



Buckinghamshire New University

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confirmed by Council:	

Council

Minutes

date: **18 March 2013**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **3.07, Uxbridge**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)
Antony Bellekom
Ashley Coles
Baljit Dhillon
Ruth Farwell
Lori Flynn
Ian Hillan
Michael Hipkins
Julie Irwin
Sukhie Mattu
Hilary Mullen
Jenny Newton
Pauline Odulinski
Simon Opie
Keith Ryan
Linsey Taylor
Terri Teasdale
Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair)

Independent Council member
Independent Council member
President Students' Union
Independent Council member
Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Elected Senate member
Elected Staff member (PSE)
Elected Staff member (Academic)
Independent Council member
Co-opted Council member
Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Elected Senate Member
Independent Council member
Independent Council member

Officers:

Ellie Smith
Vanessa Pilon

Clerk to the Council
Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

John Cooper
Steve Dewhurst
Derek Godfrey
Ian Plover
Naomi Franco

Director of Finance
Director of Business Planning
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Director of the Faculty of DMM
President elect, Students' Union

Apologies:

Antonia Byatt
David Griffiths
David Sines
Shân Wareing

Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Pro Vice Chancellor S&H
Pro Vice Chancellor Learning & Teaching

840 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

840.1 Pauline Odulinski declared an interest in item 6.3 on the agenda, "AVDC Waterside Development".

This was noted.

841 Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 November 2012 and 5 February 2013

841.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 19 November 2012 and 5 February 2013 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The actions from the meetings were noted as either on the agenda or had been completed.

842 Matters Arising

842.1 No matters arising were noted that were not already included on the agenda.

843 Chair's Action

843.1 None had been taken since the last meeting.

844 Vice Chancellor's Report

844.1 Vice Chancellor's Report, including Key Performance Indicators (C/13/03)

This included commentary on:

- National Policy Developments
 - Higher Education in England – the report on changes and impacts was published last week which includes information on the decline in postgraduate and part-time provision
 - Student number control for 2013
 - Student number control for 2014 onwards
 - Aspects of quality assurance in relation to institutional review
- Recruitment of full-time undergraduate students at Bucks
 - Student number control for 2013
 - Applications for 2013 entry
- Recent successes
 - In the Faculty of DMM the Seinnheiser partnership and UCFB College of Football Business
 - In the Faculty of S&H London Contract performance monitoring, Student Nursing Times Award shortlisting, HE Academy Scheme for transforming institutional assessment and National Student Survey response
- Timetabling – the reasons for the difficulties experience in September 2013 and the action and recommendations put in place to resolve them
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

The balanced scorecard was noted with all status showing no changes except for finance where Diversification was red and deteriorating, Efficiency was amber and deteriorating and in the area of Physical Environment current condition and functional suitability were amber and deteriorating. The reasons for these were clearly explained. Improvements were shown in the areas of Employee Satisfaction, Equality & Diversity, Income growth, Investment, Space efficiency, Affordability and Investment, Milestones and Facilities performance.

Questions were asked around some of the red RAG ratings which seemed to members to remain the same with no improvements shown. It was explained that the areas identified were the result of information received annually and whilst plans and procedures had been put in place to address such risks improvements were only identified on an annual basis. It was agreed that close scrutiny be kept on these with consideration being given to identifying risks more frequently than annually. Further consideration as to how improvements might be identified more frequently in particular in respect of the student experience would be considered at the autumn meeting.

It was noted that the timetabling difficulties experienced at the beginning of this academic year might impact on this years' NSS scores and recruitment could be affected by such scores. However what the impact might be would be difficult to identify.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

845 Buckinghamshire Education, Skills and Training (BEST) (C/13/04)

845.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 17 December 2012, and 30 January 2013 were noted together with a verbal report on the meeting held on 11 March 2013.

845.2 The current position was reported regarding the final approval of the draft Memorandum and Articles by HEFCE and the Charity Commission and in relation to the current projects both in the UK and internationally. A three year Strategic Plan was also being developed by the joint executive team at a meeting to be held towards the end of April.

845.3 Clarification was sought and provided around the International Strategy where new opportunities were being developed through the appointment of an International Director with access to existing networks in India. The focus of this role was on both in-country and direct recruitment and it was anticipated that income would be achieved by September 2013.

846 Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC): Waterside (C/13/05)

846.1 Further details of this proposed project were provided. This included a briefing by the Vice Chancellor as well as a report on the strategic rationale, commercial arrangements, a timeline and a way forward, a chart on how this accommodation could be used and a verbal report on the last BEST Board meeting.

846.2 Clarity was sought on the chart and the use to which this building might be put. This included programmes from levels 1 to 8 in a professional environment which was flexible and accessible as well as subject areas which might be covered. It also demonstrated how employer led skills, internships and access to employment might link to research, sales, consultancy and innovation through practical experience in a contained environment in a central location.

846.3 A number of concerns were raised regarding:

- the relative newness of BEST,
- sustainability,
- cost,
- the development of the Business Case in sufficient time to make a considered judgement,
- the results of market research,
- plans for the provision of accommodation for BEST if the lease of the Waterside is not approved
- the development of an exit strategy.

It was stressed that there must be a market for this provision in order for it to be viable. Members noted that BEST would only be a vehicle to finance this project and the University and the College would have to stand behind BEST in order to underwrite the Waterside lease. It was stressed that the University would still be considering this joint proposal to consolidate the higher education provision in Aylesbury in the Waterside building with Aylesbury College even if BEST did not exist.

846.4 It was AGREED that this project should be progressed further to consider a fully developed Business Case at a special Resources Committee Meeting in May/early June with consideration being given to a final decision at a special Meeting of Council in sufficient time to meet the AVDC meeting in July.

(Action: Clerk to the Council, Chair of Resources, Vice Chancellor)

847 Fees for full-time undergraduate courses in 2012-15 (C/13/06)

847.1 A report on the proposed changes to the fees for full-time undergraduate students was noted. It included information received from the Secretary of State about fee limits, the Access

Agreement, consultation with the Student Council and how the extra money might be deployed in relation to the result of this consultation as well as Investment Fund bids. A view of the level of additional income this would provide was also given.

847.2 Council was invited to:

- Approve that from 2014/15 fees for full-time undergraduate courses should be increased to £9,000pa and
- Approve that the initial submission of the University Access Agreement for 2014 is on the basis of keeping the associated costs at 22.5% of the additional fee above the basic level but it is proposed that the Vice Chancellor be allowed the discretion to increase that up to a maximum of 30% should it prove necessary to obtain approval from OFFA.

847.3 It was stressed that this proposal was for full time undergraduate honours degree students not for foundation degree work-based students who, it was believed, were price sensitive and would have a different fee structure. A discussion took place around the proposals put forward with the following points being made:

- The under-represented groups included certain ethnic and socio economic groups which varied from university to university and in different subject areas.
- These fees would not be implemented until September 2014 and would take three years to be fully operational
- Students' Union were involved in preparing the proposal and support it
- Consultation would take place on the deployment of the additional fee income, if agreed

847.4 Council APPROVED the proposal as set out in 847.2 for the full-time undergraduate honours degree students and Vice Chancellor's discretion to negotiate on the OFFA agreement.

(Action: Vice Chancellor)

848 Report on Senate Matters

848.1 Quality and standards outcomes (2011-2012) (C/13/07)

A report was received which confirmed that academic standards were commensurate with sector standards for 2011-12. This report highlighted the successes and good practice achieved both in the faculties and service departments as well as the reviews undertaken within the University and at our Regional Partner Colleges. A Quality and Standards Action Plan (2011-12) has been developed to enable the University to track progress of actions which related to improving processes. The University has been advised by the QAA that they will not be required to submit a mid-term review and that their next review (HE Review) will be undertaken in 2016/17.

Sector changes were noted in the areas of Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Public Information in Higher Education.

Council welcomed the excellent report.

848.2 Minutes of the Student Experience Committee on 30 October 2012 and 12 February 2013

The minutes of the two meetings were noted as received. The strategic issues discussed at the meetings reflect the reports received by Council and its Committees.

849 Resources Committee

849.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2013

Minutes of the meetings held on 5 March 2013 were received.

849.2 Financial Position January 2013 (C/13/08)

The current Financial Position was noted as reported to Resources Committee. It was similar to that reported in November with a better than budget operating position and a slightly worse reporting position.

849.3 Tuition Fees 2013-2014 (C/13/09)

The proposals for the unregulated fees for 2013-14 for undergraduate, postgraduate, overseas students, full-time, part-time and continuing students were detailed in the paper presented. The view of the University is that the unregulated fees should increase annually by an amount

equivalent roughly to inflation. It was noted that the Government had applied this approach to the regulated fees until this year. They are currently set in the context of a competitive market and the subject areas that are offered.

These recommendations were **APPROVED** by Council

849.4 Student Residences (C/13/10)

The paper received by Resources Committee and later updated to reflect current information and position was noted. This included the provision of additional student rooms at Hughenden by direct investment of the University or alternative sale and leaseback arrangements with two other providers. The development of more student rooms at Hughenden would underpin the attractiveness of the University offer to prospective students.

All the alternatives put forward were noted as viable with one alternative being the preferred choice. However the sale and leaseback arrangements would require HEFCE and Bank approval and in order to progress this to completion by September 2014 a decision would be required within the next few weeks.

Resources Committee recommended to Council that the lease options be pursued and that if these did not progress the University fund this directly. In order to complete the negotiations in the timescale needed Council were asked to give delegated authority to the Vice Chancellor and either the Chair or Deputy Chair to execute the necessary documents to achieve the best proposal for the University.

Further information was received at the meeting relating to additional negotiation and market research. This included:

- The lease costs provided by one company were higher than those being offered by the same company to other Universities within the sector. The reasons for this were provided and it was suggested that further negotiation would not be possible within the timescales required to commence the project and complete for use in September 2014.
- The other company had already agreed to match the sale and leaseback costs and would not be able to go further
- The sale and leaseback arrangements might have better financial terms if negotiated under better economic conditions at a later date.

It was proposed that the University fund the building of 108 additional student rooms at Hughenden is approved at this meeting at a cost of £4.5m plus the costs of the tender and fees. This would be better use of some of the reserves held by the University and would realise income from the letting of the rooms once completed. The cost of increasing the number of rooms developed as part of the project to the 180 proposed under the sale and leaseback arrangements would be in the region of an additional £2.6m. There would always be the option of pursuing a sale and leaseback arrangement later if the conditions were beneficial to the University.

It was AGREED that the proposal be approved for the building of 108 additional rooms at Hughenden for completion by September 2014 using University funds, and that the University bring proposals to the June meeting of Resources Committee to consider extending the project to include the additional 72 student rooms to 180 rooms in total.

This recommendation was **APPROVED** by Council

(Action: Director of Finance, Vice Chancellor and Chair or Deputy Chair)

849.5 Building Contract Monitoring by Resources Committee (Verbal)

A small sub group is to be set up to monitor the building projects agreed. This would be formed from members of the Resources Committee and would be of no more than three or four members. Members were asked to advise the Chair of Resources of their interest in being part of this group.

(Action: Members of Resources Committee and Director of Finance)

850 Audit Committee

850.1 Minutes of the Meetings held on 22 January 2013

Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 January 2013 were received without comment.

850.2 Appointment of External Auditors (Verbal)

Recommendation of the appointment of the existing External Auditors was noted.

Council **APPROVED** the appointment of the existing External Auditors subject to agreement on fees.

(Action: Director of Finance)

851 Governance Committee

851.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2013 were received without comment.

851.2 Council Membership (verbal)

A briefing on the current position in relation to the following was provided:

- Recruitment of an Independent Member – advertisements placed and some applications received through the Institute of Directors monthly magazine and website as well as through LinkedIn and Buckinghamshire Business First
- Recruitment of a co-opted member with educational expertise – the Vice Chancellor is progressing a contact that was thought appropriate

Other options were suggested for use when vacancies arose in future, including, the local press and a website “Strictly Boardroom”.

When the deadline for applications has passed these would be considered by the Committee Chair and Clerk to the Council and a short list prepared. Full details of the current position would be report to Governance Committee in May.

(Action: Vice Chancellor, Chair of Governance Committee and Clerk to the Council)

851.3 Calendar of Meetings (September 2013 to December 2014) (C/13/11)

Council were asked to approve the new dates.

Council **APPROVED** the dates for September 2013 to December 2014.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

851.4 Health & Safety Report 2012 (C/13/12)

This annual report and planned activities was considered by the Governance Committee who recommended that the report and the planned activities be approved. The 5* hygiene ratings for High Wycombe, Uxbridge and Missenden Abbey were noted. It was suggested that gender references should be removed and renamed eg “Mansafe Systems”.

Council **APPROVED** the report and planned activities.

851.5 Council Procedures - amendment (C/13/13)

The amendments put forward in the circulated paper, and previously discussed by Governance Committee, related to the clarification of procedures in relation to the calling of extraordinary or special meetings of Council as recommended by the Internal Audit on “Governance Review”.

Council **APPROVED** the revised Procedures as circulated for publication

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

852 Honorary Awards Committee

851.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 February 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2013 were received without comment.

852.2 Recommendations for Honorary Awards (C/13/14)

Council **AGREED** the awards suggested as circulated for graduation 2013.

852.3 Recommendations for Honorary Awards – Retiring Council Members (C/13/14)

The Honorary Awards for retiring Council Members were **APPROVED** as reported.

853 Remuneration Committee

853.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 February 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2013 were received.

854 Other Matters

854.1 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms (C/13/15)

A report on the use of the University Seal and Coat of Arms was received.

855 Date of next meeting

855.1 The next meeting of Council is scheduled to take place on:

Tuesday 4 June 2013, commencing at 2.00pm at Missenden Abbey and
Monday 8 July 2013, commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey.

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.20pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 20 March 2013
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 25 March 2013
Confirmed by the Chair – 4 April 2013