

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2013  
2:00 PM IN ROOM 102, SKINNER BUILDING

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**Present**

Dr Kevin Brown  
Professor Muriel Robinson  
Mr John Rowland  
Mrs Pamela Taylor (Chair)  
Professor Mark Thompson

**In attendance**

Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources  
Mr Rob Jones, Director of Enterprise (for items 7(ii) and 10)  
Mr Stephen Kirby, Finance Manager (for item 6 and 7(ii))  
Ms Vicky Mays, Clerk to Governors  
Ms Hâf Merrifield, Deputy Principal  
Mr Fred Robson, Head of Estates (for item 6)  
Ms Alison Smith, Head of Human Resources (for items 5, 7(ii), 8 and 10)  
Mrs Emma Smeaton, Minuting Secretary  
Mr Rob Thorpe, Students' Union President 2012/13 (for item 8)  
Mr Henry Wood, Students' Union (for item 8)

**Action**

**1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Lucy Wood.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

The minutes of the meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them with the inclusion of the following factual amendment:

#### Minute 7 (ii) Accommodation update

The words 'that came with a 25 year guarantee' would be deleted from the end of the paragraph. It was noted that the durable modules came with the standard building guarantee.

#### **4. Matters arising**

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

#### **5. Human Resources**

##### **(i) Staffing report from HR**

The Head of HR talked members through the staffing report noting that we were well within target for staff costs. Staff turnover was well below the national average as was staff sickness absence. All other measures were reported annually at the end of the academic year and overall there was nothing to raise concern in the staffing report.

##### **(ii) Key HR issues**

- **Auto enrolment report**

The Head of HR presented a briefing paper on auto-enrolment into the University pension scheme which would apply from January 2014. The Chair noted the very helpful background paper and it was agreed that a project group would be established to work on this. A decision on the proposal would be made once the project group had looked into the issues and brought it back to the FE&GP Committee.

- **Living wage report**

The Committee received the background paper noting that the living wage was distinct from the national minimum wage and set at a higher amount. 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.

**AS/  
Future  
FE&GP**

## 6. Estates & University Services

### (i) Building works update

- Update of expenditure against budget for major capital items

The Head of Estates presented the building works update which included schemes that had been completed. The Committee noted that the reporting chart had been broken down into two, one for projects over £500,000 and the other for projects under £500,000, with the older projects reporting higher actual spend.

### (ii) Student accommodation

It was reported that the ground works for the new accommodation had progressed well with a slight delay on the modules. However, these would be received during the week commencing the 11<sup>th</sup> March and ready for students to move in by late May. It was agreed that a viewing of the modules would be arranged for University Council members during the lunch prior to their next meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March.

VM/  
Next UC

### (iii) Carbon Management Plan update

The Committee received the summary chart of the schemes in the Carbon Management Plan. It was agreed that the list would be extended for future reporting as the majority of the opportunities/projects listed were reporting green.

FR

## 7. Finance

### (i) Mid-year financial update and summary variance notes

The Director of Resources summarised the mid-year accounts reporting that the overall picture from a surplus prospective was fractionally better and pretty much in line with the budget. A few variances were highlighted; the overall income was slightly down, overall the institution had made a saving on salaries and there had been an overspend on administrative one off costs due the recruitment of a new Vice Chancellor.

(ii) Pensions update

It was agreed that this would be discussed under the Limited Company item with the Director of Enterprise also present.

(iii) Consideration of future tuition fees strategy

The Deputy Vice Chancellor circulated a paper outlining the proposed future tuition fees strategy. It was proposed that a higher than inflation increase for 2014/15 tuition fees be implemented following clarification that there would be no money to fund capital projects. The Committee noted that the results of the Student Survey showed that not one student ticked the box for fees being their reason for choosing BG and it was felt that an increase in fees would not put off prospective students.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported that it felt appropriate to reverse the recommendation to charge different fees for different courses since it had become apparent that there was not much variance in the sector for different course fees at institutions. It was felt that the issue would be better addressed by tackling the perception that certain courses do not get the same value. It was also noted that additional costs were difficult for students and an extra £150 included in the course fee to cover materials would be easier for students to manage.

It was agreed to recommend to the University Council that the fee would rise to a minimum of £8.5k from 2014/15 with the additional consideration that it could be changed in the budget setting. It was also agreed that the incoming Vice Chancellor would be part of the discussions before an announcement was made in time for the June 2013 Open Day.

Next UC

**8. Students' Union review update**

The Students' Union President and Henry Wood attended for this item. The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported on the paper jointly prepared with the Students' Union noting that the review had adhered to the challenging timetable set out. The participants had attended a full day workshop in January. The recommendations were noted. The most significant recommendation for the Committee was outlined as; 5(a), BGSU should be constituted as an independent charity with its own trustee board. It was recommended that there should be at least one University trustee on the Board of the charity. The Committee unanimously agreed to all the recommendations set out in the paper and agreed to recommend these to the Council.

**9. Reserved minutes of the last meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

The reserved minutes of the last meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 were received and approved as a true record of the reserved item and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

**10. Limited Company update**

The Director of Enterprise attended for this item and presented the update to the Committee. It was noted that the Director of Enterprise, the Director of Resources and the Head of HR had met with legal advisers Hewitons to discuss the next steps. A project timeline was put in place and although there was a lot to do it was decided that it could be done in the proposed timescale. The Committee agreed that the onsite contractors for the new accommodation would be asked to provide a quote for the new catering facility. The advantages of this would be that they are already working on site and would be able to meet the time requirements to have the facility completed by September 2013.

It was proposed that staff moving across to the Limited Company in the Local Government Pension Scheme would remain employed by the University. The need to engage in some professional help to set up a defined contribution pension scheme for the Limited Company was noted. It was agreed that the Director of Resources would bring a detailed paper to the June FE&GP Committee meeting outlining the implications for the LGPS. The Committee supported the proposal to remove the option of LGPS for new staff and would recommend this to the University Council at its next meeting under confidential business.

Members supported the recommendation to create a Limited Company Board and it was agreed that possible external members would be approached in the first instance. It was noted that the positions would be non-paid, expenses only. This would be taken to the Governance and Nominations Committee regarding governance membership.

**11. Student recruitment update**

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported that student recruitment was currently satisfactory. (NB A further update was received by the Chair which will be commented on at the meeting of Council).

**SD/  
Next mtg.**

**RJ**

**G&N**

**12. Risk Register and management**

(i) HEFCE assurance

The Committee received the institutional level top risks and summary noting that the ratings remained the same as reported to them previously. The reporting paper prepared by the Deputy Vice Chancellor outlining HEFCE's expectations was also noted.

**13. Agenda suggestions**

- Pensions;
- Limited Company;
- Recruitment numbers;
- Fees;
- Budget.

**14. Any other business**

There was no other business to discuss.

**15. Key items for the University Council**

- Estates report update;
- HR report update;
- Mid-year accounts;
- Risk Register;
- Tuition Fees Strategy;
- Limited Company update.

**16. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Finance, Employment & General Purposes Committee would take place on Thursday 13th June 2013 at 2:00 pm.

Signed .....  ..... Date ..... 27th June 2013 .....