



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2017 at 4.00 pm at Newton Park

Present:	Mr T Jagger (Chair) Professor R Alexander Ms K Curtis Dr K Doern Ms T Fisk (via telephone link) Mr M Francis Mr J Glasspool	Ms R Heald Ms K Hilton Lady T Lloyd Professor P Martin Mr T Osborne Mr D Pester Professor C Slade (Vice-Chancellor)
In attendance:	Mr C Ellicott (Clerk) Mr N Latham Professor N Sammells	Mr K Wright Professor J Strachan (item 16/23 only) Ms A Stone (item 16/28 only)
Apologies:	Mr W Archer Mr S Blake Ms N Campbell	Mr A Fasoulis Ms L Fleming Reverend E Mason

16/32 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8th FEBRUARY 2017

The minutes were agreed as a true record, after Rosemary Heald's name had been added to the list of those present.

16/33 MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk drew the meeting's attention to the Schedule of Decisions taken on 8th February 2017.

16/34 CLERK'S BUSINESS

Independent and Co-opted Members [Paper G936a]

The Clerk drew attention to his paper which indicated those Governors whose terms of office expired in November. The Chair said that he was in conversation with these Governors regarding their continuing membership of the Board

Co-opted Member: President of the Students' Union 2017/18 [Paper G936b]

The Board noted the election of Ryan Lucas as Students' Union President for 2017/18. The Chair invited Ryan to attend the June board as well as Kitty Hilton.

16/35 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair said that he would continue to review the way the Board dealt with business, but he was keen not to have matters for receipt only on future agendas. He said that the Clerk was bringing forward a schedule of annual business, which would be shared with Governors.

The Chair referred to the Vice-Chancellor's recent announcement of her intention to stand down in August 2017. He said that the intention was to appoint an interim Vice-Chancellor pending a permanent appointment, both appointments being open to internal and external candidates. He outlined the likely process for appointment, including the use of search agents, which he had discussed with fellow governors. Further information would be circulated in due course. It was agreed that communication on this matter with staff, students and external stakeholders needed to be handled appropriately.

16/36 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT [Paper G937]

In presenting her report, the Vice-Chancellor mentioned the forthcoming general election and speculation about the future of the Higher Education & Research Bill. She was optimistic about student numbers for 2017/18 and pleased that continuing support for EU students had been announced by government.

She highlighted the section in her report referring to freedom of speech, as this had raised some concerns with Governors. The Students' Union President explained the apparent justification for the 'Spiked Free Speech Ranking' and Governors asked to be updated by the Students' Union in due course. The University's stated intention to maintain freedom of speech was noted.

16/37 FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 AUGUST 2016 TO 28 FEBRUARY 2017 [Paper G938]

Mr Latham introduced the presentation which accompanied this item by saying that he felt financial risk presently remained low in-year, with the University on track to achieve a surplus of around five per cent. He hoped that the new style of presentation of financial information would be helpful to Governors.

Mr Wright took the meeting through the presentation (appended to Paper G938). The Chair was reassured that the figures indicated the University was in a comfortable position as regards cash; he also welcomed the inclusion of metrics on debt (gearing) and the ability to service short-term obligations (current ratio).

A question arose regarding the underspend on student bursaries. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the Director of OFFA, Professor Les Ebdon, had previously visited the University and had shown that bursaries made little difference to attracting widening participation students, although there was some benefit in retention. The University would in future use monies previously allocated to bursaries to support study abroad which, according to Professor Ebdon's research, has great impact on employment opportunities. Bath Spa University's use of bursaries and its reporting had been highlighted by OFFA for best practice.

There was some discussion regarding a drop in income from student accommodation and Mr Wright explained that the University hoped to recover any shortfall in accommodation income through commercial letting.

While looking at the Income and Expenditure accounts, the meeting discussed pension contributions and agreed that the University might need to be more assertive in terms of defining its contributions to the LGPS.

The conclusion of Paper G938 that the University's financial position remained sound was noted.

[Professor Strachan joined the meeting]

16/38 REPORT ON RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE STRATEGY 2016/17 (Paper G939)

Professor Sammells introduce the paper by saying that the University had had a very pleasing outcome in the Research Assessment Framework ('REF') exercise in 2014 and he was optimistic that further improvement would be made in the next exercise, scheduled for 2021, particularly with the development of interdisciplinary research.

Professor Strachan then spoke to the paper, particularly highlighting that the University were doing better on enterprise but now as well as it might. He was hopeful of enterprise income of at least £1M by 2020. Turning to research, he said that the proposed inclusion of all research-active staff in the next REF could be a game-changer, but the University was prepared.

Governors felt that the report was very encouraging and noted progress against the University's research strategy.

[Professor Strachan left the meeting]

16/39 UPDATE ON ESTATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING (Paper G940)

In the interests of expediency, Mr Latham briefly presented his paper, highlighting the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Committee in paragraph 1.2.

The Chair clarified that the final decisions on the Locksbrook Road project would be taken at the Board meeting in June 2017. The recommendations of the Policy and Resources Committee were confirmed.

16/40 BUDGET PREPARATIONS 2017/18 (Paper G941)

Mr Wright took the meeting through a presentation on budget preparations for academic year 2017/18. It was noted that with fewer students likely to be recruited than originally projected (even though the population would still increase slightly), the effects of inflation and rising employment costs, the budget would be particularly tight.

Some concern was expressed by Governors about the potential impact on students of rising accommodation costs. It was explained that within the modest overall increase of 1.25%, a greater range had been constructed with some price reductions.

It was noted that a paper with recommendations regarding next year's budget would come to the June Board meeting. The Chair thanked Mr Latham and Mr Wright for their work and asked that the assumptions underpinning the budget allocation be shared with Governors in advance of the June Board meeting if at all possible. Mr Latham advised that this would be possible around the end of May or early June, following engagement with the Academic Board and further discussion at the VC's Executive Group.

[Ms Stone joined the meeting]

16/41 NEW PENSION SCHEME (Paper G942)

Ms Stone explained the proposed new pension scheme which she said she saw as an additional benefit for staff and a vehicle for the future. She was optimistic that Trade Unions would not view the proposal as contentious. Several aspects of the proposed scheme were clarified.

After discussion, the proposal was agreed.

16/42 PEOPLE STRATEGY (Paper G943)

Ms Stone said that she was offering the strategy for Board approval in the hope that it would be seen as meeting the needs of the University during a period of growth and change which required careful management.

There was some discussion about turnover rates for Professional Services staff, but Ms Stone confirmed that the University was within its benchmarks.

The Chair said that he believed a more detailed review of equality and diversity would be useful. It was agreed that this work should be led by the Board represented by the Chair and Rosemary Heald and would also involve the Chair of the Equality & Diversity Steering Group. The Vice-Chancellor said that the Equalities Challenge Unit (ECU) would also be able to provide support and information on this issue. Ms Stone noted that the annual equality report was due to be brought to the June meeting of the Board.

The paper and the proposed strategy were approved.

16/43 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT (Paper G944)

The Chair asked for a presentation of the University's Health & Safety arrangements at a future meeting. The annual report was received.

16/44 It was noted that the following papers had been circulated out of committee after the last Board meeting:

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

The Chair thanked Governors for their responses to the papers, which Mr Latham said he would collate and circulate.

16/45 It was agreed that in future a draft agenda, with timings, would be circulated to Governors as early as possible before each Board meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.05pm.

Christopher Ellicott
Clerk to the Board of Governors
April 2017

Signed as a record of confirmed minutes by:

Mr Terence Jagger
Chair

Date