

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2015

Present

Bernard Laverty	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Richard Benjamin	Independent member	
Evelyn Carnegie	Academic staff member	Elected
John Cater	Vice-Chancellor	Ex-officio
Clive Edwards	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Rob Green	Independent member	
Bill Johnson	Support staff member	Elected
David Owen	Independent member	Deputy Chair & Chair of Resources Committee
Simon Pope	Independent member	
Connor Richmond	Student member	Elected
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee
Kayley Wilson	Student member	SU President

In attendance

Mark Allanson	PVC (External Relations)
Lynda Brady	PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager

Apologies

Martin Ainscough	Independent member
Stephen Hesford	Independent member
John Maxwell	Independent member
Denise Walker	Independent member

BG.14.059 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

BG.14.060 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's Announcements.

BG.14.061 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.14.062 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/043/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.14.063 Action Log

Received: Document BG/044/14

Members received the Action Log noting that there would be further discussions around LEP involvement and that resolution of the issue concerning the Residences and Catering budget had been reported to Resources Committee.

BG.14.064 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.14.065 Minutes of Committees

.01 Resources Committee (23 February 2015)

Received: Document BG/045/14

The Chair of Resources introduced the minutes drawing attention to the following points:

- The interesting presentation of the Library Annual Report;

- The decision to maintain a conservative position in relation to Treasury Management ratings requirements despite increased cash balances;
- The high recovery rate against publicly funded teaching noted in the TRAC return as necessary to support capital investment;
- The excellent Students' Union Accounts and the positive impact of the Union's activities on the student experience;
- The encouraging figures in the Early Mid-Year Reforecast showing improved cash balances and predicting a higher surplus;
- The size and scale of the Facilities Management operation identified in their Annual Report;
- The VAT position in relation to the Sports development project;
- The recommendation to approve the Capital Projects bid for further residential developments.

The Resources Committee minutes were received.

.02 Audit Committee (9 March 2015)

Received: Document BG/046/14

The Chair of Audit introduced the minutes drawing attention to the following points:

- The detailed exposition of the University's targeting model provided by the Head of Student Recruitment;
- Scrutiny of a range of monitoring returns;
- A useful update on Value for Money activities;
- Two positive Internal Audit reports;
- Consideration of the Risk Management report which had not highlighted any major changes to the profile.

The Audit Committee minutes were received.

BG.14.066 Management Information January 2015

Received: Document BG/047/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report highlighting the healthy surplus position which was expected to improve further despite additional costs. Increased cash balances were also noted

and members were referred to the treasury management position agreed at Resources Committee.

The January 2015 Management Information report was received.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.14.067 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/048/14

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report highlighting the following points:

- The planning application for a new residential development had been accepted. Completion of these units should enable the University to guarantee accommodation to all first year students submitting applications in the main UCAS cycle;
- The positive impact of accommodation provision had helped the University significantly improve its performance in relation to retention in recent years with rates now levelling out above benchmark. Further progress in this area would be challenging;
- The considerable gains achieved in the REF exercise would enhance the University's reputation although financial reward would be limited given the changes to the funding model which were geared towards the large 4* providers. Sustaining and accelerating progress in this area was important for the continued success of the University;
- Whilst the outcome of the 2015 NSS would not be known until mid-August, a more co-ordinated approach had ensured earlier completion rates and it was hoped this would have a positive effect;
- In an increasingly competitive environment, applications rates for HEFCE monitored programmes were holding up well and conversion rates were ahead of sector norms. The University of the Year award should provide a further boost to performance;
- The position with respect to teacher training recruitment remained challenging reflecting the impact of government policy which continued to favour the Schools Direct Scheme even though this

was not meeting recruitment targets. Whilst policy change was unlikely, there were some signs that the Department for Education was adopting a more pragmatic approach with additional late allocations to Universities, albeit in shortage subjects which were difficult to recruit to. The potential for a similar policy direction to be adopted in relation to Nursing and Social Work could not be ignored;

- The institutional HEFCE grant letter was expected by the end of the month and, whilst HEFCE funding now represented a very small proportion of the University's income, some further reduction to the Student Opportunity Fund was anticipated;
- The uncertainty of the General Election outcome and potential policy changes presented a real challenge to the sector in developing plans and projections.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.14.068 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/049/14

The President of the Students' Union introduced the report, drawing attention to the following range of activities undertaken since the last meeting:

- The International Day of Persons with Disability had drawn considerable attention and had resulted in a number of recommendations to Facilities Management which were being considered;
- The *Rate Your Landlord Survey* had been completed and, in addition to providing feedback to local landlords, results would be used to compile a report for the Student Accommodation Team with a view to establishing a set of standards for the future;
- *SAFE (Sexual Awareness for Everyone) Week* had generated significant interest and had highlighted a lack of sexual health services locally. The Students' Union was working with Student Services to establish a service within the University Health Centre.

- The *University Mental Health Day* on 18 February had been extremely successful with a large number of exhibitors. There had been a specific emphasis on staff training/awareness-raising which would continue throughout the year. It was noted that the Students' Union had received an award for its ongoing commitment to issues around mental health which was presented by Lord Patel at the House of Lords. It was observed that this work linked well with the University Chancellor's current national campaign to improve children's mental health services;
- Other activities included the *Random Act of Kindness Day*, *Give It A Go Week* and further talks given by students under the *SPEAK* banner. Considerable efforts were being made to promote electoral registration in order to ensure students were able to vote in the upcoming General Election and it was noted that a discussion on the location of voting stations was on the agenda for the next WLBC meeting. A review of the current Course Representative System was also underway.

Reporting on the recent elections for Students' Union officers, it was noted that a change to the sabbatical officer positions had been agreed at the Annual Members meeting with the three Vice-President positions no longer tied to individual Faculties but drawn from the whole student constituency and taking specific responsibilities for Activities, Academic Representation and Welfare and the Community. Election turnout at just below 2,000 was comparable to the previous year. A formal report from the Returning Officer would be made to the next meeting.

Action: President of the Students' Union

In response to a concern expressed by the President of the Students' Union, it was noted that there was a national issue in relation to teaching student placements with fewer schools willing to take trainees, especially if they were already involved with the Schools Direct scheme. The recruitment of a particularly large cohort of PGCE students had created unique challenges at Edge Hill this year which the University was addressing as a matter of urgency and it was agreed that those affected should be offered appropriate interim support. It was reported that PGCE targets for 2016 entry were lower and would avoid a recurrence of the problem.

The Students' Union report was received.

BG.14.069 HEFCE Grant Letter

Received: Document BG/050/14

The BIS Grant Letter to HEFCE was received noting that HEFCE's institutional letter was expected by the end of the month.

BG.14.070 CUC Code of Governance: Gap Analysis

Received: Document BG/051/14

The Clerk introduced this item which provided an analysis of current governance practice against the new CUC Code. Overall, there appeared to be a high level of congruence with a small number of areas highlighted for further action:

- *Element 2* - A new requirement for the development of an Ethics Framework to be approved by the Board bringing together various policy areas sensitive to ethical consideration;
- *Element 3* – Development of a more robust annual effectiveness review process in relation to the operation of the Audit Committee;
- *Element 6* – Noting the Strategy and Action Plan already in place, the development of a specific Equality and Diversity report for annual consideration by the Board;
- *Element 7* – Development of procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the Clerk and an annual assessment of compliance with the Code.

Action: Clerk

In discussion, it was noted that a comprehensive Schedule of Delegation had been developed and would be considered at the next Audit Committee meeting alongside a report on governance procedures emanating from a recent internal audit.

The Gap Analysis of the CUC Code of Governance was received.

BG.14.071 Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

Received: Document BG/052/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) introduced the Code outlining the Board's responsibility to ensure Academic Freedom and the University's obligation to protect the right to Freedom of Speech

within the law for members of the University and approved visiting speakers. The Code of Practice identified an objective test to determine whether a meeting or activity would be classed as controversial and the procedures to be followed in such circumstances. Application of the procedures could lead to the refusal to allow a meeting or activity or to the imposition of restrictions where the safety of individuals or property was likely to be at risk. It was noted that the procedures had already been used successfully.

The General Manager of the Students' Union indicated that Students' Unions were being audited by the Charity Commission with respect to procedures relating to Freedom of Speech and suggested that this might be referenced in the document.

Following discussion, **the Board approved the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.**

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)

BG.14.072 Capital Projects: Bid

Received: Document BG/053/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor outlined the bid which was to provide additional residential accommodation incorporating a 144 bed development (Phase 10) and an extension to Chancellor's Court (Phase 5A) offering a further 24 bed spaces.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- the development would remove some car-parking space but this could be accommodated elsewhere on campus;
- the development would not incorporate additional laundry facilities;
- the refurbishment of older residential properties would be reviewed in 15/16.

Following consideration, and noting the positive recommendation from Resources Committee, **the Board approved the Phase 10 and Phase 5A extension bid with a combined budget of £8.7 million including an additional £100k contingency fund.**

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Concluding discussion, it was observed that further commitments to new projects would need to take account of the political context following the General Election.

BG.14.073 Capital Projects: Update

Received: Document BG/054/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the Update noting that current projects were progressing well and were within time and budget. It was agreed that Board members should tour the new Sports Centre prior to the May business meeting.

Action: Clerk

The Capital Projects Update was received.

BG.14.074 Access Agreement 2016/17

Received: Document BG/055/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) outlined the background to the development of the 16/17 Access Agreement indicating the particular challenges in making financial commitments to future students at a time of political uncertainty, static fees and with continuing reductions in HEFCE grant income for specified groups. There was also a requirement to set new and stretching targets to improve access, success and progression for students from under-represented groups. The Agreement was being developed in consultation with the Students' Union.

Within that context, the University was recommending the maintenance of the £9,000 tuition fee rate for Bachelor degree and PGCE programmes and £6,000 for Foundation Degrees which were generally run in conjunction with FE partners.

In terms of student financial support, the University wished to maintain a whole-institution approach which would benefit all students given the large percentage recruited from traditionally under-represented groups. Previous support packages had been heavily tied to the National Scholarship Scheme which used household income as a fairly blunt instrument to determine eligibility for financial awards; withdrawal of this scheme had allowed the University to develop a more sophisticated model geared to enabling engagement, attracting and

rewarding excellence and supporting enhancement. In addition to the maintenance of the existing Hardship Fund and Scholarship Schemes, the new model would provide for the establishment of criterion-based funds to support applicant access to the recruitment process and allow students to exploit opportunities within programmes to enhance their employability (such as participation in study abroad).

In discussion, it was noted that exceptional academic achievement in the final year could be an important factor in relation to student employment outcomes and should be appropriately recognised.

Following consideration, **the Board approved the principles and approach underlying the development of the 16/17 Access Agreement** noting that final documentation would be presented to the next meeting.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)

BG.14.075 Key Performance Indicators

Received: Document BG/056/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the Key Performance Indicator report highlighting the general upward trajectory.

It was noted that the most recent first destination survey showed the University had maintained its high percentage (93.5%) of full-time, first degree students employed or undertaking further study six months after graduation but that the percentage of students in graduate level jobs had increased significantly to 69.1% (previously 60.8%)

The Key Performance Indicator report was received.

BG.14.076 Any other Business

.01 Exhibition

The Chair reminded members of the invitation to visit the Leonora Carrington exhibition at the Liverpool Tate which was being sponsored by the University.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.14.077 Academic Board Minutes

Received: Document BG/057/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2014 were received.

BG.14.078 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 May 2015.