

8.30 am Briefing Session – Council received a presentation from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) and the CEO of the Students' Union on the development of the Student Experience Strategy.



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL

Held on Thursday 13th February 2020

The Chair welcomed Tim Collier (Associate Director of Finance – Financial Management & Reporting), Simon Clements (Head of Projects & Service Assurance in IT) and Filippo Nereo (Associate Director – Academic & Curriculum Development in the Keele Institute of Innovation & Teaching Excellence) to the meeting as observers.

For a record of attendance, apologies and absences, see attached list.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Clark declared an interest as a Trustee of Caudwell Children and both Dr Thompson and Professor Andras declared an interest as their spouses were members of USS.

2. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

(i) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2019 were approved and signed.

(ii) Actions List

Council received and noted the actions list.

3. STUDENT STORY

Council heard from a Level 6 Environment & Sustainability student who commended the support he had received on his course and the benefit of there only being a small number of students. This was compared to his friends on courses with much greater numbers and less support and the need for consistency. He reported that he enjoyed living on campus in his first year but that it was almost half the cost to live off campus, although landlords were beginning to increase rent in line with Keele. He thought the University should do more to publicise its excellent work in sustainability and provide greater support and encouragement to students who undertook extra-curricular activities, particularly where they related to their course.

PART A – REPORTS & APPROVALS

4A. UPDATE ON DELIVERING 'OUR FUTURE' & THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Item commercial in confidence

5A. FINANCE REPORT

- (i) Management Accounts
Item commercial in confidence

- (ii) Transparent Approach to Costing

It was reported that as part of the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC), the University had submitted an annual TRAC return to the OfS by the 30th January 2020, which had been approved by the Business Review Committee.

In addition, the University was also required to submit a TRAC Teaching return, which further analysed the costs of delivering regulated publicly-funded teaching per student FTE by subject.

The return was based on the previous year's audited accounts and it was confirmed that it had been compiled in accordance with the latest guidance.

Both returns had in previous years been considered by the Audit & Risk Committee but, due to a change in submission dates by the OfS, the internal approval process had been altered accordingly and the TRAC(T) return was being presented to Council.

Council **resolved:**

That the TRAC(T) return be approved and submitted to the OfS.

6A. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT – COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Council received a report from the Vice-Chancellor, which provided an overview of major issues and activities since the previous meeting, including:

- The key performance indicators with changes since the previous report were highlighted.
- An applications update was provided - Item commercial in confidence
- Following a discussion on how to structure and deliver the professional services that support our student recruitment ambitions, the Director of Marketing & Communications, Lorraine Westwood had taken the opportunity to move on from Keele. She was thanked for her renewed leadership over a very successful period of UK undergraduate student recruitment at Keele and consultation on proposals for the future organisation of the function were taking place.
- It was reported that in October 2019 the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) and Unison had conducted a ballot on its members regarding the ongoing dispute over the USS pension scheme and staff pay and working conditions. At Keele, UCU failed to achieve the 50% member turnout to secure a mandate and Unison voted against a mandate for industrial action. In December 2019 and January 2020, UCU reopened ballots at a number of universities and at Keele there was a mandate for industrial action on pensions but not pay and working conditions. Consequently, 14 days of industrial action would commence on 20th February 2020 over a period of four weeks, and action short of strike would commence from 20th February 2020.

There were two sets of national negotiations taking place on:

(i) pay and conditions, led by the Universities & Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), who would not move on the 1.8% pay award implemented without union agreement last summer but were in discussion regarding working conditions. It was agreed that a leaflet from UCEA setting out their modified offer on contractual arrangements, which sat alongside the 2019-2020 pay negotiations would be circulated to Council.

(ii) pensions, led by Universities UK (UUK), with recommendations coming forward from the second iteration of the report from the Joint Expert Panel. UCU had required a position of no detriment to members and the Vice-Chancellor had just been notified that UCU would be balloting on pensions again at the end of April 2020. UUK had asked universities to discuss with their governing bodies whether they wished to maintain the 65:35 split of employer:employee contributions or agree to vary it. It was noted that each additional 1% in employer contributions would cost the Keele an additional £600k.

Council agreed that the current 65:35 split in contributions remained correct and that the position should be held. In addition, Council asked the Vice-Chancellor to write to UUK to express its concern that arguing over the specifics around contribution was too short term a focus when there were broader, more fundamental issues to resolve. Council was strongly of the view that more sophisticated approaches needed to be taken in order to reach a position where the scheme was attractive, in particular to younger staff, and sustainable. Council was naturally keen to resolve the current strike action, not least because of the impact it may have on our student experience. However, taking short-term action to resolve the immediate issues could not be at the expense of resolving the long-term position of USS, and this must be the focus. It was agreed that the current tripartite discussions were clearly critical and the topics would be important in setting the mechanisms for the detailed conversations that were needed to reach the more nuanced approach to a solution to the pension issue. Council requested that UUK continued to push in this direction in the belief and hope that negotiations over the next couple of years could have a more positive tone.

- It was reported that the January 2020 graduation ceremonies had been a success and that 584 students had graduated, the majority of which were from Nursing, other health programmes and postgraduate students.
- The Smart Innovation Hub/Denise Coates Building had been officially opened on 24th January 2020 with a number of high-profile figures in attendance.
- Council was informed that, as a result of the UK leaving the EU at 11pm on 31st January 2020, details of the implications on HE were awaited and the University would work closely with the relevant bodies to ensure continued fair access to European funding, partnerships and initiatives.
- The senior team from the Beijing Foreign Studies University visited Keele on 6th January 2020, in advance of 79 of their students attending Keele from this October to complete the third year of their degrees.
- During the last week of January 2020 the University launched its new Health & Wellbeing Strategy, which had been approved by Council in November 2019.
- Council was informed of the progress of the Start to Success project, a two year project funded by the OfS which aimed to develop a whole community approach to support the mental health and wellbeing of HE and FE students, led by Keele and Staffordshire Universities.

- Planning permission would shortly be submitted for Innovation Centre 7 (IC7), which would provide new facilities for collaboration with business around digital, artificial intelligence and big data areas. The proposed funding would be a mix of c£7m from the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and a potential philanthropic and/or commercial investment of c£5-6m. Once planning approval and funding had been confirmed, Council would be provided with further details in order that approval to proceed with the project could be sought.
- Keele was taking the advice of Public Health England in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak, developing a set of emergency procedures, communicating regularly with staff and students and taking what it believed was a proportionate response.
- In response to a question regarding a recent BBC article, resulting from a Freedom of Information Act request on the number of non-disclosure agreements universities had asked students to sign, it was reported that Keele had responded with zero. They were not something that Keele had ever used for students. It was agreed that the figure would be included in the Annual Student Casework Report from hereon.
- A number of sector reports were summarised for information.

7A. SECRETARY'S REPORT – COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Council received a report from the Secretary to Council, which included the following:

- Council **resolved:**

That the Health & Safety Annual Report and Policy Statement be approved.
- Council **resolved:**

That the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of Council be approved.
- Council **resolved:**

That the proposed amendment to the terms of reference of the Business Review Committee be approved.
- Council **resolved:**

That the proposed amendment to the Schedule of Delegation be approved.
- Council **resolved:**

That the proposed rewards and promotions be approved.
- Council received and noted the consultation on the CUC Draft Governance Handbook and Audit Code of Practice; an update on the recruitment of new lay members of Council; a summary of the outcomes of the annual review of Council members; the intended move to paperless meetings; a summary of correspondence with the OfS since the last meeting and particularly the requirements of the 2018-19 Access Agreement Monitoring Return; a summary of Chair's action and the documents signed under seal.
- Training opportunities and useful resources were provided for information.

8A. CAPITAL REPORT

- (i) Student Accommodation on Campus
Item commercial in confidence
- (ii) Joint Veterinary School
Item commercial in confidence

PART B – COMMITTEE REPORTS

9B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Committee noted the reports from the following meetings:

- Annual Report of the Senior Remuneration Committee 2018-2019. The Vice-Chancellor left the room during the discussion of this report.
- Nominations & Governance Committee – meeting held on 21st November 2019
- Occupational Health & Safety Oversight Committee – meeting held on 21st November 2019
- Senate – meeting held on 4th December 2019, including Library Annual Report 2019-2020
- Business Review Committee - meeting held on 24th January 2020

PART C – THEMED DISCUSSION ITEM

10C. PEOPLE STRATEGY

Council received the revised People Strategy for approval.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Director of HR was unable to attend the meeting to present the Strategy so comments were invited by email and it would be brought back to a future meeting.

ACTION: ALL/RA

11C. DIGITAL STRATEGY

Council received the Digital Strategy, which was currently out for staff consultation and a presentation from the Chief Information Officer.

It was noted that this was the first full Digital Strategy for Keele and, as such, defined how as a University we could grow our capability and harness digital technology to support our students, academic colleagues and professional services.

Council welcomed the draft and noted that the final version would be presented to a future meeting for approval.

ACTION: DP

COUNCIL ATTENDANCE – 13th February 2020

	Dame Jo Williams	Pro-Chancellor
A	Richard Barnes	Deputy Pro-Chancellor
	Sally Bucknell	Deputy Pro-Chancellor
	Richard Callaway	Deputy Pro-Chancellor
	David Hall	Honorary Treasurer
	Professor Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor
	Professor Mark Ormerod	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost

MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY STAFF

	Professor Nicholas Forsyth	Senate Member
A	Dr Rebecca Leach	Senate Member
	Professor Peter Andras	Senate Member
	Emma Colley	Appointed by the Non-academic Staff

LAY MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE COUNCIL

	Ruth Bagley
	David Brown
	Paul Clark
	Sajid Hashmi
	Manali Lukha
	Sherree Schaefer
	Lesley Thompson
A	Professor Alistair Ulph
	<i>Vacancy</i>

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

	Amy Holden	Union Development & Democracy Officer, KeeleSU
	Katie Charlton	President, Keele Postgraduate Association

SECRETARY TO COUNCIL

	Dr Helen Galbraith	Secretary to Council
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IN ATTENDANCE

	Rachel Adams	Director of Human Resources
	Dr Mark Bacon	Chief Operating Officer
	Paul Buttery	Director of Finance

SECRETARIAT

	Fiona Dumbelton	Governance Manager
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Key

A = Absent