NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
15 June 2015

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Appleby, Ms Claire Boothman (President, Students’ Union), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Jonathan Glass, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Robert Hull, Professor Neill Marshall, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mrs Heidi Mottram, Dr Ole Pedersen, Mr Simon Pleydell, Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mr Paul Walker and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Steve Homans, 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 Stephen Lightley and Professor Tom Joyce.

The Vice-Chancellor was not present for Minute 133.

MINUTES

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

112. CONGRATULATIONS

The Chair congratulated Ms Vicky Wright, member of Council and trustee of the Royal Lifeboats Institution, on her award of an OBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours for services to Maritime Safety.

113. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27 April 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed.

114. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Report from Nominations Committee (Minute 104, 27.04.15)

Received a report providing an update on Council membership and chairs and members of University committees, following the meeting of Council on 27 April 2015.

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

Resolved that Mrs Heidi Mottram be approved as the Chair of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2018.

115. NOTES FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF COUNCIL AND SENATE, 27 APRIL 2015

Received the notes from the Joint Meeting of Council and Senate on 27 April 2015.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
116. **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. The incident reporting system that had recently been introduced was working well.

2. National benchmarking data on Health and Safety statistics for the higher education sector were now produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This had resulted in changes to the timescale for producing comparative data which had delayed the publication of the Health and Safety Annual Report. The Annual Report would now be submitted to the October meetings of Senate and Council.

117. **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

1. **Council Effectiveness Questionnaire**

All members of Council were asked to complete the Council Effectiveness Questionnaire which had been circulated in an email from the Registrar on 10 June 2015. Members were reminded that the deadline for completion was 31 July 2015.

2. **Briefing Sessions**

Members of Council were invited to suggest topics which could be covered as part of the briefing sessions arranged for members of Court, Council and Senate.

118. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

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

[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. 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. **Queen’s Birthday Honours**

In an addition to the OBE awarded to Ms Vicky Wright (noted under Minute 112 above) Council were informed that the following individuals associated with the University had received honours in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list:

- Professor Vicki Bruce, Professor of Psychology, School of Psychology, received a DBE for services to Higher Education and Psychology;
- Dr Hari Shukla, former member of Court, received a CBE for services to interfaith and to the community in Tyne and Wear;
- Ms Kathryn Tickell, Lecturer in the School of Arts and Cultures, received an OBE for services to Folk Music.
3. **General Election, 7 May 2015**

Following their success in the General Election, the Conservative government had announced plans to devolve powers to cities that agreed to appoint elected mayors. Executive Board would be discussing this matter further at a future meeting and would consider whether elected mayors and devolution was something which the University should support. Members of Council were asked for their views.

It was considered that the University should support increased collaboration within the region but this did not necessarily mean that it should publicly support the mechanisms being proposed to do this, i.e. elected mayors. Within the business community it was considered that increased collaboration was required in order to accelerate economic growth. Concern was expressed that the Government’s Northern Powerhouse initiative might not benefit the North East region as much of the power and investment could be focussed in Greater Manchester.

4. **Conference and Learning Centre**

Members of Council were invited to express their views on the possible involvement of the City Council in the creation of a larger exhibition space as part of the Conference and Learning Centre. It was considered that joint management arrangements could be difficult and it would be better for the University to maintain control but to agree an access arrangement with the City Council for use of the centre outside term time. If a larger exhibition space was to be incorporated it should be reconfigurable to ensure it could be adapted as the University’s needs changed.

5. **National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation (NASI)**

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence.

6. **Fossil Fuels**

Following consideration of a motion from the Students’ Union requesting that the University freeze investments in and divest from fossil fuel companies within five years, reinvesting these funds in renewable energy, the Vice-Chancellor had asked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to form a small advisory group to consider all aspects of the debate and to report back on a possible carbon strategy for the University. Members of Council who were interested in participating in this advisory group were invited to contact the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Representatives from the Students’ Union would be invited to participate and it was hoped that the group would be in a position to report back to Council before the end of the calendar year.

7. **Donation**

*Resolved that Council approve a donation of £500,000 from Mr Peter Lomas, to provide a Harvard-style lecture theatre as part of the Armstrong Building refurbishment project.*

8. **Naming Proposal for the Medical School Social Space**

*Resolved that Council approved the name “The Ridley Atrium” for the social space.*

9. **Executive Director of Human Resources Interviews**

Council was informed that interviews for the Executive Director of Human Resources position would take place on Thursday 18 June.
10. **Boiler House Proposals**

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council of plans to convert the Boiler House on King’s Road into a social space to be used for significant events such as congregations and other University celebrations.

119. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Received the Strategic Risk Register summary 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 increase in the net likelihood score for the research grants and contracts risk (SR1B) had been prompted by a change in government policy.

2. The reduction in the net impact score for the home student recruitment risk (SR5H) and the net likelihood score for the international student recruitment risk (SR5I) reflected the fact that progress in relation to student recruitment for September 2015 was good and the University’s income streams were becoming more balanced.

3. Executive Board would be reviewing the strategic risk register in the near future to identify risks which were no longer strategic and which could be removed or transferred to the Professional Support Services risk register. A risk relating to Xiamen would be added and the risk relating to the disruption caused by political decisions would be reviewed.

120. **INSTITUTIONAL 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 F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that there had been one change to the KPI summary report since the previous meeting; the rating of the KPI for the ‘World citation impact’ had been changed from amber to amber/green to reflect fact that the target for 2014 had been exceeded.

121. **UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2015-16 AND 2016-17 PLAN**

Received the University budget for 2015-16 as set out in a report from Executive Board.

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

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence.

122. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST**

Received the medium term financial forecast as set out in 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.

123. **ESTATES STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT**
Received the Estates Strategic Progress Report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

124. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT

Received the Environmental Sustainability Strategic Progress Report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The University should be congratulated on the progress which had been made in relation to environmental sustainability.

2. It was suggested that Document K might prove useful as part of the fossil fuel divestment discussions and the development of a carbon strategy (as noted under Minute 118, Point 6 above) as it set out clearly the University’s current carbon footprint and the areas where the University was making a positive environmental impact.

125. CARBON TARGET REPORT

Received a report on Carbon Targets from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Council had previously agreed a carbon reduction target of 43% in scope 1 & 2 emissions against a 2005/06 baseline by 2019/20. This target was proving to be hard to achieve as a result of the expansion in the University’s estate in recent years and also the government’s lack of progress in relation to the decarbonisation of the UK’s electricity supply.

2. It was proposed that, taking into account the University’s future growth plans, a new target should be adopted. It was suggested that this target should be to maintain scope 1 & 2 emissions at 2005/06 levels by 2020 which would require reducing emissions by circa 20% in the baseline estate in order to mitigate the increases from growth. The 43% reduction target should be retained as an aspirational target.

3. As far as possible the University tried to ensure new buildings were carbon efficient but it was often difficult to construct carbon neutral buildings due to the energy intensive requirements of research facilities such as laboratories.

4. It was understood that a number of other institutions were considering revising their carbon targets in a similar manner to that being considered by the University.

Resolved that the revised carbon reduction target of maintain scope 1 & 2 emissions at 2005/06 levels by 2020 be approved.

126. PROPOSAL FOR NEW 4-GRADE ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

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

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

Noted that:
1. The proposal, which had been well debated at meetings of Senate and across the University, proposed the introduction of a 4-grade academic structure which would establish separate grades for the positions of Senior Lecturer and Reader. It also provided for an uplift in the pay scales for Professors. Following extensive discussions, no titles changes were being proposed.

2. There were not considered to be any recruitment risks as a result of the proposed changes but this would be monitored. It was thought that the increase in the pay scales which was being proposed for certain grades would have a positive effect on recruitment.

Resolved that the proposal to introduce a 4-grade academic structure and the transition plan, as set out in Document M, be approved.

127. 89 SANDYFORD ROAD PROJECT APPROVAL

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

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence.

128. RICHARDSON ROAD PROJECT APPROVAL

Received a report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence

129. DIGITAL CAMPUS AND IT SERVICE UPDATE

Received a report from Professor Tony Stevenson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

130. REPORT ON STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Received a report on Student Complaints for the 2013-14 academic year from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC) received reports on student complaints on an annual basis and ULTSEC’s observations on these reports were reported to Senate. The Committee of University Chairs’ (CUC) guide published in December 2014 recommended that reports on student complaint should also be reported to Council.

2. Action was taken whenever recurrent comments were identified. For example, the need to provide more consistent guidance to undergraduate students undertaking projects had been identified following a number of recent complaints and this was to be addressed.

3. The numbers of complaints submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) that were upheld were low.
4. The reason for the sudden drop in the number of formal complaints (from 62 in 2013/14 to 26 in 2014/15) should be identified.

5. It was suggested that the complaints processes together with the University’s values should be easily available to staff, students and stakeholders.

6. Future reports should highlight the most important details and identify trends. It was agreed that a summary report which would extract and analyse the key points, would be produced for future meetings of Council.

131. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee on 3 June 2015.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Reserved Minute – Commercial in Confidence.

132. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 26 May 2015.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document S. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Council commended the Students’ Union President and the Education Officer on their hard work during the year and the excellent results which had been achieved.

2. Ms Jacqui Henderson would be stepping down as Chair of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee and on behalf of the Students’ Union, the President thanked her for her support over the past nine years.

133. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on 11 May 2015.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document T. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The report had been prepared with the aim of making the operation of Remuneration Committee more transparent.

2. The report included a number of recommended changes to the Committee’s terms of reference. Revised terms of reference would be prepared which would be submitted to a future meeting of Council for approval.

3. The reporting of Vice-Chancellors’ salaries that appeared in the Times Higher was not consistent as it was subject to an institution’s interpretation of a Freedom of Information request.

134. CHAIR’S CIRCULAR

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 27 May 2015.
Council, 15 June 2015

Approved business:

(i) Report from University and Faculty Promotions Committees

Items for information:

(i) Access Agreement
(ii) Human Resources Strategy Action Plan

135. 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 U. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]