

COUNCIL

**17 March 2011 at 16:30
Oak House**

MINUTES

Members:	Mr M Taylor (Chair)	Mr D McNulty
	Mr D Eustace (Vice-Chair)*	Professor G Nicholls
	Professor C M Snowden (Vice-Chancellor)	Professor M Olssen
	Professor D Allen	Mr I Robertson
	Mr T Chambers	Mr D Rogers
	drs J Derwig	Professor N Seaton
	Dr J Forrest*	Professor A Sterr
	Mr A Herman	Mr K Taylor
	Mr M Hunt	Ms A Watts
	Professor M Kearney	Professor S Williamson
	Ms D Langston	Professor Lord R Winston*

*denotes member unable to attend

In attendance:	Mr D Sharkey – Director of Finance
	Mr H ap Rees – Director of Planning & Strategy
	Mr G Melly – Director of Corporate Services
	Dr D Ashton - University Registrar
	Ms C Johnson - Acting Clerk to Council*
	Mr R Stickland - Director of IT Services (11/08 only)
	Ms H Styche-Patel - Director of Marketing & Market Development (11/07 only)
	Ms M McGowan - Director of Communication & PR (11/07 only)
Ms L Richards – Minutes	

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

11/01 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Professor Lord Winston, Mr Eustace, Dr Forrest and Ms Johnson.

11/02 Declarations of interest

None.

11/03 Minutes of meeting held 25 November 2010.

The minutes from the meeting held 25 November 2010 were **approved** with one minor amendment as follows:

In minute 10/75 - "The Chair then thanked Ms Langston for her expert contribution to Audit Committee over the past four years" "four" should read "five".

11/04 Matters arising

The Chair referred to the actions schedule as circulated. Updates were noted and recorded on the schedule as attached with these minutes. There were no additional matters arising.

11/05 Chair's Items

.1 (i) Nominations Committee

The Chair confirmed that the Nominations Committee had met. The following recommendations were made and Council **approved**:

- The reappointment of Dr John Forrest to Council for a further and final term of three years from 01 February 2011 to 31 January 2014.
- The appointment of Ms Anne Watts to both Nominations Committee and Remuneration Committee as a nominated member of Council. Her first term on both committees will therefore be from 01 March 2011 to 31 December 2012.

(ii) The Chair also confirmed that three nominations for civil honours had been received, two of which had been approved for follow up and submission.

(iii) It was also noted that a number of avenues were being investigated with regard to potential future membership of Council and its committees. The Chair repeated that suggestions for candidates continued to be an open request.

.2 Charter & Statutes

Council **noted** that the proposed changes to Charter & Statutes which had been approved by Council in 2010, had been formally approved by the Privy Council Office in December 2010.

.3 Achievements of members of the University community

Council **acknowledged** the achievements of members of the University community as outlined in the paper circulated.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL

11/06 University Strategy Update

.1 Mr Harri ap Rees, Director of Strategy & Planning introduced this item. The following points were noted:

- This was an update, rather than a fundamental revision of the strategy.
- All the existing strategic imperatives remained unchanged.
- The statement of Mission and Vision had been adapted to bring them up to date and to make them more concise.

- Those objectives which had been achieved had been removed.
- The significant changes in the external environment had been taken account of in updating the strategy.

.2 The following further points, relating to specific areas, were highlighted for note:

i) Learning & Teaching

With regard to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), it was confirmed that there was focus on alignment of strategy between L&T and IT, whilst recognising that this had to be a user, not IT driven project.

ii) Financial

a) It was noted that cash was going to become increasingly important as funding for capital expenditure would be greatly reduced over the next few years. An improved cash position would be needed in order to invest in improvement projects.

b) The question was raised as to why the number of students aimed for in 2016-17 was not significantly higher than that recorded for 2009-10 (i.e. 2010/15,187 - 2016-17/15,500). The Vice-Chancellor explained that whilst growth was an essential activity, it may not necessarily be a primary driver. There were other external constraints to growth such as the cap on undergraduate home/EU student numbers. For Surrey, quality, and the introduction of differentiating offerings such as a medical school were going to be key. He reiterated that the business model for the University was going to be radically different with far more reliance on using the University's own resources, rather than Government funding, to achieve growth. In relation to the quality aspect, it was agreed that an explicit statement of what the improvement of intake levels had done for the University, should be added to the strategy document.

Action: Mr Ap Rees

c) With regard to format, comment was made that tables depicting figures should be aligned, i.e. they should cover similar timescales so that straight comparisons could be made between them. It was agreed this would be looked at.

Action: Mr Ap Rees

iii) International

In discussion relating to the recruitment of international students, comment was made that a careful balance needed to be struck. International students had an impact on the culture and perception of the University and too many or too few could produce adverse effects. It was agreed that something to reflect this should be added to the strategy.

Action: Mr Ap Rees

.3 In summarising, the Chair invited Council members to provide any further comments or questions to the Vice-Chancellor or Mr Ap Rees following this meeting.

.4 Subject to the above actions, Council **approved** the update to the University Strategy.

11/07 Tuition Fees - Strictly Confidential
REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE

11/08 IT Annual Report

.1 Due to time constraints, this item was brought forward on the agenda.

In introducing the item, Mr Sharkey emphasised that, taking account of previous comments and requests from Council, tighter alignment with the University strategy and more visibility of timescales and milestones had been sought. He added that there was now a much better understanding that IT was a key contributor to major business led projects, rather than the driver. The updated IT strategy was still in draft and was yet to be discussed by Executive Board. It was shared with Council here because of the timing of this presentation.

Mr Stickland gave a presentation highlighting the major points of progress and future plans. (Copy attached with these minutes).

.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- It was confirmed that detailed plans had been agreed for all major projects on the 12-18 month horizon except for the research data project, which required further work.
- In response to a query about the use of open source, Mr Stickland commented that whilst this was being investigated, it was not yet at a stage to be part of the definitive IT offering.
- Work was underway to establish a minimum IT standard for teaching and training rooms.

.3 Mr Sharkey invited Council members to feed back any comments or questions to himself on the draft strategy document following the meeting.

Council **noted** the IT Annual Report.

11/09 USSU Annual Presentation

.1 Mr Hunt (President, Students' Union) began by giving a brief update regarding the incorporation of the Students' Union. He confirmed that the incorporation date was now 1 August 2011, in order to coincide with the financial year end and reported that good progress was being made in all areas.

.2 Mr Hunt then gave a brief presentation, (copy attached with minutes) reporting on some of the successful activities undertaken by the Students' Union in the past year. This included earning the top place for 'welcome experience' in the I-grad survey; the establishment of 400 academic reps; the development of SkyNet, a tailored communications service for students which was due to be launched after Easter; and the live streaming of the I-gala event which was particularly welcomed by international students as families were able to watch the performances.

- .3 Mr Hunt commented that as fees rise it will be ever more important for the University and the Students' Union to work together towards common goals. Research shows that students see the Union and the University as "inextricably linked" with a common goal of helping students.
- .4 In terms of the challenges faced, Mr Hunt particularly highlighted the 66% increase in case work which had risen in the last year. This had, inevitably, had a significant impact on staff time.
- .5 The Chair thanked Mr Hunt for the obvious hard work he, and the Students' Union had put in over the last year to achieve the reported improvements and successes.

Council **noted** the annual report from the Student's Union

11/10 BUniv Honorary Degrees

Council **approved** the proposal to award BUniv honorary degrees to Battersea Polytechnic alumni as outlined in the paper circulated.

11/11 Financial Forecast

- .1 There was discussion regarding the delegation of authority to Finance Committee to approve the financial forecast at a meeting scheduled for 8th April. This had been proposed because, due to the delays in publication of key funding information, the forecast had not been finalised in time for Council to approve it at this meeting.
- .2 It was **agreed** that, as there would be a quorum of Council members attending on 8th April in any event, this meeting be held as a Finance Committee, switching to Council at the point at which approval of the forecast is required. The remaining Council members were invited to attend.

11/12 HEFCE Assurance Visit

- .1 Mr Sharkey highlighted one particular point which had arisen from the Interim Report, that was the recommendation that formal reviews of both the Audit and Finance Committees be carried out. It was **agreed** that these would be carried out as a combined review.

Post meeting note:

Ms Langston, who had been Chair of the Audit Committee until December 2010, advised that she had not been questioned about this during the interview with the HEFCE representative. She confirmed that a substantial review of Audit Committee had been carried out in 2008. It had been undertaken as a comprehensive self-assessment exercise, using guidance from the CUC Handbook for Members of Audit Committees in HE Institutions. This was contrary to the suggestion in the report that the most recent review had been "conducted informally".

11/13 Risk Management

Council **noted** the risk register and changes since the last report, as per the paper circulated.

11/14 Review of Council's Primary Responsibilities and Reserved Powers

Mr Sharkey reported that this document had been compiled in the light of the recommendation

in the HEFCE Assurance Interim Report that a statement of Council's Primary Responsibilities be published. It was noted that the document brought together in one place, the Statutes covering the functions of Council, and the two separate documents created by Council covering governance responsibilities and reserved powers in 2006 and 2008 respectively. It highlighted activities for which power was reserved by Council or delegated elsewhere, and where Council required recommendation from other senior Committees. The statement would be published on the website and in the University's Accounts.

Council **approved** the proposed statement of primary responsibilities and the related document.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

11/15 Balanced Scorecard

Council **noted** the updated balanced scorecard.

11/16 Report from the Finance Committee

Council **noted** the report from the Finance Committee.

11/17 Report from the Executive Board

Council **noted** the report from the Executive Board.

11/18 Report from the Audit Committee

As Audit Committee had been held on the same day as Council, a verbal update was received with the following points raised:

- A brief presentation on Risk 16, regarding student progression had been received. The significant improvement in non-completion rates for 2010 had been noted.
- Internal Audit reported no instances of limited assurance on audits carried out since November 2010. All other follow up work was progressing with no issues for concern raised.
- Audit Committee had agreed to recommend to Council the reappointment of KPMG as the external auditors subject to the satisfactory negotiation of fees. Council **approved** this recommendation.

11/19 Report from the Senate

.1 Council **noted** the report from the Senate.

.2 Council **approved** the recommendation to appoint Professor Martin Adams as an Emeritus Professor.

11/20 Health & Safety Report

Council **noted** the Health & Safety report.

D CLOSING ITEMS

AOB

None.

Dates of Future Meetings

All meetings (except away days) are at 16:30 unless otherwise advised.

2011:

21 July (13/15BA01 - Space Centre / dinner in Ivy)

29-30 September (Farnham Castle)

24 November (Oak 1 & 2 / dinner in Ivy)

2012:

15 March (Oak 1&2 / dinner in Ivy)

26 July (Oak 1&2 / dinner in Ivy)

27/28 September (away day - tbc)

22 November Oak 1&2 / dinner in Ivy)

**Mr Max Taylor
Chair of Council
21 July 2011**