

Ulster University

Council

04 May 2018

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Ulster University held at the Magee Campus on Friday 04 May 2018.

PRESENT

Mr J Hunter (Chair), Professor P Nixon (Vice-Chancellor and President), Mrs H Bingham, Dr K Burnett, Mr D Clements, Mr P Lobban (by video-conferencing), Dr P McNaney, Mr K McStravock (Students' Union), Mrs J Pyper, Mrs H Quigley, Professor M Stringer, Dr J Stuart, Mrs E Way

APOLOGIES

Mr A Langan, Mrs M McKee, Mrs L McKeown, Sir Robert Salisbury

IN ATTENDANCE

Professor A Adair, Mrs N Lamond, Mr E Mullan and Mr R Millar

The Chairman informed Council that Mrs Mary McKee would be standing down from Council for the time being owing to a possible conflict of interest due to her employment with SIB. The due diligence report on GBDP will be completed for DfE by SIB.

18.10 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2018 were approved.

18.11 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items.

18.12 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman mentioned the following matters:

- 1 The Chairman thanked all staff involved in the tour of the Magee campus prior to the meeting. The enthusiasm of the staff had been quite evident. The new teaching block was very impressive.
- 2 The Chairman congratulated Mr Kevin McStravock on being re-elected as Student President for another term.
- 3 The Chairman had received a communication from UCU on the recording and coverage of the item on the Staff Survey in the June 2017 Council minutes. He

had responded to say that the minutes were only intended to be a summary of the information and that Council took the issues identified in the survey seriously. The issues would be taken forward through the appropriate channels.

- 4 There had been two meetings of the Chairs of the Council Committees (7 March and 12 April). The main focus had been the Greater Belfast Development. The University had given clear indications of what was expected during discussions with Somague/SACYR and respective legal teams. The University continued to press Somague to ensure momentum was not lost.

The Vice-Chancellor added, that there was regular contact with Somague and the urgent need was to have contractors paid and kick start the next stage of the project. Additional funds were also being sought to assist with the project.

Ms Lamond commented that Mr Grant Robinson, Senior Project Director and Mr Paul Spray were doing great work behind the scenes and engaging with contractors. Pressure was being put on Somague to complete as soon as possible. We also needed assurance from them that they had the capacity to complete. There had been tough commercial negotiations with Somague/SACYR.

Council noted that it might be necessary to have a special meeting towards the end of August to consider and endorse any agreement reached on the way forward with the project.

- 5 The Joint meeting of Council and Senate would take place on 16 May. The meeting would be led by Professor Brian Murphy with the focus on Widening Access and Entry Tariff.
- 6 The Chairman informed Council that the Court meeting in March had witnessed a few members questioning the role of Court and its members. The University Secretary would undertake a survey, by means of a questionnaire to members and their nominating bodies on their expectations as a Court member and what information Court should receive.

Members commented that it was important for the University to communicate regularly with Court members on their role and the purpose of Court.

- 7 The Chairman informed members that he had commissioned a review of the process and procedures that had led to the recent Industrial Tribunal decision in relation to staff redundancies. The review would be undertaken by a nominee of the Labour Relations Agency and the findings would be presented to Council.
- 8 The Chancellor's Lecture would take place on the Magee campus, possibly over the Graduation period. Members would be kept informed.

## 18.13 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/18/09)

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report and highlighted the following:

### Industrial Action and USS Pension Scheme

The strike had been instigated as a result of changes in USS pension scheme. Of the 1,147 University UCU members, only 167 took part in the strike. The percentage had been largely replicated across the UK. The faculty particularly affected had been Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The University had worked to minimise the impact on students. Students affected would not be penalised.

The Vice-Chancellor commented that the strike had been professionally handled with strikers being courteous on all campuses.

Mr McStravock added, that the Students' Union had worked to help affected students and that Professor Bartholomew had acted positively to mitigate the effect on students.

Both UUK and UCU are seeking the support of USS and the Pensions Regulator on the next steps in the process. The options include pausing the discussion of benefit reform to secure expert opinion on the USS valuation.

The amount deducted from staff pay, as a result of being on strike would be allocated to the Student Hardship Fund.

### Universities UK

The Vice-Chancellor had been re-elected to the board for a further three years. This will ensure that we have a voice in the broader UK context.

### School Visits

The Vice-Chancellor's visits to academic schools had almost been completed. There had been a great response from staff during the visits. It had been an opportunity to hear directly from colleagues.

### REF Sub-Panel Members

Five Ulster staff had been appointed as members of Research Excellence Framework sub-panels for the 2021 assessment. Ulster already had three staff acting as sub-panel chairs, Professor Hugh McKenna, Professor Marie Murphy and Dr Susan Hodgett.

### Graduate Entry Medical School

Professor Louise Dubras had been appointed Foundation Dean of the School and takes up the post on 1 June. The St. George's Curriculum contract had been concluded.

Council noted that it would be imperative to keep the pressure on the Permanent Secretaries to secure funding.

#### Health Sciences Relocation

The Health Sciences move from Jordanstown to Coleraine had been deferred to 2019 rather than the current year.

In response to a comment on the rationale for moving Health Sciences to Coleraine rather than Magee, where other related disciplines, such as Radiography are already situated, Ms Lamond confirmed that accommodation was readily available on the Coleraine campus to accommodate Health Sciences. A move to Magee would entail a move for other disciplines, to accommodate Health Sciences.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report.

Council noted the Vice-Chancellor's report.

#### 18.14 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

- a) Resources Committee (15 February 2018 and 16 April 2018) (C/18/10a and C/18/10b)

Mr Clements presented the minutes and reported that:

15 February 2018 were formally presented to Council for approval. The February meeting of Council had received a verbal report of the meeting.

The Committee had received a PS5&50 Management Information Update (minute 18.04) and noted the timeline for the next phase of the professional restructuring. The Committee also noted the matching process within the four faculties and departments such as Global Engagement, Research and Impact, Vice-Chancellor's Executive Office and Development and Alumni Relations Office.

The Committee had received details of a proposed Nominations Agreement in relation to the Belfast campus Student Accommodation (minute 18.07). The agreement would be with Student Roost. It would secure 175 rooms in 2018 and 225 rooms in 2019. The Committee noted the risks with the agreement but not to approve the agreement, would put the University at even greater risk. The Committee, taking into consideration the risks, had approved the Nominations Agreement.

16 April 2018:

The Committee had noted the update and revisions to the OSC Policy (minute 18.10) and that UCU had changed their position and approved the policy. The policy would be formally adopted and published on Insight.

The Committee had noted that Professor Richard Millar had accepted a twelve month appointment as Chief Digital Information Officer (minute 18.12a). Professor Millar took up the post on 1 May 2018.

Weekly meetings were being held with Somague in relation to the Greater Belfast Development (minute 18.12b). A three month interim contract would be entered into, to allow work to continue as soon as possible. Additional costs would be encountered but the contractors were keen to see the project to completion.

The Committee had noted that the recent UCU strike (minute 19.12c) had resulted in relatively few students being impacted with the main instances concentrated in three schools.

The Committee noted that under the previously endorsed Nominations Agreement (minute 18.12d) and the change in timeline for GBD, there could be the need to extend the agreement into a third year. The extension would reduce any potential impact the agreement may have on the existing accommodation provider at Jordanstown.

The Committee had received and endorsed the Draft Academic Plan for the period 2018/19-2022/23 (minute 18.13). The Committee noted that faculties were being asked to submit marketing plans, supported by Global Engagement and Marketing and Communications. It would witness a greater emphasis on programmes that are more attractive to students and informed by market intelligence. The Committee noted that under QAHE a review of courses being offered was being considered. It would ensure that relationship remained beneficial to the University.

The Committee had noted the lack of uptake on the Strategic Initiative Fund (minute 18.14a). However, a number of short term investments had been made against the fund.

The Council endorsed the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 15 February 2018 and 16 April 2018.

b) Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (3 May 2018)

The Chairman presented a verbal report of the meeting:

The Committee had received and endorsed the results of the Equal Pay Review. It had noted that there were no systemic issues but that a number of areas, such as allowances for additional duties, and some gender issues within grade, would benefit from further attention.

The Committee had received the Draft Delegated Authority Framework paper. The paper was aimed at giving clarity to staff and also to Council and its committees. The Chairman asked that the document be amended to allow

exceptional issues to be presented to Council. The amended paper would formally be presented to Council in June.

The Committee had received an update on the Proposed Guidelines for HE Remuneration Code. The Committee had agreed that the University's procedures should be in line with the code and ensure that we follow best practice.

The Committee had received a paper on the Development of a Pay Multiple and noted that the University was currently above the mid-point of the recommended range. The Committee had endorsed the proposal to benchmark.

The Committee had endorsed the proposal to undertake an Internal Effectiveness review of the Council and its committees. It would consist of a survey to all Council members to complete.

Council noted the verbal report of the Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee held on 3 May 2018.

#### 18.15 SCHEDULE OF SUMMER GRADUATIONS (C/18/11)

Mr Mullan presented the schedule and informed the Council that it indicated not only when each faculty would be graduating but also when and where each of the selected Honorary Graduands would receive their degree.

The Council noted that the gender balance of Honorary Graduands had improved this year. From a total of fourteen, there were five women, compared with two last year.

Mr Mullan reminded members that there be one formal dinner this year again, at a location to be confirmed in Belfast. Members would receive invitations from the Events Office.

The Council noted the paper on the Summer Graduation.

#### 18.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that there would be a series of events organized on the Coleraine campus, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the University first opened.

The Council also noted the proposal to open a Joint School with Shaanxi University of Science and Technology in Xi'an China. The proposal, if approved would be in line with the University's global vision and develop further the engagement in China.

Council recorded its congratulations to Dr Joanne Stuart on being awarded the title Belfast Business Woman of the Year.