

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD AT 4.00PM ON TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2019 IN ROOM AH3.31, CANTERBURY

Present: Mr Frank Martin (Chair), Ms Sue Appleby, Ms Judith Armitt, Dr Alison Eyden, Mr Julian Faber, Mr Philip Fletcher, Ms Judith Harding, Sir Ian Johnston, Ms Pamela Jones, Mr Philip Kloppenborg, Ms Meradin Peachey, Mr Quentin Roper, Revd. Robert Stevenson, and Professor Rama Thirunamachandran (Vice-Chancellor)

In Attendance: Ms Alison Sear (University Solicitor & Clerk to the Governing Body)
Ms Eleanor Currie (Governance and Legal Services Assistant)

15. Opening Prayer

The opening prayer was delivered by Sir Ian Johnston

16. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms Nadra Ahmed, Mr Staynton Brown and Ms Connie Nolan.

17. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made by members of the Governing Body.

18. Chair's Communications

The Chair said that the University had held six Degree Award Ceremonies in September, graduating 1800 students. The Chair felt this had been an inspiring occasion and especially notable for the Honorary Fellowship awarded to Bishop Trevor Willmott; former Bishop of Dover and Governor of the University. The Governing Body extended their warm congratulations to Bishop Trevor.

The Governing Body meeting had been preceded Governing Body Away Day, which had focussed on theme of "The Undergraduate Student Journey" and had been an opportunity for deeper engagement with academic issues: academic governance and improving student outcomes, closing our gap (an institutional approach to improving outcomes for our Black Students), our approach to learning and teaching and the staff survey results. The Chair praised the outstanding contributions from the Deans of Faculties and other contributors.

19. Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on 2 July 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 2 July 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record.

20. Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

21. Report of the Vice-Chancellor [Paper M8]

The Vice-Chancellor was invited to present his report, Paper M8, to the Governing Body.

The Vice-Chancellor took a moment to remember Brigadier Maurice Atherton CBE, JP, DL and DCL, who had been a member of the Governing Body and had recently passed away. His invaluable contribution to the University was acknowledged and appreciated by all. There had been a memorial service which the Vice-Chancellor had attended.

Key points:

- The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the draft 2018/19 end of year management accounts showed an £875k operating surplus, which was favourable in terms of the budgeted position. The Vice-Chancellor said that this was positive and reflected the hard work of staff. He recognised that many colleagues had made difficult decisions in order to limit expenditure and achieve savings locally.

The University's recruitment of new students for the 2019/20 academic year was ongoing and had been highly competitive. The Vice-Chancellor said that to date, fewer new Undergraduate students had been recruited compared to the challenging targets the University had set itself. Positively though, approximately 3,650 new Undergraduate students had been recruited against the number required to meet the income budget this year (3,788). The actual number of new Undergraduate students was expected to reach approximately 3,700 by the time the clearing period ended. There had been some challenges in recruiting to programmes in the Arts and Humanities Faculty and the offering would be revisited during the course of the current review of the faculty.

Work was ongoing to confirm the current new Postgraduate student numbers but recruitment continued to be strong and based on the recruitment to date, the Vice-Chancellor was confident the University's target in respect of such students would be met.

Overall, the current new student numbers indicated that there could be a budget shortfall of approximately £900k. The University was preparing to make in-year savings in respect of this shortfall.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that returning student registrations and re-enrolments were in progress and would continue through to mid-October. A high percentage of students expected to re-enrol to subsequent years of study had already done so. Targets for returning students were anticipated to be met.

The Vice-Chancellor said that updated figures relating to student numbers, including new students would be provided to Governing Body at their meeting scheduled for 26 November.

The Chair noted his thanks to all the staff involved in new student recruitment and re-enrolment and in particular the Recruitment and Admissions staff, for their hard work in achieving this result.

RESTRICTED

END of RESTRICTION

- The Modernising our Student Information (MOSI) Project Board was scheduled to consider and meet on 26 September to take a decision on whether to go live with the Admissions and Finance modules of the new Student Records System. In response to a question from a Governor, the Vice-Chancellor said that the new Project Director, Graham Bayliss, who was very experienced in this field and was confident in the successful launch of these modules. The Governing Body noted that the University's biggest business risk was student recruitment and that the successful roll out of the MOSI project was vital.

A Governor asked about the contingency plans in place to mitigate the risk of an unsuccessful launch. She suggested that best practise was to run the new system in parallel with the previous system. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that final testing activities were ongoing in respect of these initial modules and there was a bedding in period of several months to allow for any necessary fixes to be put in place.

- The Vice-Chancellor reported that phase one of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities review had been completed and had achieved initial savings of approximately £500k. Following the departure of the Dean of Arts and Humanities at the end of September, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would oversee phase two of the review over the course of Semester One. Efforts would be made to reinvigorate the Faculty and identify efficiency savings where needed. This was expected to be a challenging process, but the faculty was underperforming by some margin. The next phase would consist of a deep dive into the curriculum and Faculty's programme offering to ensure it continued to be attractive and relevant to today's students.
- The Vice-Chancellor said that recruitment of Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) students for the 2020/21 intake had gone live on 15 September and would continue until 15 October. After 15 October KMMS admissions staff would begin the initial selection process, followed by interviews and leading to offers to successful applicants. The first cohort would begin study in September 2020. Recruitment had been supported by successful Open Days in April and July, and, with a longer term vision, by targeting local schools both at Primary and Secondary level.

In relation to funding for KMMS, the second tranche of £4m of LEP funding was under consideration.

- The University had been successful in its application for membership of the Conceive, Design, Implement, Operate (“CDIO”) Regional Network. In response to a question from a Governor in relation to how this would impact the University, the Vice-Chancellor said that the CDIO framework had been adopted for all proposed programmes within the School of Engineering. The approach was integral to the Engineering Curriculum and would enable the University to build physics into the curriculum and remove the necessity for a physics A-level on entry. This in turn was expected to improve the levels of female applicants to Engineering. The Vice-Chancellor noted his thanks to the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education, Enhancement and Student Experience), the Dean of the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences, and the Head of School of Engineering, Technology and Design for their efforts in this respect.
- The Vice-Chancellor said that the University had been ranked 118th of 131 universities in the Sunday Times Good University Guide, which was the same as in 2018. Positively, the University had been ranked 49th for teaching quality.
- The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Office for Students had approved the University’s five year Access and Participation Plan (2020/21 to 2024/25).
- Governors noted that the School of Allied and Public Health Professions had been awarded Bronze in the Athena Swan Awards. It was necessary for the majority of the STEM Schools to be awarded Bronze in order for the University to work towards a Silver Award.

NOTED

22. Report of the Students’ Union including Presentation of SU Objectives 2019/20 [Paper M9]

The Governing Body received Paper M9, Report of the Students’ Union including its objectives for 2019/20.

The President of the Students’ Union presented the report. He said that the Students’ Union had undertaken many discussions with students about their needs and requirements from the Union and the University. The consistent message was that students wanted transparency and value for money.

The President of the Students’ Union highlighted the Sabbatical Officers’ nine point shared Manifesto. Work towards these goals was expected to go beyond the current Sabbatical Officers’ terms in office and it was expected that future sabbatical teams would build on the achievements of the incumbent officers.

“Freshers’ Month” had been a success with events aimed at a broader student body than in previous years, encompassing all of the University’s campuses across Kent. A highlight had been the Family Fun Day held in Augustine House targeting mature students and students with caring responsibilities. The Students’ Union was also moving towards Freshers’ events which were less focused on the consumption of alcohol, in line with its NUS Alcohol Impact Accreditation and the shift in student demand. The President of the Students’ Union reported that during welcome week the 2019/20 cohort had been very engaged with the range of academic and pastoral support offered by the University.

In response to a question from a Governor about the Students Unions' long term goal to return its offices to main campus, the Vice-Chancellor responded that this was proposed for January 2021 following the opening of the STEM Building (Building 2) in 2020/21. The Students' Union would occupy office space on the main campus, vacated by those in the science labs which would have relocated to the STEM Building. Governors noted that Student Support, Health & Wellbeing colleagues would also be relocated to main campus, and together with the recently relocated Chaplaincy Centre and the Food Court, create a pastoral hub.

In response to a Governor question about the Students' Union's approach to the BAME attainment gap, the Students' Union President said that the BME Society in Medway had been set up and was considered to be working well. The Students' Union aimed to build upon this type of frontline contact. The Students' Union President said that it was important to focus on a more holistic, global university experience for BAME students, which was considered to be equally important as academic diversity.

A Governor raised the point that Universities UK had recommended that Universities should appoint a board member to lead on issues of online harassment. The Vice-Chancellor said that this important agenda had been picked up within the University's adoption of the Mental Wellbeing Framework that had been developed in 2018/19 and in addition would continue to be rolled out as part of the 'Expect Respect' campaign. The Vice-Chancellor said that a great deal of work had been undertaken and it was positive that there had been no student suicides at the University in 2018/19. However, it was imperative for the University to continue building on the work in this area. The Students' Union President confirmed his view that there were policies and mechanisms in place both at the University and at the Students' Union to respond to online harassment. The Vice-Chancellor noted that there was a Health and Safety Champion and an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Champion on the Governing Body, and this was considered to be a sufficient mechanism for Governor assurance and oversight of this issue.

Governors noted that the Ex-Sabbatical Officer Alumni Reunion had been attended by the Vice-Chancellor and was well attended by ex-sabbatical officers. Many of those who attended were currently actively involved with the University, in activities such as supporting employability initiatives and advising in areas of expertise such as fundraising.

The Chair thanked the Students' Union President for his report and the Students' Union's valuable work which was vital to the health of the University.

NOTED

23. Governing Body Terms of Reference and Work Plan 2019/20 [Paper M10]

The Governing Body received Paper M10, Governing Body Terms of Reference and Work Plan 2019/20.

The University Solicitor and Clerk to the Governing Body said that there had been no significant gaps in terms of the Governing Body's compliance with the 2018/19 work plan.

The Terms of Reference for 2019/20 had been updated to reflect the appointment of the new Bishop of Dover, Right Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, who would begin her term as Governor in November 2019, and the appointment of Judith Armit as one of two Deputy Chairs of the Governing Body.

RESOLVED:

That the Governing Body Terms of Reference 2019/20 and the Work Plan 2019/20 be approved.

24. Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and External Speakers [Paper M11]

The Governing Body received Paper M11, Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and External Speakers.

The University Solicitor and Clerk to the Governing Body said that the code, last approved by the Governing Body in 2016, had been revised. Several updates had been made during the review process, including references to the comprehensive guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission following discussion in the media regarding censorship and 'no-platforming' at Universities. The revised code included a section about when the law provided for limitations on Freedom of Expression, which it was hoped would provide helpful guidance to colleagues when considering controversial speakers. The external speaker procedures had been split into an appendix to make the code a more manageable size.

A Governor asked if, until present, the code had been fit for purpose. The Clerk responded that it had been tested with several sensitive or high profile events and had been found to give appropriate guidance. Governors noted that there had been no refusals of a request to an external speakers from March 2016 to date.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and External Speakers be approved.

25. Office for Students (OfS) Regulation Update [Paper M12]

The Governing Body received Paper M12, OfS Regulation Update. The University Solicitor and Clerk to the Governing Body spoke to the paper and said that the Governing Body was required to assure itself that the University continued to satisfy the OfS' ongoing conditions of registration which were listed in the paper. This paper was intended to assure the Governing Body of the University's progress in this regard. Governors noted that an updated paper would be presented to the Governing Body at their November meeting to update Members on the University's compliance of OfS conditions B1-B6 relating to quality and to reflect that the OfS had recently approved the University's five year Action and Participation Plan.

NOTED

26. Termly Health and Safety Report [Paper M13]

The Governing Body received Paper M13, Termly Health and Safety Report. The Vice-Chancellor spoke to the paper and said this was a new standing item as requested by Governors to assure them that Health and Safety was an area of particular focus for the University. He said that the new Director of Estates and Facilities was committed to this agenda and was working closely with the Head of Health and Safety.

There had been two RIDDOR reportable incidents in this period and the lessons learned had been actioned. In response to a question from a Governor, the Vice-Chancellor said this was considered to be a low number of incidents given the size of the institution although benchmarking data was not readily available.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Director of Estates and Facilities and the Head of Health and Safety were actively involved in the construction decisions where there was an impact on compliance with Health and Safety requirements. A Governor suggested stress testing was performed in order for the University to assure itself of the adequacy of its emergency procedures before the STEM building was occupied. The Vice-Chancellor undertook to discuss the plans relating to emergency planning in respect of the STEM building with the Director of Estates and Facilities and the Head of Health and Safety.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the SMT had made a decision to require Health and Safety Induction Training, together with other trainings, to be carried out as a mandatory condition of probation for all new staff. A push for completion of these training sessions by existing staff would be rolled out by colleagues in the Organisational Development team, supported by the introduction of personalised training matrices in StaffSpace. The benefit of this had not yet been reflected in the training statistics, but was expected to become apparent by the end of the academic year.

In response to a question from the Chair in relation to the shattered glass panels on the façade of Augustine House, the Vice-Chancellor reassured the Governing Body that Estates and Facilities staff had engaged a glazing expert to review the safety of the entire building. He confirmed that there had been no injuries when the glass shattered. An update would be provided to Governors in due course.

27. Oral Report on the Meeting of the Audit Committee on 17 September 2019.

The Chair of the Audit Committee gave an oral report on the Audit Committee meeting of 17 September.

The Chair of the Audit Committee said that the committee had approved its Terms of Reference and work plan for 2019/20 and reviewed two internal audit reports as well as the Annual Report of the internal auditor. The Internal Audit work plan was broadly on track, with one delayed report. The Chair of the Audit Committee said that Members had discussed the open and transparent discussions which were ongoing with the banks regarding the University's ability to comply with financial covenants contained in the re-financing agreement. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that further updates would be provided to the Audit and Finance and Resources Committees in due course and to the Governing Body at their November meeting.

NOTED

28. Calendars of Meetings 2019/20 and 2020/21 and Calendar of Visits 2019/20 [Paper M14]

The Governing Body received Paper M14, Calendars of Meetings 2019/20 (revised) and 2020/21, and Calendar of Visits 2019/20 for information. The Deputy Chair asked that the date of the Remuneration Committee in 2019 be confirmed.

NOTED

[The date of the Remuneration Committee is confirmed and will be held on 8 November 2019]

29. Any other business

A Governor asked the Vice-Chancellor to provide an update on the University's plans in relation to its student accommodation. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that following discussion with senior colleagues in the executive, his view was that it was too early to take such decisions. Governors noted that the University's needs would be clearer once the preferences of the future medical and engineering students were understood and there was greater clarity around student numbers and demographics. The University would consider options including building accommodation on the Prison Site, renewing current halls of residence leases and finding alternative sites. The Vice-Chancellor noted that Governing Body members would be updated on these considerations in due course following prior consideration by the Finance and Resources Committee.

30. Confidential items

It was noted that the discussion concerning the sale of the Broadstairs Campus would be kept confidential for commercial reasons.

NOTED

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.

