

**NEWMAN UNIVERSITY**

**Council**

**Minutes of the Meeting held at Newman University at 2.00pm  
on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in DW111/2**

**Present:**

Mr Jonathan Day	Chair of the Council
Mr Glen Alexander	
Dr John Carlisle	
Mr Mark Davies	
Rev Canon David Evans	
Ms Deirdre Finucane	
Dr Mark Goodwin	Vice-Chair of the Council
Mr David Harris	
Mr Stephen Kenny	
Mr Phillip Lennon	
Professor Peter Lutzeier	Vice-Chancellor & Principal
Ms Sarah Parkes	
Ms Courtnie Reeve	
Mrs Rosemary Thorp	
Mr John Westwood	

**In Attendance:**

Ms Andrea Bolshaw	Registrar and University Secretary and Clerk to the Council
Professor Peter Childs	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship)
Professor Duncan Lawson	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)
Mr Tony Sharma	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Mr Nathan Richards	Students' Union President
Professor Scott Davidson	
Ms Lysandre de-la-Haye	Deputy Registrar (in attendance for item 2.5.3)
Mrs Jackie Flowers	Minute Secretary

The meeting of the Council opened with prayers led by Rev. Canon David Evans.

The Chair welcomed Professor Scott Davidson and Ms Courtnie Reeve.

**1. Work of the Council**

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Archbishop Bernard Longley and Professor Femi Oyebode.

## 1.2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016 were received and confirmed as an accurate record.

## 1.3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Clerk to Council reported that a joint meeting between Council and Senate members, to enhance awareness of the respective roles and responsibilities of the two groups, would be held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Topics for discussion were to be arranged.

Arising from item 2.1, the Vice Chancellor informed the Council that the new Director of Corporate Marketing, Alison John, was now in post. The job descriptions had been prepared for the four supporting posts in Corporate Marketing and it was hoped that the full team would be in place by Easter. Further work on the Marketing Strategy would take place when the new Vice Chancellor was in post. There was a good relationship between the Director of Corporate Marketing and the student recruitment team. It was noted that the external perception of the University might be an item at the Council's Away Day.

Arising from item 2.1 and in reply to a question about the University's response to the Green Paper, the Vice Chancellor reported that submission had to be made by 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016. He noted that, in summary, the response would be as indicated previously: that Newman had been working with schools for fifty years and considered that providing excellent teachers was the best way of raising attainment in schools.

It was agreed that a copy of the submission would be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting.

**Action:** Clerk to Council

Arising from item 3.1, the Vice Chancellor gave an update on the two student suspensions. In one case, the police investigation had now ceased and a student Disciplinary Panel would be arranged with the student remaining suspended until the outcome of the Panel. In the second, the student was still in custody and so the suspension remained in place.

Arising from item 3.4, the Council was informed that the literature about the date of readiness of the new Halls had been changed to advise that they would be ready for the start of the second semester in 2017/8. The Council noted the importance of transparency to future students about University accommodation.

Arising from item 3.4, it was reported that the ad hoc committee of Mr Kenny and Mr Westwood had received and considered the final proposal in respect of the Football Foundation Deed of Dedication and it had been signed.

## 1.4 Reports from the Committees

### 1.4.1 Nominations Committee

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the Nominations Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

### 1.4.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

Arising from the minutes, the following points were raised.

There had been a lengthy discussion about student retention, and the steps being taken to improve retention. It was noted that further discussion of this matter would take place during the report of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education).

Council members emphasised the importance of the contract for the Halls being completed on time and asked how this would be assured. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services described the range of formal and informal means of communication with Morgan Sindall, which included informal daily contact, with more formal monthly meetings. He felt that engagement between University staff and the contractor was working effectively. However, to assure the Council that the risks were being managed, it was agreed that appropriate members of the construction team would be invited to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. If this dialogue failed to give assurance, further options would be considered.

### 1.4.3 Audit Committee

The Chair of the Audit Committee gave an oral report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016. She noted that items from the Committee were on the agenda at 2.4 (Accounts and Audit 2015/6); 2.6 (Institutional Sustainability and Risk Management); and 2.7 (Prevent HEFCE 1<sup>st</sup> December Submission). She informed the Council of the other main areas of discussion. The Committee had received reports from the internal auditors on completed audits and had been encouraged by the auditors' report on the Research Degree Awarding Powers Project. The Committee had also considered a progress report on the internal audit programme for 2016/7 and the internal audit plan for 2016-19. The internal auditors had provided a report on the current and future environment in which higher education operated which was felt to be of importance and which the Committee had asked Dr Mark Goodwin to review report back to the next Committee, with a specific audit focus.

Having considered the advice and information provided by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and noting Grant Thornton's wide knowledge of the sector, the Committee had agreed

to extend the appointment of Grant Thornton as external auditors for a further year. The Committee took the view that an open tender would be appropriate in the following year.

1.5 Role of the Council Prevent and Legal Requirements

The Council received a 1-hour briefing about WRAP3 training that was being delivered across the University to staff presented by Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, West Midlands Prevent Lead, Further and Higher Education and Corinne Bresnen, Learning and Development Manager, Newman University.

1.6 Ratification of New Council Members

**Resolution 15/16**

To ratify the appointment of Ms Courtnie Reeve as Student Council Member.

1.7 Ratification of Council Members to Committees

**Resolution 16/16**

To ratify the appointment of Mr Stephen Kenny as Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

**2. The Current State of the University**

2.1 Report of the Vice Chancellor

The Committee received an update from the Vice-Chancellor on internal and external developments and on the Vice-Chancellor's major external activities and engagements. He highlighted the main points of the report.

At its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Senate had decided to join the network of universities against the death penalty. Newman was the first British university in a predominantly European network.

Dr John Peters and Mrs Sarah Parkes had made a successful bid to the HEFCE Catalyst Fund for a project on collaborative development of pedagogic interventions based on learning analytics. It was hoped that this would support the work to address some of the University's issues with retention and completion.

The Vice Chancellor drew attention to the recently published HEFCE report entitled *Financial health of the higher education sector: an uncertain outlook* which was based on the latest financial forecasts received by HEFCE from HEIs. Although the sector was currently financially sound, the report had identified potentially inadequate surpluses, declining cash levels and an increase in borrowing. There were concerns about projected high levels of growth when the environment (particularly the demographic environment until 2020) could make this difficult to achieve. He noted that in Newman's own forecast, a modest growth had been predicted with capital investment for improvements in the estate. He felt this should provide the confidence for Newman's sustainability.

The Vice-Chancellor commented on the importance of having good staff for the future of the University and reported that there had been three applicants for professorships and seven for the position of reader. Interviews were due to take place and, as always, would involve an external panellist.

## 2.2 Report of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education) reported on current issues relating to Formative Education and the major activities and engagements he had undertaken since the last meeting of the Council.

He informed the Council that following the revision of the method for the allocation of ITE places for 2017 entry, the University had been allocated 223 PGCE places; 50 at Primary and 173 at Secondary level. This was an increase from the 2016 entry when there had been 110 PGCE students. The allocations gave an opportunity for growth; however, it was noted that some of the allocations, for example 50 in Computer Science, were in areas where it was difficult to recruit students. The University had bid for more places than had been allocated to it in Religious Education. It nevertheless remained a large provider in this subject. There was no right of appeal against the allocation, but it was possible that unfilled places elsewhere might be released later in the admissions cycle.

Every institution had been sent its metrics for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Professor Lawson explained that TEF assessors would derive an initial hypothesis for each institution's rating. This would be based on the metrics, using a formulaic approach. The initial hypothesis for Newman was Silver, although this could change. Professor Lawson described the metrics in detail, noting that institutional metrics were compared with a benchmark figure which was unique for every institution and which took into account a range of characteristics that could affect the expectation of performance; these could include the distribution of subjects, the age and ethnicity of students and the proportion of students with a disability. However, HEIs had been advised that the final judgements would be holistic and not based solely on the metrics. The contextual statement could be used to draw attention to factors the University felt significant; for example, in Newman's case the high proportion of students who were recruited from the local area and who remained in the same area after graduation.

The Council heard that there was only one negative flag for the University: the highly skilled employment rate. This was the result of a poor performance in the 2014 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLEH) survey. The highly skilled employment rate had risen to 70.3% in DLEH 2015 and if this improvement were to continue for DLEH 2016, it was expected that the negative flag would disappear from next year's metrics.

Professor Lawson then explained the changes in the external quality assurance process. Previously, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had reviewed an institution every five years; this had been replaced with a dual system of an Annual Provider Review (APR) and the TEF. The APR would comprise a review prepared by HEFCE staff and drawing on existing data and information together with the assurances from the Governing Body of institutions on academic standards, the student academic experience and

student outcomes. This overall was referred to as the Revised Operating Model for Quality Assessment (ROM).

Professor Lawson identified the key points from his paper related to the assurances that the Council was required to provide to HEFCE (ROM). He highlighted the role and importance of external examiners and reported that they had all said, without exception, that the academic standards at Newman were, across the board, appropriate. He also described the process of the annual enhancement round.

During discussion of the report, the following points arose. The student continuation rates for 2015/6 were disappointing and Professor Lawson highlighted the measures that were being taken to improve the position. The University was carrying out detailed analysis to understand the reasons for the non-continuation rates. The Headsup+ induction programme had been made compulsory for new students enrolled on Top Up courses in 2016/7 and all applicants had been interviewed in Business Management where completion needed to be improved. In other areas, mentoring schemes and strengthened personal tutorial systems had been introduced.

In response to a question, Professor Lawson said that academic staff were making fuller use of the range of marks and that the number of first and upper second class degrees awarded had risen significantly.

Replying to a further question, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that the University would likely increase its tuition fees in line with inflation for the 2016/7 academic year.

### 2.3 Report of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) introduced his report on current developments. He reported that planning had intensified this year for the Project Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and was pleased to note that the RDAP Internal Audit Report from BDO was positive, having identified good practice in six of the eight categories audited and with all areas considered satisfactory for this point in the project. The twelve PhD studentships had all started; progress was good and two students were due to complete at the end of 2017. With the enrolment of around twenty EdD students, the total research student population eligible for RDAP numbers on successful completion was over forty.

Guidelines for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) would not be available until summer 2017 but the consultative document which was due to be published shortly was expected to give an indication of REF 2021. Some changes were anticipated; for example, it seemed likely that all research-active staff would be included and that outputs would not be transferable. He noted that fifty-five staff were REF-eligible, which had exceeded the target of forty.

Professor Childs then reported success in achieving funding from the Templeton Religion Trust for a pilot study to establish a framework for multi-disciplinary study of science in Muslim societies. He added that a final pilot project to develop an international network exploring perceptions of science and religion across continents was under review. It was also hoped that

there would be a three-year follow-on for the initial Templeton grant; all targets for the initial grant had been exceeded. He noted that multidisciplinary research which would be beneficial for the REF submission.

As a consequence of the greater funding and the lack of experience in this area, the University had expanded risk 3.4 to acknowledge the risk arising from the failure of large scale funding projects.

Professor Childs explained that, because of the increasing amount of grant funded research, the University had needed to improve its research strength at every level of seniority and now had an excellent team of young researchers. For example, Dr Alex Hall had received the 2016 Marc-Auguste Pictet prize, a prestigious international award for work by an early career scholar in the history of science.

## 2.4 Accounts and Audit 2015/6

### 2.4.1 Audit Findings Report from Grant Thornton

The Council received the Audit Findings Report produced by the University's external auditors, Grant Thornton. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised that a draft of this report had been reviewed at the Audit Committee meeting held on 11th November 2016, with it confirmed that no significant issues were raised within the report.

The Chair expressed his thanks, on behalf of the Council, to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and members of the Audit Committee

#### **Resolution 17/16**

To accept the Report.

### 2.4.2 Letter of Representation to be provided to Grant Thornton

The Council received the Letter of Representation to be provided to the University's external auditors, Grant Thornton. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that a copy of the letter had been reviewed at the Audit Committee meeting held on 11th November 2016, with the Committee recommending its approval with no adjustments.

#### **Resolution 18/16**

To authorise the Chair to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council.

It was noted that the Letter of Representation would also be signed by the Vice Chancellor and Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

#### 2.4.3 Newman University Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016

The Council received a draft set of financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2016. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that a copy of the financial statements had been circulated to members of the Council for review and comment prior to consideration at the Audit Committee meeting held on 11th November 2016. Members were advised that all comments received by Council members had been considered by the Audit Committee, who had recommended the financial statements for authorisation by the Chair on behalf of the Council.

##### **Resolution 19/16**

To approve the draft set of financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2016 and to authorise these to be signed by the Chair, on behalf of the Council.

#### 2.4.4 Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council

The Audit Committee's annual report to the Council for the 2015/16 academic year was received and the Council expressed thanks to the Committee for its work.

##### **Resolution 20/16**

To approve the annual report of the Audit Committee for the academic year 2015/6.

### 2.5 HEFCE Accountability Returns

#### 2.5.1 HEFCE Accountability Returns

The Clerk to the Council advised the Council of the requirements for the HEFCE Accountability Returns, noting the new section which related to the changes in the way in which HEFCE would exercise its statutory duty to assess the quality of education in the HEIs that it funded.

##### **Resolution 21/16**

To approve the Accountability Returns and to authorise the Vice Chancellor to sign Part 1 as the Accountable Officer and Part 2 by the Accountable Officer as a Council member and on behalf of all of the members.

#### 2.5.2 HEFCE Financial Forecast Commentary 2015/6

The Council received the draft Financial Forecast commentary for 2015/6. It was noted that the University was required to submit a commentary which explained any material changes from the forecast financial data submitted in June 2015. The commentary had been considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 1st November 2016 and the Committee had agreed to



recommend to Council that the commentary's submission to HEFCE be approved.

### **Resolution 22/16**

To approve the commentary for submission to HEFCE.

#### 2.5.3 Senate Report on Maintenance of Standards and Improvement in the Student Academic Experience and Student Outcomes

The Senate Report on Maintenance of Standards and Improvement in the Student Academic Experience and Student outcomes was received. It was noted that the Council was asked to consider the report and to provide assurance that the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and outcomes are, to the best of its knowledge, robust and appropriate, and to confirm that the standards of the University's awards have been appropriately set. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education) informed the meeting that the main part of the report provided an overarching summary of University's processes and where the responsibility for the these lay. He added that the annexes to the report were evidence that the processes were being used.

In response to questions, the Deputy Registrar provided further information and clarification about external examiners' meetings with programme teams and about the minutes of SSCC meetings and their availability to students. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education) advised that areas and matters of concern that arose would be picked up in his regular reports to the Council.

The Council found the report to be informative and comprehensive but felt that it would be helpful to have an executive summary as a preface. It was agreed that this would be provided for the next meeting of Council. It was clarified that this summary and would not be required for the document to be submitted to HEFCE.

**Action:** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education) and Clerk to Council

### **Resolution 23/16**

To authorise the Vice Chancellor, on behalf of Council, to sign the required assurance statement.

#### 2.6 Institutional Sustainability and Risk Management

The Clerk to Council introduced a report which gave the latest iteration of the Risk Register and the list of Principal Risks. She noted that this version of the Risk Register had been considered by Newman Management Group at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and by the Audit Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The Audit Committee had discussed in detail risks that had increased or were new (1.2, 3.4 and 1.5). The Committee had noted that the risks were identified in response to the external environment and was reassured by the internal measures being taken to manage the risks.

There followed a discussion about the risk register, especially risk 5.10 (forced merger or takeover). The Council was advised that the Government had removed the size threshold for achieving university status, favoured diversity and was generally supportive of small, specialist institutions but it was not clear whether faith based institutions were felt to have added value. It was considered that the best defence against takeover was being well-manged and efficient. It was noted that there were good relationships with other Catholic Universities and with the wider Cathedrals Group but no signs of closer alignment at present.

Some amendments were noted to the document that summarised the principal risks.

The Council received the report.

## 2.7 Prevent HEFCE 1<sup>st</sup> December Submission

The Council considered the draft of the University's first annual report to HEFCE providing a summary of evidence of the University's engagement with the Prevent Duty. It was noted that had been seen by Audit Committee at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and that Audit Committee had recommended its approval

The Clerk to Council advised that HEFCE had not provided a template for the report so she had used subheadings from the HEFCE notes for guidance. The absence of a template had given the opportunity to insert additional commentary and explanation to present a fuller picture of the University's work on Prevent and safeguarding: for example, the section on page 5 which outlined the substantial amount of expertise in the University on safeguarding issues as these were covered in the curriculum in a number of programmes, the importance given to the development of students' critical thinking skills; and in section 5, page 7, a narrative to explain the reasons given for the nil returns.

During discussion of the report some minor amendments and additions were agreed.

### **Resolution 24/16**

To approve the report, amended as agreed, for submission to HEFCE.

## 2.8 Update on Recruitment and Initial Student Numbers 2016/7

The Clerk to the Council presented a report to the Committee on the latest enrolment and recruitment position. The report was noted and received.

## 2.9 Financial Update for 2016/7

The Council received an update on the financial expectations relating to the 2016/17 academic year. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that the University was expected to achieve or exceed the budgeted surplus for 2016/7. Income was likely to be about £500,000 higher than budget and pay costs about £150,000 lower than budget. There were

currently no issues of concern to cause University management to consider that the surplus would not be achieved.

2.10 Estates Strategy Update

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented a paper giving an update on the implementation of the Estates Strategy.

The Council received the update and noted that the report raised no matter of significant concern.

2.11 Environmental Committee Annual Report

Consideration of the Report was deferred to the next meeting.

**Action:** Clerk to Council.

**3. Any Other Business**

3.1 The Council wished formally to record thanks to all those staff who had attended the graduation ceremony. It was felt that the large number of staff present was striking and that this showed to the graduands and their families the level of care the University had for its students.

3.2 It was noted the Students' Union report on the benchmarking tour of other HEIs which had been held over from the previous meeting would be on the next agenda.

**Action:** Clerk to the Council

**4. Date of the next Council Meeting**

The date of the next meeting of Council was confirmed as Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017.