

COUNCIL 1

Minutes of the Meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 25 November 2020

Members:	Baroness Ann Taylor (Chair)	Abdulraouf Abdussalam	Shahnaz Ali
	Dr Pam Bagley	Karl Bates	Jo Beaumont
	Michael Bell	Dermot Bolton	Carl Chambers
	Professor Shirley Congdon	Kersten England	Terry Hartwell
	Amir Hussain	Karen McMahon	Sally Neocosmos
	Mohammed Pandor	Professor Rami Qahwaji	Samera Shabir
	Stuart Watson	Prof Vishanth Weerakkody	Michael Ziff

In attendance: Prof John Bridgeman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Innovation and Engagement
Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head, Governance (Secretary)
Professor Zahir Irani, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality
Joanne Marshall, Director of People and Campus Services
Riley Power, University Secretary

Apologies: Maurice Watkins

1.20-21 Register of Interests (Document C1/20-21)

- 1.1 Council received the register of Council members interests. Baroness Taylor noted her interest as Chair of Council in relation to item 6 on the agenda (M6.2 refers).

2.20-21 Minutes of the Meeting on 8 July 2020 (C106/19-20)

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 8 July 2020 were **approved** by circulation prior to the Council meeting.

3.20-21 Matters Arising and Action Tracker (Document C2/20-21)

- 3.1 Council received a report on matters arising from the Council meeting on 8 July 2020 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

4.20-21 Report from the Chair

- 4.1 On behalf of Council, the Chair recorded her continued appreciation to the Executive Team, and the wider University community for the work that had been undertaken during the pandemic and in welcoming, supporting and teaching students in the current unprecedented and exceptional times.
- 4.2 The Chair also drew attention to the new monthly informal Council briefings that had been introduced to provide a regular opportunity for members to hear about developments at the University and topics of interest or importance which would support them in maintaining an understanding of the context within which the University operated.

4.3 **ACTION: circulate schedule of informal briefings (University Secretary)**

5.20-21 **Vice-Chancellor's Update (Document C3/20-21)**

5.1 Council received and discussed a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key matters affecting the University, including an update on COVID-19 recovery plans. External engagement activities were highlighted, and Council noted that the University continued to foster positive, constructive relationships through regular meetings and briefings, thus positioning itself in the heart of the city and region, showcasing its value and impact.

5.2 An overview of the recent changes that had been made to the University's senior structure were provided. These changes would ensure effective delivery of the new University Strategy and would provide integrated strategic leadership of the core academic areas and related professional services to enhance the University's capability to innovate, grow and strengthen its academic quality, research and engagement.

5.3 Points noted in discussion included:

- that the University estate would be reviewed and a blueprint for the longer-term estate and infrastructure would be developed. Longer-term estate planning was aligned to the emerging Estates and Infrastructure Strategy which would focus on the University estate and technology and IT infrastructure.
- that the proposal to establish a Chief Operating Officer had been discussed with the Chief Finance Officer and Director of People and Campus Services and would be further considered by the Vice-Chancellor in line with the development of a blueprint for the longer-term estate and infrastructure.
- translation of the four supporting strategies into detailed implementation and operational plans would be the focus of the forthcoming planning round which would inform financial resource planning from 2021/22.

6.20-21 **Report from the University Secretary (Document C4/20-21)**

Secretary's note: Baroness Taylor left the meeting for discussion on the extension of the term of office for the Chair of Council and Ms Neocosmos took the Chair for this item.

6.1 Council received an update from the University Secretary which summarised ongoing work relating to areas of governance pertinent to the work of Council and the University. This included an update on the appointment of a new University Chancellor, the collection of equality and monitoring data for inclusion in the University's Higher Education Statistics Agency staff return, and ongoing compliance with the Office for Students Conditions of Registration.

6.2 Following consideration of the report, Council **approved:**

- the extension of the term of office of the Chair of Council for a further term of one year from 1 August 2021 ending on 31 July 2022. Council thanked Baroness Taylor for her willingness to serve as Chair for an additional year which would provide stability and continuity in governance at the University during 2021/22.

- one candidate for receipt of an honorary award as recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee.
- proposed changes to the regulations and ordinances relating to the University Assembly.

6.3 Council noted:

- the extension of Michael Bell (lay member) and Joanne Beaumont (non-academic staff member) terms of office for a further six months until 31 July 2021, as approved by the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- that the University was introducing Microsoft Identity Management as part of its measures to enhance its cyber security. Members were required to undertake a Self-Service Password Reset as part of this and further details regarding SSPR would be circulated following the meeting, IT support would also be available to guide members through the process.
- that lay members were encouraged to use their University IT account as it was more secure and enabled access to the University's intranet and Committee SharePoint sites.
- that equality and diversity data for honorary award recipients was monitored by the Honorary Degrees Committee. This would be circulated to Council, for information.

6.4 **ACTIONS:**

- **circulate further details with regards to SSPR to lay members (University Secretary)**
- **circulate a briefing on SharePoint to lay members (University Secretary)**
- **circulate equality and diversity data of honorary award recipients (University Secretary)**

7.20-21 **Report from Students' Union (Document C5/20-21)**

- 7.1 Council received a report from the UBU Education Officer and UBU Student Affairs Officer on current issues and recent activities which included an overview of freshers/welcome week activities and student engagement; COVID-19 mitigations; and plans for 2020/21.
- 7.2 Council welcomed the update and congratulated the Students' Union on the excellent work that was being undertaken to support students during the pandemic. Points of note included:
- the introduction of a buddy scheme for new home and international students.
 - the focus on social networks, wellbeing, and engagement activities.
 - a reduced sports membership, funded by the SU, to attract students into physical activities.
 - continued partnership working between the SU and the Executive to effect change and enhance the student experience.
 - tailored support for students who were in hardship, self-isolating, or who remained in accommodation.
- 7.3 In response to a query, Council noted that SU support would be extended to Erasmus students.

8.20-21 **Financial Statements 2019/20 (Document C6/20-21)**

- 8.1 Council considered the consolidated Annual Financial Statements for the University for the year ended 31 July 2020 noting these were compliant with the OfS Accounts Direction. The

Financial Statements had been through an iterative process and had been subject to considerable scrutiny by a Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees who endorsed the approach to the Financial Statements.

8.2 In the absence of the Chief Finance Officer, the Vice-Chancellor presented the financial headlines from the Financial Statements, noting that the results for 2019/20 recorded an operating surplus, a positive cash inflow and stronger net current assets.

8.3 Points noted in discussion included:

- that the University's external (BDO) and internal (RSM) auditors had provided their opinions that the University had prepared the Statements in accordance with required reporting standards and that the University was a going concern.
- the impact of pension-related transactions on the Statement of Comprehensive Income.
- that the financial performance set out in the Statements presented a consistent account of the University's performance compared with the regular reports provided to Finance Committee and Council throughout the year.
- that the Financial Strategy was predicated on cash generation to build up reserves to allow investment.
- the University would continue to review and monitor its financial position carefully in order to maintain a financially sustainable position going forward and deliver on its Financial Strategy.
- The Financial Statements would be made publicly available and would be supported by a range of communications and contextual information to aid understanding.

8.4 Following receipt of relevant assurances, Council **approved**:

- the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020, as endorsed by the Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees and the Chairs of the Finance and Audit Committees; these would be signed by the Vice-Chancellor, as the accountable officer, and the Chair of Council.
- the letter of representation to the University's external auditor, BDO, and **agreed** to delegate signature to the Chair of Council.

8.5 Council welcomed the revised format and pictorial style of the Financial Statements and acknowledged the significant work that had been undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer and his team in the preparation of the Statements. Thanks, were also expressed to the Chairs of Finance and Audit Committee for providing scrutiny and challenge on the Financial Statements during its development.

8.6 **ACTION: circulate hard copies of the Financial Statements to Council Members (Chief Finance Officer)**

9.20-21 **Student Recruitment Update (Document C7/20-21)**

9.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality presented a comprehensive overview of the student recruitment activity and results outlined in the report, noting:

- that undergraduate home recruitment had been strong and was ahead of target; this position aligned with the extensive work that had been undertaken to enhance home UG recruitment and the specific interventions and activities that had been put into place.
- that good progress had been made with home postgraduate taught recruitment, however the current position remained lower than target. Additional January starts would provide opportunities to recruit additional students during the cycle.
- that international recruitment looked more favourable than anticipated and the January intake for the postgraduate international market was expected to significantly improve this position further; this was strongly welcomed by Council.
- that a Brand and Marketing Strategy was being developed, further updates would be presented to Council as this work progressed.

9.2 Plans for marketing and recruitment activity in Home and international markets for the 2021/22 recruitment cycle were also outlined. Innovative approaches to advertising, event delivery and outreach continued to be developed to minimise business risk.

9.3 Clarification was provided by the DVC, AIQ with regards to questions on student recruitment performance versus student recruitment targets; the demographics of new students; the tactical and data-informed decision-making approach to student recruitment; and virtual live and on-demand Open Days. The DVC also confirmed that the University would adopt a similar mixed on and off campus model for Clearing 2021, using an external call centre provider appointed through a robust tender process.

9.4 Members were pleased to note the positive student recruitment position for 2020/21 and thanked the DVC and his team for their hard work, especially considering the current pandemic and the challenges that continued to face the sector.

9.5 **ACTION: present update on the 2021 recruitment cycle to February meeting (DVC, AIQ)**

10.20-21 **University Strategy Update (Document C8/20-21)**

10.1 Council received an update on the development of the University's enabling strategies (Estates and Infrastructure, People, Finance and Performance, and Brand, Communications and Marketing) noting that these would be presented to the Council in in 2020/21.

11.20-21 **Business and Community Engagement Strategy 2020-2025 (Document C9/20-21)**

11.1 Council considered the proposed Business and Community Engagement Sub-Strategy, the development of which had been reported and discussed at Council in July. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Innovation and Engagement presented an overview of the strategy in which he drew attention to the extensive internal and external consultation process which had informed the proposal, and noted that the strategy described a vision in which Bradford would be a university city that shared knowledge in order to strengthen health, wealth and confidence across the many communities in which students, staff and alumni participated.

11.2 Council **approved** the Business and Community Engagement Sub-Strategy, noting the following observations: the importance of environmental sustainability; alignment of civic engagement at a local and national level; and the needs of local and regional businesses.

12.20-21 **Refreshed Financial Strategy (Document C10/20-21)**

12.1 Council considered and **approved** the University's refreshed Financial Strategy 2020/21-2023/24 which was focussed on supporting the continued viability and sustainability of the University. Council noted that it was part of the Finance and Performance enabling strategy that was currently under development.

12.2 Points made in discussion included that the Financial Strategy had been updated to reflect the assessment of the 2020/21 early financial forecast as at early November enrolments. The forecast would continue to be updated as the year progressed, but this would not change direction of the strategy or its priorities; the domination of the net asset position by pension provisions; and that the University's application to the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loans Scheme continued to be progressed which would support liquidity.

13.20-21 **Draft People Strategy 2020-2025: Next Steps (Document C11/20-21)**

13.1 Council provided detailed feedback on the draft People Strategy, an enabling strategy of the University Strategy, noting that it had been considered by the Executive Board and the People Committee. The strategy set strategic direction and described the University's vision and objectives for its workforce over the next five years. Further consultation would be undertaken from stakeholder groups, including students, throughout December and early January and a final version would be presented to the Executive Board and Council in February 2021, for approval.

13.2 **ACTION: add to Council schedule of business (University Secretary)**

14.20-21 **Academic Standards and Quality: Institutional Overview (Document C12/20-21)**

14.1 Council considered a report on the University's framework and processes for managing the quality of learning, teaching, and academic standards in relation to the changing requirements of the Office for Students 'Regulatory Framework for HE in England'. Noting the importance of the report, Council **approved** the report as assurance:

- of the robustness of the University's current management of quality and standards.
- that the risks associated with the new and emergent regulatory framework, quality assurance regime, and compliance assessment methodology were understood and appropriately mitigated.
- that priority actions had been identified and were appropriate. These would be taken forward in 2020/21 and would ensure the University was able to adjust to the new external regulatory environment whilst supporting its internal strategic objectives.

14.2 Council noted:

- that the University's approach to the monitoring of academic standards and the quality of learning, teaching, and the student experience were being recalibrated to meet the

requirements of the OfS' Regulatory Framework and the emerging approach to compliance assessment. The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Sub-Strategy provided a structure for this exercise.

- the annual report of the business undertaken by Senate which informed Council of the detailed and diligent scrutiny that was undertaken by Senate and its Committees of the academic governance of the University during 2019/20 (Document C18 refers).
- that an internal audit on academic governance had recently been undertaken by the University's internal auditors, RSM. The draft report indicated substantial assurance in academic governance arrangements at the University which demonstrated the robustness of the University's academic governance arrangements.

15.20-21 **Research Concordat (Document C13/20-21)**

- 15.1 Council considered and **approved** a report on the University's current and future activities which demonstrated compliance with the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity, a national framework for good research conduct and governance. Compliance with the Concordat was part of the University Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students. The statement would be made publicly available as evidence of the University's commitment to research integrity.

16.20-21 **Annual Safeguarding Report Incorporating Prevent Accountability and Data Return (Document C14/20-21)**

- 16.1 Council considered and **approved** the University's Prevent statement and data return for submission to the Office for Students and **authorised** the Chair of Council to sign the statement of declaration on its behalf.
- 16.2 Council noted the University's first annual safeguarding report for 2019/20 which highlighted the changes made to the University's safeguarding arrangements, along with developing plans for enhanced training for members of the Safeguarding Steering Group, staff undertaking outreach within schools, and staff supporting University students who were aged under 18. This would be enacted during 2020/21.
- 16.3 Council noted that the University had made significant provision for student support during the pandemic which included online counselling and mental health support, community support for accommodation, regular check-ins with students, and provision of food parcels. Council welcomed the support from Morrisons supermarket with regards to food donations.
- 16.4 **ACTION: on behalf of the Chair of Council, send a letter of thanks to Morrisons (University Secretary)**

17.20-21 **Modern Slavery Statement (Document C15/20-21)**

- 17.1 Council considered and **approved** the University's Modern Slavery Statement for the 2020/21 academic year which set out the steps the University had taken and would take to mitigate any risk of modern slavery and human trafficking. Council noted that the statement would be published on the University website.

18.20-21 **Risk Management Policy (Document C16/20-21)**

- 18.1 Council considered and **approved** the University's Risk Management Policy, noting this would be reviewed every three years, and the Risk Appetite Statement which was presented in terms of the willingness to take risk in areas aligned to the University's corporate level risks. The Risk Appetite Statement would continue to be reviewed annually.
- 18.2 Despite the mitigations in place, Council noted the high residual scores of four of the University's corporate risks (financial sustainability; IT security; branding and image; and student recruitment). The University Secretary confirmed that the University monitored the corporate risk register proactively and that it was subject to considerable and regular scrutiny by the Risk Oversight Group, Executive Board and Audit Committee.

19.20-21 **Pension Scheme Update (Document C17/20-21)**

- 19.1 The discussion on pensions was deferred and would take place at an informal Council briefing in December 2020, led by the Chief Finance Officer.
- 19.2 **ACTION: present an update on the pension scheme to an informal Council briefing on 8 December (Chief Finance Officer)**

20.20-21 **Report from Senate, October 2020 (Document C18/20-21)**

- 20.1 Council noted that the annual report of the business of Senate had been endorsed at Senate in October. Council **confirmed** that the report, in conjunction with other relevant information provided by Senate during 2019/20, provided the necessary assurance of the robustness of the University's academic governance arrangements.

21.20-21 **Report from Joint Finance and Audit Committee, November 2020 (Document C19/20-21)**

- 21.1 Council noted that the Joint Meeting of Finance and Audit Committee had been beneficial, removing the need for duplication of discussion and further enhancing the assurance of the approval of the annual Financial Statements.

22.20-21 **Report from Audit Committee, November 2020 (Document C20/20-21)**

- 22.1 Council noted the Audit Committee Annual Report which covered the work undertaken by the Committee in its fulfilment of terms of reference and compliance with Office for Students requirements for the year to 31 July 2020. The report formed part of the annual accountability process and would be submitted to the Office for Students.

23.20-21 **Report from Finance Committee, November 2020 (Document C21/20-21)**

- 23.1 Council received and noted the report.

24.20-21 **Business from Committees (Documents C22-26/20-21)**

- 24.1 Council received and noted summary reports from the following committee meetings: Governance and Nominations Committee; Honorary Degrees Committee; People Committee; Remuneration Committee and University Ethics Committee.

25.20-21 **Annual Workforce Dashboard and Health and Safety Report 2019/20 (Document C27/20-21)**

- 25.1 Council received and noted the report.

26.20-21 **REF 2021 (Document C28/20-21)**

- 26.1 Council received and noted the report.

27.20-21 **National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 Results (Document C29/20-21)**

- 27.1 Council received and noted the report.

28.20-21 **League Tables and Rankings (Document C30/20-21)**

- 28.1 Council received and noted the report.

29.20-21 **Access and Participation Plan Update (Document C31/20-21)**

- 29.1 Council received and noted the report.

30.20-21 **Terms of Reference and Membership 2020/21 (Document C32/20-21)**

- 30.1 Council received and noted the report.

31.20-21 **Draft Council 2 Agenda (February 2021) (Document C33/19-20)**

- 31.1 Council received and noted the report.

32.20-21 **Council Schedule of Business 2020/21 (Document C34/20-21)**

- 32.1 Council received and noted the report.

Secretary: Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head (Governance)

Date: 1 December 2020