

Summary Report of Council 1

The University Council held a virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams on 25 November 2020. This paper provides a high-level summary of the business considered by Council, which will be published on the University website. This is not a formal record of the Council meeting but presents an update on matters discussed by the University's governing body.

Baroness Ann Taylor
Chair of Council

1 Report from the Chair of Council

On behalf of Council, the Chair recorded her continued appreciation to the Executive Team, and the wider University community for the work that had been undertaken during the pandemic and in welcoming, supporting and teaching students in the current unprecedented and exceptional times.

The Chair also drew attention to the new monthly informal Council briefings that had been introduced. These briefings would provide a regular opportunity for Council members to hear about developments at the University and topics of interest or importance which would support members in maintaining an understanding of the context within which the University operated and also to hear about a range of developments, research, initiatives and other matters occurring at the University.

2 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Council received and discussed a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key matters affecting the University, including an update on COVID-19 recovery plans. External engagement activities were highlighted, and Council noted that the University continued to foster positive, constructive relationships through regular meetings and briefings, thus positioning the University in the heart of the city and region, showcasing its value and impact.

An overview of the recent changes that had been made to the University's senior structure were also provided. These changes were focussed on ensuring effective delivery of the new University Strategy and would provide integrated strategic leadership of the core discipline areas and related professional services to enhance the University's capability to innovate, grow and strengthen its academic quality, research and engagement.

3 Extension of Term of Office for Chair of Council

Council **approved** the extension of the term of office of the Chair of Council for a further term of one year from 1 August 2021 ending on 31 July 2022. Council expressed thanks to Baroness Taylor for her willingness to serve as Chair for an additional year which would provide stability and continuity in governance at the University during 2021/22.

4 Financial Statements 2019/20

Council considered and **approved** the consolidated Annual Financial Statements for the University for the year ended 31 July 2020 noting these were compliant with the Office for Students Accounts Direction. Council noted that the Financial Statements had been through an iterative process and had been subject to considerable scrutiny by a Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees (which included representatives from the University's external and internal auditors, BDO and RSM) who had endorsed the approach to the Financial Statements.

Council acknowledged the significant amount of work that had been undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer and his team in the drafting of the Financial Statements. These would be published on the University's website in due course. Thanks, were also expressed to the Chairs of Finance and Audit Committee for providing scrutiny and challenge on the Financial Statements during its development.

5 Student Recruitment

Council considered a report which provided an update on enrolment numbers of full-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught home/EU and international students for the 2020/21 entry cycle. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality reported that undergraduate home recruitment had been strong and was ahead of target; this position aligned with the extensive work that had been undertaken to enhance home UG recruitment and the specific interventions and activities that had been put into place. International recruitment looked more favourable than anticipated and the January intake for the postgraduate international market was expected to improve this position further; this was strongly welcomed by the Council. Plans for marketing and recruitment activity in Home and international markets for the 2021/22 recruitment cycle were also outlined.

Council was pleased to note the positive student recruitment position for 2020/21 and thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and his team for their hard work in producing a successful recruitment round, especially in light of the current pandemic and the challenges that continued to face the sector.

6 University Strategy Update

Council received an update on the development of the University's supporting and enabling strategies. Outstanding strategies (Estates and Infrastructure, People, Finance and Performance, and Brand, Communications and Marketing) would be presented to the Council in in 2020/21, along with KPIs and a new Performance Dashboard.

7 Business and Community Engagement Sub-Strategy

Council considered and **approved** the draft Business and Community Engagement Sub-Strategy 2020-2025. It had been developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders and would ensure a stronger interface between the University and the City and region. Members welcomed the strategy which described a vision in which Bradford would be a university city that shared knowledge in order to strengthen health, wealth and confidence across the many communities in which students, staff and alumni participated.

Council considered and **approved** the University's refreshed Financial Strategy 2020/21-2023/24 which was focussed on supporting the continued viability and sustainability of the University. Council noted that it was part of the Finance and Performance enabling strategy that was currently under development.

9 Draft People Strategy

Council provided feedback on the draft People Strategy, an enabling strategy of the University Strategy, noting that it had been considered by the Executive Board and the People Committee. The strategy set strategic direction and described the University's vision and objectives for its workforce over the next five years. Further consultation would be undertaken from stakeholder groups, including students, throughout December and early January and a final version would be presented to the Executive Board and Council in February 2021, for approval.

10 Academic Quality and Standards: Institutional Overview

Council considered a report on the University's framework and processes for managing the quality of learning, teaching, and academic standards in relation to the changing requirements of the Office for Students 'Regulatory Framework for HE in England'. Noting the importance of the report, Council **approved** the report as assurance:

- of the robustness of the University's current management of quality and standards.
- that the risks associated with the new and emergent regulatory framework, quality assurance regime, and compliance assessment methodology were understood and appropriately mitigated.
- that priority actions had been identified and were appropriate. These would be taken forward in 2020/21 and would ensure the University was able to adjust to the new external regulatory environment whilst supporting its internal strategic objectives.

Council also noted:

- the annual report of the business undertaken by Senate which informed Council of the detailed and diligent scrutiny that was undertaken by Senate and its Committees of the academic governance of the University during 2019/20.
- that an internal audit on academic governance had recently been undertaken by the University's internal auditors, RSM. The draft report indicated substantial assurance in academic governance arrangements at the University which demonstrated the robustness of the University's academic governance arrangements.

11 Research Concordat

Council considered and **approved** a report on the University's current and future activities which demonstrated compliance with the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity, a national framework for good research conduct and governance. Compliance with the Concordat was part of the University Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students. The statement would be made publicly available as evidence of the University's commitment to research integrity.

12 Annual Safeguarding Report Incorporating Prevent Accountability and Data Return

Council considered and **approved** the University's Prevent statement and data return for submission to the Office for Students and authorised the Chair of Council to sign the statement of declaration on its behalf.

Council also noted the University's first annual safeguarding report for the 2019/20 academic year which highlighted the changes made to the University's safeguarding arrangements, along with developing plans for enhanced training for members of the Safeguarding Steering Group, staff undertaking outreach within schools, and staff supporting University students who were aged under 18. This would be enacted during 2020/21.

13 Modern Slavery Statement

Council considered and **approved** the University's Modern Slavery Statement for the 2020/21 academic year which set out the steps the University had taken and would take to mitigate any risk of modern slavery and human trafficking. Council noted that the statement would be published on the University website.

14 Risk Management Policy

Council **approved** the University's Risk Management Policy, this would be reviewed every three years, and the Risk Appetite Statement, noting that this was presented in terms of the willingness to take risk in areas aligned to the University's corporate level risks. The Risk Appetite Statement would continue to be reviewed annually.

15 Pension Scheme Update

The discussion on pensions was deferred and would take place at an informal Council briefing on 8 December 2020, led by the Chief Finance Officer.

Standing Items

16 Report from University Secretary

Council received an update from the University Secretary which summarised ongoing work relating to areas of governance pertinent to the work of Council and the University. This included the extension of terms of Council Members, an update on the appointment of a new University Chancellor, and ongoing compliance with the Office for Students Conditions of Registration. Following consideration of the report, Council **approved**:

- one candidate for receipt of an honorary award as recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee.
- proposed changes to the regulations and ordinances relating to the University Assembly.

Council received a report from the UBU Education Officer and UBU Student Affairs Officer on current issues and recent activities which included an overview of freshers/welcome week activities and student engagement; COVID-19 mitigations; and plans for 2020/21. Council welcomed the extra efforts that the Students' Union had undertaken to support students during the pandemic.

18 Business from Committees of Council, and Senate

Council noted summary reports from Audit Committee, Finance Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee, Honorary Degrees Committee, People Committee, Remuneration Committee, University Ethics Committee and Senate on issues discussed since the last meeting of the Council.

In addition, Council **approved** the Audit Committee Annual Report which covered the work undertaken by the Committee in its fulfilment of terms of reference and compliance with Office for Students requirements for the year to 31 July 2020. The report formed part of the annual accountability process and would be submitted to the Office for Students.

19 Council received the following reports, for information:

- Minutes from the Council meeting held on 8 July 2020.
- Annual Workforce Dashboard and Health and Safety Report 2019/20.
- REF 2021 Update.
- National Student Survey Update.
- League Tables and Rankings Update.
- Access and Participation Plan Update.
- Draft Council 2 agenda.
- Council terms of reference and membership 2020/21.
- Council schedule of business for 2020/21.

20 Date of next Council meeting: Wednesday 24 February 2021

Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head (Governance)
26 November 2020