

Ulster University

Council

12 May 2017

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Ulster University held at the Coleraine Campus on Friday 12 May 2017.

#### PRESENT

Mr J Hunter (Chair), Professor P Nixon (Vice-Chancellor and President), Mrs H Bingham, Mr D Clements, Mr A Langan, Mr P Lobban, Mr C Mackey (Students' Union), Mrs L McKeown, Dr P McNaney, Mrs J Pyper, Mrs H Quigley, Professor M Stringer, Dr J Stuart

#### APOLOGIES

Dr K Burnett, Mrs M McKee and Sir Robert Salisbury

#### IN ATTENDANCE

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

#### PRESENT BY INVITATION

Professor C Gormley-Heenan

The Chairman informed members that Mr C Mackey would be standing down as Student President after two successful years. Council recorded its sincere thanks for his contribution to the work of the Council and the dedication with which he represented the interests of the student body and the Students' Union. The incoming Student President, Mr Kevin McStravock would attend the Council meeting on 16 June 2017.

#### PRESENTATION ON DEVELOPING RESEARCH STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE AT ULSTER

Professor Gormley-Heenan (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact) delivered the presentation on a strategy that would provide direction and a plan for the University's research over the next five years. Targets would include the increase in the number of research active staff by 50% over the next five years. The level of research council grants would double and PhD student numbers would rise by 30%. Focus must be on improving our positioning in top 25% within the next REF assessment for research power and in the top 20% within the 2021 HEBCI survey for innovation.

The success of the strategy would depend on the quality and quantity of the research. The current eligible pool of research active staff is 659. Fifty new academic appointments will be made and within three years, those 50 appointments should have generated some 25 new additional posts through grants with a further 15 moving from the ineligible pool to the eligible pool. This would bring the total to 749 by 2021.

The Chairman thanked Professor Gormley-Heenan for the detailed presentation and Council looked forward to seeing the development of the strategy.

#### 17.08 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2017 were approved.

#### 17.09 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items.

#### 17.10 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman mentioned the following matters:

- 1 He informed members that at the end of April he attended a CUC Planning Conference. The two main issues that had arisen were Brexit and its effect on NI and the lack of a budget for 2017/18 from the NI Executive.
- 2 He, and the University Secretary, had visited the QAHE London campus following the CUC event and was encouraged that QAHE were very responsive to developing the current relationship with the University.
- 3 He informed members that the recent AHUA conference had been held in Belfast. Mr Mullan commented that 100 delegates had attended and the feedback had been very positive. The Titanic Building had hosted the conference with the gala dinners taking place in Belfast City Hall.
- 4 The Chair informed Council that he had agreed KPIs with the Vice-Chancellor for the Vice-Chancellor, around key strategic issues. The Chair intended to monitor the Vice-Chancellor's KPIs through regular meetings with him and would report to the Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee in the first instance.

The Chairman also informed members that he would be holding individual meetings with members on how they felt the first year had been. Also under the Effectiveness Review, training needs for each member would also be discussed.

- 5 The Chair informed Council that under the THES Student Experience survey results, the University had been the most improved university in the UK.
- 6 The Chair informed members that the Chairs of Council Committee had met on two occasions (8 March and 2 May) and had received a project update for GBD. Senior Counsel had advised that it was unlikely that the responsibility for the substantive issues associated with the delays would rest with the University, as it had employed consultants and contractors with expertise in such projects.

The May meeting received a report on the Programme Progress and noted that the project continued to be delivered as a programme of individual but interrelated work packages. A public consultation on the Jordanstown

Masterplan would be held with a revised application due to be submitted in quarter three.

#### 17.11 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/17/07)

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

##### Strategic Appointments

A new Director of Marketing and Communications had been appointed, Ms Joanne McGowan would join the University on 1 June from the Bank of Ireland. The other Directorship roles remain vacant. There would be a further search undertaken. Interim arrangements for the vacant posts are being put in place.

##### Staff Survey

The response rate stood at 65% with the closing date being extended to Monday 15 May to allow for any responses submitted over the weekend.

##### Campus Plans

In Coleraine, a lease has been signed for a 20 acre Enterprise Zone located of the Portstewart Road. Work is continuing with the Causeway Coast and Glens Council to ensure that the University remains fully engaged with the project.

The vacant commercial space (previously Street Coffee Bar) is being utilised as an informal study space.

In Magee, progress is ongoing with the Medical School. A MoU and a non-disclosure agreement has been signed with St Georges' and this will facilitate the stage 2 submission to the GMC and the completion of the business case.

In Belfast the Provost has developed a proposal for the empty commercial space to be used as a craft shop, run by students.

##### Brexit

The University will be hosting a Brexit conference, including a number of workshops on 14 June. The response from those invited has been encouraging and it is hoped that Council members will also attend.

The Chairman welcomed the University's initiative in organising this conference, as it is an important contribution to Civic Society.

##### Queens Anniversary Award

The University had made a submission for the prestigious award. The submission pulled together all the work that is being undertaken to develop the creative industries in NI and demonstrates our commitment to this sector.

## Universities UK (UUK) Board

The Vice-Chancellor is now a member of the Board.

### Risks

The political situation and uncertainty around Brexit and sustainable funding remain the biggest concerns. The level of engagement with NI, ROI and UK stakeholders has stepped up. The University is also highlighting the NI case through Universities UK.

Council noted that the Risk Register for 2017-18 would be received by Audit Committee at its meeting on 22 May.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to a comment on the recent recruitment and marketing mission to South America by stating that the market could be a very important component in achieving our overseas recruitment targets.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report.

## 17.12 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

### a) Resources Committee (10 April 2017) (C/17/08)

Mr Clements presented the minutes and reported that:

The Committee had received and endorsed the Academic Plan for 2017/18-2021/22 (minute 17.04). The plan had been developed against a significant reduction to the block grant and the University's decision to reduce student numbers by 1,250 full time undergraduate places by 2018/19. The plan reflects increased emphasis on non MASN growth plans, especially Overseas and GB students.

Professor Adair responded to a comment on the significant increase in student numbers, by stating that the Academic Plan is linked to the planning statements from each faculty. The Vice-Chancellor added that increased student recruitment was the key to increased income.

The Committee had received the Chief Finance and Information Officer's six-month report (minute 17.05) and were reminded that the decrease in academic staff salaries had been the result of significant changes to the academic structure, whereas professional services had remained constant for now.

Council endorsed the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 10 April 2017.

### b) Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (12 April 2017) (C/17/09)

The Chairman presented the minutes and reported that:

The Committee had noted that a preferred partner had been identified to deliver the Leadership Development Programme for Senior Staff (minute 17.05). The Committee had stressed the importance of such a programme as the senior management team was relatively new. The programme would focus on collective development, built around the delivery of 5&50, as well as an element of individual development.

The Committee had noted that the last Effectiveness Review of Council (minute 17.06) had recommended that a development programme should be designed for Council. Council members would have further input as to what the focus of the programme should be.

The Committee had received details of an Equal Pay Review (minute 17.07), in advance of the commencement of relevant legislation later in the year. It would also support the University's commitment to equality and also support the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter initiatives. Members welcomed the initiative but asked that, owing to the diverse range of issues likely to be covered in the review, that the title be reconsidered.

The Committee noted that the Chairman had agreed KPIs with the Vice-Chancellor for 2017/18 (minute 17.08). The KPIs were linked to the stages of delivery of the Strategic Plan and also some personal KPIs. The Chair would be responsible for conducting an assessment of the Vice-Chancellor's performance. A report would be presented to the Committee in the autumn. The same meeting would also be asked to approve the Vice Chancellor's KPIs for the next academic year.

Council endorsed the minutes of the Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee held on 12 April 2017.

#### 17.13 SCHEDULE OF SUMMER GRADUATIONS (C/17/10)

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 Vice-Chancellor informed Council that there would only be one formal Graduation Dinner and not three as in previous years. It would be an opportunity to enhance the University's Civic Engagement reputation.

Mr Mullan informed Council that the University would be live streaming the thirteen ceremonies to a designated web site. It would allow family members not able to attend the ceremony the opportunity to watch ceremonies remotely.

Mr Mullan responded to a comment on the lack of female recipients of honorary degrees by stating that the annual trawl does encourage the nomination of worthy female candidates. The nomination criteria would be reviewed in the future. Members asked for a list of the backgrounds of the Honorary Graduates.