NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
15 July 2019

Present: Mr Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Caroline Austin, Mr David Bird, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Mr Pablo Charro de la Fuente (Education Officer, Students' Union), Professor Nicola Curtin, Mr Mike Davison, Dr Stacy Gillis, Mrs Teresa Graham, Mr Stephen Lightley, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Ms Claire Morgan, Mrs Heidi Mottram (Vice-Chair of Council), Ms Dianne Nelmes, Professor Julie Sanders (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Miss Katie Smyth (President, Students’ Union), Ms Angela Woodburn and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director of Corporate Affairs), Mrs Adrienne McFarland (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Dr Simon Meacher (Governance Manager).

Apologies: Mrs Linda Conlon, Mr Jonathan Glass, Dr Sara Maioli, Professor Sir Mike Rawlins.

Professor Brian Walker (PVC Research Strategy and Resources) attended for Minute 118. Professor Phillip Wright (PVC Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering) attended for Minute 119.

MINUTES

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Miss Katie Smyth and Mr Pablo Charro de la Fuente declared an interest in relation to the proposed establishment of a Co-op franchise within the Students’ Union building (Item 122).

112. MINUTES

Received the draft minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 June 2019.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

113. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Noted that:

1. All outstanding actions in the University’s Health and Safety Strategic Plan had now been completed.

2. Health and Wellbeing were now included in the University's Health and Safety Management System and a new University Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee had been established.

114. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

115. CHAIR’S BUSINESS
Noted that:

1. The Chair welcomed Miss Katie Smyth (President, Students' Union) and Mr Pablo Charro de la Fuente (Education Officer, Students' Union) to their first meeting of Council.

2. The Chair thanked retiring members Mr Neil Braithwaite and Mr Mike Davison for the huge contribution that they had made as members of Council.

3. The Office for Students had published a statement on the formal investigation of De Montfort University which found significant and systemic weaknesses and failings in the university’s management and governance arrangements. As a result of the investigation the university published a detailed action plan setting out how it would address these deficiencies. Council underwent an external review of governance this year which concluded that governance was working well generally. Council will have the opportunity to consider progress against the actions that arose from the review at its meeting in October.

116. 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:

Newcastle University London

1. The University expected to receive detailed feedback from INTO University Partnerships soon regarding its proposal concerning the future of Newcastle University London.

National Student Survey 2019

2. The results of the 2019 National Student Survey had been published by the Office for Students on 3 July 2019. In terms of overall satisfaction the University achieved a score of 85.39% compared with a sector average of 83.49%, and last year’s score of 86.14% and 87.52% in 2017 when the revised survey was introduced. Comparator data revealed that on the basis of Overall Satisfaction the University ranked 8th in the Russell Group out of 22 participating institutions compared to 4th out of 22 in 2018 and 7th out of 16 in 2017, and was ranked 34th among 114 Full Service Universities (28th in 2018 and 26th in 2017).

3. Despite some subjects retaining or achieving excellent outcomes, the University had seen a significant decline in comparative performance relative to 2018 when it achieved a top quartile score for one question area (Learning Resources) and received a score in the fourth quartile for only one area (Assessment & Feedback). In 2019, the University again achieved a top quartile score for Learning Resources, but fell within the fourth quartile in three question areas (Learning Opportunities, Assessment & Feedback and Learning Community). In five of the eight question areas (Learning Opportunities; Assessment and Feedback; Academic Support; Learning Community; Student Voice) the University achieved some scores below the full service average.

4. Council expressed concern and disappointment at the University’s results for Assessment and Feedback and Learning Community in particular, noting that the former had been an area of persistent underperformance. It would be important to try to understand the reasons for the results and to this end Council would consider a detailed report on the University’s National Student Survey results and the institution’s proposed response at its meeting in October.
QS World University Rankings

5. The QS World University Rankings 2020 had ranked Newcastle University 146th in the world out of 1,000 institutions (down 5 places on 2019), however the responses from over 44,000 employers had ranked the University 89th in the world for employer reputation.

Fellowship of the Academy of Social Sciences

6. Professors William Maloney and Jane Pollard (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) had been named as Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences. Fellowship is awarded to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the areas of thought leadership, practical application or policy development in the social sciences.

Executive Director of Academic Affairs

7. Dr Colin Campbell (currently Director of Strategic Planning and Change) had been appointed to this new role and would begin in post on 1 August 2019.

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. The University would be reviewing the status of strategic risks relating to the student experience and teaching quality in the light of this year’s National Student Survey outcomes.

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

RESEARCH – PLANNING AHEAD

Received a presentation from Professor Brian Walker (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources).

Noted that:

1. Since the approval of the University’s Research Strategy by Council in 2018, implementation had focused on the launch of the Newcastle University Academic Track (NUAcT) programme, the promotion of opportunities for the establishment of Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs), preparation for the Research Excellence Framework 2021, and mechanisms for increasing institutional research income.

2. Council discussed its future ambitions and risk appetite relating to research strategy and planning, and agreed that it would be useful to devote more time to horizon scanning, risk and scenario modelling.

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

Received a paper from Professor Phillip Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering).  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document D. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
Noted that:

1. The Faculty had reviewed the reorganisation experience leading to the following key reflections:
   - The additional support required to establish and develop a multidisciplinary school from a series of discrete units.
   - There had been insufficient focus on internal communications and change management.
   - The higher than expected turnover in administrative staff resulting in disruption and frustration at a challenging time.

2. In December 2018, the new Faculty structure had been reviewed via a staff survey, workshops and focus groups with staff exploring specific areas for improvement identified in the analysis of survey outcomes: management structures; strategy and leadership; service delivery; developing effective communications; and developing an inclusive culture. The outcomes of the review had fed into the development of Faculty and local unit action improvement plans which were being integrated into School and Faculty strategic planning.

3. Council discussed the cultural change and curriculum reform that would be needed to drive further improvement in the Faculty.

120. REPORT FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 8 July 2019.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document E. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. Council was presented with the medium term financial forecast. An updated version would be submitted to the Office for Students in December to form part of their assessment of institutional risk and financial sustainability. The changes would provide an update on student numbers and the correct information following the conclusion of the 2018-19 statutory accounts process.

2. The terms of reference for Finance Committee had been revised to clarify the position of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as a member of the committee. A further change had been proposed to allow the committee to co-opt up to two additional lay members.

3. The Students’ Union had requested a loan of £395k to finance redevelopment of its existing retail area into a Co-op franchise. It was felt that the franchise would provide access to an improved offering for students and staff and a more ethical supply chain. Finance Committee had approved the business case for the development. The loan would be repayable over 5 years, charged at an interest rate of 2.5% per annum.

4. Council was supportive of the University’s proposed approach to providing feedback to Universities UK on the latest Universities Superannuation Scheme employer consultation exercise.

5. Finance Committee had considered a report from the University’s Carbon Advisory Group on the investment of University funds. Further advice will be taken regarding the University’s position on ethical investments and this will be used to help inform a tender exercise due to take place in 2020. A report on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues will be presented to Council in the Autumn term.

Resolved that:
1. Council approve the medium term forecast.
2. Council approve the revised terms of reference for Finance Committee.
3. Council approve the loan of £395k to the Students' Union for the development of a Co-op franchise.

121. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Received a report from Nominations Committee.

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

Resolved that:

1. Council approve the appointment of the following as members of Council from 1 August 2019 until 31 July 2022:

   Mr Tom Caulker
   Mrs Angela Russell
   Mr Nitin Shukla

2. Council approve the following appointments/re-appointments:

   • Professor Catherine Biggs to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of the Appeals Panel for Promotions Review of Academic Staff from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Professor Konstantinos Stellos to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of the Appeals Panel for Promotions Review of Academic Staff from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Dr Ole Pedersen to be re-appointed as Chair of Biosafety Sub-Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mr Nitin Shukla to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and of Remuneration Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mr Jeff McIntosh to be re-appointed as a Council-appointed member of Estate Capital Strategic Planning Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mr Paul Woods to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of Estate Capital Strategic Planning Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mrs Angela Russell to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of Finance Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mr Iain Moffatt to be appointed as a co-opted member of Finance Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Mr Tom Caulker to be appointed as a Council-appointed member of Health and Safety Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Ms Dianne Nelmes to be re-appointed as a Council-appointed member of Nominations Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Professor William Maloney to be re-appointed as Chair of Radiation Protection Sub-Committee from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.
   • Ms Claire Morgan to be appointed as the Council-appointed member of Senate from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2022.

122. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on 20 May 2019.

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

1. The Committee had considered and agreed recommendations from the Vice-Chancellor and President in relation to the salaries of members of Executive Board.

2. The Committee had discussed the Chair of Council’s recommendation on the salary of the Vice-Chancellor and President and had agreed to award him the national pay award. The Vice-Chancellor and President was not present during Remuneration Committee’s discussion of this item.

3. Council also received an update on Merit Award Committee’s recommendations.

123. **REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS’ UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Received a report from the meeting of University/Students’ Union Partnership Committee held on 6 June 2019.

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

Noted that:

1. The Committee had considered positive developments in terms of the Students’ Union’s relationship with Newcastle City Council, as well as a review of the retail offer within the Students’ Union building (see also Minute 119).

2. The Committee had been asked to consider the possibility of abolishing the £10 charge for replacement University Smartcards as many students were unaware of the fee until they came to request a replacement. It was agreed that from 2019-20 onwards, students would be able to request one replacement card free of charge. A digital solution to replace physical cards would be investigated as a longer-term solution.

124. **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY REGULATIONS**

Received revised Delegation of Authority Regulations.

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

*Resolved that Council approve the revised Delegation of Authority Regulations.*

125. **SUMMARY REPORT FROM SENATE, 25 JUNE 2019**

Received a report from the meeting of Senate held on 25 June 2019.

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

126. **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 L. 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.*