

Ulster University

Council

06 October 2017

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Ulster University held at the Magee Campus on Friday 06 October 2017.

PRESENT

Mr J Hunter (Chair), Professor P Nixon (Vice-Chancellor), Mr D Clements, Dr P McNaney, Mr K McStravock (Students' Union), Ms J Pyper, Mrs H Quigley, Sir Robert Salisbury, Professor M Stringer

APOLOGIES

Mrs H Bingham, Dr C Burnett, Mr A Langan, Mr P Lobban, Ms M McKee, Mrs L McKeown, Dr J Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE

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

PRESENT BY INVITATION

Professor P Bartholomew, Professor H McKenna

The Chairman informed members that he had received a request for the meeting to be by video-conferencing. The Chairman indicated his preference was for Council meetings to be face to face as they offered the opportunity for members not only to fully contribute to meetings but also to interact more with members of the senior team.

To ensure a full attendance at Council meetings, the Chairman would remind members of the commitment needed to ensure the efficient working of the Council.

The May meeting would also include a guided tour of the new teaching facilities at Magee.

ENHANCING STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES – PRESENTATION

Professor Paul Bartholomew, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, updated Council on the measures he had instigated to improve the students' learning experiences. It would be important, he said to consider students as partners and to encourage them contribute to the development of the student experience. Timetabling would be an important aspect of improving the learning experience and encouraging students to remain on campus was critical.

Timely and quality feedback, he said was also a key element in enhancing the learning experience. Students needed to be allowed to develop the skills to increase

employability. The Student President commented that there were a number of different elements that informed the student learning experience and with ongoing dialogue between the University and the student body the experience would be strengthened and improved.

The Chairman thanked Professor Bartholomew for a very illuminating presentation.

17.24 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2017 were approved subject to the word “faulty” under the Balanced Scorecard presentation being replaced with “faculty”.

17.25 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items.

17.26 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman drew Council's attention to the following matters:

1. That he had included a paper on Members Effectiveness Review (C/17/20) on the agenda. The issues that had been identified by members would be taken forward by the University Secretary.
2. The Council Planning Day on 29 September 2017 had been an important event in respect of keeping Council informed of progress on the delivery of the strategic plan.
3. Members had received an invitation to an Honorary Degree Ceremony on 22 November in the Great Hall, Magee. Professor William Campbell, the world renowned Biologist and Parasitologist would receive the Doctor of Science. The Chairman encouraged members to attend.
4. Members should submit travel claims within the 90 day timeframe.
5. He informed members that towards the end of October he would be attending the bi-annual meeting of Committee of University Chairs. One of the topics to be discussed at the session would be the remuneration of Vice-Chancellors and the public perception of the issue. The role of Remuneration Committees generally would also be discussed. Any points which arose from the session would be fed back to the University's Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee for consideration.

17.27 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP (C/17/21)

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 would be asked to approve their own terms of reference.

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

17.28 PROGRAMME OF WORK (C/17/22)

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 current year. The programme was fluid and would take account of any major strategic policy issues which may arise during the year.

Council would receive regular updates on Key Performance Indicators and Balanced Scorecards during the year.

The Council noted the Programme of Work.

17.29 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/17/23)

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

Strategic Leadership and Direction

The new faculty and school structure had gone live on 1 August 2017. There had been no disruption to services. The PS5&50 faculty support project had commenced and would enable faculties to achieve the optimum staffing structures and skills to deliver the relevant KPIs.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to a comment on the four new Directors of Faculty Operations being male, by stating that there was a good balance within the Senior Leadership Team and that the University continued to strive for gender equality.

It was agreed that an organisational chart indicating the overall structure of the senior staff, faculties, schools and administrative departments would be provided to Council members in due course.

Summer Graduations

The Council noted that the graduation dinner held at the Ulster Museum had been a huge success, with around 200 attendees, including a cross section of partners and stakeholders.

Tribal Review

The review had highlighted the level of under-resourcing for the University compared to the benchmark group. Total income is close to the benchmark group and research income generated by each research active academic is close to the research leading group. The total research income could match this group by 2020 if 5&50 goals are achieved. All of the Tribal findings would be factored into each relevant stage of the PS5&50 and in developing financial models for 5&50.

It was agreed that the Tribal report would be circulated to Council members.

Welcome Week

During Welcome Week there had been a very positive atmosphere around the campuses. The Student President commented that student advice centre assisted students on matters relating to academic affairs, welfare and housing. All were aimed at improving the Students' Union support for students.

THE Awards Shortlisting

The University had been shortlisted in four of the categories. The awards ceremony would take place on 30 November 2017. Three of the programmes shortlisted demonstrate the University's civic commitment and recognises community involvement, business engagement and emphasis on access and opportunity for young people. The last category recognised the University's leadership development.

Brexit

As a follow up to the June Symposium, the next stage would be to undertake a programme of activity to explore further the ideas raised. Colleagues from all faculties would be involved at the appropriate points. The University is also developing a position paper for HE that will be used for future lobbying activity.

Strategic Partnerships and Networking

The Vice-Chancellor had delivered a key note speech at the International Educational Management Conference in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. The key theme had been the impact of international collaboration on University development. A number of other meetings had been held with Xi'an University of Science and Technology and Shaanxi University with a view to strengthening partnership opportunities.

University Successes

Members commented on the impressive list of staff achievements and successes. Mr Mullan responded to a comment on the University applying for the Silver Athena SWAN award, by stating that that a school needed to achieve the silver award before the University could apply for an institutional Silver Award and that significant progress was being made.

Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report.

17.30 MEDICAL SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT (C/17/24)

Professor McKenna presented and informed the Council that it had been a year since commencing the process of creating a Graduate Entry Medical School. He said that the optimal site would be close to the Magee campus. It was estimated that of the first intake would be approximately sixty students. The internal Business Case had been completed and the financial data incorporated into the Outline Business Case. The Business Case was due to be submitted to the Department of Health. He asked Council to endorse the Resources Committee decision to enter into a contract with St. George's University of London for the provision of a curriculum.

The Honorary Treasurer informed members that the Resources Committee had endorsed the initiative and that it needed to be progressed as quickly as possible. The Chairman reminded members Resources Committee had delegated authority in this regard.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that the University was seeking to share the costs with contributions from other stakeholders. There was also the need, he said, to ensure that leading politicians were on board. The Chairman commented that the project would be significant in the development of the North West, the University and the primary care agenda.

The Council noted the paper on the Medical School Development and endorsed the proposal confirmed by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 18 September 2017 to move to the next to the next stage and the signing of the contract with St. George's University of London.

17.31 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

a) Resources Committee (24 July 2017 and 18 September 2017) (C/17/25a and C/17/25b)

Mr Clements presented the minutes and highlighted the following:

24 July 2017 meeting:

The Committee had received a Tribal Benchmarking presentation (minute 17.07) and noted that the University's under-resourcing compared to the benchmark group. Income is £48m less per annum of which £27m is a shortfall on government subvention. Physical estate costs more in relation to the income earned and staff/student number but expenditure is lower when compared to size of the estate. The Committee recorded its concern at the severe structural underfunding which could affect the University's ability to deliver quality education. Lobbying would need careful planning and preparation. The Committee felt that the University had a really strong case. The current funding position would also make delivering the Strategic Plan 5&50 more difficult. The University would remain committed to the plan principles and areas such as widening access.

The Committee had endorsed the Financial Forecasts for 2017/18-2019/20 (minute 17.08) The University would have a 2% cut in cash terms in its block grant for 2017/18 with further cuts in subsequent years. The forecast had been based on a cash position in line with the approved contribution model and no future capital grants. The Committee noted that there was a need to internally review the infrastructure and financial strategies but that a sustainable funding model was critical.

The Committee had received details of Northland House, adjacent to the Belfast campus (minute 17.10) which had become available and would be an asset to future expansion. As required by the Land and Property Services, the University had expressed an interest. Members raised concerns but did recognise the strategic significance of the property. To try and secure the site and avoid further

pressure on University finances, options such as asset transfer should be explored with the departments concerned.

18 September 2017

The Committee had received a paper on the proposed Graduate Medical School (minute 17.16) and endorsed the proposal to move to the next stage. The General Medical Council required new medical schools to establish a partnership with a medical school with a curriculum already with General Medical Council approval. A confidentiality agreement and memorandum of understanding had therefore been signed with St. George's University London. A Business Case would be presented to the Department of Health, with an up front request for funding of £1,264,126. If the request is denied, it will be a cost to the University for the curriculum purchase and planning and design phase. Without the initial expenditure, there would be a delay in timetabling the project and a risk of losing credibility with St. George's. The associated risks would be kept to a minimum.

Council endorsed the minute of the Resources Committee meeting held on 24 July 2017 and 18 September 2017.

b) Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee 5 October 2017

The Chairman presented a verbal update of the meeting.

The main item had been the remuneration of senior staff. All University staff had received the 1.7% uplift and the Committee had agreed that the senior team should also receive the uplift. A number of the senior staff also received an additional spine point where appropriate.

The Vice-Chancellor commented that the Committee of University Chairs would be developing a remuneration code for senior staff.

The unconfirmed minutes of the 5 October 2017 meeting would be presented to the Council meeting on 10 November 2017.

The Council noted the verbal update.

17.32 DATES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS (C/17/26)

Council received the dates of the Council meetings for the academic year 2017-18. Due to prior commitments, it was agreed that an alternative date for the meeting scheduled for 11 May 2018 meeting would be confirmed.