

COUNCIL – STRATEGY MEETING

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 February 2020 in The Room, South Wing, High Wycombe Campus.

Present: Michael Hipkins (Independent [Chair]), Irene Kirkman (Independent [Deputy Chair]), Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor), Andy Cole (Independent), Anna Crabtree (Independent), Annet Gamell (Independent), Florin Ioras (Senate Nominee), Tim Marshall (Co-opted), Ken McCrea (Co-opted), Anthony Murphy (Independent), Cheryl Pitt (Elected academic representative), Susan Rosser (Independent), John Smith (Independent), Supriya Sobti (Independent), Megan Staples (Student representative), Tao Warburton (Students' Union President)

In attendance: Rachel Cragg (Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor: Education and Digital), Louise Harvey (Head of Comms – Item 3), Claire O'Callaghan (Academic Registry, Observer – Items 1-3), Chris Reilly (Interim Director of Finance), Ellie Smith (Academic Registrar and Secretary), Russel Stone (Head of School: Media & Creative Industries – Item 8 only), Marcus Wood (Minute Secretary)

Apologies: Joanna Boardman (Elected PSE representative), Alexandra Bode-Tunji (Director of Human Resources), Gavin Brooks (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Maggie James (Independent), Bob Shennan (Independent)

Welcome

- 20.01 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, which would focus on strategic issues. General business items would be considered at the forthcoming business meeting.
- 20.02 Welcomes were extended to the Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor: Education and Digital and Interim Director of Finance who were attending their first Council meeting.

Sector Update (Presentation)

- 20.03 The Vice-Chancellor and UET members updated Council on activities within the University and sector. A copy of the presentation was saved with the minutes.
- 20.04 Updates included:
- Changes in the wider political environment following the election of a majority Conservative government in December. An anticipated Cabinet reshuffle may impact on policy and personnel and lead to a formal response to the Augar report with potential funding implications for Foundation Years
 - Forthcoming changes in the local political environment with a move to a unitary authority for Buckinghamshire and upcoming Council elections in May

- The latest recruitment position noting positive growth in students joining February intakes and an overall rise in applications for September 2020 where the University is outperforming the sector
- Ongoing work to deliver programmes at Pinewood Studios in partnership with CMS, including challenges in relation to the length of lease contract availability on the site vs sector student protection requirements
- Senior appointments within the University, and in particular interviews for permanent appointments as Pro Vice-Chancellor: Education and Digital and Director of Finance which had seen a strong pool of candidates
- Early informal discussions in relation to potential development of the University Estate, including opportunities being explored in Aylesbury
- The revision and reissuing of the CUC Governance Code of Practice including a focus on collective decision-making. The current consultation closes on 13 March and will include a formal University response to which members may wish to contribute.
- Measures in place within the University to monitor and communicate to students the recent Coronavirus outbreak in China where the University is following guidance issued by Public Health England
- Ongoing review by UUK of student mental health and wellbeing particularly on disclosures to parents, where UUK will issue advice to member institutions
- Independent review of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and reporting at subject-level where review outcomes are anticipated shortly. The Government has re-emphasised the importance of TEF to help the OfS to assess quality, but subject-level TEF may be deferred to 20/21 at the earliest
- Preparations and activity to submit the University's annual Ofsted Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of its FE and Level 4/5 apprenticeship provision which is subject to inspection
- The latest financial picture which is showing a current budget surplus of £0.9m
- Sale of the Missenden Abbey estate which is set to complete in April 2020.

Climate Emergency (Presentation)

- 20.05 In response to growing concerns in relation to climate change and calls for a declaration of a climate emergency, the Vice-Chancellor and Head of Comms updated Council on the University's actions and response. A copy of the presentation was saved with the minutes.
- 20.06 In particular, and following discussion, the University:
- Has joined the Climate Commission Council established by the EAUC, the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education
 - Will pledge to achieve net zero carbon emissions by the University by 2030, ahead of the government target of 2050, mobilising its resources and embedding sustainability into the academic portfolio.
 - Will sign the UN Sustainable Development Goals Accord, a collective response by education institutions to help the environment
 - Will declare a Climate Emergency in recognition of the need for a drastic societal shift to combat the growing threat of climate change.

- Will appoint an Environment and Sustainability Manager to guide University activities continuing the University's already strong reputation for corporate social responsibility
 - Will embed sustainability into the role description of all members of the University Executive Team ensuring collective responsibility
 - Will reduce the use of paper and printer ink in the University committee structure, including Council, by investing in digital alternatives for the distribution of papers
 - Will report annually to Council on progress being made by the University on its sustainability targets
- 20.07 Activity will focus in the immediate term on the University's "Love the Planet" Day coinciding with Valentine's Day on 14 February where the Accord will formally be signed and the Climate Emergency declared. A further activity on 21 February will be an initiative to Give to Refresh, a joint project with the Students' Union to tackle hygiene poverty.
- 20.08 Council strongly endorsed the activities being undertaken by the University. It noted the infrastructural challenge in particular of a carbon zero pledge by the 2030 target but recognised the need for strong, affirmative action which would be expected by students as key stakeholders.

Impact 2022 (Presentation)

- 20.09 The Vice-Chancellor updated Council on progress with the University Strategic Plan. This had now been fully analysed and mapped and rendered into a more simple, accessible form by consultants engaged by the University. A copy of the presentation was saved with the minutes.
- 20.10 The following was noted in discussion:
- Employability is a key activity within the strategy and of increasing importance to students.
 - Placement / meaningful vocational opportunities are being embedded into all academic programmes, with activities at each Level.
 - Schools are being encouraged to establish Industry Liaison Boards to enable industry experts to review curriculum content.
- Together, these initiatives should see a rise in highly skilled employment levels.
- The Consultants were challenging the University to identify measures for each area to ensure success could be accurately measured.
 - A financial assessment for each action has not yet been completed; however, no action had a major investment requirement, although some investment would be required for lecture capture and attendance monitoring technologies
 - There was overall confidence that actions would be met for the 2022 target.

Bucks Health & Social Care Academy (Presentation)

- 20.11 An update was provided on the development of the Bucks Health & Social Care Academy in partnership with Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust, Health Education England, Bucks County Council and other regional and national providers.

20.12 Notable developments included:

- The expansion of partners involved
- The agreement of a governance structure covering legal and funding aspects, including an Academy Strategic Partnership Group and an Implementation Board
- A focus on funding issues and the intention to approach the LEP for funding to support the initiative
- The drafting of Mission and Values statements
- The appointment of a Director from HEE on a two-year appointment

Buckinghamshire University Technical College (UTC)

20.13 Council noted a verbal update on Bucks UTC and its decision to join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in line with a government recommendation. A number of options had been explored by the UTC and conversations were now at an advanced stage with one MAT in particular. A comprehensive business case was being drawn up for government consideration.

Council duties and responsibilities in respect of the Office for Students (Presentation and Paper COU20-01)

20.14 The Academic Registrar and Secretary reminded Council members of their obligations in respect of OfS reporting and in particular University compliance with:

- Ongoing conditions of registration
- The process for informing the OfS of reportable events.

20.15 This included review of a tracker that had been drawn up to track each such condition which was considered by UET at its fortnightly meetings as well as an overview of events and requests for information from the OfS received to date. Council would receive regular reports on Compliance throughout the annual cycle of meetings.

20.16 To support ongoing compliance it was further noted that the University would be seeking to appoint a Compliance Officer and to establish a University Compliance Steering Group, while a policy on reportable events was also planned.

20.17 Council considered that the processes in place were appropriately robust and would ensure compliance with OfS requirements. A copy of the presentation was saved with the minutes.

School Presentation: Media & Creative Industries (Presentation)

20.18 Council welcomed an update from the Head of School on activities and courses within the School, including notable alumni. It was noted that the School was taking action to improve applications and conversion and had developed a "90 second prospectus" which had been well received and would be further rolled out.

Date of next meeting

20.19 The next meeting would take place on 16 March 2020 at the Uxbridge campus where business items would be considered. Parking would be arranged for Council members and arrangements notified in advance.