



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2017
at 10.00 am at Locksbrook Road

Present:	Mr T Jagger (Chair)	Mr M Francis
	Professor R Alexander	Mr J Glasspool
	Mr W Archer	Ms R Heald
	Mr S Blake (by telephone link*)	Ms K Hilton
	Ms K Curtis	Lady T Lloyd
	Dr K Doern	Mr T Osborne
	Mr A Fasoulis	Professor C Slade (Vice-Chancellor)
	Ms T Fisk	
	Ms L Fleming	(* from item 16/56)
In attendance:	Mr C Ellicott (Clerk)	Professor R Mears (part)
	Mr N Latham	Professor A Taylor (part)
	Professor N Sammelts	Dr K Anagnostopoulou (part)
	Mr K Wright	Mr R Jordan (part)
	Mr R Lucas	
Apologies:	Ms N Campbell	
	Professor P Martin	
	Mr D Pester	

16/46 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Ryan Lucas, the incoming Students' Union present, who was attending as an observer. He thanked Kitty Hilton, whose last meeting it was. He drew attention to Edward Mason's recent resignation as a Board member and noted the Reverend Mason's long involvement with the institutions. Finally, he noted the recent announcement of the appointment of Professor Nick Foskett as Interim Vice-Chancellor from 16th August 2017.

16/47 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25th April 2017

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

16/48 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 16/44

Responses to the following papers, considered out of committee, had been received:

- LEAD INDICATORS AND COMPARATOR GROUP (Paper G927)
- PROFITABILITY AND BETTER WAYS OF WORKING (Paper G930)

Mr Latham indicated that he would be responding to Governors in July, having reviewed the points raised.

16/49 CLERK'S BUSINESS

HEFCE Annual Provider Review 2016/17 [Paper G945]

The Clerk drew attention to the satisfactory outcome for the University, and for its principle local partner, University Centre Weston, from the HEFCE Annual Provider Review. Professor Sammells added that University Centre Weston had achieved a Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework exercise.

16/50 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT [Paper G946]

The Vice-Chancellor raised the following matters in amplification of her written report:

- Following the Grenfell Tower disaster in London, a review of building safety had been carried out and the Head of Estates, Richard Jordan, would report to Governors later in the meeting.
- The VC tabled a perception study, commissioned by Scott Williams, which she felt offered some clear lessons to be learned. It was agreed that the perception study should be further discussed at the Board meeting in September, with an input from Mr Williams.
- The Chancellor's Dinner had been held recently at Locksbrook Road, to great effect.
- She had received a final report on international matters from Jeremy White, which she would circulate. She felt that there were very positive signs, and commended Professor Georgina Andrews's work with TNE partnerships. She had represent UUK at the European Parliament in a discussion on Erasmus exchanges, at which the parliament had agreed to argue a special case on UUK's behalf.
- A University Staff Survey had provided some useful indicators. While the report required further analysis, the University appeared to be performing well against most benchmarks. The HR Director would report further in September.
- The VC talked of her visit to Savannah College of Art & Design which had been very interesting. Ms Curtis commented that views on academic rigour and research were not as strong at Savannah as here. Further connection between the two institutions was, however, still a possibility.
- Supplementing the Vice-Chancellor's paragraph on Graduation, the Clerk told the meeting that there would be additional security at the year's Graduation event as part of the University's Prevent awareness and on the advice of local police, in the light of recent events in Manchester and London.

16/51 UPDATE ON STUDENT RECRUITMENT FOR 2017 ENTRY [Paper G947]

The Clerk introduced his paper and drew the meeting's attention to its conclusions.

Professor Sammells talked of work in progress to examine the impact of entry tariff changes on recruitment and retention. Conclusions would be reported to the Board in due course.

The Vice-Chancellor told the meeting that she was confident that the introduction of semesterisation would have no negative impact on retention.

The paper was noted.

16/52 LEAGUE TABLES OVERVIEW [Paper G948] / NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY: ANALYSIS AND ACTIONS (Paper G949)

The meeting agreed to take these matters as a single item.

The Vice-Chancellor expanded on her paper on league tables. She stressed the difference between international and domestic league tables, the latter being entirely dependent on pre-existing data. She felt that international league tables were more reliable. The National Student Survey (NSS) would always be a major factor in domestic league tables and recent poor outcomes in the NSS would inevitably impact on the University negatively in league tables.

Ms Hilton said that her decision to come to Bath Spa University was made without regard to league tables, and she felt that she was not untypical.

In talking to Paper G949, Professor Sammells said that after a rising curve over five to six years the recent drop in the NSS was disappointing. He said that the NSS posed particular challenges for small institutions, which were vulnerable to negative responses from relatively small sections of their student population. There was a lot of debate in the sector about the validity of the NSS, but it required constant vigilance. He said that the University's NSS Taskforce would work to reverse the drop in response rate, in particular.

Professor Alexander highlighted methodological problems with domestic league tables which made them unsafe. He said that institutions effectively had a choice of 'playing the game' by seeking to manipulate data to the institution's advantage, or accepting that the exercise was about quality of experience and teaching, and seeking to use it for improvement purposes. He felt that questions relating to teaching and feedback were particularly important.

In discussion, Governors supported with Professor Alexander's comments. There was general agreement that the quality of a teacher's interaction with their students, and particularly the quality of feedback received by the student, both summative and formative, was critical.

The Vice-Chancellor talked about the work of the NSS Taskforce and commended the work of the Bath Business School on feedback. She said that students wanted immediacy, not long narratives.

Summing up, Professor Sammells said that while the discussion had concentrated on teaching quality, the NSS had a wider scope, and he observed that the University had done poorly in organisation and management, which might cover a very wide range of issues. He said that responsibility for improving NSS performance fell across all departments and that Professional Services were particularly engaged in this.

Both papers were noted.

[Professors Mears and Taylor and Dr Anagnostopoulou joined the meeting]

16/53 FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 AUGUST 2016 TO 30 APRIL 2017 (Paper G950)

Mr Latham presented the report. He said that a surplus of 5.3% was now forecast and that all other parameters were also satisfactory.

The report was noted.

16/54 BUDGET 2017/18 (Paper G951)

The Chair introduced the item by saying that it was important that budget-setting was neither top-down nor bottom-up, but a balance of the two. He welcomed increased independence for budget holders.

Mr Latham explained the process of consultation and iteration which led to the formation of the budget. He said that the principle risk was around recruitment and cost-management, the latter particularly in terms of staffing costs.

The Chair welcome the Executive Deans (Dr Anagnostopoulou representing Professor Reynolds) and invited each to comment on the extent to which they felt they could deliver outputs within the proposed budgets; the risk that they foresaw; and whether any initiatives would be stifled by the proposed budget.

On behalf of the College of Liberal Arts, Professor Mears spoke of the need for an improved customer-focused attitude from Professional Services. He said that the major risk was space, as staff accommodation was now at full capacity. Also there was a need for more specialist performance space. He felt that was a long way to go on the digital agenda, and insufficient staffing resources associated with this. He also said that there was significant work to do on marketing, conversion of applicants and retention. First year student support needed to be strengthened, with academic input, and wellbeing and welfare needed to be taken very seriously.

Professor Taylor said she was pleased at the uplift in staff numbers within the Bath School of Art & Design and believed the School would come in on budget, but would have to work across budget lines in order to get the most efficiency. She said that the rising cost of consumables meant that studio fees could not yet be withdrawn. The major risk was recruitment, and she hoped that the new Foundation Course would prove a success. The School had measures in place to improve retention.

Dr Anagnostopoulou said that the Institute for Education was also pleased with the budget, but felt that their primary risk was the teacher education programme, particularly because of uncertainty about the allocation of student numbers. There were particular space issues associated with postgraduate provision, leading to pressures on the timetable. The requirement to provide a particular learning environment for trainee teachers created a risk of reputational damage if standards were inadequate. Marketing was another risk and she felt that recruitment might improve through better messaging, specific to Education. Finally she agreed with previous comments about the need to address the digital agenda; identified the need to balance provision and standards with being able to innovate; and looked to bring income-generating activity together within the Institute.

The Chair identified space and marketing as the two prominent themes from the Deans' contributions, and other governors stressed the importance of IT development in its widest sense.

Mr Latham spoke about the efforts to increase space availability and agreed the importance of addressing digitalisation (on which preparatory steps had been taken), including making better use of the University's virtual learning environment. The Vice-Chancellor said that

there was no doubt that the University was behind its competitors with regards to the digital agenda, but the situation was improving and some flexibility might be found within the budget to assist in this area.

There was some concern that the marketing budget looked low, but there was uncertainty as to how it compared with marketing provision elsewhere. Mr Latham confirmed that there would be a benchmarking exercise during academic year 2017/18.

In discussion, Governors noted that the projected surplus in 2017/18 was below the target of 5%, in part because of the earlier decision to retain Home/EU undergraduate fees in that year at £9000 for continuing students. It was nevertheless felt that there was a need to re-examine the projected surplus for the longer term; it was also noted that capital expenditure appeared to be a challenge, which was confirmed by Deans. There could be a case for a longer view on budgeting – perhaps five years.

Mr Latham noted that a three year planning view was taken and that the forecast over this longer period (to be discussed in the item on the HEFCE Forecast) delivered appropriate surpluses. Mr Wright confirmed that the University would be looking critically at Estates spending to see if any savings could be made, and each new staff request would also be scrutinised with care.

Summing up, the Chair thanked the Board for endorsing the proposed budget, but asked that the issue of digitalisation be revisited in the near future and suggested that the Board should be engaged early in the planning process and budgeting for 2018-19.

Mr Latham thanked the Board for their interest and said that he was already making progress on the 2018-19 planning round.

Finally, the Chair noted the impending retirement of Professor Mears and thanked him for his major contribution to the University over many years. In particular, he highlighted Professor Mears's contribution to innovation and to interdisciplinarity. The meeting concurred.

16/55 AUDIT COMMITTEE: CONVENER'S UPDATE

In her short oral update, the Convener of the Audit Committee, Ms Fisk, mentioned the internal audit plan; processes around the National Student Survey; policies; the HEFCE accountability report (previously noted under Clerk's business); and the Value for Money Submission. She thanked the Finance team for their hard work.

[Professor Mears and Dr Anagnostopoulou left the meeting]

[Mr Blake joined the meeting by telephone link]

[Mr Jordan joined the meeting]

16/56 BUILDINGS

In the light of the recent tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London which had given rise to concerns about building standards, Mr Jordan presented a short report on the condition of buildings in the BSU estate and student residences not owned by the University. Mr Latham clarified that the University was a little behind in its fire safety checks, but was presently rectifying this. Some would be contracted out. The University would ensure that the process was robust and that rigorous maintenance routines were in place for gas, electricity and other services.

The Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that the owners of student accommodation had carried out recent and very thorough checks. He noted progress to date and asked for an update in due course.

16/57 LOCKSBROOK ROAD CAMPUS (Paper G953)

Introducing his paper, Mr Latham said he believed that there was sufficient justification for carrying on with the project as proposed, which represented value for money, was affordable and would add significantly to the facilities of the University. Professor Taylor spoke in favour of the project which, she said, provided the opportunity for the Bath School of Art & Design to be a 'hard-hitting, high profile institution'.

Mr Osborne commended the proposal and felt that there was only a very minor risk that planning consent would not be granted. He said that building contracts were always risky, but the University was well prepared and would seek to reduce risks to a minimum. Given that many universities were investing substantial funds in teaching at a time of very low interest rates, this relatively low-risk project seemed to be what the University needed.

Governors discussed the detail of the project. In response to a point about whether achieving growth in BSAD numbers was realistic, Professor Taylor said that other Art Schools were already replacing old with new facilities, and the Bath School had to be competitive. She felt the numbers were robust and that BSAD could attract the numbers of students planned, and that the quality of the new facility would itself be a strong magnet. Mr Glasspool congratulated all involved with what he felt was an exemplary proposal, and the only question remaining to be decided seemed to be how much to spend.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the cost of the project was disappointing but she still felt that it offered value for money and would be a great acquisition for the University. The Chair agreed that there were bound to be risks, but felt that delay was a bigger problem than cost-inflation.

It was agreed to:

- Approve the project on the basis of the paper;
- Employ every endeavour not to use the contingency;
- Maintain forward looking governance of the project.

All subject to planning consent; HEFCE approval; and finalisation of the loan agreement with Lloyds Bank.

Mr Osborne noted that this was the Vice-Chancellor's final meeting before retirement from her post and praised her vision in bringing forward the Locksbrook Road project. He said it was evidence, along with the setting up of GALA, of what she had brought to 'this great University' and how much she would be missed. He felt that the approval of the Locksbrook Road project was a historic moment for the University.

[The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Taylor and Mr Jordan left the meeting]

16/58 FINANCIAL FORECASTS 2017 (2016/17 to 2019/20) (Paper G952)

The Board agreed to delegate approval of Paper G952 to a small group consisting of the Chair, Mr Latham and one other Governor.

16/59 COMPLIANCE WITH CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY – ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT TO HEFCE (Paper G954)

Professor Sammells commended the paper as good housekeeping, for onward transmission to HEFCE.

The paper was approved for submission to HEFCE.

16/60 STUDENT AGREEMENT (Paper G955)

Ms Hilton explained the changes proposed to the Student Agreement, and said that the graphics would be updated.

The proposed modifications to the Student Agreement were approved.

16/61 STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORT 2016/17 (Paper G956)

The paper was noted by Governors.

16/62 ITEMS FOR RECEIPT

In receiving the Academic Board minute, Professor Alexander commented that the Academic Board appeared to be relatively small in terms of the number of members compared to similar bodies at other universities. It was agreed that further work would be carried out on academic governance, following on from the recent independent review of governance, with a view to bringing a paper to the Board in November.

16/63 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following matters were raised:

Honorary Awards

Governors asked about the University's arrangements for making Honorary Awards. The Clerk reported that he was presently tasked by Academic Board with reviewing the University's procedures in this area and would report back, both to Academic Board and to Governors, in due course.

Royal Mineral Hospital/Fashion Museum

Governors reviewed progress with discussions regarding the future of the Bath Fashion Museum and possibilities of co-locating with the University's fashion provision.

Innovation Township

Mr Osborne reported on recent discussions involving the Duchy of Cornwall. The Chair noted that while the developments were interesting and potentially exciting, the idea presently had no formal project status.

Prevent Duty

In response to a question from Governors, the Clerk updated the meeting as regards compliance with the Prevent Duty. He said that he would bring a paper to Governors in the autumn, prior to submitting the Prevent Annual Report to HEFCE at the beginning of December.

Cyber Security

Mr Latham advised the meeting of some recent cyber threats to the University which had been defended, although challenging. He said that the University was doing all it could to remain vigilant and he would update Governors in due course.

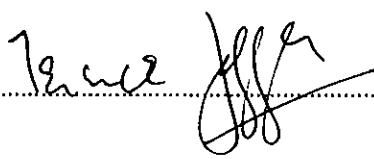
Vice-Chancellor

The meeting noted that this was Professor Slade's final meeting and wished to record formally its appreciation of her achievements during her term of office.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.05pm.

Christopher Ellicott
Clerk to the Board of Governors
July 2017
Amended 21 September 0217

Signed as a record of confirmed minutes by:

Mr Terence Jagger 

Chair

Date 18th October 2017