NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
8 December 2014

Present: Mr Mark I’Anson (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Appleby, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Jonathan Glass, Professor Deborah Henderson, Mrs Jacqui Henderson, Mr Robert Hull, Professor Tom Joyce, Mr Stephen Lightley, Professor Neill Marshall, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Mr David Morris (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Dr Ole Pedersen, Mr Simon Pleydell and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Chris Day, Professor Charles Harvey, Professor Steve Homans, Professor Tony Stevenson 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: Ms Claire Boothman (President, Students’ Union), Mrs Heidi Mottram and Mr Paul Walker.

M I N U T E S

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

44. RETIRING MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

Noted that Professor Charles Harvey would be stepping down as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences at the end of the calendar year. The Chair thanked him for his contribution to the work of Council and wished him well for his new role in the Business School.

45. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27 October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed.

46. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

At the meeting of 27 October 2014, Council was informed of the publication entitled ‘The University Paper’ which had been distributed to residences in Sandyford and Jesmond (27.10.14., Minute 29, Point 8, refers). This was not a University publication but the University had received complaints from some of the recipients as a result of the paper’s contents. The University had contacted the publisher who had agreed to publish an apology in a subsequent edition. This apology appeared in the December edition of the paper and the University now considered the matter to be closed.

47. 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 the management information included as an appendix to the report from Finance Committee recorded a notable increase in the number of accidents and RIDDOR incidents.
The rate of accidents had been on a downward trend so this sudden increase was considered to be concerning. Executive Board had reviewed the data and the Vice-Chancellor had written to the three Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors and the Registrar asking them to investigate the various incidents to see what could be learnt, to identify what preventative steps could be taken and to report back.

48. **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

**Council Briefing Sessions**

Council members were reminded of the forthcoming Council briefing sessions:

- **18 December 2014, 10–10.45am, room L5.18, King’s Gate**
  The role of the faculty PVCs both within the faculty and at a University-wide level: the structure and operation of the faculties, schools and research institutes delivered by the PVC SAgE.

- **15 January 2015, 9–9.45am, room L5.18, King’s Gate**
  NUIT Overview delivered by the PVC Planning and Resources and the Director of NUIT

- **28 January 2015, 9am–12noon, room L5.15, Level 5, King’s Gate**
  Meeting of Audit Committee

- **16 February 2015, 10–10.45am, room L5.18, King’s Gate**
  PR Overview delivered by the Director of Corporate Affairs

- **2 March 2015, 11.30am–12.15pm, room L5.18, King’s Gate**
  The Research Strategy: an overview of the key issues relating to this University delivered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)

Council members were asked to inform Lizzie Taylor if they planned to attend any of these sessions.

49. **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. **Raising the Bar: Project Summary**

A revised version of the project summary table was tabled.

[Copy filed in the Minute Book]

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

In his Autumn Statement of 3 December 2014, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced that the University was to receive £20m towards the creation of a national centre for ageing. The centre, which will be known as the National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation (NASI), will lead the UK’s efforts to improve the health and well-being of older people by developing new technologies and services to support them to continue to live in their own homes and remain socially active for as long as possible. The University is to provide match funding.

It was hoped that the funding made available by the Government would help the University purchase the former General Hospital site. A valuation of the site had taken place and a business plan would be presented to Council in due course.
3. **Alan Turing Institute**

The University had been informed that its bid to host the Alan Turing Institute had been unsuccessful. It had been announced that the Institute, which will focus on new ways of collecting, organising and analysing large sets of data, commonly known as big data, will be based at the British Library.

4. **Singapore**

Professor Steve Homans, Pro-Vice-Chancellor SAgE, had recently returned from a month-long visit to Singapore. Following negotiations with colleagues at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), it had been agreed that the current teaching arrangements would remain in place until September 2017. The University would be seeking to build on its existing research activity in Singapore.

5. **Xiamen**

On 28 November 2014, a senior delegation from Xiamen University, led by President Zhu, visited the University.

The group was made up of staff from their professional support services and academic staff from the academic disciplines that would initially be involved in the partnership, either in delivering programmes or through research collaboration.

6. **Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences**

A long list for the position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities and Social Sciences had been produced. The recruitment agency which had been engaged would now work to prepare a shortlist which would be considered at a meeting on 5 January 2015.

7. **REF Results**

The University had prepared a plan for communicating the REF results which were to be released to the public on 18 December 2014. Universities would receive their own results on 16 December and sector results on 17 December. The *Times Higher* would receive all results the weekend prior to their release. Professor Nick Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, would oversee the communication process within the University.

8. **USS and Industrial Action**

On 20 November 2014, the University and College Union and Universities UK confirmed an agreement to suspend the industrial action in relation to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pensions dispute from Thursday 20 November until after the joint negotiating committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 15 January 2015.

50. **RISK MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

Received:

(a) The full Strategic Risk Register Summary report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

(b) The revised Risk Management Strategy

[Circulated with the agenda as Documents C & D. Copies filed in the Minute Book.]
Council, 8 December 2014

Noted that:

1. The revised Risk Management Strategy had been considered by Audit Committee at the meeting on 19 November 2014 and minor revisions, relating to the clarification of roles, had been suggested.

2. A Risk Management Adviser had been appointed and had taken up her post from 14 October 2014. Responsibility for the risk registers remained with line managers and the Risk Management Adviser would provide a support and advisory role.

3. In future, Executive Board would be considering at least one risk from the Strategic Risk Register at each meeting. Reports to Council would highlight any changes agreed as a result of Executive Board’s consideration of risks.

4. It was considered that the net score for strategic risk SR4C – Failure to maintain the academic and financial viability of the Singapore campus – could be reduced following the outcome of Professor Homans’ recent visit.

5. SR5A – Failure to maintain a financially robust pensions provision – remained the risk with the highest net score.

6. Audit Committee had highlighted the need for an alignment between the net score and the overall risk status and this was an aspect of the risk registers which the Risk Management Adviser had been asked to keep under review. The Risk Management Adviser was also to review the controls and gain assurance that they were in place and working.

7. It was noted that neither of the controls recorded under SR1A – Failure to publish adequate research outputs – were noted as being in place and working however, despite this, progress over time was said to be satisfactory. It was suggested that the controls listed did not accurately represent the range of activities undertaken to manage this risk and additional controls should be identified. The Risk Management Advisor, together with the risk owner, should be asked to conduct a rigorous analysis of what the real controls should be for this particular risk.

8. It was suggested that the use of the word ‘control’ could be a misleading term to describe the range of activities engaged in to manage a risk since some were enabling actions and it might be helpful to consider an alternative.

9. It was noted that the net score for strategic risk SR2B – Failure to maintain teaching quality and standards – had increased from 8 to 15 and the reason for this was requested. It was explained that the University was progressing a range of projects, such as Xiamen, which would take it into unfamiliar territory and there was a need to be cautious, as highlighted by the increased net score.

10. It was proposed that the Risk Management Advisor should be asked to look for complacency in the Risk Management process. There was also considered to be a need to include more detailed information about the University’s risk appetite. It was proposed that Council should receive an additional paper on this at a future meeting.

Resolved that the revised Risk Management Strategy be provisionally approved, subject to an additional paper being presented to Council on risk appetite, following consideration by Audit Committee.
51. **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 E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

52. **PROGRESS REPORT ON XIAMEN**

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

53. **SPORTS FACILITIES PROJECT**

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

54. **LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

Received a progress report on the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy presented by Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. In general, progress in relation to the strategy was considered to be good. The results in relation to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) provided the only exception as there had been a decline in the overall satisfaction score from 91% in 2012 to 86% in 2014. This could, in part, be attributed to the fact that the PTES had been modified in 2014 to align it more closely with the questions used in the National Student Survey. The University intended to engage with the PTES each year to establish a clear baseline.

2. The acknowledgement that the estate needed to continue to expand in line with the expansion in student numbers was welcomed.

3. The University’s MOOCs offering had been well received and, in future, the University intended to use MOOCs to address its own strategic imperatives.

55. **STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

Received a progress report on the Student Recruitment Strategy 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.]

56. **HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

Received a progress report on the Human Resources Strategy from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources.

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

Noted that a request was made for more comparative data to be included and it was agreed that this would be addressed in future versions of the report.

57. **REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of Audit Committee held on 19 November 2014.

[Circulated with the Agenda as Document L. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
58. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

59. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received an oral report from the Chair of Nominations Committee regarding the meeting held on 24 November 2014.

Noted that the meeting of Nominations Committee had been a planning meeting during which the strategy for identifying and appointing new members of Council had been discussed. The committee had also considered the responses to the recent advertorial exercise.

60. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on 24 November 2014.

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

Noted that it was commented that the proportion of female Professors remained low and it was important to address issues of parity of pay. The report suggested that some progress was being made in relation to this.

61. REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of the University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 28 October 2014.

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

Noted that:

1. The report referred to the Students’ Union Impact Report for 2013-14 (Document S) in which it was noted that the student newspaper The Courier had, in 2013, received the award of Guardian Student Newspaper of the Year for the second year running. Council congratulated the Students’ Union on this significant achievement.

2. In the most recent National Student Survey, the Students’ Union had been placed 8th out of 136 institutions, which meant that it had achieved the target it had set itself a year early.

3. The Union had achieved a 97% satisfaction score in the International Student Barometer which placed it in 5th position nationally and 24th position globally. It was important to continue to improve in order to maintain this strong position.

4. 93% of students surveyed had said that the Students’ Union had had a positive impact on their student experience.

62. ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT

Received the annual Equality and Diversity Report from Mrs Veryan Johnston, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that a significant effort had been made in relation to Athena SWAN applications. There had been a slight increase in the percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees however, there had been a decrease in the percentage of staff declaring a disability and it was necessary to investigate the reasons for this.
63. **ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS**

Received the Annual Review and Accounts of the University.

[Tabled at the meeting. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

64. **REVIEW OF STUDENT RENTS**

Considered the review of student rents from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

*Resolved that Council approve the proposed increase in student rents.*

65. **INTO Annual Report**

Received the INTO Annual Report, from Professor Tony Stevenson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Planning and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

66. **STUDENTS’ UNION IMPACT REPORT**

Received the Students’ Union Impact Report from Ms Claire Boothman, President, Students’ Union and Mr Simon Gerry, Chief Executive, Students’ Union.

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

67. **CHAIR’S CIRCULAR**

The Chair’s circular of routine business was sent to members on 17 November 2014.

**Approved business:**

There were no items of business to approve.

**Items for information:**

(i) Financial Regulations
(ii) Reported Business