NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
11 February 2019

Present:  Mr Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Caroline Austin, Mr David Bird, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mrs Linda Conlon, Professor Nicola Curtin, Dr Stacy Gillis, Mr Jonathan Glass, Mrs Teresa Graham, Mr Jonathan Hall (Education Officer, Students’ Union), Mr Stephen Lightley, Ms Adrienne McFarland, Mr Raffaello Marioni (President, Students’ Union), Ms Claire Morgan, Mrs Heidi Mottram (Vice-Chair of Council), Professor Sir Michael Rawlins, Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Ms Angela Woodburn and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance:  Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies:  Mr Mike Davison, Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mr Jeff McIntosh, Dr Sara Maioli, Ms Dianne Nelmes, and Professor Selina Stead.

Ms Lucy Backhurst and Mrs Emma Reay attended for Minute 59.
Professor Richard Davies attended for Minute 60.
Helen Baird and Aaron Porter (Advance HE) attended for Minute 62.

M I N U T E S

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms Claire Morgan declared an interest in relation to Minute 62 – Campus for Ageing and Vitality – due to her employment at Sintons LLP, which is acting on behalf of Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Trust.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 17 December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed.

55. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

a) Student Recruitment (Minute 26, 17.12.18)

Council received undergraduate applications data for the period 2006-18, and considered the University’s performance over time relative to a number of key Russell Group comparator institutions. The University was focusing on making improvements to its approach to marketing and to conversion rates.

b) Rubraca Monetisation (Minute 34, 17.12.18)

Council received an update on progress towards the final round of offers for the monetisation of Rubraca and the latest market performance. The manufacturer Clovis had reported an increase in sales and positive market sentiment, suggesting that the final offers for monetisation might be higher than had been expected previously. Council would receive a final update from the Monetisation Committee at its next meeting.

56. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Noted that:
1. The Vice-Chancellor and President was congratulated on his appointment as Chair of the board of the Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research, which Council saw as an important esteem indicator both on a personal level and for the University.

57. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

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

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

Noted that:

1. Brexit

On 29 January the Home Secretary had set out the arrangements that would apply to EU and European Economic Area nationals arriving after 29 March in the event of a no deal Brexit. Any EU citizen arriving in the UK after 29 March who wished to stay longer than 3 months would need to apply for European Temporary Leave to Remain. If granted, this would give them permission to stay for 36 months to live, work or study in the UK from the point of application, an arrangement that would not be appropriate for any students planning to start a 4 or 5 year course, or for PhD students, and in practice would not work for 3 year courses as their 3 years could expire before graduation. The Russell Group had raised its concerns about this position with the Home Office.

The government had also announced that it would not underwrite Erasmus+ funding for students due to go abroad in 2019-20 in a no deal scenario and where the UK government was unsuccessful in negotiating access to the programme. The University was committed to minimising disruption to its exchange programmes and would be offering an additional guarantee for the Erasmus+ funding in 2019-20, and was discussing potential bilateral agreements with partner institutions to safeguard opportunities for future students.

2. Major Review of Post-18 Education

Early reports indicated that the major review of post-18 education, chaired by Philip Augar, would recommend a headline reduction of tuition fees to c.£7.5k, topped up to current fee levels to ensure that the overall unit of resource would not deteriorate.

3. New Year’s Honours

Council extended its congratulations to Professor Louise Robinson, Director, Newcastle University Institute for Ageing and Professor of Primary Care and Ageing, who had been awarded a Damehood for services to Primary Care, and to Professor Herbie Newell (Emeritus Professor of Cancer Therapeutics, Northern Institute for Cancer Research) who had been awarded a CBE for services to Medical Research and Drug Development.

4. Global Research Hubs

The University was to lead two Global Research Hubs, worth more than £35m, addressing future water security and the safeguarding of river deltas and their communities. The awards demonstrated the University’s commitment to helping deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Newcastle had been the only university to have been awarded more than one of the Global Research Hubs.

5. Realising Opportunities
Realising Opportunities (RO), a national widening participation programme, led by Newcastle University and involving 14 highly selective universities across England, had released a report which outlined the impact of RO in increasing the participation of underrepresented students at research intensive universities. This area of work was a key target for the Office for Students and the University was making a significant contribution by leading RO, with 6000 participants to date, and a further 1000 Year 12 students involved for 2019.

6. Postgraduate Research Fee

Student Finance Committee had recommended that the home postgraduate research fee for 2019 should be reduced to the Research Council level (from £5,010 to £4,327), in line with the approach taken by many other Russell Group institutions. Senate had endorsed the reduction at its meeting on 22 January 2019.

Resolved that Council approve the reduction of the Home PGR fee for 2019 to the Research Council level.

7. Knowledge Exchange Framework

Research England were consulting on proposals for a Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) for the higher education sector. The KEF aimed to provide benchmarked performance information about knowledge exchange activities that would be used internally by English universities for improvement, and externally by businesses and others to help them understand and engage with universities.

8. Henderson Hall

The total project costs for the demolition of Henderson Hall had risen to £2,959k following the discovery of additional asbestos containing materials. Although the current Delegation of Authority permitted Executive Board to approve this expenditure, Council was asked to note the developments given the escalation in costs and potential risks. The site had been unoccupied since 2015 and had suffered numerous break-ins which had resulted in vandalism and theft of materials.

9. The Chancellorship

The Chancellorship Working Group, chaired by Mr Antony Jones (Chair of Convocation), had met for the first time on 16 January 2019. Suggestions for the next Chancellor had been invited from the whole University community, including students, staff, alumni and lay membership of University committees.

10. Re-appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation

In accordance with Senate Standing Order X, the Vice-Chancellor had recommended to Senate and Council the re-appointment of Professor Richard Davies as Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Professor Davies had overseen a wide range of University initiatives including leadership of the University’s Freedom City during 2017 and a review of the operation of Newcastle University London. He had worked particularly closely with the Director of International Affairs in revising our approach to international student recruitment and our broader international agenda. Given his exceptional performance in the role and the need for some continuity during a period of forthcoming change for the University, it was recommended that Professor Davies’s appointment be renewed until 31 July 2024. Senate had endorsed this recommendation at its meeting on 22 January 2019. Executive Board had also agreed that the title of the role will change to Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global.
Council approved the re-appointment of Professor Richard Davies until 31 July 2024.

11. **Director of Estates and Facilities**

   Mr Iain Garfield had been appointed as the new Director of Estates and Facilities.

12. **Centres for Doctoral Training**

   The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) had announced that the University would lead three new Centres for Doctoral Training in Geospatial Systems, Power Electronics for Sustainable Electric Propulsion and Molecular Sciences for Medicine. The centres, worth £18m, would train around 180 researchers. Newcastle was also a key collaborator in three further CDTs led by Northumbria University, Cranfield University and the University of Hull.

58. **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 C. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

   Noted that:

   1. There were high net risk scores for ‘Failure to grow research power and intensity’; ‘Failure to maintain financially sustainable pensions provision’; ‘Failure to accurately create, securely manage, securely store data and protect against cyber risks’; ‘Adverse impact following Fees and Funding Review’; and ‘Disruption caused by political decisions’.

   **Council confirmed that it had received sufficient assurance that the risks facing the University were being managed appropriately.**

**Health and Safety**

Noted that:

1. A ‘near-miss’ incident had been reported when an aluminium panel had been dislodged from the Newcastle University Business School building in high winds. The building had been confirmed as safe and a full incident review would take place.

2. A recent incident in the Medical School had resulted in a member of staff waiting for more than 15 minutes for first aid, giving rise to a query about how the University calculates the number of first aiders required per building. A response to this query would be provided at the next meeting of Council.

59. **WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

   Received a presentation from Miss Lucy Backhurst (Director of Student Recruitment, Admissions and Progress) and Mrs Emma Reay (Head of Undergraduate Recruitment).

   Noted that:

   1. The context for widening participation had changed significantly with the introduction of the Office for Students as the new sector regulator. Higher education institutions were required to compile Access and Participation plans at the point of registration with the Office for Students and at five-yearly intervals thereafter, as well as annual monitoring returns. The
plans were required to detail a thorough and disaggregated self-assessment of access and participation for all under-represented groups across the whole student lifecycle.

2. On 1 February the government had announced new measures to improve outcomes for ethnic minority students in higher education. Universities would now be held to account on how they could improve outcomes for underrepresented students, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, through the powers of the Office for Students. All universities were required to publish data on admissions and attainment, broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background, thereby highlighting which groups were making good progress and those that were not.

3. The student profile at Newcastle University needed greater numbers from under-represented groups, and in this respect the University, although similar to other Russell Group universities, was behind the national trend. Furthermore, students from under-represented groups, particularly Black and Mature students, performed less well than their peers. In terms of graduate-level employment, however, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic as well as disabled students, performed comparatively better than others in their cohorts.

4. The University aspired to develop and embed an organisational culture that worked to eliminate access and attainment gaps and to play a leading role in shaping sector developments in this space. As a sign of its commitment, the University was participating in a national collaborative project (‘Closing Attainment Gaps’) with nine other English universities and colleges that aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of how degree-awarding gaps develop whether at the discipline, department, or institution level. Newcastle’s involvement in the Realising Opportunities and North East Collaborative Outreach programmes were another aspect of its regional and national widening participation profile.

5. It was important to seek the views of students from under-represented groups about their university experience face-to-face, as well as to study the data available.

6. Institutions were also being encouraged to address race disparities in their workforce using tools such as the Race Equality Charter, to which Newcastle University hoped to become a signatory.

60. **GLOBAL STRATEGY**

Received the University’s Global Strategy from Professor Richard Davies, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The University’s global vision was to excel by being an internationally networked and diverse community of students and staff who identified as global citizens, and who could respond to global challenges through the research it undertook and the skills and knowledge it created. The Global Strategy provided an overview for how this vision would be realised.

2. The specific aims of the Strategy were to:
   - Foster an environment that places international ambition and activities in the centre of our everyday thinking and working.
   - Engage with our global alumni community and support professional networking and career development events.
   - Build and meet the needs of and collaborate with the global network of partners, stakeholders, alumni and friends of Newcastle University.
Provide the quality of experience that attracts and supports exceptional international students and staff from around the world.

Work with our partners to make a positive impact in low- and middle income countries by addressing ‘grand challenges’ relevant to them and championing social justice.

3. To achieve its aims, the University had identified a number of priorities that had been developed as a result of engagement with staff, students and institutional-level university partners: internationally excellent and impactful research; education for global citizenship; building global networks with the best research and teaching teams around the world and acting as a hub for the North East region’s global connectivity; and broadening our horizons through global mobility. The priorities exemplified an emphasis upon the four institutional guiding principles which were to respond to society’s current and future challenges, to visibly lead, to work together, and to provide staff and students the freedom and opportunity to succeed.

4. In terms of transformational initiatives, there were two areas of activity that were particularly critical. Firstly, striving to increase the international diversity of the university community – for which the Newcastle University Partnership Academic Track was an important vehicle – and secondly, accelerating work to transform the University’s international presence. This would be done through strengthening the institution’s presence and reputation in South East Asia, developing regional strategies and enhancing institutional partnerships, and building a global alumni community.

5. The Strategy committed the University to international and virtual mobility to enable remote participation in events and meetings. This would require investment in digital technology and some changes to working practices. Doing so would assist lay members in attending meetings remotely, and enable more alumni to participate in events such as the annual meeting of Convocation, for example. A working group consisting of alumni and University staff, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, had been charged with ensuring that Convocation had a strengthened engagement with alumni across the globe.

6. The distinctiveness of the Strategy lay in the University having a strong and successful physical presence outside of Newcastle in Singapore and Malaysia, the championing of social justice and place, and international ambitions for its areas of research excellence in Ageing and Health, Data, Cities, Culture and Creative Arts, and Energy.

7. Strategically-placed regional offices in India, China, Southeast Asia and Hong Kong would be modest presences, aimed at enhancing recruitment, building intelligence and alumni engagement.

8. The focus of the University’s recent preparations for Brexit had been on modelling the likely implications of the United Kingdom exiting the European Union without a deal, and future support for the Erasmus scheme. Executive Board had agreed to underwrite the University’s participation in the scheme for 2019-20 to help minimise disruption to student exchange programmes.

9. There was a perception that the language within the Global Strategy on research did not reflect sufficiently the challenges faced by the University which it aimed to address through its Research Strategy and Academic Track programme, for example. Relevant wording would be reviewed prior to finalisation of the document.

Resolved that Council approve the Global Strategy.

61. STRATEGIC ENABLERS
Council, 11 February 2019

Received the Strategic Enablers from Dr John Hogan, on behalf of Executive Board. [Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The strategic enablers would inform the work and budgeting and planning of Professional Services in support of the University’s Vision and Strategy and the four underpinning strategies. The approach taken was consistent with the principles of Integrated Thinking and Reporting (ITR). This aimed to promote a long-term and sustainable approach to strategic decision-making and to demonstrate accountability, transparency and stewardship of resources. The Strategic Enablers document would be updated periodically to reflect the changing issues that would impact on delivery of the overall Vision and Strategy. Senate had endorsed the document at its meeting on 22 January 2019.

2. The five strategic enablers were People; Infrastructure; Networks and Partnerships; Effectiveness and Financial Sustainability; and Environmental Sustainability. The University would use them to help understand co-dependencies that impact on ability to deliver the Vision and Strategy and create value for staff, students and other stakeholders. The success of this approach would be demonstrated through joined-up planning and use of resources, effective delegation, greater agility in responding to new opportunities, and risk-informed decision-making.

3. Although not the subject of a separate strategy, People were equally as important as the University’s Vision and underpinning strategies. It was suggested that staff awareness of training and development opportunities could be improved.

Resolved that Council approve the Strategic Enablers.

62. EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

Received a report from Helen Baird and Aaron Porter of Advance HE. [Circulated with the agenda as Document F. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University had commissioned consultants from Advance HE to undertake an external review of governance effectiveness, which had taken place between October 2018 and February 2019. The review had been forward-looking and developmental, with an emphasis on how the University could continue to enhance institutional governance given its strategic ambitions. The process had involved a series of meeting observations, interviews with members of Council, and analysis of the results of an online survey benchmarked against insights that had arisen from similar reviews conducted by Advance HE.

2. The overall assessment of the review was that the University’s governance was working well generally, and this had been backed by a clear consensus among the consultees. Further enhancements had been identified in eight key areas, with the Advance HE report offering recommendations informed both by proposals made by consultees, and knowledge of effective governance within the sector. The suggested areas for enhancement were as follows:
   - Composition: size and structure of the Council
   - Student voice
   - Equality, diversity and skills
   - Agenda-setting and papers for meetings
   - Strategic input/added value of Council
   - Assurance, reviewing and monitoring performance
Resolved that:

1. **Advance HE be thanked for the valuable report.**

2. **The Chair of Council would convene a small task and finish group to consider the outcomes of the review and report back to Council with recommendations for action.**

63. **REPORT FROM AUDIT, RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee held on 16 January 2019.

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

Noted that:

1. The Committee had received reports on the University’s preparations for Brexit, and on Brand and Reputation, from the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs and Director of Marketing, and on Cybersecurity from the Chief Information Officer. A proposed scope was considered for a comprehensive Cyber Audit which would take place before the end of 2019.

**Resolved that the Chief Information Officer be invited to the next meeting of Council to discuss Cybersecurity.**

64. **CAMPUS FOR AGEING AND VITALITY**

Received 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.]

Noted that:

1. At its meeting on 17 December 2018, Council had agreed that the University should start discussions with Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust about the acquisition of the former Newcastle General Hospital site, based on an independent valuation showing an indicative value of £7.5m. Since then, an agreement had been reached in principle for the sale, subject to approval by the two relevant governing bodies. The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust had approved the sale on 31 January 2019.

2. A potential philanthropic donation of up to £5m would be used to help fund the purchase cost. Agreement had been reached in principle for an immediate donation of £3.5m with potential for future donations in line with the emerging development plan.

**Resolved that Council:**

1. **Approve purchase of the former Newcastle General Hospital site, excluding the plot of land adjacent to Brighton Grove and the plot of land currently occupied by the NHS Walk-In Centre, from the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust (NUTH) for an agreed valuation of £7.47m with a view to completion by 31st March 2019.**

2. **Authorise the Executive Director of Finance and the Vice-Chancellor and President (or his nominee) to execute any documents required to complete this transaction.**
3. Authorise Finance Committee to approve any capital restructuring of, or intra-group loan funding to, University of Newcastle upon Tyne Supply Company Ltd required to complete the transaction in a tax efficient manner.

4. Note proposed interim uses for the land and initial governance proposals for development of the site.

5. Note the intention to pay a further £2.03m as full and final settlement of all past and future claims relating to the Biomedical Research Building on the site.

6. Note recent discussions in relation to philanthropic donations to the University.

65. UNIVERSITIES SUPERANNUATION SCHEME

Received an update from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance.

Noted that:

1. The March 2017 valuation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme had been concluded by the Trustee and would result in contributions to the scheme increasing from April 2020 by slightly less than had been expected due to a change to the scheme recovery plan. The financial adjustment to the University was expected to £83m, which would be reflected in the Quarter 2 forecast. The March 2018 valuation was due to be concluded by the end of the financial year.

66. SUMMARY REPORT FROM SENATE, 22 JANUARY 2019

Received a report from the meeting of Senate, held on 22 January 2019.

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

67. TRANSPARENT APPROACH TO COSTING RESULTS 2017-18

Received the University’s TRAC results for 2017-18.

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

68. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY

Received the University’s revised Declaration of Conflicts of Interest Policy.

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

69. 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 M. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

*Council recorded its deep regret and sympathy for the relatives concerned.*