

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2013
2:15 PM IN HARDY TEACHING ROOM 1

Present:

Mr David Babb
Dr Kevin Brown
The Very Rev'd Philip Buckler
Mr Jamie Caress
Mr David Clements
Mr Richard Corn
Mrs Sandra Gratrack
Dr Tony Hill
Mr Graham Meeson
Ms Hâf Merrifield
Mr Roger Mosey (Chair)
Rev'd Sally Myers
Rev Professor Peter Neil
Mrs Jasmit Phull
Dr Jim Smith
Mrs Bridget Starling
Mr James Turner
Mrs Lucy Wood

In attendance:

Professor Chris Atkin, Head of Education Development & Research (for item 8)
Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Rev'd Peter Green, Dean of Chapel & University Chaplain (for item 16)
Mr Nick Roberts, Students' Union Vice President 2013/14
Professor John Sharp, Professor of Education Studies & Head of Research (for item 8)
Mrs Emma Smeaton, University Council Administrator
Ms Katie White, Acting Clerk to the University Council

1. Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed Ms Katie White, Acting Clerk to the University Council to her first meeting. Farewell acknowledgements and thanks were noted to Ms Vicky Mays, former Clerk to the University Council and Dr Jenny Rees, Interim Dean of Students & Academic Engagement. The Council members who had attended the Strategy workshop prior to University Council were thanked and it was noted that a report and a discussion on the next steps would take place later on in the agenda. Members were reminded of the opportunity to see the new dining facility, the Refectory following University Council where tea and coffee would be available.

2. The University Prayer

Rev. Professor Peter Neil, Vice Chancellor led the University Prayer.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Bishop Christopher Lowson and Professor Mark Thompson. It was noted that Senior Leadership Team members were only required to be present at Council if they had a specific item to report.

5. Minutes of the last meeting held 30 September 2013

The minutes of the last meeting held on 30 September 2013 were accepted as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

6. Matters arising

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

7. Vice Chancellor's report

Members received the report and the Vice Chancellor highlighted sections which included:

- The wider context;
- Research and the REF
- National Citizenship Service;
- Staffing;
- Staff survey;
- SLT and students;
- Recruitment;
- External relations;
- Update from hubs.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor gave a verbal update to members on the current position regarding recruitment. It was reported that the University had recruited slightly more students than previously anticipated but the total number was still 29 fewer than the minimum government quota. It was estimated that the introduction of a January start for Foundation Degree students would make up the shortfall in numbers. The budget had been adjusted to accommodate this situation.

It was noted that an additional mid-week Open Day had been held this year which had been well attended. In general, numbers attending Open Days were similar to those recorded in Autumn of last year. The need to supplement the Schools and Colleges' Liaison Team was recognised as they were operating at a higher level than before. It was felt that as much work as possible was underway to promote the University and that although there was cause for cautious optimism there remained a fundamental requirement to adjust the portfolio.

The Vice Chancellor noted that it was important for research to be taken forward within the University although there was a need to be clear of BGU's limitations and expectations in terms of funding. Due to the fact that only 25% of BGU staff were academic, the need to invest in academic staff that could contribute to the research culture was noted. Members agreed that if the University did not invest in research, there was a significant risk that BGU would not be able to recruit good academic staff, students or compete internationally.

It was reported that the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leicester had proposed to ask the QAA to advise on whether the University of Leicester was at risk if they continued to award EdD and PhD degrees as a collaborative partner to BGU due to BGU not having Research Degree Awarding Powers. The Vice Chancellor has agreed to this proposal. It was agreed that the University should also be seeking out other collaborative partners. This would be explored further once the new Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) was in post.

It was noted that the issues outlined would be revisited following the Strategy and members were asked to highlight any areas they would like to be covered on the Vice Chancellor's next report to the Clerk outside the meeting.

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8. Presentation Research and REF

Professor John Sharp, Professor of Education Studies & Head of Research, accompanied by Professor Chris Atkin, Head of Education Development & Research gave a PowerPoint presentation to Council on the current situation with research and the Research Excellence Framework at BGU. The presentation would also be available for members in the University Council secure area of the website.

9. Chair's items

The Chair reported on the on-going Strategy work noting that there would be a lot of involvement required early in 2014 once proposals were put forward. An extra session of University Council would be required for this.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor thanked all members who had been involved in the Strategy work so far noting that the analysis and discussion phase was near complete. The appetite for expansion and the purpose of this, BGU's role in the local community, views on collaboration and sensible risk taking with regards to investment were all noted. The Deputy Vice Chancellor would now commence the writing up of the Strategy.

10. Students' Union

(i) President's report

Members received the report and the Students' Union President highlighted the course rep strategy day and the working group set up to increase student engagement with staff using the course rep system. Members commended course representative booklet that which been tabled during the meeting. The high number of students who had signed up for the voluntary trip to Romania was also noted.

(ii) Accounts for year ended 31 July 2013

Council received and approved the BGSU accounts for the year ended 31 July 2013.

11. BG (Lincoln) Ltd.

(i) Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors – 9 October 2013

Members received the minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Directors.

(ii) Agenda for meeting of the Board of Directors – 3 December 2013

The Director of Resources noted the agenda for the next meeting of the Board of Directors and members were invited to add any items.

(iii) BG (Lincoln) Ltd. Accounts 2012-13

Members received the BG (Lincoln) Ltd. accounts which had been approved by the Board of Directors noting the £114k gift-aided back to the University and the improvement on the previous year.

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12. Key items from sub-committees

(i) Audit Committee

Mr David Clements, Chair of the Audit Committee reported that although two sets of minutes had been circulated; 30 September and 5 November a verbal report on the 30 September meeting was given at the last meeting of the University Council which took place later the same day. The key items highlighted for this meeting were from the 5 November 2013 meeting of the Audit Committee.

- External audit tender

It was reported that the tender process for new external auditors for 2013/14 would begin in March 2013.

- Internal reports received

- Review of Fundraising

Members noted that at present BGU was losing money on its fundraising endeavour and that the University Council would be required to decide over the next 12-18 months if and how this should continue. The fundraising business plan had been submitted by the Director of Enterprise prior to the meeting for consideration by the Council.

- Finance System Audit

It was noted that the majority of recommendations set out in the Finance System Audit had been applied.

- Audit Committee Report

The Audit Committee Report to go on to HEFCE was received and approved.

- External Audit Management Letter/Report

This was received and approved.

- Internal audit timetable

The internal audit timetable had been approved

(ii) FE&GP Committee

The minutes of the meeting of 13 November were tabled as the meeting had taken place following the distribution of papers for University Council.

The Chair of the FE&GP Committee reported the following:

- The Committee would monitor closely fundraising over the next twelve months and noted the requirement to separate alumni activity from fundraising activity.
- The amount of money currently in the reserves and the issue of whether it would be used to enhance the student experience was noted along with the requirement to spend this strategically.
- The Committee complimented the Estates team and credited all those involved in the recent work on campus. Thanks were formally recorded.

(iii) Governance & Nominations Committee

The minutes of the meeting of 16 October were received and Mrs Sandra Gratrack who Chaired the meeting reported on the following:

- Instruments and Articles

Minor amendments to terminology and to reflect the changes in senior staffing were agreed. Council endorsed these changes.

It was also reported that since Governance & Nominations Committee had met dialogue had taken place with the Bishop's Office whereby it was requested that the Instrument and Articles could be amended to allow a nominated representative to attend University Council should he be unable to attend. Council endorsed the additional change to paragraph 3.1.1 of the Instruments of Government to read:

"The Bishop of Lincoln who may nominate a representative for one or more meetings of Council."

- Advertising for new Council members

The Committee had approved the University to commence advertising for three new Council members.

- Trustee for the Students' Union

A member of Council was required as trustee for the Students' Union. This was noted as a key appointment as part of establishing the SU as an independent charity and would provide a key link between BGSU and the University. Members were asked to contact the Clerk outside the meeting if they would be interested in this role.

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13. Senate

Council received the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September. The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported on the National Student Survey (NSS) task team comprising of a data analyst, senior members of staff and members of the Students' Union to ensure the NSS had a substantial return and was an accurate reflection of students' opinions and experiences at BGU. A 'you said, we did' campaign following previous results would be publicised and a schedule of attendance at lectures, working with academic staff to pick up any issues and ensure outlet for them before the NSS, would take place.

14. HEFCE Annual Return

(i) Annual Monitoring Statement

Council received and approved the Annual Monitoring Statement 2013 which was a statutory return due for submission to HEFCE by 2 December. This was completed by the relevant heads from within the University and had previously been reported to the FE&GP Committee.

(ii) Financial Returns

The financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2013 were received and approved. It was noted that these had previously been reported to Audit Committee and FE&GP Committee.

15. KPIs

Members received the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboard and noted the current state of progress. The downward arrow for media profile was highlighted, though members agreed that last year was a particularly prolific period. The boxes shaded in grey indicated no change as there was no new data available. The increase in liquidity days was also noted and it was agreed that the Strategy work would be influential in terms of the amount held in the reserves.

16. Chaplain's report to the University Council

Members received the Chaplaincy report with Revd. Peter Green, Dean of Chapel and University Chaplain in attendance for this item. The Chaplain reported positive results in terms of Chaplaincy engagement with other faiths along with a substantial level of uptake of pastoral support for both staff and students. Members noted the Chaplain's efforts around engagement along with his activity within the Diocese. Council thanked the Chaplain for his report and on-going hard work.

