NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

15 September 2014

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Ms Claire Boothman (President, Students’ Union), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mr Mike Davison, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr Stephen Lightley, Professor Neill Marshall, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mrs Heidi Mottram, Dr Ole Pedersen, Mr Simon Pleydell and Mr Paul Walker.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Tony Stevenson (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), and Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Dr John Appleby, Mr Jonathan Glass, Professor Charles Harvey, Mr Robert Hull, Mrs Veryan Johnston (Executive Director of Human Resources), Professor Nick Wright, and Ms Vicky Wright.

M I N U T E S

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

2. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Claire Boothman, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Tom Joyce, Professor Neill Marshall, Mr David Morris and Dr Ole Pedersen to their first meeting of Council.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 16 June 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising or outstanding actions from the previous minutes.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an oral report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on the current health and safety issues affecting the University.

Noted that following the deaths of two students in Borneo (see also item 7.1 below), the University’s policy for students working abroad had been reviewed. It had been determined that there was no apparent systems failure and there were no further steps which Newcastle-based staff could have taken to prevent the tragic events from occurring.

6. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Council Briefing Sessions
Council members were reminded of the forthcoming Council Briefing session:

- 27 October 2014, 9.30am-10.15am, Room 5.18, King’s Gate – Estate Strategy: overview and current projects and issues.

Council members were reminded to inform Lizzie Taylor if they planned to attend this session.

7. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

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

[Circulated with the agenda as Document B. 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. **Student Recruitment**

The most recent figures suggested that the targets set for student recruitment had almost been achieved with an increase in the proportion of students achieving grades of ABB or better. The Vice-Chancellor sent his thanks to the staff who had worked hard to achieve this outcome.

3. **89 Sandyford Road**

Council was informed that the purchase of 89 Sandyford Road had been completed.

4. **Sale of University property: 13 Windsor Terrace**

*Resolved that Council approve the recommendation to sell 13 Windsor Terrace to DurhamLane.*

5. **Late News**

The Scottish Independence Referendum was discussed.

7. **Early Warnings**

Singapore – Council was informed that since the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) had become a university in its own right it was expected to become less dependent on the support of its international partners. It was proposed than in light of this development, an updated version of the Internationalisation Strategy should be prepared.

8. **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER SUMMARY**

Received the Strategic Risk Register Summary.

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

Noted that:
1. The increase in the likelihood rating of SR4C – Failure to maintain the academic and financial viability of the Singapore campus – reflected the recent change to the status of SIT and the increased uncertainty over the University’s future relationship with the institution.

2. The increase in the likelihood rating of SR5K – Failure to manage the University in keeping with the ethos of environmental sustainability – reflected the fact that the University was unlikely to meet the HEFCE’s carbon emission targets for 2020. The consequences of this were as yet unknown.

9. **VISION 2021: INSTITUTIONAL KPI REPORT**

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

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

10. **GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Received a report outlining the 5 year review of Governance, 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 University was required to undertake a review of its governance structures every five years. The Committee of University Chairs (CUC) recommended the engagement of external advisers to assist with this process. It was noted that the employment of an external adviser could add value but the University was advised against engaging a consultancy firm.

2. It was proposed that the Governance review should reflect on whether the current structures were effective in enabling the University to achieve its objectives and allowed it to respond in an agile manner, particularly given the number of changes which had taken place within the sector since the previous review. The review should consider whether the existing structures were fit for purpose and whether they would enable the University to meet the challenges it would face over the next five years.

3. It was proposed that the governance structures used in other sectors should be considered alongside available benchmarking data. The process to be followed should be agreed by Council. To include management would expand the review beyond its usual remit and careful consideration would need to be given as to whether this was desirable.

**Resolved that consideration would be given to the process and scope of the governance review and Council would be presented with a proposal for consideration at a future meeting.**

11. **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

[Minute classified as ‘strictly confidential’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

12. **REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee, held on 10 July 2014.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Members of Council were reminded that they could submit items which they considered in need of a review by Audit Committee to the Chair of Council.

13. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 10 June 2014.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document H. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

14. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2014

Received a report on the results of the National Student Survey 2014 from Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University had achieved an overall satisfaction score of 91% which, from a response rate of 70%, was an excellent outcome and represented a genuine indication of student opinion.

2. Assessment and feedback remained the area where the lowest scores were achieved both for the University and for the sector as a whole. The lack of improvement was considered to be disappointing given the focus which had been given to this area. It was suggested that feedback could be given too late to be of use to students and there were occasionally complaints that handwritten comments were unclear. Often the feedback given was used to explain why a certain grade had been awarded rather than clarifying or explaining points which a student may not have understood. It was suggested that the University should review the emphasis and purpose of the feedback given to ensure that it was of use to students rather than meeting the requirements of an internal process.

3. The Students’ Union was congratulated on having achieved a good result of 82% satisfaction, an increase of 4% on the previous year.

Resolved that the nature of feedback given to students be reviewed and comments sought from student representatives.

15. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

[Minute classified as ‘commercial in confidence’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

16. ESTATES UPDATE

[Minute classified as ‘commercial in confidence’. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

17. PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY

Received a report from Professor Chris Day, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document N. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that the creation of a flagship translational research facility for childhood cancer research on the 5th and 6th floors of the Herschel Building at a total project cost of £5.009m be approved.
18. PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Reported that:

(a) Professor Charles Harvey would step down as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences with effect from 31 December 2014.

(b) The procedure for the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors, as set out in Senate Standing Order X, was as follows:
   (i) The Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council any establishment of, or appointment to, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor post.

   (ii) If Senate and Council approve the recommendation, a joint selection committee shall be established comprising:

         The Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair)
         Three members appointed by Council
         Three members appointed by Senate

   (iii) On the occasion of the committee being established to appoint a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for a faculty, at least three of the members of the committee must be members of the relevant faculty.

Considered a recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor, that a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences be appointed to succeed Professor Harvey.

Resolved that:

(i) The recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor that a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences be appointed to succeed Professor Harvey be approved.

(ii) Suggestions for Council appointed members of the selection committee should be submitted to the Chair of Council by 19 September 2014.

19. CHAIR’S CIRCULARS

Chair’s circulars of routine business were sent to members on 28 July and 26 August 2014.

28 July 2014
Approved business:

There were no items of business to approve.

Items for information:

(i) Council Effectiveness Review 2013-14
(ii) HEFCE Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability
(iii) Reported Business
(iv) Vice-Chancellor Distinguished Teaching Awards
(v) Outstanding Registry Team Award
(vi) Council Briefing Lunches – 2014-15

26 August 2014
Approved business:
There were no items of business to approve.

**Items for information:**

(i) Membership of Council 2014-15  
(ii) Statement of Primary Responsibilities  
(iii) Delegation of Powers and Authority  
(iv) Principles of Council  
(v) Council Schedule for 2014-15  
(vi) Schedule of Council Business 2014-15  
(vii) Council Briefing Sessions 2014-15  
(viii) Statutory Returns  
(ix) Reported Business