

Council – Strategy Meeting

Open Minutes

Date of meeting: **Tuesday, 04 June 2019**

Duration of meeting: **2.00pm to 5.30pm**

Location: **S3.02, South Wing, High Wycombe Campus**

Attendance

Name	Role	Category of membership
Michael Hipkins	Chair	Independent
Irene Kirkman	Deputy	Independent
Nick Braisby		Vice-Chancellor
Anna Crabtree		Independent
Florin Ioras		Senate nominee
Maggie James		Independent
Ken McCrea		Co-opted
Anthony Murphy		Independent
Jenny Newton		Independent
Lauren O'Shea		Students' Union President
Cheryl Pitt		Elected Academic Representative
Susan Rosser		Independent
John Smith		Independent
Phil Wood		Senate nominee

Officers

Name	Role	Category of membership
Ellie Smith	Secretary	Academic Registrar and Secretary
Marcus Wood	Minute Secretary	N/A

In attendance

Name	Role
John Brewer	Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Julie McLeod	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Rod Mercer	Director of Finance
Alexandra Bode-Tunji	Director of Human Resources
Tao Warbuton	Incoming Students' Union President (Observer)

Nicholas Roussel-Milner (Item 5 only)	Director of Information Systems & Technology
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Apologies

Name	Role	Category of membership
Joanna Boardman		Elected PSE Representative
Gurdeep Chadha		Independent
Baljit Dhillon		Independent
Lise Llewellyn		Independent
Tim Marshall		Co-opted
Bob Shennan		Independent
Megan Staples		Student Representative

Welcome / Introduction

19.68 The Chair welcomed members to the strategy meeting, including the incoming SU President. In addition to the strategic discussions, some business items would also be considered due to impending deadlines.

Business Items

Access and Participation Plan: Briefing Paper (COU19.13)

19.69 The paper was noted. This provided an overview of the recent changes to the widening participation agenda within the HE sector, regulation introduced following the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act, compliance requirements – specifically submission of a five-year Access and Participation Plan 2020-2024 to the OfS – and associated risks for Bucks. The paper further set out key sector metrics provided by the OfS to benchmark provision and noted a changing emphasis towards the impact and tangible output from widening participation initiatives.

19.70 Council noted:

- The University's assessment of its own performance against the benchmark is generally positive with Bucks performing well against most metrics provided;
- A significant overlap between OfS objectives and ongoing University work including increasing participation from: Carers; Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) communities; and military families;
- Gaps in participation have been identified at Bucks in relation to some POLAR low participation areas, further work is also required to reduce the significant part-time attainment gap for BAME vs white students;
- The initial proposals outlined in the briefing paper to both close the gaps identified while sustaining existing positive performance
- Further proposals outlined during the meeting to engage the University's partners in improving continuation for disadvantaged students, including the provision by some partners of scholarships and bursary schemes. These would be outlined in partners' own Access & Participation Plans which would also incorporate actions from the University's final Plan;

- 19.71 As yet, the Access and Participation Plan had not been finalised. Once complete, it was agreed that this would be circulated to members for comment with Chair's Action subsequently undertaken.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Subsidiary Companies

This item was considered under Reserved Business.

Council Recruitment of New Members

- 19.72 The Secretary updated members on the recruitment of four new members to join Council from 1 August 2019:

- Fourteen applications had been received to date, including 9 male and 5 female applicants (with 6 BAME applicants received overall);
- A shortlist of applicants was in the process of being agreed, following which shortlisted applicants would be interviewed;
- Recommendations for all appointments would be presented to Council in July meeting;
- References would be followed up for all successful applicants;
- Successful applicants would also be required to complete a Fit and Proper Persons Declaration to be further shared with the Office for Students in accordance with OfS requirements.

Strategic Items

Cyber Security: Overview of Practice and Capabilities

- 19.73 Council received a presentation from the Director of Information Systems and Technology on the University's preparations in the incident of a cyber-attack on its IT infrastructure. It was noted that the topic was timely given recent media reporting on such vulnerabilities within the HE sector, ongoing work by JISC in this area, and the increasing sophistication of such attacks.

- 19.74 It was noted that the University has reviewed related IT processes and identified a range of actions and interventions to limit vulnerability, including achievement of ISO27001 certification (scheduled for renewal this year), planned rollout of encrypted devices to protect against data breaches, and an ongoing four phase process of 'penetration testing' conducted by an external consultant. A full report will be prepared and considered in due course and will inform internal audit of this area of provision.

- 19.75 Council requested regular updates on IT / cyber security. This would be reviewed as part of an ongoing review of Council governance activity.

Action: Secretary

Augar Review of Post-18 Education and Funding

- 19.76 Council noted the recent publication of the independent panel report in relation to Post-18 ('tertiary') education in England chaired by Dr Philip Augar. The report had been prepared against a background of perceived imbalance within the market.

- Further education (FE) was considered to be under-invested in when compared to HE, particularly following the increase in the tuition fee cap to £9000;

- Meanwhile the report identified that 40% of 25 year-olds do not progress beyond GCSEs as their highest qualification.

19.77 The report makes proposals to:

- a) **Strengthen technical education** at sub-degree levels to meet structural skills shortages;
- b) **Increase opportunities for everyone** by reversing cuts in adult skills provision and encouraging part-time and later life learning;
- c) **Reform and refund the FE college network** by means of an increased base rate of funding for high-return courses;
- d) **Bear down on low value HE** by encouraging and incentivising universities to increase the provision of courses better aligned to the economy's needs; also by withdrawing financial support for foundation years attached to degree courses and reprioritising access courses in FE;
- e) **Address higher education funding** by reducing the maximum fees for students to £7,500 a year with more taxpayer funding through grants directed to disadvantaged students and to high value and high cost subjects;
- f) **Increase flexibility and lifetime learning** through the introduction of a lifelong learning allowance to be drawn down at any stage of an adult's career, permitting funding at the modular rather than the course level, and facilitating transfer between institutions and the National Retraining Scheme;
- g) **Support disadvantaged students** by reintroducing maintenance grants for students from low income households and increasing / better targeting government funding for disadvantaged students;
- h) **Ensure those who benefit from higher education contribute fairly** ensuring that more graduates repay their loans in full over their lifetimes by extending the repayment period and freezing the current repayment threshold;
- i) **Improve the apprenticeship offer**, strengthening the role of Ofsted and addressing barriers faced by SMEs, while restricting funding for degree apprenticeships to those who do not already have a publicly-funded degree.

The full report is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-18-review-of-education-and-funding-independent-panel-report>

19.78 Council welcomed some aspects of the report such as the focus on flexibility and lifelong learning, and support for addressing disadvantage; however, other aspects were considered regressive – including the withdrawal of support for foundation years, potential restrictions on access and choice, and the possibility of a more fragmented system for accessing funds to support widening participation activities; while if recommendations were introduced selectively they could lead to a significant loss of income to the University, e.g. if the reduction in the tuition fee is not matched by government funding to make up the shortfall. Council further criticised some aspects of the report, particularly the consideration that the HE sector was in reasonable financial health where 25% of providers were in deficit, while it was felt that the report did not adequately reflect the value (rather than cost) of some programmes – such as nursing and other social care courses – to society as a whole.

19.79 It was noted that the Government had not immediately responded to the report's publication and its implementation was dependent on an uncertain political and economic landscape with any recommendations unlikely to take effect before 2022.

University Strategy: Impact 2022

- 19.80 Council discussed the latest draft of the University's strategic plan, Impact 2022, as a staging post for a longer-term vision for Bucks. The Strategy would be finalised ahead of the start of the new academic year and would include a full Implementation Plan.
- 19.81 Council welcomed the Vision outlined and noted in discussion the following broader comments:
- The synergies between the developing strategy and aspects of the Augar Review (above) as well as broader implications such as:
 - potential for a 'pre-Augar' dip in student applications / recruitment anticipating reductions in student tuition fees
 - questions over the importance of studying *at University* 'post-Augar' vs studying for a qualification *outside University*
 - reconsideration of credit accumulation strategies in light of the review
 - developing closer links with further education provision
 - The need for diversification of income streams and a growth in international activity
 - The importance of 'owning' the local territory and being more proud of Bucks and its achievements
 - The importance of REF in league table positions
 - The discipline of the Transformation Programme should be extended to broader changes across the University
- 19.82 Members identified a range of considerations for developing and improving the strategy prior to finalisation including:
- The 'One University' approach outlined should include alumni with Bucks becoming a 'University for life' and encouraging graduates to return to study
 - 'Measures' should instead be positioned as strategic objectives and aligned to implementation and financial plans. Full SWOT and competitor / market analysis was needed
 - The strategy perhaps outlined too many strategic priorities (especially for a three-year plan) which should be aligned to measures and prioritised. Too many priorities would make it harder for staff to engage and be fully supportive of the plan
 - Responsibility and accountability should extend beyond members of the University Management Group; accountability should be 'bottom up'
 - Plans for expansion of subject areas and broadening the range of subjects (rather than courses) offered at Bucks should be made more explicit
 - Entrepreneurialism should be incorporated into the DRIVE values
 - Reference should be made to surplus being used for reinvestment in core activities
 - Local and Government Industrial Strategies should be directly referenced
- 19.83 Council looked forward to publication of the final strategy in due course.

School Developments: Art, Design and Performance

- 19.84 Council received a presentation from the Head of School for Art, Design and Performance on recent activities and developments within the School and reviewed marketing materials celebrating the School's successes.
- 19.85 Preparations for the Art and Design Summer Show were well advanced ahead of the private opening on 13 June 2019. This would provide an opportunity for Council members to view examples of students' work.
- 19.86 It was suggested that UET should include presentations from Schools as part of all-staff briefings to ensure achievements could be celebrated across the University.

Date of next meeting

- 19.87 The next meeting was confirmed for Monday 8 July 2019, starting at 4pm. The venue would be Missenden Abbey and the meeting would be followed by the annual Council Dinner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Dr Michael Hipkins (Chair of Council)

Drafted (Minute Secretary):	6-Jun-2019
Checked (Clerk to the Council):	7-Jun-2019
Checked (Vice-Chancellor):	Date
Confirmed for circulation (Chair):	16-Jun-2019