

NEWMAN UNIVERSITY

Council

**Minutes of the Meeting held at Newman University at 2.30 pm
on Tuesday 21st February 2017 in DW111/DW112**

Present:

Mr Jonathan Day	Chair of the Council
Mr Glen Alexander	
Dr John Carlisle	
Professor Scott Davidson	Vice-Chancellor & Principal
Ms Deirdre Finucane	
Dr Mark Goodwin	Vice-Chair of the Council
Mr David Harris	
Mr Stephen Kenny	
Mr Phillip Lennon	
Archbishop Bernard Longley	
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
Mrs Jackie Flowers	Minute Secretary

The meeting of the Council opened with prayers led by Archbishop Bernard Longley.

1. Work of the Council

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Rev Canon David Evans and Professor Femi Oyeboode.

1.2 Minutes of the Meetings of Council and AGM of the University Company held on 24th November 2016

1.2.1 The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24th November 2016 were received and confirmed as an accurate record subject to typographical corrections.

1.2.2 The minutes of the AGM of the University Company held on 24th November 2016 were received and confirmed as an accurate record.

1.3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

1.3.1 Annual Provider Review Report

At the last meeting, the Council had received the Report on Maintenance of Standards and Improvement in the Student Academic Experience and Student Outcomes, with it suggested that an executive summary would be helpful. It was noted that a summary of the Report had been given at the Senate/Council Connection and it was agreed that this would serve as the summary for this year. An executive summary would be provided for Council for the report next year.

Action: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)

1.3.2 The University's Response to the Green Paper

At its November meeting, Council had asked to see the University's response to the Government consultation *Schools That Work for Everyone*. The response was received and noted. It was explained that the Green Paper was wide-ranging and that the University had responded only to the sections which concerned Universities.

The Council was advised that the next step would be for the Government to issue a summary of the responses received; however, the date for this was not yet known.

1.3.3 Reflections on the Senate/Council Meeting

It was considered that the joint meeting between Senate and Council had been useful and successful.

1.3.4 CUC Paper – Governing Body Responsibility for Academic Governance

The recently issued CUC guidance to Governing Bodies on their new responsibilities on providing assurance of academic quality was received for information.

Council discussed the implementation of the guidance. It was noted that there would be a continuous flow of information to Council throughout the year. For example: there would be a joint meeting with Senate each year; the minutes of Senate would be received by Council; in papers presented to Council, elements which related to the maintenance and setting of academic standards and the continuous improvement of the student experience would be more explicitly highlighted; at its October meeting, the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) would produce a report which addressed matters of academic quality and standards and which would go forward from ASC to Senate and then to Council.

Whilst it was important for all Council members to be engaged, it was felt useful for one Council member to become the lead for academic issues arising and perhaps to attend Senate as an observer.

It was agreed that the Vice-Chancellor would seek Senate's views and report back to Council.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

1.4 Reports from the Committees

1.4.1 Nominations Committee

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the Nominations Committee held on 27th January 2017.

1.4.1.1 Ratification of the second term of office of Mr Jonathan Day, Chair of Council

Mr Day left the meeting for this item and Dr Goodwin took the Chair.

Resolution 1/17

The Council ratified the second term of office of Mr Jonathan Day, Chair of Council.

1.4.1.2 Ratification of Mr Stephen Kenny as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Resolution 2/17

The Council ratified the appointment of Mr Stephen Kenny as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

1.4.1.3 Recommendation to Council to appoint a new co-opted member to the Audit Committee – Mr Colin Sagar

Resolution 3/17

The Council agreed the appointment of Mr Colin Sagar as a co-opted member to the Audit Committee.

1.4.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27th January 2017.

1.4.3 Audit Committee

The Chair of the Audit Committee gave an oral summary of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st February 2017. She reported

that there had been a discussion about the function of the Committee which had focussed on the importance of it being active with regard to the agenda and the annual report. It was considered that the annual report could be extended to give a wider account of the Committee's stewardship of its role and to provide insight into the ways in which it had been able to challenge and so to assure the Council of the vigour with which it fulfilled its audit role.

The Committee had received reports on the progress of the internal audit programme and had noted the positive feedback. The other item for discussion was the UKVI, reported in a Restricted minute.

2. **Role of the Council**

2.1 The Council Away Day

The Clerk to Council presented for discussion an initial draft of the agenda which was being developed by the University Leadership Team (ULT) and Chair of Council for the Council strategic away-days on 26th and 27th April 2017. The following suggestions were made: to leave space on the agenda for discussion; to have input from the Vice Chancellor at the start rather than the end of sessions; to have more emphasis on future threats and opportunities; to invite an outside speaker from the Catholic Education Service; to invite a non-Council member of Senate to attend; to strengthen Council Committees to ensure that they 'spoke with one voice'.

It was agreed that the Chair of Council would reflect on the suggestions made during discussion and would prepare a revised agenda for consideration.

Council members were asked to send any further reflections on the draft agenda to the Clerk to Council.

Action: Chair of Council and Vice Chancellor

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

3.1 Introduction and Report of the Vice Chancellor

The Council received a report from the Vice Chancellor which gave an update on significant factors in the University's external environment and on promotions within the University. During consideration of the report the following points were noted.

HEFCE was now working on TEF3 subject level assessment. University staff had involvement on QARSAC, as an assessor for TEF and as potential assessors with ROMQA and feedback from this would inform good practice. Since the Vice-Chancellor's report had been written, the National Student Survey (NSS) response rate had risen to 62.7%. There were twelve subjects at the University and in nine of these both of the necessary response thresholds for results to be made publicly available had already been reached. The University was confident that all twelve would meet the thresholds by the required date.

Drawing attention to the information on internal staff promotions to Chair and Reader, the Vice-Chancellor said it was gratifying that the University was able to produce and retain academics of such senior status. He noted that the process had been subject to significant external reference and that the applications had been judged at the standard pertaining across the University sector.

The HEFCE Regional Adviser and their Policy Officer had made the Annual Institutional Visit on 20th February 2017. The meeting had been very productive and they had been very satisfied with the University's financial position, sustainability and plans for the future.

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

A report appraising Council of current developments with regard to research and scholarship was received: speaking to the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) focussed on the following points. He outlined HEFCE's consultation process on the proposals for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 and drew attention to some key aspects - for all research active staff to be included and for outputs not to be portable - noting the problems that were felt to be associated with these particular proposals. He reported that the University was continuing with its preparations for the REF.

He gave an update on preparations for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and noted that BDO's internal audit report on RDAP had been positive. Under postgraduate research, he reported that progression on doctoral programmes was proceeding well and noted that there was an EdD viva taking place that afternoon which, if successful, would add to the list of completed doctorates.

3.3 Retention and Completion

The Council received a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education) giving the latest data regarding retention.

In consideration of the report, discussion centred on particular areas where retention could be improved and on the measures being taken and planned to improve retention. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that some of the measures listed were at the design stage, whilst others were currently in place. He said that he would be evaluating the effectiveness of the different methods, although it might not be possible fully to disaggregate the individual effects of the various measures. He would report back to a future meeting of Council.

Action: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)

3.4 Prevent 1st December annual return: outcome letter from HEFCE

The response from HEFCE to the University's annual report on Prevent was noted and received. The Council congratulated the Clerk to Council on the positive outcome.

3.5 Recruitment

The Clerk to Council presented a report which gave an update on student numbers for 2016/7 and applications for the 2017 entry. During discussion of the report it was noted that enrolment to Joint Honours programmes had declined by 15% since the previous year, and that the University had strategies in place for this. The decline in enrolments from November 2016 to February 2017 was noted.

In respect of applications for 2017, there had been an increase in the number of applications and in the numbers of offers made and accepted. This was encouraging as recently published UCAS figures had shown a sector decrease of 5% and given Newman's small size.

The decrease in School Direct PGCE applications for 2017 was expected and actions taken in response had been the development of School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) agreements, with further agreements being made in Cornwall and Northampton and with advanced discussions taking place in Nottingham.

3.6 Financial Expectations for 2016/7

The Council received a report on financial expectations for 2016/7, and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services highlighted the main points. He noted that there were no material concerns.

Due to the University's agreement to invest available resources in the achievement of the Strategic Plan and because of higher tuition fee income than budgeted, it had been decided to spend £500,000 of the additional £600,000 income on non-pay and on 5 fte staff posts. This had no adverse impact on budgeted surplus.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services clarified points raised about creditors and debtors, income received and about variances in expenditure in respect of the Library and of IT Services and Reprographics. Following discussion about the information given on the Balance Sheet, it was suggested that a column be added to provide the monthly as well as the yearly comparison.

Action: Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

3.7 KPI Report

The Clerk to Council introduced a paper giving an initial review of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI). It was noted that the paper had been presented for members to reflect upon and that it would be considered in more detail at a later meeting.

3.8 Students' Union Benchmarking Trip Report

A report was received on the benchmarking trip conducted by Newman Students' Union (NSU) as part of its Governance Review and to see what measures NSU could take to increase participation and engagement in activities.

Discussion focussed on the actions that NSU proposed to take as a result of the findings from the benchmarking. Council members observed that most of the institutions visited during the benchmarking had an officer for mature students and asked why there had been a decision not to introduce a Mature Students' Officer as about 30% of students at the University were mature. The President of the Students' Union explained that due to the size of the student body, it was felt more effective and efficient to have officers covering a range of areas rather than focusing on one particular group of students. The Equality and Campaigns Officer would have a responsibility for mature students as part of his or her role. The President reported that NSU had held a successful coffee morning for mature students and that the Union had encouraged mature students to establish their own Mature Students' Society. However, there had been insufficient interest, which was thought to be due to the commitments of mature students outside university.

The President drew attention to the number of candidates for President, noting that this was the highest number that had been received in the past few years.

It was noted that the categories in the NUS green impact awards had been changed to good and very good and excellent and the NSU was on track to achieve very good as a minimum.

3.9 Environmental Committee Annual Report

The Annual Report of the Environmental Committee on work undertaken during 2015/6 was received. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported continuing improvement. He noted that the more easily achievable outcomes had been completed and that it was accordingly now more difficult to sustain a high level of improvement. The emphasis had been on the estate but it was hoped to widen the focus to the curriculum. During discussion there were suggestions that the University might wish to investigate the Living Simply campaign, and the approach to the environment as taken by Unilever, for example.

A correction to the report was noted: NSU had not achieved the NUS Green Impact Gold Award as stated.

It was noted that agenda papers for Council meetings would in future be circulated via Moodle rather than by paper copy.

3.10 Summary of last Senate meeting

A summary of the last University Senate meeting held on 25th January 2017 was received and noted.

4. **Future Issues**

The Council received copies of slides used in the Vice-Chancellor's recent staff briefings and he gave his initial reflections on the University, based on his first few weeks in post. He had observed that the University was tightly controlled centrally; for example, Deans had little discretion in respect of financial decision making, so he had decided to devolve budgetary decisions to a lower level in the organisation to improve flexibility and responsiveness.

He was working with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services on a new model for resource allocation to devolve budgetary decisions. He was also looking at target setting, and noted that it was important for resources to follow students as academic areas were the main income generating areas. He considered that there was a need for more rational academic structures, with there being some very small and large very subject areas, particularly in Human Sciences. The Dean of Human Sciences was now looking at the structure of academic units in his School.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of effective management information and reported that he was discussing with the Secretary and Registrar ways to improve management information in order to provide good data and analysis on which to make decisions.

He had renamed the Senior Management Team as the University Leadership Team to reflect its role as leadership rather than management, and had changed the title of the Newman Management Group to the University Operations Team and re-written the terms of reference to focus and work together as a team on the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

The following points were made during discussion of the report.

The importance of the effective presentation of information to Council was emphasised and the Vice Chancellor intended to ensure that there was a single body of consistent data which would be communicated in graphic presentation and be easily understood.

In response to questions, the Vice-Chancellor explained that he did not wish to identify deficit academic areas *per se* but to obtain a sense of where income and costs lay to inform decisions; for example, to show which areas made a surplus and the extent of cross subsidisation. On interdisciplinarity, he noted the potential creation of new academic areas which would help to reduce silos.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Schedule of Council Meetings for 2017/18

The schedule of meetings for 2017/18 was received with the change of date noted for the meetings of the Nominations Committee, Newman Firmtrust and the Finance and General purpose Committee.

5.2 Bank Mandates

The Council was advised that it was necessary to update the bank mandates to reflect the arrival of the Vice Chancellor and University Secretary and Registrar.

Resolution 4/17

- i) that Scott Davidson and Andrea Everson (née Bolshaw) be approved as signatories to the University Bank Accounts including NatWest, Co-op, Lloyds and HSBC.

- ii) that the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the Company Secretary and Registrar be authorised to supply the bank as and when necessary with lists of persons who can sign and act on behalf of the University.

Archbishop Langley closed the meeting with a prayer.

The Council
Action Plan from the meeting held on 21st February 2017

Minute	Agenda Item	Action to be Taken	Person Responsible
1.3	Annual Provider Review Report	To provide an executive summary for the next report.	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)
1.3.3.1	CUC Paper	To seek Senate's views on a Council member attending Senate as an observer.	Vice-Chancellor
3.3	Retention and Completion	To report back to a future meeting with an evaluation of the measures taken to improve retention and completion.	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Formative Education)
3.6	Financial Expectations 2016/7	Additional column to Balance Sheet as agreed.	Director of Finance and Corporate Services