



UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 1:30PM IN CSH12

Council Members present:

Mr David Babb
Dr Kevin Brown
Mrs Angela Crowe
Mr Richard Hallsworth
Professor David Head
AVM Gavin Mackay
Mr Graham Meeson
Professor Jayne Mitchell
The Reverend Dr Sally Myers
Mr Kieran Parrish
Mr Alan Stacey
Mr Bob Walder (Chair)

In attendance:

Mr Josh Blanchard, SU Vice President
Mr Stephen Deville, Chief Operating Officer
Reverend Dr Peter Green, Dean of Chapel and Chaplain (item 10)
Ms Rachel Harvey, Head of Planning (items 15 and 16)
Mr Matthew Pitts, Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager
Mrs Louise Stow, Student Recruitment Manager (item 11)
Ms Sue Reed (Governance Officer – minutes)
Ms Emma Smeaton (Governance Officer – shadowing)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of University Council of the 2017–18 academic year. He expressed his gratitude to all for their service over the summer period in attending various meetings and events on behalf of the University.

Action

2. The University Prayer

The Revd Dr Sally Myers led the University Prayer.

3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were RECEIVED from:

Dr Tony Hill	Vice Chair
Mr Stephen Lawrence	
Bishop Christopher Lawson	Bishop of Lincoln
Rev Canon Professor Peter Neil	Vice Chancellor

The Chair explained that Mrs Jackie Croft had stood down as a Diocesan Nominee as she was relocating to take up post with a new diocese. As Mrs Jackie Croft's skills were most valuable to Council, the Chair explained that he would like to invite her to re-join as a co-opted Council Member from 1 November 2017. It was NOTED that Shakespeare Martineau solicitors had confirmed to the Chair that no governance rules would be breached by this proposal.

Council AGREED to the appointment of Mrs Jackie Croft as a co-opted Council Member from 1 November 2017.

The Chair explained that Mrs Jackie Croft had been the University Council's nominated member of the Students' Union Board of Trustees.

Council AGREED that the Chair should serve as University Council's nominated member of the Students' Union Board of Trustees in the interim, with a view to handing the role to another Council Member in due course.

4. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

5. Election of Vice Chair

The Chair reported that Dr Tony Hill had expressed his wish to continue in the role of Vice Chair for 2017–18. The Chair asked whether any other Member wished to self-nominate for the role. No nominations were received.

Council AGREED the reappointment of Dr Tony Hill as Vice Chair for 2017–18.

Governance

Council ENDORSED the current sub-committee membership for 2017–18.

Governance

6. Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 July 2017

The minutes of 6 July 2017 meeting were CONFIRMED as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

Governance

The restricted minutes of 6 July 2017 meeting were CONFIRMED as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

7. Matters arising

(i) Action Points

The Members RECEIVED and NOTED the progress on the Action Points from the last meeting. The following was highlighted:

Item 8 – To approve the revised Instrument & Articles of Government

A Member commented that the cost and advantages of joining Universities UK had been requested but that no cost information had been circulated. It was agreed to forward cost information following the meeting.

VC

(ii) Any other matters

No other matters arising were discussed that were not covered under substantive agenda items.

8. To receive the Vice Chancellor's Report

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the Vice Chancellor's Report presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor.

It was NOTED that the format of future Vice Chancellor's Reports would be aligned with the Strategy Themes in the mid-term review of the University's 2014 Five Year Strategy.

The following verbal updates were RECEIVED and NOTED:

External environment

- The Office for Students (OfS) had announced its plans to become operational in January 2018 (not April 2018 as originally stated), and to consult on the new regulatory framework in autumn 2018.
- Vice Chancellors' pay would be related to the new powers of the OfS.
- The announcement on fee changes for 2018–19 remained pending.
- The University had decided not to enter the Year 3 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise.

Internal environment

- Estates - works on campus improvements were ongoing.
- Following active campaigning by the SU, the BGU response rate to the National Student Survey was 87%, which was excellent.
- Interviews for the two Executive Dean posts would be held on 19 and 20 October 2017.
- Interviews for the Head of Research post would be held on 17 October 2017.

A Member commented that the University had been at the bottom of *The Sunday Times* league table for its staff–student ratio. The Chair responded that this point was very relevant to future discussions about the University’s Five Year Strategy and an issue that Council would need to consider carefully.

9. To receive the Students’ Union President’s Report

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the report from the Students’ Union President.

In response to a question about regarding the £5,000 student engagement project allocation, the SU Vice President reported that the funds could be split to support SU societies and sports, and to improve the SU building – with the possible option of setting up a mobile ‘pop-up’ SU.

A discussion ensued around ways to increase SU membership numbers and diversity within it. The Chair asked for an update on progress in this regard in the SU’s next report to Council.

SU President

10. To receive the Chaplain’s Report

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the report from the Chaplain in which he drew attention to the University’s drive to enhance the way it supports its students’ mental health and wellbeing.

Council AGREED with the Deputy Vice Chancellor’s suggestion to ask the Head of Student Advice to brief Council on the investment made by the University as a condition of its access agreement.

**Head of
Student
Advice**

11. Update on student recruitment

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the update on student recruitment from Louise Stow, Student Recruitment Manager.

In response to a Member’s question about how the forecast related to the University’s Five Year Strategy, the Chair reported that he had asked the Deputy Vice Chancellor to prepare a briefing for the Council away day on 31 January 2018, setting out the strategy that underpinned the University’s portfolio development.

**Deputy Vice
Chancellor**

12. Update on student fee decision

The Chair explained that he would like to include an item on future Council agendas to discuss significant matters, such as fees. It was important to understand Members’ views, and for Council’s position to be clear in terms of building a process for the University’s new strategy.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- did BGU students believe they were getting value for money? It was essential to engage with students throughout their student experience. Based on anecdotal evidence, a Member suggested that many students did not fully realise the benefits of higher education until they were in employment,
- employability was becoming increasingly important in terms of course choices,
- fees for lab-based courses may be allowed to increase, whereas classroom-based course fees may not – this would need to be factored into portfolio planning,
- there was concern expressed about putting students in debt for their education, and around the interest rates associated with student debt; however, it was recognised that this had to be balanced with the need to fund higher education,
- there was a perception that lower fees equated to a lower quality student experience,
- students who were paying the highest fees were most likely to have the highest expectations,
- it was essential to generate income from sources other than fees,
- the narrative seemed to be shifting away from 'expensive = best' – particularly in the commercial world.

13. Update on the legal status/transition to limited company

- (i) The Chief Operating Officer presented an update on the incorporation process and associated timeline.
- (ii) The following points about the project timeline (Part B: incorporation) were made:
 - contracts and lines of credit with suppliers were important considerations as the new limited company would have no credit history,
 - it was important to make HMRC and VAT arrangements well in advance of winding up the charity.

Council AGREED that the project timeline for incorporation should be used as the checklist to monitor progress towards incorporate on 1 August 2018, subject to revision in line with the comments received (above).

COO

(iii) Articles of Association

The Revd Dr Sally Myers offered apologies for delay in the Diocese's review of the draft Articles; this was due to staff changes. It was NOTED that the Diocesan Registrar was now in a position to expedite his review of the papers.

Council AGREED to the Chair's suggestion that he, the Chief Operating Officer, and the University's solicitor should meet with the Diocesan Registrar in October 2017, with a view to producing a set of Articles for Council to sign off at its next meeting on 22 November 2017.

COO

14. Update on the acquisition and development of land

Council NOTED the update and plans for more detailed financial information to be presented at the next Finance, Employment and General Purposes (FE&GP) Committee meeting on 8 November 2017, and to the Council meeting on 22 November 2017.

COO

15. Key Performance Indicators

The Head of Planning presented the KPI Dashboard.

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the KPI Dashboard update, and NOTED that an updated version would be presented to Council at its meeting on 22 November 2017.

HoP

16. Risk Register

The Head of Planning presented the Risk Register.

In response to a Member's question, it was NOTED that the Student Recruitment risk level had not been decreased as the recruitment period was not yet complete.

Council RECEIVED and NOTED the Risk Register, and NOTED that an updated version would be presented at the Council meeting on 22 November 2017.

HoP

17. Key items from sub-committees

(i) To note the Audit Committee update

A verbal update from the Chair of the Audit Committee on the meeting of the Audit Committee held earlier on 26 September 2017 was RECEIVED and NOTED.

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that the meeting had focused on the monitoring of risk. It was NOTED that Dr Stephen Critchley was expected to attend the next Audit Committee meeting on 8 November 2017 following his appointment to the Committee.

