



COUNCIL meeting

Thursday 13 May 2021 at 9.30am

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendance:

Pamela Chesters, Chair
Maria Bond
Tim Ford
Christine Gibbons
Professor Dot Griffiths
Mesar Hameed
David Hardy
Marion Harney
Malcolm Holley
Tim Hollingsworth
Professor Tim Ibell
Francesco Masala
Don McLaverty
Sujata McNab
Catherine Mealing-Jones
Charlotte Moar
Dr Dai Moon
Professor Ian White, Vice-Chancellor & President
Dr Jane White
Annie Willingham

In attendance:

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International & Doctoral)
Richard Brooks (for item 7297), Director of HR
Corinne Evans, Director of Communications
Emma Haines (for item 7293), Acting Co-Director, DDAR
Dr Nicky Kemp, Director of Policy, Planning and Compliance (for item 7286)
Professor Jonathan Knight, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Professor Peter Lambert, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)
Professor Rajani Naidoo (for item 7295), Head of the Race Equality Taskforce
Mike Nicholson (for item 7291), Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Professor Nick Pearce (for item 7301), Director, Institute for Policy Research
Peter Phelps (for item 7294), Climate Action Project Lead
Molly Southwood (for item 7293), Acting Co-Director, DDAR
Professor Pete Walker (for item 7294), Climate Action Framework Leader
Martin Williams, Director of Finance
Dr Cassie Wilson, Vice-President (Student Experience)
Keith Zimmerman, Chief Operating Officer

Secretariat

Emily Commander, Secretary

Karen Gleave, Member of secretariat

Part 1 (items)

7281 – Welcome and Quorum

The Chair welcomed everyone, particularly Nicky Passmore, the new Chief Executive of the Students' Union. She noted that it was the last meeting for the outgoing Students' Union President, Francesco Masala, and thanked him for the work he had done in a very challenging year. She put on record Council's thanks to Professor Bernie Morley, the outgoing Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and to John Preston, the outgoing Treasurer, for the substantial contribution they had both made to the University.

The Chair congratulated Professor Tim Ibell on his appointment as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering Architecture, noting that his appointment would mean that his term on Council would come to an end. She also congratulated Dr Jane White, who would be made a professor for the new academic year. Council congratulated the University in its recent success at Athena Swan: Education had received its first bronze award and computer science had renewed its bronze award. The attendance was noted.

7282 – Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any interests which were relevant for the meeting. The Chair advised that as previously indicated, staff members would be able to remain and speak on USS pensions paper but would not be able to vote on it should a vote be called for. No other interests were declared.

7283 – Minutes of Previous Meeting – paper C20/21 – C20/21 - 69

The minutes of the Council meeting of 22 February 2021 were approved, subject to a correction to item 7270 to read Don McLaverty, and would be signed by the Chair.

7284 – Action and Matters Arising

Council noted decisions taken by correspondence, as follows:

C20/21 – 64 – Recommendations from the Senior Academic Appointments Committee (18 March 2021)

C20/21 – 65 – Student accommodation rebate (12 April 2021)

C20/21 – 66 – Recommendations from the Senior Academic Appointments Committee (20 April 2021)

C20/21 – 67 – Interim arrangements (26 April 2021)

C20/21 – 68 – Recommendation from the Senior Academic Appointments Committee (27 April 2021)

7285 – Update from the Vice-Chancellor – paper C20/21 - 70

The Vice-Chancellor presented paper C20/21 – 70. The previous few weeks had been very busy in terms of Covid. The government decision not to allow students to return to campus has been a blow for the sector but had minimal impact at Bath. Activities were beginning to increase on campus, and nearly 6,000 students from the 2019/20 and 2020/21 cohorts had already registered for graduation ceremonies.

Planning for 2021/22 was underway. Senate had been responsive to developments in India and had formulated clear plans in support of prospective Indian students: these were broadly in line with plans at other universities.

iCAST, a major collaboration between academic and industry, would be announced later that day. A series of major grants had also been awarded in the humanities, and it was good to see the emergence of new funded research projects at scale.

7286 – Strategy – paper C20/21 – 71 and 71A

The Chair put on record Council's thanks for the informal development session that had taken place the previous evening, noting the considerable progress that had been made by the University in scoping the key programmes and developing indicators and milestones to track performance in the delivery of the new University strategy.

The Director of Policy, Planning and Compliance presented paper C21/22 - 71A on key performance indicators. A review of KPIs had been conducted to ensure alignment with the new University strategy and to ensure the continuing appropriateness of the benchmarking group. The result was a set of 12 Council KPIs, with three KPIs under each of the four strategic pillars, with new KPIs on international perception, engagement and enterprise.

The benchmarking group had been updated.

Work was underway to create a KPI dashboard which would be updated in real time as soon as data became available. This would be supplemented in the coming academic year with contextual reports to every Council meeting, each one themed around one of the strategic pillars. The KPIs would be kept under a review, and Council would have an opportunity to update them at the end of the next academic year. UEB would monitor a longer list of KPIs on an ongoing basis and advise council if any were moving significantly off track.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that Senate would be looking at the list of academic KPIs again in a year's time and would continue to challenge where appropriate. It was hoped that the development of a strong set of KPIs would be part of the iterative strategy process.

The Chair commented that the report represented a major step change both in the presentation of performance data and in the assurance it provided to Council. She noted broad support for the approach to reporting that had been proposed for the coming year, with the aspiration that the University might be able to move to a more "business as usual" approach thereafter.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- The University was putting in place a process to ensure more effective oversight of significant change programmes, which would result in an increase in activity to be brought together under a portfolio board, which would monitor progress and performance. It was anticipated that reports on delivery would go to Finance Committee, with assurance reports to ARAC.
- Widening participation and diversity were strategic priorities for the University: fuller reporting on performance in these areas would go to Council as part of the richer reports on the Access and Participation Plan (APP) and HR reports.
- National Student Survey (NSS) results tended to cluster around a very narrow spread of scores. Consequently, a very small change in score could result in a significant change in ranking.
- Both NSS and OIA were imperfect measures but they were included as KPIs because they could be benchmarked: the University would work with the Students' Union to develop methods for gaining a more nuanced understanding of student satisfaction for internal use.
- Work would be carried out on bringing together the different datasets on graduate outcomes.
- It was noted that, whilst it had been important to re-examine the benchmark group to ensure its continuing appropriateness, alterations would have an impact on the baseline against which performance was measured. Clarity on this would be vital to understanding the data.

- The strategy reflected the in-depth *Our University, Our Future* engagement exercise conducted by the University in the 2019/20 academic year and should therefore contain very few surprises for staff. Internally, work would now begin to with Heads of Department to give them the tools (such as the Stop-Start-Continue model) to help staff to understand what the strategy would mean for them in practice. Virtual Town Halls would be used to bring it to life. Consideration would be given to how Council members could best be involved in that process.

Council:

- approved the external-facing strategy document for publication; and
- approved a set of Council KPIs to be used to track performance against the University's strategic objectives.

Action: Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement to disseminate and publish the University strategy.

7287 – Finance – paper C20/21 – 72

The Director of Finance presented an update to Council on financial matters.

The planning round was well underway: ongoing uncertainty was linked to a number of factors, including the outcome of the union process in relation to the proposed national pay settlement of 1.5% and student recruitment levels, which were predicted to show an improvement on 2020/21 but would not return to their pre-pandemic trajectory. Professional services departments had made a number of bids as part of the planning round, but many of these would not be progressed until the University's financial position had improved.

It was expected that the budget would show a small surplus for 2021/22. When recruitment returned to its normal levels, it was hoped to return to a 3% surplus. This would be depressed by planned increases in longer-term maintenance expenditure as the University began to address the findings of its condition survey.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Commitments made under the Climate Action Framework, including those related to campus maintenance, would be included in the budget: granularity would increase as more details became available.
- The primary goal of IAAPS was to increase the University's research power but to do so in a financially sustainable way.
- The first post-investment appraisal was underway on Polden. In future it was anticipated that ARAC would conduct a post project appraisal on all major projects to assess performance against the original business case.
- The space condition survey was one factor in a multi-faceted approach to decision-making on maintenance issues. The decision-making process would also take account of the way in which space would be used.
- An emerging issue in relation to a potential tuition fee refund claim was noted.

Council:

- considered an update on financial matters
- noted a report from the Finance Committee (12 April 2021)

7288 – Pensions Working Group – paper C20/21 - 73

Noting that it was helpful that so many staff had contributed to the USS consultation, members were advised that the analysis of staff responses together with the full free text comments were now

available on Convene. Council approved the key principles by which the University responded to the USS valuation and delegated to the Vice-Chancellor responsibility for responding to Universities UK.

Action: Vice-Chancellor to respond to Universities UK

7289 – Plans for teaching in 2021/22 – paper C20/21 - 74

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) presented paper C20/21 – 74 on plans for teaching in 2021/22. In response to a question, he noted that, if government guidelines changes, teaching would move wholly online. This would be much easier and quicker than it had been in the first lockdown because the University was well prepared. There may be a short lag time of a few days.

Council noted the update on plans for teaching in 2021/22.

7290 – Operations – paper C20/21 – 75

The Chief Operating Officer presented paper C20/21 – 75 on operational matters. He noted that the University had made a higher number of offers than in previous years. UK undergraduate applications were strong, but postgraduate numbers and international recruitment remained challenging.

There had been a further delay from the contractor on the completion of the School of Management due to a combination of Covid and weather factors. The Estates team was working with the contractor to examine the programme.

The University was continuing to work on its preparedness in the event of a ransomware attack, mindful of serious attacks that had disrupted other institutions within the sector. A new business continuity and resilience manager would take up post the following week.

A project was underway to explore future ways of working that would take advantage of innovations developed during the pandemic, but also allowing staff to return to work with colleagues on campus.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- An update would be provided on the portfolio office and proposals for providing assurance.

Council noted the update.

7291 – Widening Participation – Paper C20/21 – 76

The Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions presented paper C20/21 – 76 on widening participation.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- In previous years, a large proportion of students with widening participation (WP) characteristics applied to the University but were not given an offer. This year, these potential students had been flagged into the system, enabling the admissions team to go out to schools and teachers to better understand the context. Early indications were that this had driven up offers to this group of students. Similarly, when results were released in the summers, the flags in the system would prevent students in this group from automatic rejection, enabling the team to carry out further contextual work before making a decision instead.
- The new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) would have a role in ensuring appropriate linkages between the entry and exit data for students with WP characteristics, helping the University to ensure equivalence in placements and degree outcomes for these students.
- The University was looking at data on the link between applications and conversion.
- The University took an opportunistic approach to working with charities on WP projects.

Council noted the Students' Union report to the Office for Students on the University's Access and Participation Plan, which had taken the form of a podcast. The President of the Students' Union welcomed the opportunity to make this submission, and the support of the widening participation team in doing so.

Council noted the update.

With consent, Council varied the order of the agenda, as follows:

7294 – Climate Action Annual Carbon Report – paper C20/21 – 79

The Climate Action Framework Leader and Climate Action Project Lead presented paper C20/21 – 79 on the Annual Carbon Report. The Report was based on the previous year's data but also commented on more recent activity. The University had achieved its previous carbon targets and was saving £1.5 million per year on energy costs despite growth. However, the task ahead was very challenging as the carbon savings made to date had been the easiest ones to achieve. Having embraced the idea of whole institution change, there was also an opportunity to become an exemplar within the sector.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- A clear plan had been developed in terms of cultural and behavioural change, but this would only contribute about 5-10% towards the ambitious targets. However, the action needed worked with the grain of the University's savings plan: spending less money meant expending less carbon.
- One of the key principles under the Framework was partnership, both operational and in terms of regional influence. Bath was reaching out to other universities in GW4 to work together, including on research.
- The University was working with BANES on the energy performance of historic buildings.

The Chair noted very positive feedback from Council members, and emphasised the value they placed on this work.

Council approved the University's Annual Carbon Report for publication on the University website.

Action: Climate Action Project Lead to publish the Annual Carbon Report

7295 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – paper C20/21 - 80

The Chair of the Race Equality Taskforce presented paper C20/21 – 80. She noted that the way in which the Taskforce was set up would be crucial to its success and that it was important to secure broad engagement across the University. Her work would build on lived experience, existing innovation and good practice. She undertook to share with Council a recent successful seminar on decolonising the curriculum.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- The Taskforce would look closely at the experience of staff, and would involve the Unions.
- The government report on race disparity had been a disappointment, particularly in light of previous government work on institutional racism, which had been rigorous. However, it was important to maintain the vision and values that the University had set itself and to make the most of the window of opportunity to take meaningful action.

The Chair of Council commented on the strong support from Council for this work, against which it would be keen to see progress.

Council noted the update.

7293 – DDAR Annual Report – paper C20/21 - 78

The Acting Co-Directors of the Department for Development and Alumni Relations presented paper C20/21 – 78. One highlight had been a successful crowd-funding campaign to raise money for the student hardship fund. 548 new donors had made gifts: they were much younger than existing donors and created a pipeline.

The Department had focused on the recommendations made in the Internal Audit report and had been tightening up financial, reporting and due diligence processes.

Members of Council asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Work was underway to ensure secure processing of data. There had been some impact on the University of the Blackboard data breach: data security assessments had been carried out for suppliers affected and the small number of University records affected had all been traced and appropriate action taken.
- The crowd-funding campaign had attracted a younger demographic and the pandemic had extended the Department's global reach. Both these factors may have contributed to the attraction of a cohort of younger donors.

Council noted the report.

7292 – Student Update – paper C20/21 - 77

The Vice-President (Student Experience) presented paper C20/21 – 77. A more formal approach to the Students' Union Top Ten had been adopted, which had worked well. The paper showed what progress had been made on each of the issues, and indicated where ongoing work would be integrated into business as usual.

The student governors thanked the Vice-President (Student Experience) for the approach taken to the Top Ten, particularly progress that had been made on legacy issues despite the pandemic.

Council noted the update.

7296 – Statute Changes – paper C20/21 - 81

The Head of Strategic Governance presented paper C20/21 – 81 on statute changes. The amendments put into effect decisions already taken on Court membership, Council term limits and Senate effectiveness.

Council approved amendments to Statutes for informal consideration by Privy Council and the OfS.

Action: Head of Strategic Governance to report the proposed amendments for informal consideration by the Privy Council and OfS

7297 – Nominations and role changes – paper C20/21 – 82, 82A and 82B

The Vice-President (Student Experience), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Charlotte Moar all declared an interest and were removed to the waiting room for this item.

The Director of HR presented paper C20/21 – 82, 82A and 82B.

Council:

- Approved a recommendation to appoint, for statutory purposes, Professor Jonathan Knight as Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor until the appointment of a permanent Deputy Vice Chancellor;
- Approved a recommendation from the Senior Academic Appointments Committee to appoint Dr Cassie Wilson as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) from 1 August 2021 until 31

August 2022, noting that at the end of that term extant appointment procedures would be used;

- Noted that the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) would be split from 1 August 2021 and that Professor Jonathan Knight would continue to undertake the enterprise elements under a new fractional role of Vice-President (Enterprise);
- Approved a temporary transfer of responsibility for the Freedom of Expression Code of Practice from the outgoing Deputy Vice-Chancellor to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences **Action: Head of Strategic Governance to update the Scheme of Delegation, Director of Policy, Planning and Compliance to update all relevant policies;**
- Approved the appointment of Charlotte Moar for a further term as lay member of Council.
- Noted an update from the Nominations Committee in relation to role changes on Council.

7298 – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – paper C20/21 – 83

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented paper C20/21 – 83. He noted that the new strategic risk register would need to be linked to the new University strategy: there was a new risk in the area of enterprise. Members of Council could provide feedback on the risk register to the Committee.

Council noted the report and approved the reappointment of PWC as the external auditor for a further period of two years. **Action: Director of Finance to confirm the reappointment of PWC as external auditor**

7299 – Grievance Committee – paper C20/21 – 84

In order to preserve his impartiality in the event of any appeal in the grievance, the Vice-Chancellor absented himself from the meeting for the duration of the item. Dr Dai Moon declared an interest in his capacity as a Union representative in the case.

Council noted a report from the Grievance Committee.

7300 – Redundancy Committee – paper C20/21 – 85

The Chair of the Redundancy Committee presented paper C20/21 – 85. The cases presented for redundancy all related to the end of fixed-term contracts. The Committee had asked for gender and ethnicity data to be considered.

Council asked the Head of Strategic Governance to consider, as part of the governance framework review, whether it was still appropriate for decisions taken by the Committee to be subject to Council approval.

Action: Head of Strategic Governance to include consideration of Redundancy Committee approvals process as part of governance review

Council approved each of the cases for redundancy and authorised the Director of HR to dismiss the staff concerned.

Action: Director of HR to take next steps in each of the cases for redundancy approved by Council

7301 – Institute for Policy Research – paper C20/21 - 86

The Director of the Institute for Policy Research presented paper C20/21 – 86. The Institute was doing well, with a mix of postgraduate teaching, policy research and events creating links to policy-makers and the wider public.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- The report came to Council in fulfilment of a recommendation made as part of the Quinquennial Review of the Institute.
- The Institute invited civil servants to the University to teach and lecture. It was willing and able to share information in its database of contacts with colleagues throughout the University.

Council noted the report.

7302 – Council Effectiveness Review – oral update

The Chair of Council stated her intention to conduct a light-touch effectiveness review using the same self-assessment questionnaire that had been used the previous year. In 2021/22, an external review would be required. Council members were invited to get in touch with any thoughts or suggestions they may have on this process.

Council noted proposals for assessing Council effectiveness.

7303 – Calendar of meetings – paper C20/21 – 87

Council approved the calendar of meetings for 2021/22 and noted the draft calendar of meetings for 2022/23.

Action: Head of Strategic Governance to ensure calendar of meetings is published.

Part 2 (items)

7304 – Academic Governance – paper C20/21 – 88A - F

Council noted the following minutes:

- Meeting of Senate of 3 February 2021
- Meeting of Senate of 21 April 2021
- Meeting of the Senior Academic Appointments Committee of 2 March 2021
- Meeting of the Senior Academic Appointments Committee of 14 April 2021
- Meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee of 11 February 2021
- Meeting of CSSU of 18 February 2021

7305 – CSSU – paper C20/21 – 89

Council noted a paper on decolonising the curriculum referred to Council by CSSU.

7306 – Forthcoming Council Meeting Programme – paper C20/21 - 90

Council noted the programme of meetings of Council for remainder of the current academic year and noted topics for the agenda of the year's final meeting on 22 July. It was intended that, if government guidelines permitted, this meeting would be held in person.

7307 – Any Other Business

The meeting finished at 12.30am.

Sections of four of the agenda items have been redacted either because they pertain to information relating to individual staff or students, or because they are still commercially confidential.
