



Minutes

Board of Governors

29 November 2022

The meeting was held in the Waldegrave Room and Online

Present: Mr Paul Barber
Mr David Brambell
Dr Chris Campbell – Staff Governor
Mr Jeff Cottle
Ms Caitlin Finn – Student Governor
Mr Dave Hartnett
Mr George Jenkin – Staff Governor
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor
Ms Claire McDonnell
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)
Ms June Mulroy
Mrs Deborah Streatfield

In Attendance: Mrs Jo Blunden – Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)
Mr Andrew Browning – University Secretary (Minutes)
Professor Symeon Dagkas – Provost
Mr Jack Kenward – Interim Director of Strategic Planning
Dr Mary Mihovilovic
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
Mr Andrew Whateley – Head of Data Analytics & Reporting
Mr Ben Williamson – Financial Controller

Apologies: Fiona Gatty, Pietro Palladino, Paul Barber

22/16	<p>WELCOMES</p> <p>The meeting opened with a prayer.</p> <p>Dr Mary Mihovilovic who will be taking over from Dr Chris Campbell as the staff governor nominated by the Academic Board was welcomed to the meeting.</p> <p>The interim Director of Strategic Planning, Jack Kenward, was welcomed to his first Board meeting.</p>		
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22/17	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>		
22/18	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting of 29 September 2022 were approved by the Board.</p>		
22/19	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>22/06 – Maryvale – The Provost gave a brief update on the current position of the proposed transfer of activities from Maryvale to the University. Meetings had taken place both internally and externally with staff from the Birmingham Archdiocese and the University was currently waiting to hear back from them regarding the proposal.</p> <p>The University Secretary gave a brief update on the current position regarding recruitment to the Board of Governors. He said that two potential members of the Board had recently visited the University and had met informally with him and the Vice-Chancellor. He said that they were of the view that both individuals seemed to have great potential to be appointed to the Board. They would therefore be meeting with the Chair and then be considered by the Nominations and Governance Committee.</p> <p>The Chair said that following this meeting a draft statement coming from the Board to all staff regarding Equality and Diversity and with a particular emphasis on the Race Equality Charter would be distributed to Board members for their approval. Once this approval was received it would be sent out to all staff.</p>		
22/20	<p>VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT</p> <p><i>Paper 1 refers</i></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the success of the University at the annual THE Awards in which it was awarded the trophy for Outstanding Support for Students for its “St Mary’s Cares” package for care leavers. The Board offered its congratulations to all of those involved in the University receiving this award.</p>		

	<p>On the regulatory front despite 90% of institutions during the OfS consultation arguing for its retention, Question 27 of the NSS which related to overall student satisfaction was being removed from the survey. This meant that the University would have to work harder to do well in the NSS.</p> <p>It has been reported in the press that there was consideration in government of restricting international recruitment of students to only “top” universities. This was being taken seriously by the sector and UUK was actively campaigning against this.</p> <p>An update was given on Development by the CFO. He said that a review of development was being carried out and this would start in the New Year and would be completed in three months.</p> <p>The COO provided an update on the UCU industrial action. This related to pay and pensions; however, the action relating to pensions did not apply to the University as it related to the USS Pension Scheme of which the University was not a member. The industrial action included action short of a strike and there had been two days of strikes on 24 and 25 November with a further day planned on 30 November. To date the local UCU had been respectful on strike days and there had been no major impact on students so far.</p> <p>The Board noted the Vice-Chancellor’s report.</p>		
22/21	<p>MEDICAL SCHOOL UPDATE <i>Paper 2 refers</i></p> <p>The University Secretary presented the update on the medical school. He told the Board that the first meeting of the Programme Board took place on 21 November and that the first meeting of the Steering Group would be held in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>The University Secretary also highlighted the reporting requirements saying that progress reports would be provided at each meeting of the Board and it was envisaged that an analysis of the financial feasibility of a medical school would come to FRC for scrutiny. Staff members would also be updated</p>		

	<p>through VC reports and there would be a “town hall” for staff in late January/early February.</p> <p>The CFO said that an external audit of the financial analysis would need to be carried out so the analysis that would come to Board would not be extensive as the external audit would be.</p> <p>A question was raised by the Board regarding the need to set up a medical school. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University’s size and finances meant that it had issues that organic growth alone could not address and there was a need for initiatives which would create a step change in growth of student numbers which was one of the aims of Vision 2030. A medical school would increase student numbers and there would be significant financial benefits. The subsidiary model that the University was considering was due to the lack of funding from central government.</p> <p>The Board asked what the view of the Charity Commission would be if money were being moved from the University which was a practising charity into a private medical school. The Board asked that this be researched further. The University Secretary said there were two models being considered for operating the medical school one being a wholly owned subsidiary which would allow uncapped fees to be charged to all students. He said that further investigation was needed as to whether this would be feasible and also consideration by the Board as to whether it felt it would be appropriate to charge UK students uncapped fees.</p> <p>The Board asked about the pace of the application and whether the University was moving too quickly in making the application due to the expertise which was required to be appointed to set up a medical school. The University Secretary said that the pace could be adjusted after stages 1 and 2 with the pace being slowed after then for stages 3 and 4.</p> <p>The Board asked about the role of the OfS and whether it should be engaged in the process. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University did need to consult informally with the OfS regarding the arrangements for the medical and this would be done.</p>	<p>AB</p> <p>AB</p>	<p>19/01/23</p> <p>19/01/23</p>
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	<p>The Board said the University needed to consider whether resources for the medical school were being absorbed at the expense of current students of the University and also whether there was management capacity to implement the project. They were also concerned about the risk that other areas the University was looking to develop would be overlooked at the expense of the medical school.</p> <p>The Board also acknowledged that the development of a medical school could be financially beneficial to the University and the concerns raised by the Board should be addressed.</p> <p>The Chair concluded the discussion stating that the two main questions raised by the Board centred around pace and capacity to deliver a medical school and these concerns should be addressed in the next update to the Board. He said that it would be helpful to have a timeline. It was requested by the Board that informal discussions take place with the OfS and Charity Commission ahead of the next meeting.</p>	SLT	19/01/23
22/22	<p>APPROVAL OF KPIS <i>Paper 3 refers</i></p> <p>The interim Director of Strategic Planning presented the KPIS for approval by the Board. He said that the retention KPI was still being worked on but the remaining KPIS were coming before the Board for approval.</p> <p>The Board asked what the current KPI rates were. The interim Director of Strategic Planning said that it currently stood at 4.2% but this would be expected to double to around 8%. He said however that this was ahead of a review of the date in December and the January exams. This compared to attrition rates last year of 20%. The Provost was cautiously optimistic that there was an improvement from last year. He said that attrition rates were considered at each meeting of the Academic Development Committee.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that in the near future there would also be a proposed new KPI on tariff with consideration being given as to which areas of the University's academic offering would be able to take having a tariff KPI.</p>		

	The Board unanimously approved the KPIs.		
22/23	<p>STUDENTS' UNION REPORT <i>Paper 4 refers</i></p> <p>The SU Life President said that consultation had taken place on stage 2 of the student heart project with the results of this now being compiled. The COO said that following the consultation the University would be meeting with the SU to go through the plans for the student heart.</p> <p>The SU Life President said that concerns had been raised by students regarding parking on campus and the surrounding area. The COO said that parking use on campus had changed following Covid. The change in parking restrictions around the University had also had a significant effect and there was going to be a meeting with the local authority next week to discuss this. The University was also looking to provide more facilities for cyclists as well as investigating the possibility of participating in an e-scooter scheme.</p> <p>It was currently RAG week and the SU was therefore engaged in a number of fundraising activities.</p> <p>The Board noted the Students' Union report.</p>		
22/24	<p>STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE <i>Paper 5 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost said that the numbers for the January intake were up on last year. He said that while this was positive more work was being done to further increase these numbers in future years.</p> <p>On undergraduate recruitment the University was currently 3.9% down on applications compared to last year. The University's competitors were around 5% down. It was however very early in the UCAS cycle with the closing date for applications not being until 25 January. Following the UCAS deadline the portfolio review would take place.</p> <p>PGT programmes were 200% up on last year and international recruitment was strengthening with the University seeking to increase its number of CAS applications. The University was now attracting a</p>		

	<p>higher calibre of international students and the attrition levels for international students were currently low.</p> <p>Deborah Streatfield said that she had received some positive feedback from a school visit to the University and this was shared with the Board.</p> <p>The student recruitment update was noted by the Board.</p>		
22/25	<p>DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT <i>Paper 6 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost presented the proposed Degree Outcomes Statement which had been drafted primarily by the Dean of Learning and Teaching with assistance from strategic planning. It had been reviewed by Academic Board and following approval by the Board of Governors it would be uploaded onto the University's website.</p> <p>The Provost asked the Board to note that it was expected that the percentage of students expected to get "good honours" for this academic year would be 77% which would bring it back to pre-covid levels.</p> <p>The Board asked about the process for appointing external examiners and monitoring their performance. The Provost said that the approval process was conducted through ADC with his giving the final approval. Their performance was subsequently monitored through the programme reports which came to ADC and through the portfolio review.</p> <p>The Board approved the Degree Outcomes Statement.</p>		
22/26	<p>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS <i>Paper 7 refers</i></p> <p>The Management Accounts to the end of October were presented by the CFO. Operating profit was c£1.5m which was c£0.2m ahead of budget. The CFO said that it was very early in the financial year but it was a very positive start. He said that looking at the resource allocation model that there were</p>		

	<p>areas of the University which were not only covering their costs but they were also achieving up to 8% profitability which was pleasing to see.</p> <p>The Board asked about the performance of the Exchange. The CFO said that this was in part due to phasing as August was a particularly quiet month; however, it may not meet budget this year.</p> <p>The Board asked about the high number of vacancies being carried. The COO said that it was currently very hard to recruit at present in particular on the non-academic side. She said that there was still a need for the roles and it meant the University was not able to do some things as a consequence of their not being filled. She said that as part of the Operational Enhancement Review more consideration was being given to automation.</p> <p>The Board asked whether the staff costs to income ratio could be held down if vacancies remained unfilled. The COO said the University had lower than average staff costs and it was more a case of the University needing to improve its income to improve the ratio. She said that if processes were streamlined then staff costs could potentially be reduced.</p> <p>The Board asked whether the University would be able to take advantage of increases in interest rates. The CFO said that he was looking at what options there were but there was a need to ensure that there was enough cash accessible in order to pay for capital expenditure.</p> <p>The Board noted the Management Accounts.</p>		
22/27	<p>ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS <i>Paper 8 refers</i></p> <p>The CFO confirmed that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been audited by the external auditors BDO and while there were a few minor points they needed to examine their opinion was likely to remain the same.</p> <p>The CFO said that the accounts had remained broadly the same since the year end with pension</p>		

	<p>provision being the only element in need of some adjustment as a consequence of the actuarial valuation. There had been an uptick in the pension valuation as a consequence of the increase in interest rates.</p> <p>The CFO highlighted the stress testing that had been done to give confidence to the Board that the University was a going concern.</p> <p>There had been a small surplus this year for the first time in six years of £400k which was slightly ahead of budget.</p> <p>The Board asked about the purpose of the US Foundation. The CFO said that in practice this had been dormant for some time; however, it was felt that it would be beneficial to retain this as and when the need arose to have a vehicle in the US for fundraising.</p> <p>The Board unanimously approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements and thanked all those involved for their hard work in producing these.</p>		
22/28	<p>AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT <i>Paper 8 refers</i></p> <p>The University Secretary asked the Board to note the Annual Report of the Audit Committee. He highlighted the favourable opinion of the internal auditors and the external auditor's completion report.</p> <p>The Board noted the report.</p>		
22/29	<p>AUDIT LETTER OF REPRESENTATION <i>Paper 9 refers</i></p> <p>The Board approved the signing of the letter of representation by the Chair of the Board to the auditors on behalf of the Board of Governors.</p>	AB/BW	29/11/22
22/30	<p>PREVENT ANNUAL RETURN <i>Paper 10 refers</i></p> <p>The COO presented the Prevent Annual return. The Board approved the signing of this by Chair on behalf of the Board of Governors.</p>		
22/31	<p>SALE OF 16 STRAWBERRY HILL ROAD</p>		

	<p><i>Paper 11 refers</i></p> <p>The COO asked the Board to approve the sale of 16 Strawberry Hill Road. The property is not adjacent to the University's estate and is considered an outlier in terms of the accommodation provision for students. It is therefore the wish of the University to dispose of the property with the proceeds being re-invested into on-campus accommodation. It is valued as being in excess of £2.3m.</p> <p>The Board asked if there would be a net loss in rooms as a consequence of the sale. The COO said that the plan was to reconfigure and potentially increase the number of on-campus rooms.</p> <p>The Board unanimously approved the sale of 16 Strawberry Hill Road. The University Secretary would now liaise with the CES regarding processing the sale.</p>	AB	01/12/22
22/31	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p><i>Valediction</i></p> <p>Dr Chris Campbell was thanked for her contribution as a member of the Board of Governors.</p>		
22/32	<p>Dates of Next Meetings</p> <p>03 November 2022 (Mini Away Day)</p> <p>29 November 2022</p> <p>19 January 2023</p> <p>23 March 2023 (Away Day)</p> <p>20 April 2023</p> <p>20 June 2023</p>		

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