

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

THURSDAY 14th MARCH 2013
2:00 PM IN HARDY TEACHING ROOM 2

Present:

Mr David Babb
Mrs Judith Babb
Mr Haydn Beeken (Chair)
Mr Kevin Brown
The Very Rev'd Philip Buckler
Mr David Clements
Mr Richard Corn
Mrs Sandra Gratrack
Dr Tony Hill
Bishop Christopher Lowson
Mr Graham Meeson
Ms Haf Merrifield
Rev'd Sally Myers
Mrs Jasmit Phull
Professor Muriel Robinson
Mr John Rowland
Dr Jim Smith
Mrs Bridget Starling
Mrs Pamela Taylor
Professor Mark Thompson
Mr Rob Thorpe
Mr James Turner
Mrs Lucy Wood

In attendance:

Mr Nigel Appleton, Dean of School of Teacher Development
Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Rev'd Peter Green, Dean of Chapel and University Chaplain (up to item 5)
Mr Rob Jones, Director of BG Enterprise
Ms Vicky Mays, Clerk to University Council
Dr Ruth Sayers, Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation
Mrs Emma Smeaton, University Council Administrator
Mr Aaron Smith, Students' Union Vice President 2012/13

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all University Council members to the meeting, noting that this was to be the Vice Chancellor's last before her retirement. Two new members were warmly welcomed, Mr David Babb and Diocesan representative Rev'd Sally Myers.

The Chair reported that the current meeting was to be the last for Judith Babb who had reached the end of her second term. It was noted that she had been a valued member and the Chair thanked her for all her efforts over the years. Judith responded to this noting the welcoming atmosphere of BG and what an enormous honour and rewarding time it had been to work with a team of people who were so generous with their time, all of which reflected the University's ethos. The Chair also reported that Julie McDonald had regrettably had to resign as a Council member due to workload commitments and health issues. University Council's thanks were recorded to Julie who was a committed member of the Audit Committee as well the University Council and all wished her well for the future.

2. The University Prayer

Rev'd Peter Green led the University Prayer.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Apologies

It was noted that Dr Jenny Rees, Dean of Students and Academic Engagement would normally be in attendance but had sent her apologies on this occasion.

5. Chaplain's report

(i) Chaplain's report to the University Council

Rev'd Peter Green presented his report to the University Council which had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Chair thanked Peter for his very comprehensive and informative report.

6. Minutes of the meeting held 22nd November 2012 and 30th January 2013

The minutes of the 22nd November 2012 and 30th January 2013 were accepted as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

7. ^{to} ^{be} ^{added} Matters arising

There were no matters arising other than those already covered on the agenda.

8. Key items from sub-committees

(i) Governance & Nominations Committee

(a) Timetable for the recruitment of new Chair of the University Council

It was reported that there had been around half a dozen serious enquires into the vacancy from people at a senior level. It was very hopeful that there would be a strong field of people apply for the role. A few potential applicants had taken the time to have conversations with the Deputy Vice Chancellor and one had arranged to visit to the University. The timetable for the appointment process was on track.

(b) Honorary Graduates

Members noted that all 2013 Honorary Graduates were now in place. All had accepted, which included a recent letter from Karen Lowthrop.

(c) New University Council members

It was noted that the University Council were now looking for three new members and any ideas for possible candidates should be forwarded to the Clerk to the University Council.

(d) Report on associate University Court membership

The University Council happily endorsed the approach recommended by the Governance and Nominations Committee for the creation of associate University Court membership for those who had expressed an interest but were unable to travel due to distance, age or health reasons.

(ii) Audit Committee

(a) TRAC update

Members were happy to approve the annual TRAC report. The update on the Risk Register was noted, noting the concerns regarding recruitment and retention.

(b) Internal audit reports

Members reported that they had been concerned by the internal audit programmes for this year as none had yet taken place. The audit of EDRF building works had been carried out, however the analysis was sent two days before the EDRF audit took place and could therefore not be fed into the audit as intended. The timing was concerning and the auditor had reassured the Audit Committee that the audit timetable was on track.

(c) Student data update

It was reported that progress on student data was continuing and the focus of this work was concentrated on improving data accuracy.

(iii) FE&GP Committee

(a) Estates report update

It was reported that progress on the new student accommodation was moving forward and was on schedule. The Estates team were congratulated on the new signs all around campus.

(b) HR report update

It was reported that there was nothing of specific concern in the HR update. To fall in line with the recommendations made by the Living Wage initiative the Committee agreed to recommend to the University Council that the first three points on the pay scale be removed. It was noted that this would affect only a small number of staff. Although the intention was to pay no less than the recommended minimum it was agreed that the University would not become accredited as a Living Wage employer as this brought higher financial risk to HEIs. University Council members fully supported the decision which upheld BG's ethos and would come into effect from the 1st April 2013.

(c) Mid-year accounts

The Council noted that the University was on track to deliver a surplus and was in fact better than the surplus predicted overall.

(d) Risk Register

It was reported that at the last Recruitment and Retention Committee meeting members were content that recruitment was on track; however a subsequent update has shown that this was no longer the case. Members noted that this was not just a problem for BG, but a national one and the Deputy Vice Chancellor would report on this later in the meeting.

(e) Tuition Fees Strategy

The FE&GP Committee recommended to the Council that the University should move to charge a minimum tuition fee of £8.5k per year with the fee also including money for additional course materials. This would generate a surplus for capital development. Members agreed to the recommendation in principle but noted that the incoming Vice Chancellor would be involved in the final decision. Council members were reminded of the confidentiality of this issue and that current discussions regarding fees should not be in the public domain.

(f) Limited Company update

This was an item to be discussed under reserved business at the end of the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Audit Committee and the Chair of the FE&GP Committee for their helpful reports to the University Council.

9. Academic Board

(i) Minutes of the meeting of 12th December 2012 and 23rd January 2013

The minutes of the Academic Board meetings of 12th December 2012 and 23rd January 2013 were received and the Deputy Vice Chancellor highlighted the following points:

- The School Overview Reports on Annual Monitoring Reviews.
- The Head of Doctoral Studies and Head of Research were working towards a modest Research Excellence Framework entry. *educational development and*
- The extended discussions on statistical returns were noted.
- It was reported that Academic Board had unanimously agreed that Professor Muriel Robinson OBE be awarded the title of Emeritus Professor.
- A review of the Professorship and Readers Scheme would be undertaken as it was felt that the pay grading system did not reflect the work that they did. The intention was to introduce new routes to demonstrate excellence in Teaching and Learning and Leadership Management. Members agreed that this was important in terms of credibility and some of the posts should be advertised as Readers and Professors. Members were happy to endorse the plans, and for them to be taken them forward and for anything that required University Council clearance being done via correspondence.

10. Chair's items

(i) Members appointments

This item was picked up earlier in the meeting under the Governance and Nominations Committee item.

The Chair reported that the Governance and Nominations Committee had recommended that he continued as a co-opted advisory member of the University Council for a further term to assist the transition of the new Chair. All members endorsed this recommendation.

(ii) Departure of current Vice Chancellor

The Chair reported that many positive things had been said about the current Vice Chancellor at various events over the past ten years, all of which were fully endorsed by the University Council. The Chair noted that her OBE title and the awarding of the title of Emeritus Professor were fully deserved. University Council members applauded Professor Muriel Robinson OBE for all her work and achievements at the University over the past ten years.

11. Student's Union

(i) President's report

The Students' Union President presented his report to the Council. Members congratulated the Students' Union for all they had raised for annual the Receive and Give (RAG) activity and for such a well managed election campaign.

(ii) Governance update

It was noted that the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Students' Union President had worked together, alternately chairing the review board meetings which higher education external consultant Aaron Porter also attended. The issues that came out of the review were not unexpected as the Students' Union had historically always done well engaging with traditional undergraduates living on campus students but had always found it harder to engage with mature and part time students. The Students' Union President thanked all staff involved in the review. In response the Chair thanked the Students' Union for their support in the process and their willingness to make progress.

12. Vice Chancellor's business

(i) Vice Chancellor's report

The Council received the Vice Chancellor's report which she presented to members highlighting key points.

(ii) Income generation

Members received and noted the income generation table.

(iii) External engagement

The external engagement list was also received and noted.

The Vice Chancellor gave a farewell speech to Members of University Council and thanked them for their support.

13. Student recruitment

The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the paper updating the Council on the latest position on student recruitment. The paper summarised the best assessment of the University's status with the risk likelihood moving across from amber/green to amber/red as recruitment was increasingly difficult to predict. It was noted that recruitment had been carefully tracked, week by week for the last two years which had shown different behaviours of prospective students. It now appears that prospective students are doing their research much earlier and making their university applications earlier.

The Council endorsed the set of actions set out in the paper and praised the team for all they were doing. Members noted that although a 5% drop in recruitment was concerning it was not really out of line within the sector, although the 5% impact would obviously depend on the conversion into student numbers. The Chair noted that any additional thoughts or ideas for action were welcome and should be fed directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor outside the meeting.

14. Key performance indicators

(i) KPI report

Members received the KPI dashboard noting the switch to amber/red on recruitment as previously reported.

(ii) FSSG assurance

The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented her report to the Council regarding HEFCE's expectation for universities to follow the self-assessment approach to reporting financial sustainability by December 2013. It was agreed that this would be taken through the FE&GP Committee.

(iii) Ethos KPI

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported on the paper outlining the creation of a key performance indicator for BG's ethos. It was reported that the outcomes of the ethos workshops had been collated into a report which brought forward the recommendations to University Council. The Chair reported that this was vital work in progress. This appeared to be the right approach although it could be challenging in terms of measuring if anything had changed. It was agreed that this was a journey and things could be done to develop this work further. The Vice Chancellor thanked the Deputy Vice Chancellor for all her work so far.

15. Hub business plans

The University Council received the hub business plans noting that they were preliminary outlines for the direction of travel for the full business plans to be developed for the June University Council meeting.

(i) Academic Engagement and Students

In the absence of the Dean of Students and Academic Engagement the Vice Chancellor presented the business plan to members highlighting the proposal to move Quality and Student Data over to the Strategy and Performance hub. The Council were content with the direction of travel.

(ii) School of Culture, Education and Innovation

The Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation reported on her hub business plan noting that recruitment was always a priority. Members happily endorsed the plan.

(iii) Enterprise

The Director of Enterprise reported on his business plan, noting that he was encouraged by how well on track his hub was entering phase eight of the academic year. It was reported that the new student accommodation would allow students to be self-catering hence the proposal to build a new food and drink facility in Nelson with the ability to make a significant saving on VAT. It was reported that what was originally budgeted at £680k was now estimated at £750k but the intention was to reduce this figure. The Council agreed that the FE&GP Committee together with the task and finish group would approve the budget if it was within the ball park of the £750k figure. Anything more than this would require approval from the University Council.

(iv) Resources

The Director of Resources presented his hub business plan and members confirmed that they were happy with the direction of travel.

(v) Strategy and Performance

The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the Strategy and Performance hub business plan noting as a headline that it was anticipated a full review of the Corporate Plan would take place next academic year. Members endorsed the direction of travel of the plan.

(vi) School of Teacher Development

The Dean of School of Teacher Development presented his business plan to the University Council who happily endorsed its direction of travel.

The Chair thanked the Senior Leadership Team for their very comprehensive summaries of direction of travel which in the opinion of the University Council was the right direction. The Vice Chancellor also thanked them for all they had done.

16. Agenda suggestions for future meetings

- Research activity and planning presentation.

17. Any other business

The Vice Chancellor highlighted the following:

- Jade Etherington had won the overall silver medal in the Skiing World Cup Championships.
- The informal learning area outside the Chapel was now complete. This was refurbished using the legacy left by Joyce Skinner.
- Members were reminded about the Chapel service at 5:15 pm for the Vice Chancellor prior to the Dinner which all Members of Council had been invited to that evening.

18. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the University Council would take place on Thursday 27th June 2013 at 2:00 pm.

19. RESERVED BUSINESS

Signed  Date 27-6-13

