NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

6 February 2017

Present: Mr Mark l’Anson (Chair of Council), Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tony Stevenson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Paul Christensen, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Christopher Duddy (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Jonathan Galloway, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mrs Teresa Graham, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Mr Jack Taylor (President, Students’ Union), and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor David Burn, Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Nick Wright, Professor Phillip Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Mrs Lynne Howlett (Assistant Director, Human Resources), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Lizzie Taylor (Executive Officer (Governance)) and Miss Janice Trewick (Development Officer, Learning & Teaching Development Service).

Apologies: Professor Richard Davies, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Ms Dianne Nelmes, Mrs Judith Whitaker (Executive Director of Human Resources) and Mr Paul Walker.

Dr Stuart Edwards (Dean of Undergraduate Studies, SAgE) and Mrs Helen Wass (Administrator, Planning Office) attended the meeting for Minute 75.

M I N U T E S

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

66. WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed Professor Chris Day to his first meeting of Council as Vice-Chancellor & President and Professor David Burn to his first meeting as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences.

67. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 5 December 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

68. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Teaching Excellence Framework (Minute 57, 05.12.16)

Reported that, at the meeting on 5 December 2016, Council granted delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor to approve the Teaching Excellence Framework Provider Submission on its behalf.

Received the Teaching Excellence Framework Provider Submission that was submitted to HEFCE on 25 January 2017.

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

1. The University’s grading in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) would depend, in part, on its performance against the published metrics. Three positive flags were required in order to achieve a gold rating as of right and the University had achieved only one but it scored highly on all its metrics.

2. The outcome of the TEF would have implications for the University’s ability to increase home undergraduate tuition fees: a result of silver or above would allow an institution to increase the fees in line with inflation in 2018-19.

3. The University did not plan to issue a press release on its TEF performance but it would be prepared to respond to any questions from the media once the results were announced in May 2017.

69. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

Noted that:

1. The Health and Safety Annual Report would be presented to Council at its meeting on 3 April 2017.

2. A review of the University’s occupational health provision was currently underway and a report on this would be available in April 2017. The University had limited resource for occupational health services and it was important to ensure they were allocated appropriately.

3. A recent incident at Northumbria University had resulted in volunteers for a sports sciences research project being given harmful amounts of caffeine. This incident had prompted a review of procedures to ensure a similar incident could not occur at Newcastle University.

70. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Noted that the National Student Survey 2017 had been sent out to students significantly earlier that had been agreed. It was thought that this had been done to reduce the impact a potential boycott planned by the National Union of Students (NUS). The NUS was opposed to the proposal to use NSS results as one of the metrics for the TEF. This earlier than publicised release date was considered to provide an example of the changing relationship between government and the sector.

71. 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

Council was informed of the following additional death:

30 January 2017

Mrs Jane Duffill-Grant. Jane joined the University in July 1989 as a Clerical Assistant in the Public Relations Office of the Registrar’s Office. Jane held various posts within the Registrar’s
Resolved that Council record its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.

2. The Freedom City Launch Event on 16 January 2017 had been well received but the University would now be challenged to demonstrate how it had addressed the expectations created by Dr Martin Luther King’s speech from 1967. This speech had covered the themes of war, poverty and racism. The launch event had been hosted by the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, who had expressed an interest in visiting the University. The programme of events for Freedom City was available online and it was agreed that a narrative of the University’s activity in relation to the themes from Dr King’s speech would be prepared and distributed to members of Council for information.

3. The University’s Economic Impact Report would be launched at an event to be held on 17 February 2017. It was agreed that the report should be circulated to members of Council for information once available.

4. Council was informed that the University intended to submit a bid to become a centre within the Dementia Research Institute, the submission deadline for which was 7 February 2017. Centre foundation bids could be up to a maximum of £10.5m (£6.5m in 5 Programme Grants, up to £2m infrastructure and up to £2m equipment) and there was a match requirement in the call of 2:1 MRC/University for infrastructure and equipment. The University’s bid total was £8.4m and the University would be required to provide match funding of £4.2m (total cost £12.6m). Estates works totalling just over £1m would be required to establish the Centre at the Campus for Ageing & Vitality and all capital requirements (estates and equipment) had been included in the capital plan under consideration. Council would receive further information on this proposal in the event that the bid was successful. The outcome was expected by early April 2017.

Resolved that:

(i) Council approve the acceptance of a donation of £870,000 from Mr Edward David Forshaw (deceased). As stipulated in Mr Forshaw’s will, the funds are to be divided between the departments of Psychology, Architecture and Fine Art for the benefit of female students.

(ii) Council approve the recommendation from Executive Board that the King’s Road Centre be renamed the Hadrian Building with effect from 1 September 2017.

72. RISK MANAGEMENT

Received the summary risk register from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that the University’s risk position was greater than it had been at the same time in the previous year due to a number of factors. However, the University was thought to be at no greater risk than other institutions in the sector.
Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the risks facing the University were being managed appropriately.

73. INSTITUTIONAL KPI SUMMARY 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.]

Noted that the University’s performance in the National Student Survey was rated as Amber/Green. Previously, the overall satisfaction rating had been the determining measure for the University’s performance but this was due to change. The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy and the associated KPIs would be reviewed to reflect the change in emphasis. As part of the review, consideration would be given to whether the rating of the KPI could be upgraded to Green.

Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the identified KPIs were being managed appropriately.

74. SUMMARY REPORT FROM MEETING OF SENATE, 24 JANUARY 2017

Received a summary report from the meeting of Senate that took place on 24 January 2017.

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

75. AUDIT COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

Reported that the Governance Review 2015 had recommended that an independent review of the effectiveness of Audit Committee should be undertaken during the 2015-16 academic year.

Received:

(a) The report from the Audit Committee Effectiveness Review, from Mrs Teresa Graham, Chair of the Review Panel.

(b) Audit Committee’s response to the Effectiveness Review Report from Mr Mike Davison, Chair of Audit Committee.

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents G & H. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The review team had sought to take a strategic approach and to identify recommendations that would significantly improve the Committee’s effectiveness.

2. It was the view of Audit Committee that it received an excellent level of service from the Internal Audit team. The Committee did, however, support the recommendation to bring in additional support to permit more flexibility in the way additional internal audit capacity could be deployed in specialist areas or to supplement the team, when required.

3. One recommendation focused on the issue of assurance mapping. Audit Committee’s view was that it was not possible to apply assurance mapping across the whole of the University’s activity as this would be resource intensive and of limited value. Instead, Audit Committee intended to apply a targeted approach that was based on a review of the controls contained within the risk register.
4. Audit Committee would review its agenda setting process at its next meeting on 26 April 2017. The possibility of removing certain items from the agenda to provide more time for the discussion of significant strategic matters would be considered.

5. The recommendation regarding recruiting new members to the Committee who possessed expertise in specialist areas had been addressed with the appointment of two new members who specialised in the areas of cybersecurity and property.

Resolved that

(i) Audit Committee’s proposed approach to addressing the recommendations from the Audit Committee Effectiveness Review as set out in Document H, be approved;

(ii) Mrs Teresa Graham, Dr Stuart Edwards and Mrs Helen Wass be thanked for their work.

76. FACULTY STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORTS

Received the strategic progress reports from:

(a) The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, from Professor Julie Sanders, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

(b) The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering from Professor Phillip Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Science, Agriculture and Engineering, on behalf of Executive Board.

(c) The Faculty of Medical Sciences, from Professor David Burn, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.

[Circulated with the agenda as Document J-L. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]

Received PowerPoint presentations from each of the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

[Copies of PowerPoint slides filed in the Minute Book]

Noted that:

HaSS Faculty

1. A forecast downturn in international students in September 2016, had prompted the University to increase its intake of undergraduate home students, 430 of whom had been accommodated within the HaSS Faculty. Steps were being taken to avoid repeating such short term increases in home student numbers particularly since such actions had a disproportionate impact upon the HaSS Faculty and served to decrease staff:student ratios.

2. It had been determined that the University could legitimately submit an additional 100 staff in its HESA return which would have a positive impact upon its staff:student ratios in future returns.

3. Cross-faculty conversations were vital to the success of the University’s future plans. The three faculties intended to work together to address estates issues and to identify areas where resources could be shared.

4. It was suggested that a rationalisation of subjects could be undertaken and it was confirmed that a portfolio review was planned with the aim of introducing new ideas and
identifying programmes that could be discontinued, particularly in the Faculty’s postgraduate taught provision.

5. With regards to the Business School, internal meetings were underway and external advice was being sought to help determine the schools’ future direction. There was a need to increase interactions between the Business School and the other schools. Translator roles and appointments were to be made with a view to developing the Business School’s distinctiveness. It was also intended to make better use of the advisory boards and to work more broadly with schools within the HaSS Faculty.

SAgE Faculty

6. It was confirmed that there was potential for an expansion in student numbers whilst also improving the entry tariff of undergraduate students to improve the Faculty’s performance against that of other members of the Russell Group.

7. There was considered to be a need to introduce an effective mechanism to allow staff to provide feedback on the PDR process. It was noted that the Faculty intended to make greater use of group PDRs in addition to individual PDRs to determine the overall performance of research groups.

8. The proposal to move from 10 to 4 in Newcastle schools presented the potential risk of a loss of distinctiveness within the Faculty, particularly in the area of Chemistry, and this was thought to be a concern.

9. A number of foundation course were now offered by Northumberland College which had been specifically designed to provide non-traditional applicants with the opportunity to progress onto degree programmes in the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Faculty of Medical Sciences

10. With regards to the transfer of the School of Medicine, Pharmacy and Health from Durham to Newcastle, the majority of the Pharmacy staff would be transferring to the University with effect from 1 August 2017. Arrangements were being made to accommodate staff in the King George VI building. A process was underway to map staff across to the University’s existing research institutes to ensure that they could maintain their research interests.

11. There were concerns for the quality of the REF return for some units following the transfer of some of the staff from Durham to Newcastle.

12. There was potential for the new School of Pharmacy to develop links with schools and institutes in other faculties and it was thought that the introduction of this new subject area would also provide a catalyst for the development of existing research.

General Points

13. It was confirmed that it remained the intention to pursue ‘Excellence with a Purpose’ across the University and to continue curiosity driven research. Areas where the University could claim to be distinctive and world leading should be promoted.

14. A consideration of the Societal Challenge Themes was to be undertaken to ensure these were focused in the right areas and on those which resonated with wider society. External perception surveys were underway to sense check various assumptions.
15. Excellent work should drive improved reputation and improved performance in league tables. The Vice-Chancellor advocated the pursuit of a virtuous circle whereby high quality research could feed into an enhanced reputation which would lead to improved performance in rankings which would ultimately encourage the recruitment of high quality staff and students.

16. Cross-faculty working would be encouraged and work was already underway to identify and build on existing areas of good practice, such as the work of the Combined Honours Centre. Cross-faculty dialogues would be encouraged. There were certain practical steps that could be undertaken such as a reconsideration of the promotions conventions to help encourage a team approach. There was also a requirement to consider a cross-faculty approach to some funding streams.

Resolved that the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors be thanked for their informative presentations.

77. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 18 January 2017.

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

78. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 8 December 2016.

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

Noted that:

1. The National Student Survey included a question on the Students’ Union and the wording of this question had been revised for the 2017 survey. It was thought that, as a result of the change of wording, it might be more difficult for the efforts of NUSU to be recognised in the responses.

2. It was important to recognise that NUSU had achieved a good financial position at the end of the 2015-16 academic year and the efforts made by the Union to improve its financial position should be noted.

3. NUSU’s decision to disaffiliate from the National Union of Students was not considered to have resulted in any negative effects to date. The fact that the NUS was not considered to represent the views of students was considered to be unfortunate in the current political climate.

79. TRAC RESULTS 2015-16

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

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

80. INTO ANNUAL REPORT

Received the INTO Annual 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.]
81. **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 Q. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

82. **CHAIR’S CIRCULAR**

Noted that no Chair’s Circular was issued in advance of the meeting.

83. **PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR RESEARCH/ PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR INNOVATION & BUSINESS**

Reported that in accordance with Senate Standing Order X:

1. The Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Senate and Council the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and any establishment of, or appointment to, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor post.

2. If Senate and Council approve the recommendation, a selection committee shall be established comprising:

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

3. Senate, at its meeting on 24 January 2017, considered a recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor for the establishment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation and Business post and resolved that the recommendation be approved, subject to the agreement of Council.

Received a report from the Vice-Chancellor.

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

**Resolved that:**

(i) The proposal to establish the positions of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business be approved.

(ii) The proposal that Professor Nick Wright should become Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business once a Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research was appointed be approved. (Professor Wright’s appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation & Business would end on 31 July 2018, in line with the term of office for his current appointment as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation.)

(iii) The following individuals be appointed as the Council members of the joint selection committee:

   - Professor Derek Mann – Dean of Research & Innovation, Faculty of Medical Sciences
   - Mrs Heidi Mottram – Lay member of Council
   - Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones – Professor of Town Planning, School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape