



Buckinghamshire New University

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Council Minutes

date: **11 July 2016**
time: **4.00 pm to 6.30 pm**
location: **Carrington Room, Missenden Abbey**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)	Independent Council member
Rebecca Bunting	Vice-Chancellor
Gurdeep Chadha	Independent Council member
Joseph Collins	President Students' Union
Lauren Griffiths	Elected Senate member
Michael Hipkins (Deputy Chair)	Independent Council member
Steve Hoole	Elected Staff member (PSE)
Maggie James	Independent Council member
Lise Llewellyn	Independent Council member
Tim Marshall	Co-opted Council member
Ken McCrea	Co-opted Council member
Hilary Mullen	Elected Staff member (Academic)
Anthony Murphy	Independent Council member
Jenny Newton	Independent Council member
John Smith	Independent Council member
Terri Teasdale	Independent Council member

Officers:

Ellie Smith (Secretary)	Clerk to the Council
Marcus Wood (Acting Minute Secretary)	Senior Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

Steve Dewhurst	Director of Strategic Development & Planning
Sean Mackney	Pro Vice-Chancellor Education
Tim Middleton	Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise
Ian Plover	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Tracey Price	Director of Finance

Apologies:

Antonia Byatt	Independent Council member
Baljit Dhillon	Independent Council member
Lori Flynn	Independent Council member
Keith Ryan	Independent Council member
Phil Wood	Elected Senate member
Kam Ahumibe (Minute Secretary)	Registrar (Governance)

16.40 **Welcome / Apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Council sent its congratulations to Kam Ahumibe on the recent birth of her daughter.

16.41 **Declaration of potential conflicts of interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

16.42 **Minutes and Action Sheets of the meetings held on 21 March 2016 and 7 June 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2016 (including the confidential appendix) were **SIGNED** as an accurate record. It was confirmed that actions had been completed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 were **SIGNED** as an accurate record. Some actions were ongoing, but were reported as in hand.

16.43 **Matters arising**

Key Strategy Performance Indicators and Targets (C/16/13)

Indicators and Targets had been updated following feedback from Council at its previous meeting to reduce and simplify the number of KPIs going forward (Minute 16.37). Conversion indicators had also been removed as these were contained in other measures and the decision had been taken to move to percentiles better to monitor achievement. Reference to league tables had also been removed as TEF measures would be used in preference as being more relevant.

Council approved the indicators and targets.

16.44 **Chair's Action**

Approval of Honorary Award

Following her decision to step down from Council due to increasing work pressures, Chair's Action had been taken to approve an Honorary Fellowship for Antonia Byatt. The award will be conferred at the University's graduation ceremonies in September 2016. Council endorsed the award.

University reports and matters for discussion

16.45 **Vice Chancellor's report**

Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice (White Paper, May 2016)

The Vice-Chancellor presented to Council on the implications for the University arising from the recent HE White Paper, now Bill, which is progressing through Parliament.

The Paper highlights some key challenges for the University in forthcoming years and presents significant changes to the HE landscape, in particular through the establishment of an Office for Students (OfS) to replace HEFCE (and other sector bodies). Throughout the Paper there is a focus on the market and there is an expectation that, as new providers are admitted, other failing providers will leave the market – although the OfS will have a mandate to protect affected students.

The Paper also introduces the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) on a phased basis allowing tuition fees for eligible institutions to be uplifted by the rate of inflation (with a 2.8% increase to £9250 for September 2017 for which Bucks has been confirmed as eligible). TEF will be based on a combination of metrics supported by a short self-evaluation document to be completed by the University. It will initially be conducted on an institutional-wide basis, but a discipline-specific dimension will be introduced from year 4. Metrics will specifically highlight disadvantaged groups through each TEF category.

Research and Innovation features briefly, but significantly, in the Paper through changes to the research infrastructure. A new body, UKRI, will be established from the current Research Councils,

Innovation UK and HEFCE's research function. UKRI will be made up of 9 Discipline Councils and will incorporate the Government's commitment to both the dual support mechanism for research funding and the Haldane Principle (that funding decisions will be taken by sector peers).

The Bill is scheduled for a Second Reading in Parliament but this may not be possible before the Summer Recess. Some areas of the Bill are likely to be challenged; particularly the link between quality and fees and the changes to research. The Bill is intended to be implemented as an Act on either 1 April or 1 August 2018. The impact on the University is significant, but Bucks is in a good position to adapt to the changes.

Council discussed the Paper:

- The notion of a 'private provider' has changed. Almost all universities could be defined as private given the reduction in government funding and the reliance on fees. There are still very few truly 'private' providers who receive no government support at all (i.e. access to student loans) while most providers want access to funding.
- New providers running similar programmes to the University will be in competition. These tend to fall into more general disciplines such as business programmes and are often run more cheaply using very different models to the traditional institution.
- The distinctiveness of Bucks is that it is an established University, with benefits to students such as links to employers through alumni and its research connections; these can be combined with agility and flexibility.

Council Key Performance Indicators (C/16/34)

Council received the final update on the KPIs in its current format. These would be replaced with the new KPIs previously approved (above, minute 16.43).

16.46 **Students' Union Report**

The SU President presented to Council on a consultation process undertaken by the SU to inform their new strategy for 2017-2020 which contained strands around the following areas:

- Complementing studies
- A 'fit for purpose' Union
- Supporting student success
- Making positive change
- Developing understanding

Overall, there were clear synergies with the University Strategic Plan. The consultation also supported the SU's contention that the Big Deal was an important factor for recruitment and retention. Students valued the central tenets of the Union's co-curricular offer in relation to skills development, while findings also reinforced assertions that improvements needed to be made to support students' academic experience and support arrangements.

Council commended the focus on extra-curricular activities as being beneficial to a student's employability, but was concerned to note that of the 1008 students who responded to the consultation, 19% said that they had seriously considered leaving Bucks. No breakdown of this figure was provided, and it had not yet been benchmarked against other Universities although this would be undertaken in due course. It was noted that the University's overall attrition rate for the three years of a FTUG is ~20%.

Council commended the research undertaken and noted key challenges for the Union to engage with a varied student population, especially part-time and mature students. The President noted that some groups have been identified and responded to and this will continue to develop.

16.47 **HEFCE revised operating model of quality assessment: Transitional arrangements (C/16/14)**

The Clerk to the Council informed members that a consequence of the changes introduced in the White Paper was a change in the process for quality assurance of universities sector wide. Bucks was scheduled for Higher Education Review (HER) in 2016-17; this had now been discontinued

with a new process to apply from 2017-18. Accordingly, in 2016-17 transitional arrangements will apply.

Under the new arrangements, Council will be asked to provide additional assurances to HEFCE via its Annual Accountability Return (due 1 December 2016) in relation to its oversight of the student academic experience and student outcomes. To facilitate this judgement, the paper proposed to provide Council with additional evidence which could be supplemented by further information as required. In particular, the paper proposed that the joint Senate-Council meeting in November should be repurposed to focus on the University's annual review mechanisms.

The Chair welcomed the progress to date and asked that further comments should be forwarded to the Clerk of the Council. It was noted that processes already made allowance for student involvement at a number of levels. Council further noted that employer engagement will be the subject of a one-off verification process to be undertaken by all providers in 2017-18.

16.48 Bucks Academic Framework (C/16/15)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise introduced the framework which had also been presented to Senate at its meeting on 8 June 2016. The Framework responds to the University Strategy by setting out expectations for academic staff of all levels. Expectations have been benchmarked against the sector and universities with a similar discipline mix to Bucks. A consultation process was currently underway with follow-up meetings planned with a variety of staff drawn from across the University as well as with other stakeholders. This will lead to a revised proposal being presented to Senate for approval in September.

Council considered that the document represented the outcome of a complex exercise and welcomed the ongoing consultation – although it noted a concern that the consultation was being undertaken across the summer when many staff would be on annual leave. Council also considered whether the two-year window for staff to meet the framework requirements was sufficient, taking into account pressures to meet existing teaching commitments and the outcomes of previous work undertaken by the University's Balanced Academic Workload (BAWL) group. It noted the University's expectation that the majority of staff would already meet or exceed the expectations and that a two-year period would allow for the changes needed by Bucks to avoid falling behind the rest of the sector. Existing HR policies and procedures would be enacted for any staff unable to meet the requirements following the window. It was commented that other universities had adopted a more 'aggressive' approach but the proposal recognised that this was not an appropriate approach for Bucks where focus was on staff development.

Overall, Council commended the framework and considered it was a necessary response for the University to become more successful and customer-focussed. It was also felt that a strength of the document was that it was clear with regard to personal responsibilities. Council looked forward to a strong outcome from the consultation.

Report on Senate Matters

16.49 Minutes from Senate (8 June 2016) (C/16/16)

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

It was confirmed that the survey of student experience in relation to assessment issues referred to in Senate minute 16.65[b] related to the consultation process undertaken to inform the SU strategy (above, minute 16.46).

16.50 Report on Senate matters discussed during 2015-16 (C/16/17)

Council received and noted the report.

16.51 Minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee (11 May 2016) (C/16/18)

Council received and noted the minutes.

16.52 **Minutes of the Education Committee (4 May 2016) (C/16/19)**

Council received and noted the minutes.

16.53 **Minutes of the Research Degrees Committee (21 June 2016) (C/16/20)**

Council received and noted the minutes.

Meeting of the Governance Committee held on 24 May 2016

16.54 **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016**

Council received and noted the minutes.

It was reported that an explanation from the Health & Safety Manager for the rise in health and safety related incidents had been circulated to committee members by email and accepted (see minute 16.17 from the meeting).

16.55 **Annual Report on Equality Scheme to July 2016 and Action Plan 2016-17 (C/16/21)**

Council approved the report which had been prepared by the Equality and Diversity Manager and recommended by Governance Committee. It was noted that there was a range of work to be picked up.

It was reported that 'Disability Confident' campaign was about to be relaunched and would subsume the 'two ticks' disability criteria.

16.56 **2015-16 Governance Review (C/16/22)**

Council considered the report of the five-yearly review of Governance, including the Independent Reviewer's Report which was tabled at the meeting.

Evidence outlined in the report demonstrated that the University's Council remained effective and supported the successful outcomes from both the HEFCE Assurance Review (March 2016) and the University's Internal Audit of Governance (June 2016).

The Review had identified a number of helpful recommendations to strengthen performance. These included actions to:

- Review the induction and ongoing training requirements for Council members
- Provide greater transparency in the selection of sub-committee memberships and consider what role Council members should have in the membership of the University's Senate
- Devise and implement a structured communication to report regularly to Council members either at, or between meetings
- Devise and implement a regular communication to the wider University about the work of Council
- Consider the frequency, duration, content of papers provided and format of Council meetings to enable greater opportunities for discussion and participation, including from other University contributors
- Encourage greater participation of Council members in University events and promote greater engagement between members of Council and University staff
- Hold a termly (or annual) open meeting between Council members and the wider student body

Council was assured that a robust process had been undertaken and welcomed further work through implementation of the Action Plan.

16.57 **Committees / Boards of Subsidiary Companies Membership for 2016-17 (C/16/23)**

Council noted the changes to the allocations of members to Committees and Boards of Subsidiary Companies for 2016-17 as outlined in the paper.

Noting the recent announcement by the Chair of Council to step down from her position due to a conflict of interest that had recently arisen (see below minute 16.71), the Deputy Chair and Chair of Governance Committee recommended to Council that the changes should be provisionally approved pending further discussion and changes following the resignation.

Council approved the allocations on a provisional basis pending further changes to be undertaken by Chair's Action.

Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 14 June 2016

16.58 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016

Council received and noted the minutes, including the confidential appendix.

16.59 HEFCE Assurance Review: Final Interim Report (13 May 2016) and Action Plan (C/16/24)

Council considered the Interim Report received from HEFCE. An issue had been identified which had led to a formal recommendation that "The Council must approve the five yearly forecast tables and the accompanying commentary before submitting them to HEFCE" (Note: this is on the agenda further in the meeting).

An Action Plan had been developed in response to the report. It was anticipated that HEFCE will check the status of actions underway in November/December 2016 ahead of the final report being issued in January/February 2017.

16.60 HEFCE's annual assessment of institutional risk (C/16/25)

Council noted the letter from HEFCE advising that the University is **not at higher risk** following their assessment of the accountability returns made for 2014-15 and that the University was meeting the accountability obligations set out in the Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability and other HEFCE guidance.

It was noted that an additional paragraph had been inserted following consultation with the Vice-Chancellor relating to the suspension and subsequent revocation of the University's Tier 4 licence by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 28 June 2016

16.61 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2016

Council received and noted the minutes, including the confidential appendix.

16.62 Financial position monitoring (May 2016) and new forecast for 2015-16 (C/16/26)

Council noted the update on the University's financial position as at 31 May 2016, which included the Management Accounts – Summary, Analysis and Balance Sheet. It was noted that a small surplus was being forecast following savings identified.

Council welcomed the work being undertaken by the Director of Finance and her team.

16.63 Draft budget for 2016-17 and forecast for 2017-18 and 2018-19 (C/16/27)

Council noted the Draft Budget and three-year Financial Forecast as recommended by Resources Committee. This included some changes recommended by the committee that had subsequently been implemented. The budget and forecast formed the base for the financial results and institutional forecast to be submitted to HEFCE in July (see below). It was noted that changes in accounting standards had affected how the accounts had been drawn up.

Council noted that the budget included the 10% savings target for all departments for 2016-17 although it did not include the tuition fee increase for 2017-18, and for which an optional return to HEFCE would be permitted.

A question was raised about the movement in debtors noted in the accounts. It was agreed that this would be clarified outside the meeting.

(Action: Director of Finance)

The SU President asked about the impact of the 10% savings on the overall student experience. The Vice-Chancellor explained that every budget holder had been asked to review their budget and take out any unnecessary expenditure as well as 'paper transactions' (costs that were in the budget but were not used). In addition, teams had been asked to identify and implement efficiency savings and to negotiate carefully when undertaking procurement. The impact on students was considered to be minimal. It was noted that the commentary also identifies future risks to the University.

The budget was approved.

16.64 Students' Union Draft Budget for 2016-17 (C/16/28)

Council noted the SU interim report for 2015-16 and the draft SU budget for 2016-17 which had been considered and recommended by Resources Committee with some minor additions. In particular, an updated balance sheet had been provided, while further details of the breakdown of the University grant had been provided.

It was noted that the budget includes savings of £100k as agreed with SMT which, although lower than the 10% reduction initially requested, was welcomed by Council.

The budget was approved.

16.65 HEFCE Five Year Forecast (2014-15 to 2018-19) (C/16/29)

Council was invited to approve the HEFCE Five Year Forecast as recommended by Resources Committee.

It was noted that the forecast uses the same budget as approved above (minute 16.63), albeit that tables had been reformulated to meet HEFCE requirements.

All validation checks had been passed, while the submission also included responses to some additional questions asked by the Funding Council.

The forecast was approved. It was noted that the submission would be uploaded by the deadline of 29 July 2016.

16.66 Tuition Fees for 2017-18 for all non-controlled provision (PTUG, PG, Overseas) (C/16/30)

Council approved the proposed fees as recommended by Resources Committee. It was noted that the number of tuition fees in use had been consolidated and simplified.

16.67 Chiltern Student Village (CSV) – Refinancing proposal (C/16/31)

Council noted the update on the refinancing options for CSV as presented to Resources Committee. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that discussions are ongoing with the auditors and a number of legal issues are being looked into. A resolution is required by the deadline of December 2016.

16.68 Financial Reporting 2015-16: New SORP requirements (C/16/32)

Council noted the paper outlining preparation for the new Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for the end of the year and changes to accounting policies which will feature in the University's end of year accounts.

Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 8 March 2016

16.69 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016

Council received and noted the reserved minutes, including the confidential appendix.

Other formal matters

16.70 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms (C/16/33)

Council received the report on the use of the University Seal and Coat of Arms since the previous meeting.

16.71 Thank you to departing Council Members

The Chair noted the retirements from Council of Lori Flynn, Keith Ryan and Antonia Byatt and thanked them for their contribution to the work of the University and Council.

It was also noted that Dr Lauren Griffiths is retiring from her position as Head of School at the University and therefore this will also be her final Council meeting as Senate representative. Meanwhile, Steve Hoole has resigned his position at the University to take up another position from September 2016 and so this was also his final meeting as PSE representative. Council thanked both members of staff for the work and wished them well in their future endeavours.

Resignation of the Chair of Council

The Chair also noted that, as outlined in her recent email to Council members, she would be stepping down as Chair of Council following changes in the health service restructure and a request to chair the commissioning body for the London and South East Board. The Board will be the major commissioner for health education from the University and would therefore represent a significant conflict of interest.

In the interim, the Deputy Chair would lead Council until a new appointment is made; a special meeting of Governance Committee would be reconvened and would be asked to make recommendations to Council on the next steps.

The Deputy Chair extended Council's warm thanks to the Chair for her work during the term of office.

16.72 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Council was scheduled to be the joint meeting with Senate to take place on Monday, 21 November 2016, commencing at 4.00pm in The Room, to be followed by a full meeting of Council at 6.00pm in G5.05.

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 6.30pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Senior Registrar (Governance) – 13 July 2016
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 14 July 2016
Checked by the Vice Chancellor – 15 July 2016
Confirmed by the Chair –