NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
18 May 2009

Present: Mrs M O Grant (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Professor E G N Cross, Professor M F Cross, Professor G J Docherty, Ms C J Ellis (Education Officer), Mr J C FitzPatrick, Ms J Henderson, Mr C J Hilton, Mr R Hull, Sir Miles Irving, Mr P M Johnson, Dr L Y J Liu, Professor J N Marshall, Mr S Pleydell, Ms K Priestley, Mr W P Richens (President, Union Society) and Mr I Shott.

In attendance: Professor C P Day, Professor O R Hinton, Professor E Ritchie, Professor A C Stevenson, Professor N G Wright and Professor P L Younger (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), Dr M Clewlow (Head of QuILT) and Ms E M Niven (Administrative Officer).

Mrs C Harvey (Academic Registrar) attended for item 94. Ms J Henderson was not present for item 92(i).

MINUTES

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

88. RETIRING VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was noted that this would be the last meeting for Mr Chris Hilton, Vice-Chairman of Council. The Chairman thanked Mr Hilton for his considerable contribution to the work of Council over many years.

89. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30 March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed.

90. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received an oral report from the Executive Director of Human Resources on current health and safety issues affecting the University, including performance measures and actions taken.

Noted that:

1. At its meeting on 30 March, Council had been informed that the University had received an improvement notice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the receipt of infected tissue from another institution. The University had recently received written confirmation from the HSE that it would not be prosecuting the University or any of the individuals involved in this incident.
2. At the meeting of Council on 30 March, the Executive Director of Human Resources had been requested to investigate why a number of the RIDDOR reports submitted to the HSE, and recorded in the Summary Accident Report for the fourth quarter of 2007-08, ‘had not been investigated’. It had been established that, where the report indicated that an incident ‘had not been investigated’, this was because an appropriate investigation had already been conducted by the academic or service unit manager or by its health and safety team and a further investigation by staff from the Safety Office was not required. It was confirmed that all incidents were properly investigated and reported to the HSE. Internal reporting procedures would be amended in future to provide clarity and also to give details of the follow up actions.

91. **MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**Progress of business**

Received a business tracking form.

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

92. **CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS**

(i) **Deputy-Chairmen of Council**

Reported that Nominations Committee, at its meeting on 11 May 2009, had resolved that Council be asked to:

(a) Appoint two Deputy Chairs from 1 August 2009, Ms Jacqui Henderson and Mr Mark I’Anson.

(b) Formally designate Mr I’Anson as Vice-Chairman of Council from 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2012, for the purpose of compliance with the University Statutes.

Noted that consideration would be given to amending the Statutes to allow greater flexibility in future.

**Resolved that the above recommendations be approved.**

(ii) **13 July 2009 meeting of Council** (Minute 69 (ii), 30.3.2009)

Reported that the 13 July meeting of Council would be held at the Dove Marine Laboratory, followed by a barbeque. Contingency measures had been put in place in the event of a bad weather forecast and members would be contacted approximately 5 days before the event to confirm the final arrangements.

(iii) **National Meeting of the Committee of University Chairs**

The Chairman had attended the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) plenary meeting in April where a presentation had been delivered by Robert Behrens, Chief Executive of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The Chairman considered that it would be useful for Council to learn more about the work of the OIA as it related to students’ perceptions of fairness and the student experience.
(iv) **Size of Council**

A number of universities had reduced considerably the size of their governing body but the range of responsibilities for members of Council was increasing and it was necessary to ensure that there were sufficient members to cope with the spread of responsibilities. Council would need to give some consideration to this issue in due course.

(v) **Strategic Positioning Project**

Members of Council would soon receive an invitation to participate in an engagement study to assist the University with its strategic positioning. Council members would be invited to attend two meetings on 25 June and 9 September. Individual consultations could be arranged if members were unable to attend on these dates.

93. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

Received the Vice-Chancellor’s report.

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

(i) **Angel Alliance**

It was noted that the £1m award reported in this item was from the EPSRC, not ONE North East as stated in the document.

(ii) **HEFCE Funding**

HEFCE had informed the University of its grant allocation in February 2009, however, following the announcement of the Budget, it had been required by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) to make efficiency savings of £180 million by 2010/11. HEFCE was expected to clawback some of the money it had allocated to institutions for 2009/10. It was understood that the research allocation would not be affected and HEFCE had been asked to ring-fence science funding. It was thought that c. £900,000 of the University’s income could be at risk. Executive Board had scheduled its away day for 1 September in order to consider the University’s future financial plans in anticipation of reduced government funding in future years. Council would have an opportunity to contribute to these discussions at an away day to be held in the autumn.

(iii) **Malaysia**

The University’s Medical Campus in Malaysia had started to recruit its first students and this had been the subject of very positive coverage in the Malaysian and Singaporean press. Council members received a document which included articles in three languages from a number of Asian newspapers (copy filed in the Minute Book).

(iv) **Strategic Overview Document**

Council members received a draft version of the Strategic Overview Document which had been prepared for public consumption (copy filed in the Minute Book). A web version of the document was also to be prepared.
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(v) **Swine Flu**

Council members were informed of the University’s response to a confirmed case of swine flu in a house in which some students lived. The University had responded promptly to ensure accurate and consistent messages were sent to students and staff. A member of Council raised the point that there had been no deaths in the UK to date as a result of swine flu and that, in contrast, there were 80 deaths per week as a result of road accidents.

(vi) **Ncl+ Awards**

The Vice-Chancellor had attended the Ncl+ Awards which sought to recognise students’ extra-curricular achievements. The Vice-Chancellor sent his compliments to the students and also to the Academic Registrar and her team for the organisation of a successful evening.

94. **STUDENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BUILDING**

Received an oral report from Mrs Cathryn Harvey (Academic Registrar) on the arrangements for the delivery of student services in the new Student and Administrative Services building.

Noted that:

1. The new building would lead to a number of services that were currently dispersed across campus being brought together in one location. The aim would be to provide the University with a front door rather than a ‘one-stop-shop’ as individual schools and faculties would continue to provide a vital role in supporting students.

2. The services in the SAS building would be supported by on-line information, allowing all students to access some form of support and advice 24 hours a day. It was not intended to open the building outside of normal opening hours, except at key times such as registration, as there was considered to be little demand for this. This policy would be kept under review.

3. The new building and the services it would provide would be marketed to all students. It would be necessary to monitor whether the convenient location of the services led to an increase in demand.

[A copy of the slides used by Mrs Harvey in her presentation is filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that Cathryn Harvey be thanked for her informative presentation.

95. **UNIVERSITY BUDGET FOR 2009-10**

Considered a report from Executive Board.

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

After noting that:

1. From 2010/11 onwards there were expected to be a number of significant pressures on the University’s finances. The level of income growth in future years was expected to be significantly less than the rate of past pay increases. The Research Councils were also expected to cut back on
funding. The removal of the fee cap was unlikely to take place in the near future and the University’s income had already been affected by lower rates of interest.

2. The University expected its funding allocation for 2009/10 to be cut by £900k as a consequence of HEFCE clawing back £65m from its 2009/10 budget. Such a reduction would be containable within budgeted contingency funds but the University would also seek to make savings elsewhere.

3. The Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills had stated that in future it was likely that more funding would come from contestable funding rather than from increases in the block grant.

4. The University needed to take action in order to protect its future but it was expected to be in a strong position to do this at the end of the current financial year. The financial enabling objectives set by Finance Committee had all been achieved. The pay settlement was considered to be the biggest risk to the University’s finances in the next year. In order to maintain the University’s sustainability it would be essential for the pay settlement to be low and for future increases to be linked to affordability. The University’s performance in terms of international recruitment remained buoyant but there was some concern over the impact of new border controls.

5. It was important for the University to harness strategic opportunities as they arose and for it to ensure that its current and future projects were successful. The efficiency of business processes across the University would be addressed and a series of projects were already underway. Overseas recruitment, continuing professional development (CPD) and consultancy projects had been identified as areas of potential growth.

6. It was suggested that a more fundamental restructuring process could be pursued to ensure that the University was in a suitable position and that necessary resources were available to make key strategic investments as opportunities arose. It was noted that the University was already undertaking a form of restructuring through the development of the Strategic Overview document, which helped to clarify the University’s objectives. It was intended that this clarification would improve the University’s position and increase demand for its services.

7. It was noted that many services were duplicated between the NHS, Northumbria University and Newcastle University and that consideration should be given to the potential of generating savings through shared services.

8. The University’s five-year strategy would need to provide real headroom in order to cope with the changed financial circumstances. The Financial Services Authority was advocating ‘reverse stress testing’ for financial companies to help determine when their current business model might become unviable. It was suggested that the University might wish to adopt this approach.

9. If necessary, the discussion of the budget and future financial strategy which Council would consider at its away day in the autumn could be brought forward to allow Council to influence these discussions at an early stage.

10. Council noted the material improvement in the Faculty of SAgE’s finances and resolved that its congratulations should be extended to the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor and his colleagues on this achievement.

Resolved that the budget for 2009-10, as detailed in Document D, be approved.
96. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Received the updated Strategic Risk Register, as considered and endorsed by Executive Board, together with a paper from Dr John Hogan (Registrar).

[Circulated with the Agenda as Documents E & F. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. A number of changes had been made to the risk management methodology and these were detailed in Document E. The Strategic Risk Register (Document F) had been prepared using this new methodology. A gross risk rating had been introduced which was considered helpful in identifying the effectiveness of the controls.

2. Audit Committee, at its meeting on 24 April 2009, had received the full Strategic Risk Register together with a report from Executive Board explaining the recent changes to the University’s risk management procedures. Audit Committee had endorsed the Risk Register for onward submission to Council.

3. Audit Committee had asked for more detail to be provided where controls were noted as not being fully effective. Audit Committee also considered that the risk register should be reviewed more frequently than twice a year. It was noted that Executive Board received reports on major projects each month.

4. In relation to Science City (SR6) it was important to recognise that the public was aware of the University’s involvement and that its success or failure would impact upon perceptions of the University. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to quantify some of the reputational risks associated with this project.

5. It was suggested that the naming of individual risk owners on the risk register could detract from the idea of collective responsibility. It was noted that the responsibility for individual controls would be assigned to named individuals.

6. It was acknowledged that the active risk management process was more important than the document itself and that it should be considered as a dynamic tool. It was essential for the consideration of risk to become part of the management culture. It was noted that the University had made significant improvements in this regard since the concept of risk management was introduced to the sector several years ago.

Resolved that Council note Executive Board’s current assessment of the University’s strategic risks and their associated controls.

97. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ANNUAL REPORT

Received the Equal Opportunities Annual Report for 2008-09, which had been endorsed by Executive Board.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document G. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
After noting that:

1. A number of significant developments had occurred during the past year in relation to equality and diversity at the University. A ‘Think Tank’ on Gender Balance in Academic Careers had taken place in October 2008 and the recommendations which had emerged from this event were expected to be implemented by the end of December 2009.

2. The University was continuing to make efforts to improve the diversity of the student population. Regional benchmarks had been achieved but it was proving more difficult to achieve those set nationally. The Partners programme had been extended to Yorkshire and Humberside with the expectation that this would improve the number of applications received from and offers made to applicants from ethnic minorities.

3. The University was required to submit a report to HEFCE on how well it was performing in terms of widening participation benchmarks. A copy of this report would be presented to Council.

98. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Considered a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 24 April 2009.

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

Confidentiality Clauses

Noted that the introduction of a Confidentiality Clause would need to be carefully worded to ensure that it did not create an element of conflict for staff.

Resolved that the Registrar be asked to give some consideration to wording of the Confidentiality Clause.

99. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) : RESEARCH INCOME AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Reported that Council was asked to consider, in detail, one or two KPIs at each meeting, following approval of the overall framework by Council.

Considered a paper from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) on the KPIs, ‘Research Income’ and ‘Research Excellence’.

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

Resolved that Council would receive a breakdown of the number of postgraduate research students by gender.

100. PAY BARGAINING : UCU 2009 PAY CLAIM (Minute 75, 30.3.2009)

Received an oral update from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources.

Noted that:

1. On 23 April, the UCU had announced its intention to ballot members on industrial action. This announcement was made prior to the announcement of an offer from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA). UCEA had subsequently made offer of 0.3% on 27 April following the timescale agreed by New JNCHES, the national pay negotiating forum.
2. On 30 April, the Vice-Chancellor had sent a letter to all staff encouraging them to use their vote but also to consider the challenging financial climate in which the University was operating and the need to maintain sustainability.

3. It was understood that UCEA intended to challenge the validity of the strike based on the inaccuracy of the information contained in the ballot papers.

Resolved that Council agree to delegate authority to the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Honorary Treasurer to enable action to be taken on behalf of Council, should it be required prior to the next meeting.

101. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE OF THE INTO JOINT VENTURE (Minute 18, 20.10.2009)

Received a progress report from Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The joint venture had achieved and exceeded recruitment targets. Conversion rates were also good.

2. Procedures were to be put in place to ensure the English and academic levels of students progressing onto degree programmes via INTO were appropriate. A cross-faculty teaching and learning committee would be established for this purpose. The committee would also monitor the progress of INTO students once they commenced their degree programmes.

3. The provision of appropriate teaching accommodation for INTO remained a high priority. It was hoped that the finance required to progress the INTO capital developments would soon be available.

102. ANNUAL REPORT FROM ETHICS COMMITTEE

Received the Annual Report from Ethics Committee.

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

103. NEWCASTLE SCIENCE CITY

Received a progress report from Executive Board.

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

104. FEES SCHEDULE 2009-10

Considered the Fees Schedule for 2009-10, which had been endorsed by Executive Board and approved by Senate, subject to the agreement of Council.

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

Resolved that the Fees Schedule 2009-10 be approved.

105. DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY
Received a report from Executive Board.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document O. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that Executive Board had declared the following properties to be surplus to requirements and had given permission for the properties to be sold at the appropriate time and price, to be determined by the Executive Director of Finance:

- 19 Claremont Place: current market value £195k
- 20, 21, 22 & 23 Claremont Place: current market value £750k
- 25 Claremont Place: current market value £275k

106. **GREAT NORTH MUSEUM GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES** (Minute 25, 20.10.2008)

Considered a report from Executive Board.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document P. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Resolved that:

(i) **The Great North Museum Board be established with immediate effect, with membership and terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 to Document P.**

(ii) **The following committees be disestablished with immediate effect, subject to the agreement of Senate:**

   - **Museums and Gallery Board**
   - **Hancock Museum Management Sub-Committee**
   - **Joint Museums Sub-Committee**
   - **Hatton Gallery Policy Sub-Committee**

107. **HEFCE’S ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK**

Received a paper from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance.
[Circulated with the Agenda as Document Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that HEFCE’s overall assessment at this time was that the University was not at higher risk.

108. **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 R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]