

## THE COUNCIL



### Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 June 2014

Present: The Chairman of the Council (Mr R Jewson) (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor (Professor E D J Acton), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor D Richardson), the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Professor N Ward), the Treasurer (Mr J Sisson), Dr M Blyth, Professor G Schofield, Dr K Skoyles, Ms V Keller Dorsey, Mr D Edwards, Mr J Greenwell, Mr G Jones, Mr M Williams, Mrs E Slaymaker and the Student Representatives (Ms R Rawle and Mr J Levell)

With: The Registrar and Secretary (Mr B Summers), the Director of Finance (Mr S Donaldson), the Director of Planning (Mr I Callaghan), the Senior Assistant Registrar (Dr L Moulard) and the Senior Administrative Assistant (Committee Office) (Mrs R. Phillips)

In attendance: The Executive Deans of Faculty (Professor J Collier, Professor I Harvey, Professor Y Tasker and Professor P Gilmartin)

Apologies: Ms Laura McGillivray

#### 87. MINUTES

Confirmed  
the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2014

#### 88. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chairman noted that this was to be the last meeting for the Student Representatives, Joe Levell and Rosie Rawle and he thanked them for their contribution. It would also be the last meeting for David Edwards, the Deputy Chairman and for the Vice-Chancellor both of whom were thanked for their significant contributions. The Chairman also noted that Dr Wendy Thomson, who will soon become the Managing Director of Norfolk County Council, has accepted an invitation to join the Council from 1 August 2014.

The Chairman congratulated the Executive Team on their success in winning the Outstanding Leadership and Management Team award at the recent THE Leadership and Management Awards. He also noted the outstanding performance of both Norwich and the University in the recently published Thomson Reuters research tables with Norwich being the fourth most highly cited city (after Oxford, London and Cambridge) and UEA being the fifth most cited University (level with Southampton).

#### 89. STATEMENTS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Vice-Chancellor made the following statements:

1. There was intense concern in the sector about the way in which the debate about the UK's membership of the European Union was proceeding. The stakes are significant given the level of funding received via the EU and its agencies and the potential impact on free movement of students and academic staff.

2. The Immigration Minister had recently updated the House of Commons following an investigation into English language qualifications triggered by a Panorama broadcast. Some 157 private college Tier 4 licenses had been suspended together with that of one University. Two other universities had seen their allocation of CASs frozen. There was concern that in some sections of the media an investigation by the QAA into London branch campuses was being linked to immigration compliance issues but the QAA has confirmed that this is not the case.
3. The Vice-Chancellor re-stated the Chairman's statement regarding the Thomson Reuters publication and confirmed that it provided international affirmation of the quality of research in Norwich.
4. The final cohort of students will graduate this summer from the School of Music. It was pleasing to note that this year's results recorded the highest number of first class degrees ever delivered and the highest proportion of "good honours". The University had also recently announced the appointment of a Director of Music to ensure continuity of music provision on campus.
5. The results of the RPIF bid for the Centre for Societal Change and Big Data would be announced on Thursday this week.
6. The first open day had been held recently against a backdrop of excellent weather and a highly positive campus environment.

90. COMPLETE UNIVERSITY GUIDE

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor shared the outcome of this year's league tables with Council members. This showed a position of:

- The Guardian – 14<sup>th</sup>
- The Complete Guide – 15<sup>th</sup> (30 points from both 20<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>)
- The Times/Sunday Times – 17<sup>th</sup>

The corporate plan target was to achieve a Top 20 position and, moving forward it would be the University's aim to consolidate a Top 15 position. In summary of each measure the following was noted:

- Student satisfaction could be regarded as "green" and is highly positive towards league table positions. However, there is still a need to enhance performance in assessment and feedback;
- RAE: this measure is constant pending the outcome of the REF which is expected on 18 December 2014;
- Entry standards: the current reported figure is the University's best ever performance. However, it is known that this will drop in absolute terms next year (when data on the current year's intake is reported). It is anticipated that this will be the case for a number of other institutions but the extent to which they fall is not yet known.
- SSR remains a strong measure for UEA but the potential drift identified in the current financial plans should be noted.
- Spend per student currently includes a significant sum invested in the Students' Union shop development. This is a rolling average so will drop out over two years.
- Good honours has increased in absolute terms but not in rank terms. With the SSR investment and initiatives such as peer assisted learning (PAL) this should improve.
- Graduate prospects are the subject of a later presentation at this meeting.
- Completion rates have improved but there is scope for further improvement.

In discussion it was noted that there had been some adverse comment about contact time in recent press stories. However, it was also noted that this is a very difficult area to analyse and some misleading interpretations could be made. For example, it needs to be set against how academic staff set work to engage students and enable them to use library or private study time effectively. It also takes no account of the effectiveness of different types of teaching such as re-inventing the lecture and use of online resources. All Schools have been asked to systematically review their assessment processes to ensure that they secure stronger student satisfaction.

91. BUDGET FOR 2014/15 AND FUTURE YEARS' FORECAST

Considered

1. A paper from the Director of Finance providing details of the Budget for 2014/15 and future years' financial forecasts. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D043; and
2. the paper from the Executive Team outlining a future capital investment in teaching laboratories for STEM subject. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D044)

(The Finance Director presented the budget followed by a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor regarding investment in STEMM facilities. It was noted that in broad terms the level of contingency included in 2014/15 carried through the financial plan and that the aim had been to deliver a financial plan that matches with previous submissions to Council. Apart from the STEMM laboratories referred to below the main change to the capital plan was the re-prioritisation of £2m in support of HUM facilities to ensure that the Faculty recruiting the highest tariff students was able to deliver appropriate facilities to those students. Some concern was expressed by the Students' Union about the level of rent rises made this year and the potential impact upon widening access but it was confirmed that accommodation rents are reviewed in line with sector benchmarking. It was also acknowledged that the University had a good record on widening participation. The Students' Union also expressed regret at the potential impact the savings delivered by Catering may have on sustainability. With regard to the proposals for investment in STEMM laboratories there was broad agreement that investment was essential. It was acknowledged that there is no proposal to borrow any additional money but instead to utilise funds held in reserves. The change to net debt as a result of the recent decision to deliver the new residential accommodation in-house was discussed in detail and would be subject to HEFCE granting approval. The Treasurer advised Council that HEFCE has recently issued a Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability (MAA) for HEIs which makes it clear that where an HEI plans to borrow more than five times EBITDA clearance from HEFCE will be required. In view of the University's existing borrowing arrangements with RBS and EIB, together with the prospective private placement arrangement to fund the Blackdale residences, this means that UEA would exceed this threshold. In consequence the Treasurer felt that Council should assume that the University would not be in a position to apply for new borrowings in the foreseeable future and need to bear this in mind when considering the capital programme. The concerns of Audit Committee about the decision to deliver the Blackdale development in house were noted but the reasons for the decision were reiterated. However, it was agreed that the capital plan should form a significant part of the agenda for the Council Strategy Conference in the autumn and that the independent members of Audit Committee should also be invited to attend. There is also an imperative to drive out additional income and reduce costs.

RESOLVED

- (1) to accept the budget for 2014/15 and future years' financial plan; and

- (2) to proceed with the development of the STEMM laboratory building noting that this is currently contingent upon receiving £5m contribution from HEFCE.

\*92. CORPORATE PLAN: EMPLOYABILITY

Received

a presentation from the Director of Research and Enterprise Services regarding the University's activities in support of Graduate Prospects. A copy of the presentation is filed in the minute book.

(The development of Career Central delivered innovative space in support of graduate prospects but it was acknowledged that further work is required to ensure appropriate communication with students. The aim is to encourage earlier engagement with students: ideally from day one, so that they are ready to make early applications prior to and during their final year. A range of events will take place in the seminar room and work is on going regarding the start of year. Council thanked the Director (REN) for her informative presentation and the work that has gone into improving and developing graduate prospects.)

93. UNIVERSITY STATUTES

Approved by special resolution:

subject to Privy Council approval, and any amendments required by the Privy Council which do affect the substance of the change, Statue 1.5 to be amended to read:

*Members of the Council (other than ex-officio members or student members) shall hold office from the date appointed for a period ending on the third anniversary of the 31st day of July in the year in which they are appointed or for such shorter period as the Council may determine.*

This paper was circulated by email on Friday 13 June 2014 to comply with the requirements for a special resolution. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D045)

\*94. COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Received

The report of the Council Membership Committee which took place on Monday 19 May 2014. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D046)

RESOLVED

To accept all of the recommendations contained in that report.

95. FINANCE GROUP

Received

The report of the Finance Group which took place on Monday 9 June 2014. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D047)

96. UNION OF UEA STUDENTS CORPORATE STATUS

Noted

that the Union of UEA Students is currently reviewing its status as a corporate body and that this may lead to incorporation.

Recommended

That any necessary approvals be delegated to a sub-committee comprising of the Registrar and Secretary, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Dean of Students.

97. ASSEMBLY

Received

The un-confirmed minutes of The Assembly which took place on Wednesday 4 June 2014. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref COU13D048)