

Council

10 May 2022

Present: Joe Docherty (Chair), Joanna Barker, Jonathan Bewes, Kay Boycott, Camila Caiado, Leslie Ferrar, James Grierson, Alison Hastings, Denise Lievesley, Antony Long, Colin Macpherson, Amir Michael, Cheryl Millington, Rebecca Morris, Karen O'Brien (Vice Chancellor), Nigel Perry (minute 106), Kate Pretty, Ari Sadanandom, Corinne Saunders, Terry Toney, Andrew Tremlett and Seun Twins.

In Attendance: Sandip Biswas (Lay Member Observer), Alison Blackburn (Interim University Secretary), Janette Brown (Lay Member Observer), Declan Merrington (PG Academic Officer), Stephen Willis (Chief Financial Officer), and Kelly Knapp (Minutes).

Kieran Fernandes and David Loudon (minute 105); Stephen Taylor and

marriage. The Dean would assume the new post in the autumn and would continue to participate on Council until the end of the academic year

102. Vice-Chancellor's Report (C/2178 Confidential Restricted)

Noted:

- a) the Chief Information Officer (CIO) would retire in October 2022 and recruitment for his replacement was underway. The CIO had agreed to continue to support the University in a consultancy and transitional role
 - b) the University had identified a new Executive Director (Business) from a strong field of candidates. An offer had been made and accepted. An announcement would be made once the candidate had agreed timing with their current employer;
 - c) the Student Support project was beginning to go to fruition as part of the wider Case for the Integrated Student Experience Programme with colleagues across the institution working together on the initiative in preparation for launch in the new academic year
 - d) the threat of University and College Union (UCU) industrial action continued with connection with pay and pension concerns. Recently University had been formally notified of proposed industrial action that included a marking and assessment boycott.
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103. Senate Report (C/2179 Open)

Noted: the matters discussed by Senate at its April 2022 meeting.

Received: a verbal update on the Senate Effectiveness Review (SER) from the SER Working Group Chair.

- a) the Working Group had held extensive discussions with Halpin to define the scope which had resulted in an expanded list. Hain had to Td Tw () T(v)85 (tiec O O Twein) () in

- ii. the information technology would need to be updated to accommodate the higher number of users and for an academic setting versus office use
 - iii. there was not an appetite to carve up the building any more than required;
 - iv. the University's planning application included a sustainability appraisal that reflected a decrease in the carbon footprint stemming from the anticipated lower number of cars driving to the site;
- g) there were no other known prospective buyers and the price reflected DCC's lowest acceptable bid plus VAT;
- i. the Sands cost DCC £50 million to build and built in today's environment was estimated to cost £70 million
- Closed Minute
- h) the acquisition would have a significant impact on the University's overall investment plan. The Finance Committee had reviewed the impact on the case and had agreed with the proposal. The capital programme would be revisited as part of the planned Strategy refresh that would be presented to Council later in the calendar year
- i. communications and the associated messages to the wider University would be carefully managed acknowledging that a number of other faculties / departments were awaiting capital commitments to support their strategies and growth; plans
- i) the sale of the Sands would most likely require DCC to revisit its plans for Aykley Heads and therefore offered an opportunity for the University to collaborate with DCC on its development plans for the area;
- j) the University recently formalised an agreement with DCC in a Memorandum of Understanding and as such the risk register would be reviewed and updated accordingly;
- k) clarity was required as to whether the acquisition included an education covenant which was not desired as it had the potential to hinder the University in the future

Agreed:

- a) ongoing support with the University's plans to acquire the Sands from DCC;
- b) if acquired, plans to adapt the building needed to be swiftly developed with the aim of minimising the change required to the building's current footprint but equally ensuring the building was fit for purpose and to do so in the most economical and timely manner
- c) the OBC

- a) the action plan for the recommendation from the Council Effectiveness Review reflected GNC's prioritisation and proposed actions including opportunities for quick wins. Commentary on the following specific recommendations, included:
- i. Recommendation 2: Council reconsiders the question of its size: whilst Halpin did not perceive the current size of Council to be an issue, some universities had few members. GNC did not perceive this matter required further action at this time;
 - ii. Recommendation 7 and 11: Council consider replacing University Strategy Implementation Committee (USIC) and Finance Committee with a SPaRC... and consider standing down USIC by the end of the current academic year. GNC did not agree with the creation of a SPaRC nor changing the role and responsibility of either Finance Committee or USIC. There was a desire for some type of People Committee to be constituted and further guidance had been sought from Halpin
 - iii. Recommendation 10: GNC to advise on the appointment of a Senior Independent Governor (SIG): GNC did not perceive the appointment to be a matter of urgency and was something to be reviewed when the Vice Chair's term ended;
- b) high priority items included a review and update of the Gifts Acceptance Policy and (ii) Financial Delegations both of which were scheduled to be presented for Council's consideration before the end of the academic year

Agreed:

- a) Council did not need to consider adapting size at this time (Recommendation 2);
- b) retention of USIC and Finance Committee and their current roles and responsibilities (Recommendation 7 and 11)
- c) the formation of some type of People Committee which once defined would be presented to GNC and Council prior to being constituted (Recommendation 7)
- d) defer consideration for appointing a SIG to align with the timing of the Vice Chair's end of term and for further information to be presented to GNC and Council at that time (Recommendation 10).

111. Finance Committee Report 6 April 2022 (C/2187 Confidential Restricted)

Noted:

- a) the Case for the Integrated Student Experience (CISE) Programme was part of the wider Digital Strategy and the funding request was outside Finance Committee's delegated authority. The Programme encompassed projects that would update certain technology that was no longer fit for purpose as well as provide advancement to the University and its students. The student journey project currently did not include alumni and would be defined as part of future phases of work;
- b) preliminary discussions had been held regarding fundamental financial frameworks which would help in the refresh of the Strategy and associated Capital Plan. The frameworks would be formally defined and presented to Finance Committee;
- c) the Psychology Department needs were initially planned to be addressed via temporary facilities but the acquisition of Boldon House provided an opportunity to replace within Rowan House. The Department needed to act quickly in order for the work to be undertaken in time for staffing the University at the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year. The requested funding was just within Finance Committee's delegated authority

Approved:

- a) Case for the Integrated Student Experience (CISE) Programme Full Business Case for an overall investment of £6.1 million, which is part of the previously approved Digital Strategy budget.

to 31 July 2025; and (iii) Classics & Ancient History: Professor Roy Gibson with effect from 1 August 2023 for a period of three years to 31 July 2026

113. Dates of Future Meetings

Noted: the dates of future meetings (7 June 2022 and 12 July 2022 to include dinner one the previous evenings)