

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

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

THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2013 - 12NOON IN ROOM 102

Present

Dr Kevin Brown
Rev Professor Peter Neil
Mr John Rowland
Mrs Pamela Taylor (Chair)
Professor Mark Thompson
Mr David Babb

In attendance

Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Mr Rob Jones, Director of Enterprise (for item 7)
Mr Stephen Kirby, Finance Manager (for item 6)
Ms Vicky Mays, Clerk to the University Council
Ms Hâf Merrifield, Deputy Vice Chancellor
Mr Fred Robson, Head of Estates (for item 10)
Ms Alison Smith, Head of Human Resources (for item 9)
Mrs Helen Parkinson, Minuting Secretary
Mr Rob Thorpe, Students' Union President 2012/13 (for item 5)
Ms Abi Rogers, Students' Union Administrator (for item 5)
Mr Nick Roberts, Students' Union Voice (for item 5)

The Chair welcomed members and thanked them for agreeing to the earlier start time for this meeting. She also welcomed Mr David Babb to his first meeting of the FE&GP Committee.

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

Action

3 Minutes of the last meeting held 27 February 2013

The minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2013 were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

4 Matters arising

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

5 Students' Union

The Students' Union President, Students' Union Voice and Students' Union Administrator attended for this item.

(i) Draft budget

The Chair thanked the SU for their papers and asked them to report on key issues.

The SU Administrator highlighted that the new post of SU Senior Administrator would be at a scale 2 rather than the initial budgeted scale 1; this falls in line with current University policy, but does result in less surplus in the accounts. However the SU felt confident the new full time post would enhance the student experience and all other categories and expenses were in line with the previous year.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported that during the past year the SU had received a much more appropriate level of support and congratulated the team in getting to this stage.

The Committee confirmed there were happy to receive and approve the SU draft budget and Financial Accounts.

(ii) SU Governance

The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that the implementation of the SU review was on track with a new constitution as an independent charity, based on an NUS standard model and written in a straightforward style. This had been welcomed by the students.

After discussion the Committee felt that item 9.5 (c) was too broadly worded and it was agreed that the Deputy Vice Chancellor would work with the Implementation Team to make a slight amendment. To be brought back to the next meeting as a matter arising

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6 Finance

(i) Draft budget

The Director of Resources presented the 2013-14 draft budget for consideration and highlighted: -

- A change in income with the majority generated from tuition fees and a projection based on a realistic assumption of student numbers;
- No GTP funding, this has now been replaced by Schools Direct with income received as fees;
- A slight increase in HEFCE funding;
- For Academic Engagement -£70,000 set aside for an additional allocation for data quality work;
- For Vice Chancellor and Strategy and Performance – an additional £100,000 allocation for senior appointments, mainly within the Academic Engagement hub and currently under discussion by the Senior Leadership Team;

The Vice Chancellor reported that the Director of Resources had been very cautious with the budget which had been re-worked to take account of current numbers. The £100,000 set aside for senior posts would not be used if student numbers are low.

(ii) Financial forecasts

The Director of Resources reported to the Committee on the Financial Forecasts and commented on the main assumptions: -

- Student recruitment would be held at the same levels;
- Additional income/surplus from BG Enterprise of £80,000 was just over a break-even point;
- The spike in pay inflation for 2015/16 was due to the loss of some National Insurance benefits;
- There was a 1¼% increase in the budget for the 2013/14 pay offer, currently 1%, with reasonable increases built in for future years.

The Director of Resources confirmed that the budget included all significant capital expenses with the cash position still reasonably healthy. The financial forecasts would be used to report to the Funding Council by the end of July.

The Committee agreed to accept and approve the Draft Budget and Financial Forecasts.

(iv) Pensions

The Director of Resources introduced the suggested pension scheme for staff employed by the limited company and staff who are not currently members of a scheme and recommended the proposed rate of employer contribution of 10%. The Committee were asked to approve the proposal so that the scheme could be operational for the limited company and developed and active from 1st August 2013. The Committee discussed the issues at some length and assessed the fairness and comparability of the terms.

Agreed, to go for approval to the next meeting of the University Council

(v) Consideration of tuition fees

The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that the intention to increase fees for the 2014/15 entry to £8500 had been promoted at the recent Open Day with no negative feedback. OFFA had been informed that the provisional agreement already sent would be the one the University would be submitting as final.

The Committee formally agreed to recommend the fees increase to the Council.

7 Limited Company Update

(The Director of BG Enterprise joined the meeting for this item)

The Director of BG Enterprise confirmed that the staff and activities would be transferred to the Limited Company on 1st August 2013. There were still some legal documentation to complete and he asked for the Committee's approval for the Task and Finish group to ratify the final stages so that they would be ready for sign-off at the next meeting of the University Council on 27th June 2013.

He also reported that the new BG(Lincoln)Ltd Board had met and confirmed that a member for this board from the University Council would be agreed at the meeting of Council on 27 June 2013.

The Committee agreed the final ratification could be done by the Task and Finish Group and recommended this for approval by University Council at their next meeting.

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8 Student recruitment update

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported that although the recruitment position was not as initially hoped, work was continuing to ensure that everything was in place to recruit strongly for this autumn. An extra Open Day had been planned to fall within clearing week (Friday 16 August). The Vice Chancellor agreed that the numbers were a matter of concern but the budget took account of these figures and every avenue was being pursued for collaborative work.

9 Employment

(The Head of HR, Alison Smith, joined the meeting for this item)

Staff report

The Head of HR presented her report and highlighted:-

- Good results against the national median for sickness absence and staff turnover;
- An increase in the casual and fixed-term as a percentage of all staff due to the employment of more non-medical helpers;
- The Staff Survey which would be live the following week with the results reported to the next meeting of the FE&GP Committee.

The Chair thanked the Head of HR for her report and for the work she and her colleagues in the HR department have undertaken over the past year.

10 Estates

(The Head of Estates, Fred Robson, joined the meeting for this item)

The Head of Estates reported that the second phase of the new accommodation block was currently arriving on site. He also informed the Committee that a very competitive tender had been received for the re-modelling of Constance Stewart Hall and this would be carried out in conjunction with other maintenance work.

The projected costs for the new Nelson Dining room are still be worked on in consultation with BG Enterprise staff; orders still to be placed.

Other small projects on campus were all in hand including the re-modelling of the Curiositea café and closure of the shop.

The Chair thanked the Head of Estates for his report and asked him to pass on the Committee's thanks to his team for their extensive work on the estates projects.

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11 Agenda suggestions

There were no agenda suggestions

12 Any other business

The Chair asked whether, with so much work taking place on pensions to ensure fairness, there were any plans to harmonise other terms and conditions such as annual leave. The Director of Finance confirmed that leave allowance was less for administrative staff and would ask the Head of HR to do some research within the sector.

DoR

The Chair thanked Lucy Wood for her time on this committee and wished her well on the Audit Committee. She also thanked John Rowland for his contribution to this committee and hard work across so many areas during his time as a Council Member.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor passed on thanks to the Chair for her work with regard to the FE&GP Committee and as a University Council member. She commented that her very wise 'support and challenge' approach would be missed.

13 Key items for the University Council

- Draft budget
- SU budget
- Financial forecasts
- Capital developments
- Staff report
- Tuition fees

14 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the FE&GP Committee will take place on Wednesday 13 November 2013 at 2pm.

Signed  Date 