senate.