

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SPONSOR BOARD

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2016
12:00 PM IN CSH ROOM 2

Present

Mr David Babb
Professor David Head (Chair)
Professor Jayne Mitchell
Rev. Canon Professor Peter Neil
Mr Bob Walder

In attendance

Mr Stephen Deville, Director of Resources
Dr Grahame Killey, Planning & Performance Manager
Professor David Rae, Executive Dean: Research & Knowledge Exchange
Dr Ruth Sayers, Executive Dean: Learning, Teaching & International
Mr Andy Shenstone, Leadership Foundation Consultant
Ms Emma Smeaton, Governance Officer & PA to University Council (minutes)
Mr Matthew Pitts, Governance, Compliance & Operations Manager

Action

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the first Sponsor Board meeting of the academic year and the Chair of Council Bob Walder to his first Sponsor Board meeting. A warm welcome was given to Leadership Foundation for Higher Education Consultant Andy Shenstone who was at the meeting to report on Item 8 of the agenda.

It was NOTED that under the University's governing documents that it was normal practice for the Chair of Council to Chair Sponsor Board. However, the Chair role had been delegated to Professor David Head by the previous Chair. The issue of Chairing was DISCUSSED and It was AGREED that Professor David Head would continue in the Chair role.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were RECEIVED from Rev'd Sally Myers. Dr Anne Craven, Registrar & Secretary would also normally be in attendance but had sent apologies on this occasion.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest. Members were reminded to complete the financial interest and related party disclosure forms (FRS8) if they had not already done so. It was AGREED that following several reminders to complete the forms those who had not yet submitted them would be contacted directly by the Governance Office.

**Governance
Office**

4. Membership & Terms of Reference

Proposed Membership and Terms of Reference for the Sponsor Board were RECEIVED. The document was unchanged from the version the Board previously endorsed, other than points 12 and 13 where the phrase 'deal with' was omitted, as recommended in the Governance Effectiveness Review. It was also NOTED that the numbering of the points needed correcting. With the inclusion of these amendments members ENDORSED the document as fit for purpose.

**Governance
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5. Minutes of the last meeting held on 3 June 2016

The minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2016 were CONFIRMED as a true record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

6. Matters arising

(i) Action Points

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the progress on the Action Points from the last meeting.

Members REPORTED that the University Council would appreciate the opportunity to meet the 6 new PhD students at a future University Council lunch. The Executive Dean: Research & Knowledge Exchange would invite them to put together a joint presentation on their experience of the University so far for the spring Council meeting.

**David Rae/
Governance
Office**

(ii) Any other matters

There were no other matters to discuss.

7. To receive and discuss reports on Strategy themes

(i) Overview of performance – dashboard

The Planning & Performance Manager presented the Strategy performance dashboard which was a high level report intended to give a brief overview of the University's position. It was NOTED that the detail for each theme was in the narrative provided.

(ii) Strategy theme updates

It was NOTED that the Strategy leads had focussed on the big issues over the past few years while including relevant explanatory detail. As the Deputy Vice Chancellor had to leave the meeting early her themes were presented first.

The updates to the Deputy Vice Chancellor's two themes were tabled at the meeting, as the DVC had been in China until shortly before the meeting. It was NOTED that in her view the University was appropriately resourced and was working on modernising systems and processes.

Change Management – Professor Jayne Mitchell

The Planning and Performance Manager reported that the Change Management Programme was flagged as green with an upward arrow on the dashboard indicating progress over the past quarter.

Academic Portfolio – Professor Jayne Mitchell

The Deputy Vice Chancellor reminded the meeting that this theme had been linked to the development of the three Schools. It was NOTED that the internal Auditors had reviewed the systems and processes relating to this linkage and had given assurance that these were effective. In response to a question by the Chair, the DVC informed the meeting that the University had undertaken an exercise to identify an external marketing research company to support academic portfolio renewal, but had decided not to pursue this option for the time being. Instead, the institution was placing emphasis on improving internal expertise in managing and analysing available data on the market and demand for degree courses.

The question of whether the University had the foundations in place for making a realistic and sustainable plan for growth in numbers was NOTED. It was REPORTED that as an institution BGU now understood itself better and had a greater understanding of what it did not know about itself, and still needed to find out. There was confidence that the next set of targets would be very clear about where the institution was heading, and were well supported. It was NOTED that although BGU was in a better position than it had been previously, it was not where it wanted to be just yet; to move forward it was advised that future plans must include an appropriate level of flexibility. The appointment of a Director of Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing was REPORTED. It was also NOTED that the post of Head of Planning was yet to be filled. The requirement for more creative ways to appoint was also NOTED.

Professor Jayne Mitchell left the meeting at this point.

The Planning and Performance Manager REPORTED that undergraduate recruitment was slightly down. Recruitment figures were to be presented to Council at its next meeting later in the month.

Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement – Ruth Sayers

The Planning and Performance Manager REPORTED that the three green flags in this area were particularly positive. The Executive Dean: Learning, Teaching and International REPORTED that in some areas the Strategy had been delivered with confidence, and this was one of those areas. The Board congratulated the Executive Dean: Learning, Teaching and International NOTING that this aspect of strategy had come a long way since the Board had started talking about it, and it had clearly made a positive impact on the University's satisfaction score in the latest National Student Survey.

Research – David Rae

The green flag on the dashboard for Research was NOTED. The Executive Dean: Research & Knowledge Exchange REPORTED that it was almost certain there would be a Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise in 2020 and it would therefore be necessary to manage the anticipated Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise and REF together. It was REPORTED that as part of the wider business engagement strategy contracts had provisionally been exchanged and planning permission had been granted for a Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre. The Vice Chancellor REPORTED that the Executive Dean: Research & Knowledge Exchange had professionalised research at the University. The Board AGREED that significant progress had been made in developing and advancing the research agenda.

Internationalisation – Ruth Sayers

The Planning and Performance Manager REPORTED significant progress in regard to the internationalisation strategy, with recruitment of international students moving this strategy theme from red to amber on the dashboard.

External Engagement: Employability & Enterprise – David Rae

The green flag on the dashboard was NOTED. The Chair noted that the real value of this area was apparent in the narrative provided within the papers.

Environment & Sustainability – Steve Deville

The green flags on the dashboard were NOTED, and the Director of Resources NOTED the requirement for improvements in timetabling in order to optimise use of existing teaching space given the current trend in student numbers. It was NOTED that cyber security and IT system security would be reported on at a future meeting.

External Engagement: Partnership and Community – Anne Craven

In the absence of the Registrar & Secretary, the green flag on the dashboard was NOTED. The potential requirement for the University to sponsor an academy under a proposed new fee-setting formula was HIGHLIGHTED.

**Future SB
meeting**

The Chair thanked the Strategy theme leads for the encouraging news in all areas and for clearly identifying those aspects that were work in progress, including the issue of student numbers.

8. To receive and discuss the Leadership Foundation Report on the Strategy stock-take

The Planning and Performance Manager outlined the materials that will be used to inform the stock-take:

- Corporate Leadership Team 'think pieces';
- Leadership Foundation Report;
- BGU's own reflective piece on the first two years of Strategy implementation;
- Stock-take workshops for BGU staff.

Mr Andy Shenstone from the Leadership Foundation presented the Leadership Foundation Report commissioned by the Senior Leadership Team NOTING that the stock-take would be in two phases. Phase 1 would review progress against the existing strategy and would be undertaken in October, November and December. Phase 2 would involve a refresh of the Strategy and be completed by April 2017. The four workshops scheduled for early December would be facilitated by Mr Shenstone and were intended to be University drop-in events. It was AGREED that members of the Sponsor Board would be invited to attend the workshops, to ensure that it was in a position to make an informed contribution to Council's strategy away day.

It was NOTED that the Report was the product of a desk-based review. It was intended to be a stimulus and a prompt, not a criticism, nor was it intended to give 'everyone a pat on the shoulder'. It was NOTED that the risk of standing still, particularly with regard to overall student numbers, was that the University could end up going backwards. The extent to which shadowing of other institutions recruitment figures might be unhelpful was raised. The total number of students cited did not reflect the actual overall number of students at BGU, but was restricted to full-time students. The observation was made that if the University contained 2.5k students, rather than its originally proposed ambitious target, it could still be a successful institution. But it needed to be clearer about the total student number that it considered the right one to support the broad spectrum of its aspirations and commitments, for instance with regard to research.

It was NOTED that there was a sense of clarity and purpose where there are external opportunities, and it was suggested that the establishment of task and finish groups could be a way to address issues highlighted by the report, and this possibility would be included in the workshops in December. The Chair thanked Andrew Shenstone for an extremely helpful and informative report.

Mr Andrew Shenstone left the meeting.

**Governance
Office**

9. To discuss Council Strategy Away Day – 2 February 2017 – and the Chair’s Strategy stock-take presentation

The Chair REPORTED the suggested outline for the Strategy Away Day to take place on 2 February 2017 as follows:

- 10.00-11.00 – Update from the Sponsor Board regarding the current Strategy position and the Strategy stock-take (time slot to include time for questions);
- 11.00-11.15 – Coffee break;
- 11.15-12.30 – The Deputy Vice Chancellor would provide an update on the national picture in respect of changes within HE and a recap on previous presentations (includes time for questions). It was noted that by the time of the Strategy Day further details of TEF2 would have been issued by the Government;
- 12.30-14.00 – Lunch;
- During the afternoon there would be a couple of workshops in smaller groups (3 or 2 groups depending on numbers attending) which would discuss the implications of what had been said during the morning, and the Strategy going forward;
- All attendees would then reconvene and one person from each group would provide feedback on what they had discussed;
- The day would be concluded by the Vice Chancellor, who would sum up what had been covered.

There were also suggestions to include discussions around Fundraising and Risk Tolerance as part of the stock take process. No decision was made on this proposal.

The Chair of University Council NOTED that the dinner to be held the evening prior to the strategy away day was intended to be an event where senior University staff members and Council members could get to know each other in an informal setting.

Professor David Rae left the meeting.

It was REPORTED that outcomes from the Leadership Foundation workshops would be fed through Sponsor Board to University Council.

Sponsor Board

10. To discuss the implications for Sponsor Board of the Council Effectiveness Review recommendations on Council oversight of Strategy

It was NOTED that the Chair of Sponsor Board would report key items from the meeting to the University Council, as was the usual practice, and would indicate that Sponsor Board welcome the Council’s view on the on the responsibilities assigned to it in the light of the Council Effectiveness Review.

The Chair of University Council NOTED that he would be reviewing the performance and development of Council members in due course.

11. Agenda management and review

Mr David Babb was asked to comment on the present meeting:

David noted that it was important that equal time was given to each of the Strategy theme leads to report on their area and regularly to adjust the order of reporting the Strategy themes to ensure that no one person was pushed for time at the end of the item. He also noted that it would be helpful if the presentations from each theme lead allowed for interruptions for questions as often the question in mind was forgotten by the end of their item. It was agreed that the maximum time slot of 3 hours was required to do justice to the items the meeting considered.

12. Any other business

There was no other business to discuss.

13. Key items for the University Council

- Collective lunchtime presentation from the 6 new PhD students at the March Council meeting, focusing on their experience of the University to date;
- Leadership Foundation Report and workshops, highlighting discussion of student numbers (e.g. the need to include part-time students and the question of what the right total for the University might be) and the University's decision to concentrate on enhancing internal expertise in managing and analysing market data relating to demand for university courses rather than enlisting the support of an external organisation;
- Ongoing emphasis on optimizing the use of teaching space taking into account current trends in student numbers.
- Council Strategy Away Day;
- The implications for Sponsor Board of the Council Effectiveness Review recommendations on Council oversight of Strategy and on the role of the Sponsor Board (including its revised Terms of Reference, which would be submitted to Council for discussion and approval);
- To congratulate staff on what they have achieved particularly in the strategy themes Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement and Research.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Sponsor Board would take place on Thursday 24 February 2017 at 10:00 am in Hardy Seminar Room 3.

Signed  Date 10/03/17

