

Ulster University

Council

16 June 2017

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Ulster University held at the Coleraine Campus on Friday 16 June 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 (by video-conference), Mrs L McKeown, Mr K McStravock (Students' Union), Mrs H Quigley, Professor M Stringer, Dr J Stuart

#### APOLOGIES

Dr K Burnett, Ms M McKee, Dr P McNaney, Mrs J Pyper, Sir Robert Salisbury

#### IN ATTENDANCE

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

#### PRESENT BY INVITATION

Mrs A Rankin (for Balanced Scorecard presentation) and Dr A Moore (for minute 17.20)

The Chairman welcomed the new Students' Union President, Mr Kevin McStravock to his first meeting of the Council. Council looked forward to having his input into its work over the next twelve months.

#### PRESENTATION ON PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALANCED SCORECARD AND THE 5&50 METRICS AT FACULTY LEVEL

Mrs Rankin, Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance updated Council members on progress at faculty level. The four faculties had agreed their individual planning statements for the next five years which had been developed as part of the Balanced Scorecard. Council noted the impressive targets in relation to Teaching and Research.

Mrs Rankin responded to a comment from the Chairman on how the Balanced Scorecard had been received by individual faculty staff, by stating that there had been a shift in staff culture and faculties were embracing the way forward. It would be important for staff to take up the challenge and for the new Executive Deans to have the appropriate support to achieve the targets. It would also be important for Heads of Schools to work closely with Executive and Associate Deans to achieve the targets.

The Chairman commented that the material would allow Council to see where the University aspires to be in five years time and judge if targets are being met.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Rankin for presenting the current faulty position in relation to the Balanced Scorecard.

#### 17.14 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2017 were approved.

#### 17.15 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items

#### 17.16 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman mentioned the following matters:

- 1 He informed members that the recent Symposium on Brexit had attracted around 200 attendees from across the community. The feedback had been very positive.
- 2 He informed members that the annual accountability meeting had taken place on 25 May 2017. Mr Langan commented that the meeting allowed the University to put forward its concerns and issues. The University received the standard classification of not being at higher risk.
- 3 The Chairman intended to hold individual meetings with Council members to ascertain individual members training needs and how Council members could add value to the University in what is a period of considerable transition.
- 4 The Chairman informed members that he had attended the Learning and Teaching awards in May. The atmosphere had been extremely positive and the strong relationship between staff and students had been very evident.
- 5 The Chairman reminded members that they should have replied to invitations to the summer ceremonies and lunch. Applications from Council members to processing would still be included in arrangements.

#### 17.17 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/17/13)

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

Professor Paddy Johnston – Vice-Chancellor of Queens University Belfast

The Vice-Chancellor informed members that he had contact QUB and offered support following the sad passing of their Vice-Chancellor. The University had opened a book of condolence.

## Global Engagement

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that the International Office had been undergoing a significant period of restructuring. The Draft International Strategy would be presented to Council in the Autumn.

## Brexit

The recent Brexit conference had set a higher standard for the University in relation to its civic contribution. The conference had put the University at the centre of the community and had received excellent feedback.

## Funding

The political uncertainty means that the funding challenges continues, with an estimated 2% cut in the budget for NI. The University still receives £48m per year less than GB institutions. The University with the assistance of non MaSN students, could still have control of its future. The University needed to continue and lobby and promote its vision.

## Strategic Academic Recruitment

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that he had approved a sum of £2m per year for strategic academic recruitment.

## Vice-Chancellor's Talent Pool

The Council noted that it would be a robust process to either recruit talented individuals or to encourage existing staff to step up to the challenge.

## Risks

The risks continue to be the uncertainty surrounding the political situation in NI, the lack of clarity on Brexit and a sustainable funding solution.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report.

## 17.18 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

### Audit Committee (22 May 2017) (C/17/14)

Mr Langan presented the minutes and reported that:

The Committee had received the Risk Based Approach to Assessment of Strategic Risks for 2017-18 (minute 17.11). The Committee had agreed that:

- The risk appetite assigned to 'reputation' should be reviewed to better reflect the comments in the comments in the institutional risk appetite statement.
- Further consideration be given to simplifying the scheme used to reflect methodologies.

- Senior Officers responsible for the strategic priority areas should be invited to future meetings of the Audit Committee to provide further information on the rationale for assigning specific Risk Appetite categories to each of the areas of focus within their portfolio.

The Committee endorsed the Institutional Risk Appetite statement and approved the assessment of the 2017/18 Strategic Risks after controls and the reporting and escalation of the risks.

The Committee had received three Internal Audit Reports and update against the plan (minute 17.12)

- Income had received a Satisfactory internal audit opinion with no issues.
- Library Services had received a Satisfactory internal audit opinion with two priority three issues. The first issue related to lap-tops borrowed by students which are not covered by Radio Frequency Identification. The second issue had involved relatively small amounts of cash received from Library fines and the authority of staff to waive fines.
- Data Protection/Information Governance had received a Limited internal audit opinion with two priority one issues and two priority two issues. The first priority one issue related to the retention of staff and student records and that personal information should not be retained longer than necessary. The second priority one issue related to the monitoring of IT Assets and in particular the security and monitoring of personal devices used by staff who work from home and are able to access University material and download it to remote devices.

The Status of 37 issues had been reviewed, 9 had been addressed or superseded, 20 are partially addressed or in progress and 8 remain outstanding or not yet due. Of the 37 issues, 6 had been priority one issues, one had been addressed, three are in progress and two were not yet due.

The Committee had received the Draft Internal Audit Strategy (minute 17.13). The strategy took into account the emerging priorities and risks driven by 5&50 and the operating environment. The faculty reviews had been reintroduced, owing to the reduction from six to four faculties and changes in budgetary accountability for faculties. The final strategy would be presented to the September meeting of the Committee for approval.

The Committee had received the External Audit Plan (minute 17.15) and noted that the report would give a true and fair review of the financial statements. The audit would concentrate on areas such as GBD and other capital projects, pension obligations, research grants, funding position, fraud risk and compliance with recommended accounting practices.

The Committee had received an update on Sectoral Issues (minute 17.16) and noted that the sector was going through a significant period of change. Challenges included the increasing need to achieve income diversification and increasing

pensions liability. The external environment risks included Brexit, immigration restrictions, apprenticeships and cyber security.

Council endorsed the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 22 May 2017.

#### 17.19 STAFF SURVEY (C/17/15)

The Vice-Chancellor assisted by Mrs Lamond presented the Staff Survey summary of results. A response rate of 70% had been achieved. The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that 83% of staff considered the University to be a good place to work. 73% of staff would recommend the University as a place of employment. Staff also feel valued by both students, service users and their colleagues. Most respondents also felt their school or department delivered a good quality service to stakeholders.

Issues to be addressed, included how to make staff feel more valued, increase access to training, learning and development. Communication needed to be improved particularly in regard to the Jordanstown staff. There needed to be action to reduce undue stress which had been highlighted in some responses.

Members stressed the need for improved communication during a period of rapid and significant change, to ensure that staff on all campuses felt they were important and integral part of the University family. Mr Mullan stressed that the message to academic and administrative leaders must be to involve staff at all levels.

The University will be establishing a Steering Group to develop an action plan which will in turn assist and support faculties, schools and professional services to develop more localised actions plans.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the pleasing and positive survey results. Council congratulated everyone involved in the survey.

#### 17.20 USING A RISK BASED APPROACH TO ACCESS THE STRATEGIC RISKS FOR 2017-18 (C/17/16)

Mrs Lamond, assisted by Dr Moore presented the paper on accessing Strategic Risks. Mrs Lamond informed Council that the new model and approach had received good feedback from internal auditors. Senior Officers had been consulted on the Risk Appetite Statement, Risk Categories and statements for the strategic priorities and areas of focus within 5&50.

The model had taken account of the different risk appetites and thresholds, above which risk would not be acceptable. The appetite for risk under individual areas of activity would affect the colour assigned to each. The Audit Committee at its meeting on 22 May had recommended a simplified scheme for defining scoring methodologies which had been achieved. The Audit Committee would have responsibility for scrutinizing and challenging the new system.

Dr Moore responded to a comment on the appetite for risks column, by stating that it would change slightly on an annual basis but monitored on a monthly basis.

Members raised concern that the Reputation area of activity had been assigned a risk taking appetite. With the need to protect the Brand and the University's reputation it was AGREED that Reputation sat better in the middle of the risk appetites. The Council agreed that Reputation should move to a cautious risk appetite.

Members welcomed the extensive piece of work undertaken to achieve the new tool for accessing strategic risks.

Council noted the new approach to handling and reporting Strategic Risks.

#### 17.21 THIRD EQUALITY SCHEME FOR ULSTER UNIVERSITY (C/17/17)

Mr Mullan presented the report and informed members that Council had the statutory responsibility for the implementation of the scheme. The current Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee had responsibility for monitoring equality. The statutory report follows a standard format. The scheme outlines staff responsibility under section 75 and the University's obligation to provide necessary resources, to ensure the effective mainstreaming of equality, diversity and good relations.

Mr Mullan highlighted that, where equality issues did exist, an action plan would be developed.

Council noted that the University had complied with the scheme and had submitted its third equality scheme on 8 May 2017. As there had been no changes to compliance arrangements, the scheme had been implemented and circulated to staff and students on 29 May 2017.

Council noted the report.

#### 17.22 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017 (C/17/18)

Mr Mullan presented the Calendar of Meetings. The calendar had been considered by the Vice-Chancellor's office and the Chief Finance and Information to ensure that it assisted the flow of information to and between committees.

Council members would be contacted regarding a Council Planning Day to be held in September.

Council noted the Calendar of Meetings.

#### 17.23 STUDENTS' UNION ACTIVITY REPORT 2016/17 (C/17/19)

Mr McStravock presented the annual report which indicated the activities of the Students' Union in relation to societies, student engagement and awareness campaigns.

The number of course representatives now stood at 760 and goes from strength to strength. All schools, except one had at least one senior representative. Mr

McStravock highlighted the governance structures of the Students' Union and that it was a Charitable Company Limited by guarantee.

There were a number of successful campaigns over the year, including the Mind Your Mood campaign which had been well received and had good media coverage.

A survey carried out in May, revealed that 77% of students who were involved with the Students' Union agreed that it helped with a sense of belonging to Ulster. 82% were aware that the Union is there to help and support students. 55% were aware that the Union is there to assist with welfare issues.

The Students' Union Strategic Plan had been developed in line with the University's 5&50 Strategic Plan. The plan would be presented to Council in the new academic year.

The Chairman congratulated the Student President on an excellent report for last year and in particular the impressive number of course representatives and the fund raising achievements. Council looked forward to receiving the Students' Union Strategic Plan in the future.

Council noted the report.