

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

THURSDAY 27th JUNE 2013
2:00 PM IN HARDY SEMINAR ROOM 2

Present:

Mr David Babb
Mr Haydn Beeken (Chair)
Mr Kevin Brown
The Very Rev'd Philip Buckler
Mrs Sandra Grattrick
Dr Tony Hill
Mr Graham Meeson
Ms Haf Merrifield
Rev'd Sally Myers
Rev Professor Peter Neil
Mrs Jasmit Phull
Mr John Rowland
Dr Jim Smith
Mrs Bridget Starling
Mrs Pamela Taylor
Professor Mark Thompson
Mr Rob Thorpe
Mr James Turner
Mrs Lucy Wood

In attendance:

Mr Nigel Appleton, Dean of School of Teacher Development
Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Rev'd Peter Green, Dean of Chapel and University Chaplain (up to item 6)
Mr Rob Jones, Director of BG Enterprise
Ms Vicky Mays, Clerk to University Council
Dr Jenny Rees, Dean of Student and Academic Engagement
Dr Ruth Sayers, Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation
Mrs Emma Smeaton, University Council Administrator
Mr Aaron Smith, Students' Union Vice President 2012/13
Mr Jamie Caress, Incoming Students' Union President 2013/14

1. The University Prayer

Rev'd Peter Green led the University Prayer.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from David Clements, Richard Corn and Bishop Christopher Lowson.

The Chair noted that it would be the last University Council meeting for the current Students' Union President and Vice President. Members had valued their relationship with the University Council and Jamie Caress was welcomed as the incoming SU President. The Chair expressed heartfelt thanks to the Students' Union from the University Council, noting what a great job they had done.

The Chair noted that it would also be the last meeting for Council member John Rowland who had served his maximum two full terms. John had played a very active part in University Council and the University and thanked him for all he had done.

It would also be the last meeting for Pamela Taylor and the Chair noted the wealth of experience she had brought to Council, acting as Vice Chair to the University Council and Chair of the FE&GP Committee. The Chair reported that he had valued her advice tremendously and that she had become a great friend to the University.

Dr Ruth Sayers, Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation was formally welcomed in her formal role. The Council congratulated her on the recent permanent appointment.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 14th March 2013

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14th March 2013 were accepted as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them subject to the following factual amendments:

Minute 7 Matters arising

The header would be corrected to 'Matters arising'.

Minute 9 Academic Board

The second bullet point referred to the 'Head of Research', this would be amended to 'The Head of Educational Development and Research'.

5. Matters arising

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

6. Chaplain's report

Rev'd Peter Green presented his report to the University Council which had been circulated with the agenda noting that future reports would be briefer, however, this captured all of his observations since taking up the role in January. The following points were highlighted:

- Point 43: The Staff Common Room was only used by a small minority of staff – Staff members noted that this was the one room designated as a staff room even though staff used other spaces on campus to socialise and gather collectively. Some members of Council were concerned that the lack of use of the common room may reflect/affect staff morale. It was agreed that any indication of this would be reviewed when looking at the outcomes of the staff survey – see later item.
- Point 46: Some staff had reported being unable to attend Chapel on a regular basis due to working patterns – This had been discussed at the last SLT meeting and it was agreed that hub leaders would find out if there were any staff in their area who felt unable to, but would like to, go to Chapel. The Chaplain was happy to cater for all faiths and members agreed that this was a distinctiveness BG wanted to promote.

Members noted that it was very impressive to see what the Chaplain had achieved in such a short space of time and thanked him for his comprehensive report which had stimulated debate within the University.

7. Key items from sub-committees

(i) Governance & Nominations Committee

(a) Limited Company Board of Directors

It was reported that this had been set up with currently four Directors. Nominations were required from a member of the lay University Council to be appointed Director. Members were asked to contact the Clerk outside the meeting if they were interested. It was noted that the link from the University Council to the Limited Company was crucial.

(b) Academic Board nomenclature

Council endorsed the name change of Academic Board to Senate. It was noted that this title is used in most universities.

(c) Students' Union Trustee Board

It was reported that a member of University Council was also required to be appointed to the Students' Union Trustee Board. Anyone interested was asked to contact the Clerk outside the meeting.

(d) Membership and vacancies

David Babb was nominated to become the Chair of the FE&GP Committee following the departure of Pamela Taylor. It was noted that his experience of chairmanship would be invaluable. Lucy Wood was to move over from the FE&GP Committee to the Governance and Nominations Committee.

The Council noted that anyone interested in being put forward for the position of Vice Chair of the University Council should express their interest to the Clerk. To date Tony Hill had registered his interest in the position. This position would be elected at the first meeting in September.

The Chair reminded members that if they could not spare the time to be on one of the committees but were interested in participating on a recruitment or appeals panel then they should register this interest with the Clerk.

(e) Chair of University Council

It was formally recorded that the new Chair of University Council would be Roger Mosey, Editorial Director at the BBC. Members were reminded that Roger would be visiting the University on Monday 1st July to meet with members of the University Council. All agreed that this appointment was a great addition to BG.

(ii) FE&GP Committee

(a) Draft budget

The Chair of FE&GP reported that the draft budget had been agreed and was revised to reflect a possible downturn in recruitment. It was noted that the budget would need to be revisited if recruitment was to fall further.

(b) SU budget

The SU budget had been received and approved and the professional way in which the budget had been produced was noted by the Committee.

(c) Financial forecasts

The financial forecasts were recorded and approved. It was reported that although there were likely to be changes in the future the forecasts were realistic and prudent.

(d) Capital developments

The Council were reminded that the Director of Resources was available to take anyone interested on a tour of the new modular student accommodation following the meeting.

(e) Staff report

Members noted the work in progress on pensions, auto enrolment and for staff moving over to the Limited Company.

(f) The legal documentation and project plan required for the Limited Company project were approved (subject to final ratification by the appointed task and finish group) and it was reported that the arrangements to ensure cash flow to the Limited Company were in progress. The Council noted that this had been a very difficult challenge but had been done sensitively and properly and congratulated the Senior Leadership Team for how they had conducted the process.

(g) Tuition fees

The Council endorsed the recommendation from the FE&FP Committee to set the fees for 2014/15 at £8,500.

(iii) Audit Committee

(a) Student data

It was reported that the Committee had received an update from the Dean of Students and Academic Engagement on the Agresso Student Records System which noted that progress had been made but it would not do all that was desired. Options as to whether Agresso could be further enhanced or whether to start again with a new system were being explored.

Members were informed of a recent breach of the Data Protection Act where it was necessary to notify the Information Commissioner's Office. The Audit Committee were satisfied that the appropriate actions were taken and that the situation had been contained. Steps had since taken place to ensure that this did not happen again, ensuring that such information was password protected. Further Data Protection training for staff would also be provided. Members were confident that this was a one off situation and did not believe there to be a continuing problem. It was still to be confirmed as to whether the penalty for this breach would be an enforcement notice or a financial penalty. Track record and seriousness of the breach are all taken into account and it is hoped that the ICO would take into account the way in which the situation had been dealt with.

(b) Tuition fees collection

It was confirmed that there were appropriate mechanisms in place for the collection of tuition fees.

(c) Draft internal audit programme for 13-14

The draft internal audit programme for 2013-14 was presented.

(iv) Remuneration Committee

RESERVED BUSINESS

8. Academic Board

(i) Minutes of the meeting of 20th March 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2013 held under the chairship of the previous Vice Chancellor were received. Members noted that an extensive debate on the report of the academic health of the University had stimulated a high level of discussion.

9. Chair's business

The Chair reported that the Council were pleased to welcome the new Vice Chancellor to his first formal University Council meeting. The Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation was also formally welcomed to her first meeting in her new role. It was reported that it had been decided to defer the appointment of Dean of Students and Academic Engagement as the Vice Chancellor had a proposal to put to University Council later in the meeting.

The Chair reported that he had come to the end of his second term on the University Council. He expressed his thanks to the Clerk and the University Council Administrator for the support they had provided over his two terms. He noted the great students BG were producing and that the University Council's success lies only in the success of the students. He wished the University Council well in continuing to move forward facing the future challenges in higher education.

10. Vice Chancellor's report

The Vice Chancellor thanked the Chair for the welcome and to all who had made him feel welcome since his arrival at BG. The Council received the Vice Chancellor's report which was based on observations of how he saw things at BG following discussions with a number of staff. He noted that had been trying to develop a profile internally as well as externally and thanked the Senior Leadership Team and the Deputy Vice Chancellor, in particular, for the efficient and successful way in which the transition had been managed.

The Vice Chancellor reported that he felt there were a number of untapped resources with regards to leadership and a leadership level below the Senior Leadership Team would create a forum to share ideas and look at the projects in which everyone would need to be involved. Student representatives and the Chaplain would also form part of this.

There was concern regarding portfolio and recruitment and it was noted that the Director of Resources had done a great job in making sure the University continued to be financially stable, however, there was concern about recruitment falling further. It was agreed that an overall portfolio review was needed to ensure that BG were stable. Members also noted that the Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students and Academic Engagement were looking at ways to operate more strategically with regards to international engagement. The Deputy Vice Chancellor was working on a timeline from the present to January 2014 for a new strategy to be in place by January/February that would include portfolio and international engagement.

The results of the recent staff survey would be available in August and it was reported that there had, to the present date, been a 50% response rate after just 5 days. The results of this would be taken to the September meeting of the University Council.

Next UC

11. RESERVED BUSINESS – Senior appointments

12. Key performance indicators

The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the KPI dashboard noting the area they were particularly concerned about was recruitment and the comparison of the number of acceptances to those of last year were attached. It was noted that following discussion at the last meeting it was time to consider whether the performance indicators were still correct.

It was noted that students were looking at universities earlier than they had done in the past therefore publicity and open days had been adjusted to reflect this change in applicant behaviour. This was recognised as occurring across the HE sector and was not exclusive to BG. It was agreed to look at considering options if BG were in a position to over recruit in the School of Teacher Development. The Dean of School of Teacher Development confirmed that there was some capacity for adjustment. The Chair thanked all staff for their efforts during the current climate on behalf of the University Council.

13. Risk Register

Members received the summary of institutional risks and noted the two risks which had been rated higher since the last time of reporting to Council; student recruitment and the materiality of ITT. It was noted that it was part of BG's strategy to be positively engaged with the School Direct Programme.

14. Students' Union

(i) President's report

The final report from the Students' Union 2012/13 President was received. The last elections were highlighted for achieving the highest number of votes that had ever been made during elections and processes were now in place to keep this number rising in future years. The new Students' Union awards for staff were noted and it was agreed that there was a need to raise the profile of these awards.

The Chair thanked the SU President for his concise report and welcomed the incoming Students' Union President. The current Students' Union President and Vice President thanked the University Council for their work and wished them well for the future.

15. Strategic planning

(i) University budget

Members received the University budget noting that the detailed version had also been scrutinised thoroughly at FE&GP Committee. The Director of Resources reported that if student recruitment improved there would be some additional money to be put back into the budget. University Council endorsed the cautious approach.

(ii) Hub business plan summaries

(a) School of Culture, Education and Innovation

The Dean of School of Culture, Education and Innovation presented her hub business plan highlighting the concern with BG's current portfolio. It was also noted that they were keen to look carefully at research and third stream activity.

(b) Academic Engagement and Students

The Dean of Students and Academic Engagement presented her hub business plan reporting that development of research activity was central to the Hub. The admission and sponsorship of international students was also a key focus and members noted the Learning and Teaching Conference taking place on Thursday 11th July, details would be e-mailed to Council members.

(c) Enterprise

The Director of Enterprise presented his business plan, noting that the Enterprise hub was coming to the conclusion of a phase of significant changes. Foundations had now been put in place and the Hub was moving into the delivery phase.

(d) Strategy and Performance

The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the Strategy and Performance hub business plan confirming that the Chaplaincy reporting line had been returned to the Vice Chancellor. It was also reported that the business plan would look differently following the structural changes proposed.

(e) Resources

The Director of Resources presented his plan to Council noting that credit was due to the Director of Enterprise and the Head of Human Resources who had dealt with the staff impact during recent restructure changes.

(f) School of Teacher Development

The School of Teacher Development business plan was presented by the Dean of School who noted the continuing challenges in teacher education.

The Chair thanked members of the SLT on behalf of the University Council for their helpful reports.

(iii) Students' Union budget

The Students' Union budget that had previously been through the FE&GP Committee was received and endorsed.

16. Agenda suggestions for future meetings

- Strategy and recruitment;
- The outcome of the staff survey;
- How the new Chair sees the shape of the University Council.

Members agreed that the new Chair would also have a view as to what would be on the next agenda.

17. Any other business

Gifts were presented to:

John Rowland who expressed that it had been a real privilege over the past eight years to be part of the changes and wished BG all the very best for the future;

Rob Thorpe and Aaron Smith were thanked for their sensible approach and valuable contribution to the University Council;

Pamela Taylor who the Chair reported as being invaluable to him in his role of Chair and to the rest of the University Council. Members wished her well for the future and for her new governor role in Gloucestershire.

Pamela Taylor presented the Chair with a gift on behalf of the University Council. The Council expressed their thanks and well wishes for the future.

18. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the University Council would take place on Monday 30th September 2013 at 2:00 pm to be preceded by a networking lunch at 1:00 pm.

Signed 18/2 Mary Date 30/9/13