NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL
19 February 2018

Present: Mr Paul Walker (Chair of Council), Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Caroline Austin, Mr Neil Braithwaite, Professor Paul Christensen, Professor Nicola Curtin, Dr Jonathan Galloway, Ms Teresa Graham, Mr Stephen Lightley, Ms Adrienne McFarland, Mr Jeff McIntosh, Dr Sara Maioli, Ms Claire Morgan, Mrs Heidi Mottram, Ms Dianne Nelmes, Sir Michael Rawlins, Mr Ronnie Reid (President, Students’ Union) and Mr Rowan South (Education Officer, Students’ Union), and Ms Vicky Wright.

In attendance: Professor David Burn, Professor Richard Davies, Professor Julie Sanders, Professor Brian Walker, Professor Nick Wright, (Pro-Vice-Chancellors), Professor Helen Berry (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor designate), Mr Richard Dale (Executive Director of Finance), Dr John Hogan (Registrar), Ms Abi Kelly (Executive Director Corporate Affairs), Mrs Judith Whitaker (Executive Director of Human Resources), and Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Officer (Governance)).

Apologies: Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Mr Mike Davison, Mr Jonathan Glass, and Professor Phillip Wright.

MINUTES

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs Heidi Mottram declared an interest in relation to Minute 79 – Research Partnership Investment Fund Proposal – due to her position as Chief Executive Officer at Northumbrian Water, which is part of Infrastructure North together with Northern Gas Networks and Northern Powergrid.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11 December were approved as a correct record and signed.

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

Noted that: a member of Council expressed concern that Minute 55 suggested Council would be prevented from discussing pension matters in future.

69. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising or outstanding actions from the previous minutes.

70. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

Noted that:

1. The University’s Health and Safety procedures had been confirmed as robust in an external audit. The audit report had also commended the approach of senior management on health and safety matters.
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2. A new Assistant Director of Human Resources with responsibility for Health and Safety was due to be appointed soon.

3. The Newcastle University Students' Union and University had expressed concern about the safety of a pedestrian crossing on Wellington Street adjacent to the Science Central site. The Estates Support Service was conducting an informal investigation, and had made contact Newcastle City Council about this matter.

Resolved that the Chair of Council should write to the Chair of Newcastle City Council to voice concern about the safety of the pedestrian crossing on Wellington Street.

71. CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Reported that:

1. Mr Neil Braithwaite had produced an independent report on the hydrogen gas leak in the Bedson Building reported at the 11 December 2017 meeting of Council (Minute 41). This concluded that the investigation of the issue followed the Incident Reporting Management Standard and guidance and was completed with a professional approach and impartiality, and established that the approximate extent of the leak was below both the alarm setting for hydrogen and the lower explosive limit. The Report endorsed the recommendations made by the Investigation but made a number of further recommendations and suggested that these additional recommendations are reviewed to establish what is appropriate and practical and that agreed Actions are then added to the Actions set out in the Action Plan contained in the Investigation Report. The report would be considered by Health and Safety Committee on 22 February, and any issues would be flagged up for Council’s attention as necessary. The report was also available to members of Council by request.

2. At its meeting on 8 May 2017, Nominations Committee considered the process to be followed for the appointment of the next Vice-Chair of Council following the retirement of Mrs Jacqui Henderson. Having considered the University’s ‘Procedure for the appointment or re-appointment of lay officers’ and ‘Vice-Chair of Council Role Description’, Nominations Committee resolved to invite expressions of interest in the role from existing members of Council. Expressions of interest were then invited at the 22 May 2017 meeting of Council. Mrs Heidi Mottram had expressed an interest in the position and this had been supported by Nominations Committee. Council’s approval for her appointment as Vice-Chair of Council was therefore now being sought.

3. The Vice-Chair of Council had traditionally also served as Chair of Remunerations Committee, however, it was proposed that this position would be filled instead by Ms Vicky Wright.

4. Following further consideration of the outcomes of the Council Effectiveness Questionnaire 2017, changes aimed at maximizing the use of the skills of members of Council and creating more time for discussion of matters of strategic importance, would be made to the format of the Council agenda and Vice-Chancellor’s Business report w ahead of the next meeting.

Resolved that:

1. Mrs Heidi Mottram be appointed Vice-Chair of Council for a term of three years, effective from 1 August 2017.
2. Ms Vicky Wright be appointed Chair of Remunerations Committee, effective immediately.
3. **Consequential changes be made to the Vice-Chair of Council Role Description and Terms of Reference for Remunerations Committee.**

72. **VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'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.]

Noted that:

1. **Deaths**

Received a report on deaths recently announced by the University.

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

2. **Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

Professor Helen Berry, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, had been appointed as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor in HaSS effective from 1 April 2018 to such time as a new permanent Pro-Vice-Chancellor starts in the role. Professor Berry was not a candidate for the permanent role.

3. **School of Pharmacy**

The official opening of the new School of Pharmacy took place on Wednesday 24 January 2018. Sir Michael Rawlins performed the opening ceremony and gave a keynote address.

4. **HEFCE Catalyst Fund Success**

The University had been successful in securing over £125,000 from HEFCE’s Catalyst Fund programme, and matching industry funding, providing a total of £251,000, for the project: “Closing the skills gap and supporting the Industrial Strategy through curriculum development”.

5. **Careers Service Matrix Standard**

The Careers Service had been recognised for the outstanding support it offers to our students and graduates by being reaccredited against the Matrix Standard. The Matrix Standard is an external accreditation of Careers Services, focussing on the quality of information, advice and guidance services provided to students and graduates.

6. **NICE AdviseMe Prize**

NICE has announced that Newcastle University is the first winner of the NICE AdviseMe Prize for its novel prognostic skin cancer test. The test was developed by Professor Penny Lovat and colleagues at the Institute of Cellular Medicine. It is undergoing further clinical validation and should be launched within 2 years. The NICE AdviseMe Prize was launched last year for small or medium-sized companies, charities and academic research groups who are developing healthcare products that have the potential to change patients’ lives and/or save the NHS money.

7. **£42 million for Energy Storage Research**

The Faraday Institution had announced £42 million in new government funding in a bid to address some of the battery challenges faced by industry. Led by academia – including
experts from Newcastle University led by Professor Phil Taylor (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering) – in collaboration with key industry partners, the projects will focus on four key areas: extending battery life, recycling and re-using batteries, next generation batteries and battery system modelling.

8. Celebrating Success

The latest University Celebrating Success event on 13 December 2017, had a special focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives in celebrating the first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Awards.

9. Newcastle Strategic Business Leaders’ Dinner

In keeping with the University’s strategic aim of working more closely with industry, the Vice-Chancellor and President hosted the latest Strategic Business Leaders’ Dinner organised by Newcastle City Council on 8 February 2018. These events are aimed at engaging support from leaders in helping them to shape Newcastle’s future and positioning Newcastle as the Government’s Industrial Strategy goes live, and this was work that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Innovation and Business would take a leading role in.

10. Goldman Professor

Newcastle University Business School had appointed Alison Shaw as its new Goldman Visiting Professor. Alison is the founder of the North East Futures University Technical College (UTC), which will open in Newcastle in September 2018. She will also work closely with the Business School Director and other colleagues to extend the University’s engagement in the regional technology and digital sector.

11. Best Neighbour on Campus Campaign

Following a year-long initiative to help improve relations between residents and students in Jesmond, Newcastle University and the Students’ Union had launched the Best Neighbour On Campus award. Residents from across the city are being asked to nominate students or households who have had a positive impact on the area where they live, either through volunteering, supporting local residents or simply by being considerate, responsible neighbours.

12. Netexplo UNESCO Award

A bionic hand, developed by biomedical engineers at the University with funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), that can ‘see’ objects and pick them up by itself has won a prestigious 2018 Netexplo UNESCO Award in Paris. Selected from over 2,000 innovations from around the world, the ‘hand that sees’ has been given the award in recognition of its “potential to have a profound and lasting impact on society”.

13. Major Review of Post-18 Education

The Prime Minister had announced a major review of post-18 education with a focus on four key themes: access, student choice and competition, value for money, and skills. The wide-ranging review will be informed by independent advice from an expert panel from across post-18 education, business and academia chaired by Philip Augar, a former non-executive director of the Department for Education. The panel’s report will be published at an interim stage and the review will conclude in early 2019.

Noted that:
Council expressed concern that the review would lead to tuition fee changes based on the cost to the institution of programmes, the earning potential of graduates, and value for society, as this could lead to lower fees for some courses, whilst the fee for courses deemed to be more valuable would not be increased. Any changes of this nature could bring about unintended and undesirable consequences for arts and humanities subjects, and should be challenged by the sector.

Resolved that Council offer its congratulations to all staff who had helped to the successful transfer of the new School of Pharmacy from Durham University.

73. RISK MANAGEMENT

Received a summary strategic risk register and 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 risk score for Newcastle University London (SR4D) had increased. A strategic review of NU London was underway with a number of considerations needing to be managed. A Project Manager independent of the current leadership team would be recruited for this purpose.

2. An amendment had been agreed to the risk for Improper conduct of business (SR5G) following an Internal Audit which had demonstrated a weakness in evidencing compliance with University policy for the declaration of external interests. It was suggested that annual reminders to complete the declaration should be sent to all eligible staff, instead of line managers.

3. Home student application numbers were currently lower than this time last year, therefore the net risk score had been increased for Failure to meet home student recruitment targets (SR5H).

4. The risk for Failure to deliver a high quality student experience (SR2A) may be affected by industrial action in the coming weeks. The Mitigating Impact of Industrial Action on Students Group had met to discuss action which could be taken to reduce the impact.

74. SUMMARY REPORT FROM MEETING OF SENATE, 23 JANUARY 2018

Received a summary report from the meeting of Senate that took place on 23 January.

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

75. FACULTY STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORTS

Received the strategic progress reports from:

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

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

c) The Faculty of Medical Sciences, from by Professor David Burn, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Medical Sciences, on behalf of Executive Board.
Each Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor delivered a PowerPoint presentation that focused on their Faculty's future strategy.

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

Noted that:

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

1. Scoping work was underway for School X, which was envisaged as a conceptual home for new modes of programme delivery, as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. The work extended across all three faculties and had potential for Newcastle distinctiveness in this area in the context of the developing University vision and strategy.

2. The Faculty had seen a steady increase in research income over the past three years, including an increase in research council income. Large awards reflected the Faculty commitment to supporting interdisciplinary research.

3. In terms of estates improvements, scenario planning for the redevelopment of the Claremont/Daysh complex was underway. Key project objectives were to ensure a variety of high quality flexible teaching rooms, active circulation spaces and social learning space. As a linked project, the faculty was working with SAgE to develop shared laboratory facilities in the Drummond Building.

4. Investment in staff had reduced the Faculty’s overall Student: Staff Ratio, and the Faculty had identified two key areas where strategic investment in staff would return significant benefits, being quantitative social sciences and leadership capacity in the Business School.

5. Active focus was being placed on ‘The Future of Work’ in terms of strategy development. This gave prominence to graduate opportunity, but also builds on broader University opportunities in the context of the developing Education and Place strategies. A University-wide stimulus event on this topic led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor is planned for June 2018.

**Faculty of Medical Sciences**

1. The transfer of Pharmacy students and staff from Durham University had been successfully completed in August 2017, and the Faculty was now working closely with the General Pharmaceutical Council to secure full accreditation for the Pharmacy degree.

2. Nutrition had been transferred from the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering and integrated within the School of Biomedical Sciences. Overall student satisfaction with the Nutrition stood at 67%, and the Faculty had acknowledged that bringing this into line with student satisfaction with its other programmes would be particularly challenging.

3. NUMed in Malaysia was highly regarded and successful, and in the last year recruitment to the new NUMed foundation programme had surpassed expectations. Nevertheless there were some difficulties with staff retention (due mainly to local regulations) and student concerns with the availability of teaching accommodation at the NUMed campus that the Faculty were seeking to address.
4. The Faculty was keen to progress the design and development of ‘Plot 4’ on Richardson Road, with a target of September 2019 for completion. The development would significantly improve the teaching and learning environment and mitigate the risk of the Faculty failing to realise its true growth potential.

5. Ageing, supported by the development of the National Innovation Centre for Ageing (NICA), represented an opportunity to translate research into key detail that could help to inform policy and practice in politics and society. It was suggested that the University could explore the possibility of working with external organisations, such as Microsoft, which were supporting ageing research in the UK.

6. The Faculty was looking to invest further in clinical research facilities, aiming to create a well-defined Diagnostics entity that would be attractive to industry partners and academic collaborators. It was suggested that the Faculty might consider how to establish more opportunities for students to undertake clinical research.

7. A bid had been submitted for an additional 75 student places for the MBBS course in response to call from HEFCE for an additional 1000 medical student places nationally. The bid had been strongly supported by regional NHS Trust partners and aimed to increase Widening Participation recruitment.

8. The five-year average for research income would decrease when reported next year. It was suggested that the Faculty could generate more income by seeking to do more research supported by research councils, and carry out less research on behalf of charities.

Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering

1. The Science and Engineering Excellence transformational change project had seen the academic re-organisation of the Faculty into four Newcastle schools and a fifth academic unit in Singapore, realignment of academic and professional services staff to new academic units, and updated business processes. The project had also changed the Faculty business model to ensure that the Faculty was able to use resources in a more strategic manner, the development of the new Urban Sciences Building being one notable example.

2. A review of programmes and modules with low numbers had been carried out with consideration given to employability and market attractiveness, with regard to international recruitment in particular. Work was continuing to rationalise the number of low recruiting programmes, to identify growth areas and to price courses appropriately to maximise income.

3. Newcastle Research and Innovation Institute Singapore (NewRIIS) had opened during 2016-17, creating a focus for research, CPD and postgraduate study. Private Education Institution (PEI) status had been granted, allowing the University to deliver postgraduate training in the form of postgraduate research and taught courses.

4. A review of strategic partnerships was underway, with its aim to enable targeted academic visits. Industrial Advisory Boards had been reinvigorated throughout the Faculty’s schools, and industrial liaison managers had been appointed to enhance the student experience through industrial engagement.

General Points

1. All three faculties had identified ways in which to continue to promote best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, HaSS was working towards achieving
Athena SWAN accreditation for seven schools over the next three years (two already having obtained bronze awards) and the role of the Faculty Director of Equality and Diversity would expand in 2018 to include a focus on disability, race equality, LGBTQ+ accreditation, and the black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and student experience; Medical Sciences would be submitting a Faculty application for Athena SWAN in April 2018, and had established an EDI Strategy Group to strengthen the faculty’s agenda beyond its current focus upon gender; in addition to its Faculty Director of Diversity, each school in SAgE had established a Diversity Committee to promote best practice relating to EDI, and the faculty had made a priority improving the gender balance of School Executive Boards and professional service staff roles.

2. The profile of heads of academic units and directors of institutes within the Faculty of Medical Sciences was predominantly male.

3. Support for Early Career Researchers was a key priority and had been expanded in all three faculties, through training and development events and providing information about funding opportunities.

4. The introduction of new interdisciplinary and challenge-focused funding streams such as the Global Challenges Research Fund was a focus for all three faculties.

5. Across the faculties there were a large number of Key Performance Indicators, and the University should give thought to how to rationalise these and to how to present KPI ratings and weightings in a clearer way.

76. STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIC PROGRESS REPORT

Received a report from 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. The 2016-17 recruitment cycle showed a mixed picture in a competitive market. The University generally performed well in terms of Home undergraduate student intake and intake of widening participation students, but international numbers were significantly below target.

2. The key changes to highlight in terms of performance against strategic objectives were a failure to meet recruitment targets for home postgraduate students, and progress in meeting targets for UK fair access and international diversity.

3. Whilst the report was clear about recruitment trends, it was lacking detail about what would be done differently to improve recruitment figures. International recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students had increased as a result of recent measures taken by the University, however.

4. There was a need to balance maintaining the quality of the student intake against the need to meet recruitment targets. It was possible that a cultural shift was taking place, whereby the traditional perception of the quality of students available through Clearing would no longer apply, since there was a growing trend of students choosing not to apply to university via UCAS and instead use Clearing to negotiate for themselves a place at the best possible institution.
5. The University had chosen to increase fees for international students, although these were currently at an average for the sector. The impact of the fee increase on recruitment was not yet known.

6. Dependency on levels of recruitment from particular countries was being monitored. Continued over-reliance on recruitment from China, for example, presented a significant risk to revenue and the quality of the student experience in some subject areas.

7. It was important to work collaboratively with academic units to identify international recruitment markets.

8. In terms of recruitment of home students, the University was not alone in experiencing a fall in the current recruitment cycle, however it was faring worse than its comparator group.

9. Diversity in terms of widening participation remained an issue in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, and the factors behind this would be looked into.

77. **NU LONDON**

Received report from Professor Richard Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Internationalisation, on behalf of Executive Board.  
[Circulated with the agenda as Document J. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. A strategic review of the Newcastle University London joint venture had identified that the joint venture was currently highly unlikely to realise the majority of the founding motivations. To move forwards there would be a more conservative plan, which would be a scaled down version of the original vision of NU London as a pan-university portfolio.

2. There was a decision point planned for mid-2018 to assess whether the changes to the portfolio of courses, which were expected to be modest in their extent, were strong enough to be viable financially and pedagogically and to provide Council with sufficient assurance that the joint venture could continue to be viable.

3. Key representatives of INTO University Partnerships and Newcastle University were working together effectively to put in place the changes in portfolio, costs and governance for the joint venture. A project manager and Associate Dean would be appointed to assist in this process.

4. Feedback on the quality of the student experience at NU London indicated that there were some issues. The results of the 2017 International Student Barometer, for example, showed that London students were less satisfied with aspects of their learning experience, such as the quality of lectures, course organisation and library facilities when compared with their Newcastle peers. Overall satisfaction, however, was comparable with that of Newcastle-based students (91% compared with 93%).

5. There was a pressing need to provide additional funds to the joint venture so it could remain technically solvent. Discussions were underway between the Executive Director of Finance the INTO University Partnerships to agree the optimum structure of the funding required.

**Resolved that Council agree that Finance Committee, on its behalf, approve the structure of additional funding required by the joint venture for 2018-19 and 2019-20.**

78. **GENDER PAY GAP**
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Received a report from Mrs Judith Whitaker, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Under new gender pay gap regulations, the University was required to report on a number of key gender pay data sets and publish the information both externally and on its own webpages.

2. The mean pay gap between female and male staff was 20.4%, compared with a Russell Group average of 21.7%. Although there were mitigating factors such as long-term structural issues across the sector and the way in which the University employs some of its operational staff, there is an urgency to address and narrow this pay gap.

3. In terms of bonus pay, the University’s pay gap was the lowest in the Russell Group at 49%. This figure was very significantly affected by the classification of Clinical Excellence Awards as bonus pay, a standard agreed across the sector.

4. The University should be vocal in highlighting the extent of the issue created by the classification of Clinical Excellence Awards.

5. Pay gaps were partly due to women taking career breaks in academic life, as well as a lack of mobility relative to men and reluctance to highlight pay inequality.

6. The University would be taking action to significantly reduce the gap over the next few years, with a focus on sustainable action over a range of policies and procedures within all staff grades which will combine to make a positive difference. This will include the ongoing major review of the Academic Promotions Process, and the new Returners Programme, aimed at providing extra support for those returning to work after a long period of absence, such as Maternity or Carer’s Leave.

7. The action plan to address the pay gap should be more ambitious and that timescales should be established for the completion of priority actions.

8. For internal publication it would be helpful to add staff numbers in tables 1 (Gender pay gap 2016-17) and 3 (Gender quartiles) of the report.

Resolved that:


2. An update on comparison of the University’s data with that of competitor universities be submitted for consideration at the April 2018 meeting of Council.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT FUND PROPOSAL

Received a proposal from Professor Brian Walker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Strategy and Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. Council was being asked to approve in principle the strategic investment by the University of up to £5million in a research, teaching and engagement hub building at Low Thornley
near Gateshead. The development would provide a nationally unique facility for experimentation on multiple energy modalities.

2. The University’s aims in developing a presence at Low Thornley would be: to further develop internationally leading research; to foster strategic partnerships with major regional commercial companies; with these companies, to develop educational programmes including apprenticeships which meet the skills gap in contemporary energy provision; to relieve pressure on the estates in central Newcastle; and to be in a strong position to obtain Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund funding in support of clean energy systems.

3. The opportunity for the development had arisen through Round 6 of the HEFCE Research Partnership Investment Fund, for which the University had submitted an expression of interest. In the event that the proposal was not funded by HEFCE, alternative funding could be sought in parallel and subsequently through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund or Sector Deals, for example.

Resolved that Council approve in principle the strategic investment of up to £5million in the Low Thornley site, and approve the progression of the project as outlined in the proposal.

80. DRUMMOND BUILDING BUSINESS CASE

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

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

Noted that:

1. Council was asked to approve up to £1.99m of capital expenditure for the first phase of works to redevelop the Drummond Building to provide a flexible multi-purpose teaching lab. This amount would normally be within Executive Board’s delegated authority to approve, but was being referred to Council because of the potential for future phases of redevelopment that would require Council approval.

2. The business case had been developed in collaboration between HaSS and SAgE faculties. Cross-faculty collaboration was expected to benefit other forthcoming development projects.

Resolved that the business case for the initial phase of work to redevelop the Drummond Building be approved.

81. REPORT FROM AUDIT, RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Received a report from the meeting of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee held on 17 January 2018.

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

Noted that:

1. The Committee had reported its concern about the University’s preparedness for large-scale cybersecurity threats and its ability to understand how and where it was vulnerable to large-scale incidents. The issue of cybersecurity would be a very high priority for the incoming Chief Information Officer

2. The Committee confirmed it had received assurance that the University had complied with the TRAC statement of requirements, prior to its sign-off by the Vice-Chancellor and
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President. The TRAC report had been circulated to members of Council on 5 February 2018.

3. HEFCE had reviewed the University’s annual accountability return submitted in December 2017 and judged that the University was not at higher risk in relation to financial sustainability, good management and governance matters. HEFCE would therefore continue to engage with the University on the basis of normal contact.

*Resolved that Council should receive periodic updates on the University’s preparedness for cybersecurity threats.*

**82. USS AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

Received a report from Mrs Judith Whitaker, Executive Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

Noted that:

1. The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) had secured a mandate for strike action and action short of a strike (ASOS) in opposition to proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) at 61 HEIs including Newcastle.

2. The UCU had given the University notice that it would be calling on its members to take two days strike action on 22 and 23 February. This would escalate to three days on 26, 27 and 28 February, four days on 5, 6, 7 and 8 March and 5 days on 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 March. They have also asked their members to take ASOS from 22 February consisting of working to contract; not undertaking voluntary duties; not covering for absent colleagues; and not rescheduling lectures or classes cancelled due to strike action.

3. An industrial action planning group chaired by the Registrar had been reconvened to address the industrial action and seek ways of mitigating the impact on students. That group would make recommendations on the level of pay deduction as the industrial action played out.

4. The Executive Director of Human Resources had written to all appropriate employees in advance of the industrial action to set out the University’s position on partial performance and pay deduction and would ask employees to declare if they intended to take action. Employees were not obliged to inform the University of their intention to strike in advance of the action (making it difficult to establish quickly who had been on strike), but they must do so afterwards if so requested.

5. Frequently Asked Questions, a briefing paper and updates had been provided to employees and managers and were available on the HR website. The Academic Registrar had written to all students to advise them of the strike action and what the University would be doing to minimise any impact. Students would be kept informed about the situation as it develops.

**83. ELECTIONS TO COUNCIL**

Received a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.

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

*Resolved that the revised arrangements for elections to Council be approved, and incorporated into the Standing Orders of Council.*
84. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

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

Noted that:

1. The GDPR, which would become law across the European Union on 25 May 2018, increases the rights of data subjects, required organisations to adopt appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal data, increased the size of potential fines for data protection breaches (from a current maximum of £500,000 to 20 million euros) and made mandatory data breach reporting.

2. The University was building upon a firm foundation based upon our compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 whilst following updated guidance produced by the Information Commissioner’s Office. There was an on-going need to comply with this data protection legislation.

3. Good progress had been made by the University in meeting its obligations in respect of demonstrating compliance with GDPR. Deadlines no later than April 2018 had been set for the completion of other tasks necessary for compliance, with the exception of areas where further guidance from the Information Commissioner’s Office would first be needed (once the UK’s new Data Protection Act had received Royal Assent). An update on this work would be provided to Council at its next meeting in April 2018.

85. DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Received the University’s revised Data Protection Policy.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document R. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

Noted that:

1. The University could benefit from having a clearer definition of what was a policy and what was guidance. It was hoped that this would result from the forthcoming audit of policies and procedures that had been requested by Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

Resolved that the revised Data Protection Policy be approved.

86. 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 S. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

87. ANNUAL EFFICIENCY RETURN

Received a report from Mr Richard Dale, Executive Director of Finance, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document T. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

88. COMMITTEE STANDING ORDERS

Received a report from Dr John Hogan, Registrar, on behalf of Executive Board.
[Circulated with the agenda as Document U. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]
89. **CHAIR’S CIRCULAR**

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

90. **NOMINATIONS AGREEMENT MALAYSIA**

   Received a residential nominations agreement.
   
   [Circulated with the agenda as Document V. Copy filed in the Minute Book.]

   *Resolved that the nominations agreement be approved.*