

Ulster University

Council

07 October 2016

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Ulster University held at the Magee Campus on Friday 07 October 2016.

#### PRESENT

Mr J Hunter (Chair), Professor P Nixon (Vice-Chancellor), Mrs H Bingham, Dr K Burnett, Mr D Clements, Mr A Langan, Mrs L McKeown, Ms J Pyper, Mrs H Quigley, Professor M Stringer, Dr J Stuart

#### APOLOGIES

Mr P Lobban, Mr C Mackey, Ms M McKee, Dr P McNaney, Sir Robert Salisbury

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Professor A Adair (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Mrs F Kane, Mrs N Lamond, Mr R Millar, Mr E Mullan

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new session and extended a warm welcome to Mrs Lamond, attending her first meeting of Council since taking up the post of Chief Operating Officer.

#### 16.32 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2016 were approved subject to the word "moral" in minute 16.15i) being replaced with "morale".

#### 16.33 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items.

#### 16.34 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

##### The Chairman mentioned the following matters:

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chancellor and members of Council who had taken part in the recent selection process to appoint senior members of the University's senior leadership team. The Chairman also thanked those who contributed to and presented during the recent successful Council Induction session.

The Chairman tabled a paper which outlined the membership of Council committees for the four-year period. Members were invited to contact the Chairman if they had any issues with the committee memberships.

The Council noted that a request had been received from government for nominations for appropriate staff to be considered for New Year's Honours Awards.

The Chairman asked that staff who had, either through their University work or as a result of their outside activities in the community, shown outstanding dedication, be considered for nomination for the Public Awards.

The Chairman also reminded members that the annual trawl for Honorary Degree nominations had commenced and it would be an opportunity for appropriate individuals, from Northern Ireland or indeed from further afield to be recognised for achieving excellence in their chosen field. Conferment would be at the summer 2017 graduation ceremonies.

Members were reminded to complete their Register of Interest form, which had been issued by the Office of the University Secretary.

#### 16.35 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP (C/16/25)

The Chairman presented the Terms of Reference and informed members that Council is asked, at its first meeting every year, to consider and if appropriate re-adopt them. Members noted that each Council committee will be asked to approve their own terms of reference.

The Council noted that point eight on the recommendation on Fellowships, Studentships, Bursaries and Prizes had been delegated to the PVC for Education

Mr Mullan commented that the terms of reference largely reflected the Council Statute and that he would revisit them in the future with a view to refreshing them.

The Council agreed to re-adopt the Terms of Reference.

#### 16.36 PROGRAMME OF WORK (C/16/26)

The Chairman presented the Programme of Work and reminded members it was only a preliminary schedule of papers and committee minutes Council would receive during the year. The programme was flexible and would take account of major issues which may arise during the year.

Mr Mullan commented that the purpose of the programme of work was to align the work of the Senior Leadership Team and Council to the strategic plan and ensure the flow of information between committees.

The Council noted the Programme of Work.

#### 16.37 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/16/27)

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report to Council, drawing members attention to the following:

##### 1 Senior Portfolios

The Vice-Chancellor thanked everyone who had been involved in the very rigorous appointments process for the appointment the Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Executive Deans. The process to appoint Provosts on all campuses had been concluded with the following staff appointed: Dr Karise Hutchinson (Coleraine),

Professor Raffaella Folli (Belfast and Jordanstown) and Dr Malachy O'Neill (Magee). Fiona Kane had also been had been appointed to the role of Director of the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to a question from the Chairman on time commitment for the position of Provost by stating that it would be a two day per week commitment. Two of the three appointees were currently Heads of School.

## 2 Strategic Planning

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that the Strategic Plan had been circulated to all staff and that he would be holding sessions on each campus to formally present the plan.

## 3 Leadership Forum

A second Leadership Forum had been held on 28 September. A total of 120 senior staff attended. Members of the Senior Leadership Team presented their initial impressions and plans. A similar event would be held in January 2017.

## 4 Magee Expansion

The Vice-Chancellor informed the Council that conversations were on going with the relevant stakeholders in respect of a number of projects, including a graduate entry medical school.

## 5 Medical School

The outline case for a graduate entry medical school in Magee would be completed and submitted in the next week to sponsor departments. The Irish Medical Council was also in support of the proposal.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to a question from the Chairman that the plan was for 120 students each year. It was, he said, a significant commitment for the University and for the City.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to Professor Hugh McKenna who had been doing a spectacular job in pulling proposals together and driving the project.

## 6 Key Risks

The Vice-Chancellor commented that HE funding remained a constant concern. The Northern Ireland Executive had engaged in discussions but no real solution had been proposed. Staff morale is also a key concern in the context of change, the funding situation and the recent cuts.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to a comment on the need to invest in staff to acquire skills needed to assist the University in achieving its goals by stating that a Leadership Development Plan would be sourced and developed by the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Senior Leadership Team. In the first instance Mr Mullan commented that as staff moved into senior leadership roles, there would be a need for them to be supported to ensure that their skills were

reinforced. Mrs Lamond commented that enhancing the human resources and staff development functions was a priority.

## 7 Council Score Cards

Council noted that the Vice-Chancellor would be developing a score card to assist Council in monitoring the key performance indicators associated with the strategic plan. The score card was currently being developed by the Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Planning Office and that Council would see it at the next meeting.

Council noted the Vice-Chancellor's report.

## 16.38 COUNCIL INDUCTION 21 & 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

Mr Mullan thanked members for their participation in the induction programme and invited comment. Members expressed the view that it was a very successful programme and had found it helpful. Members commented that they would find it helpful to have 'ready reckoner' on key University statistics and issues. Mr Mullan agreed to pursue this and also commented that there would be further development activity.

The Chairman thanked all involved in organising the event

## 16.39 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

### a) Resources Committee (27 July 2016) (C/16/28)

Mr Clements presented the minutes and highlighted the following:

#### i) Updated Financial Forecasts 2015/16-2018/18 Meeting (minute 16.33)

The Committee had received and approved the updated Financial Forecasts. The Committee recorded that the formal letter of funding had still to be received from the Department for Employment and Learning. With the exception of 2016/17 an operating loss had been forecast. A reduction of cash holdings from £143m to £27m had been forecast.

Staff costs as a percentage of income are forecast to average 56% and the net cash position is estimated at 57 days. This is in line with planned levels of cash reserves although still below the sector average of 90 days.

The meeting also recorded the importance of increasing international recruitment to allow for reinvestment.

Council endorsed the minute of the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 July 2016.

### b) Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (06 October 2016)

The Chairman presented a verbal report of the meeting which dealt with remuneration issues. The meeting had received details of salary increases and noted that the 1.1% national pay award had been awarded to all staff. The

meeting also agreed increments, where appropriate to senior staff. There had been no performance bonuses awarded in the previous year. There would be an opportunity to look at performance related bonuses in the future.

New salary scales for Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Deans would be linked to performance and benchmarks.

The Chief Operating Officer had taken a preliminary look at senior staff within her portfolio which would be augmented by the appointment, in the near future of a Chief Digital and Information Officer.

The Chairman informed members that the formal minutes of the meeting would be presented to Council for approval on 2 December 2016.

The Council noted the verbal update from the meeting held on 06 October 2016.

#### 16.40 GREATER BELFAST DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (C/16/29)

Mrs Lamond presented the update and informed Council that the programme of works was progressing to the revised completion date of September 2019. The facilitated meetings between the University's representatives and legal advisors with contractors for BC/BD had commenced and would continue until the end of the year. The recovery plan being prepared by the contractors would be subject to due diligence. The recovery plan targets completion by May 2019. The Steering Group on 6 October 2016 reassessed the risks associated with the project. The University is still primarily focused on achieving operational completion by September 2019.

Professor Adair commented that there were a number of risks associated with the project. The variation of costs of the works had been marked RED on the risk register. Mr Mullan commented that it was a time of rapid change and risks needed to be developed within the overall change management process.

Mrs Lamond emphasised the need to manage the risks now as we work towards a period of significant change for both staff and students. There had also been a willingness for staff and students to engage in the process.

Mrs Lamond agreed to look at supplying members with a list of key messages on University projects which could be used to promote the University's plans. There was also the need for the project to be owned by the entire University.

Council noted the update.