

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL COURT

Friday 2 December 2022

MINUTES

Sir Paul Nurse FRS (Chancellor)
(Hannah Quinn – Clerk)

Members

Category 1 – Elected Members

R Barry, R Bedi, U Brandenburg, T Brewer, C Burns, S Ellwood, A Franks, A Ganapathy, J Metcalfe, T Mitchell, M Partington, H Phillips, J Phillips, C Scowen, V Smith, S Sparks, G Stirrat, J Thompson, A Waterman-Pearson, L Wilson, M Young

Category 2 – Nominated Members

T Aditya, Z Banks Gross, X Bell, S Crew, H David, C Denyer, J Diamond, H Holland, D Marsh, R Maule, H Michallat, A Parekh, P Pipim Osei, A Raikes, S Raynes, C Reddington, G Richardson, S Savant, P Smith, S Wilson

Category 3 – Ex Officio

M Berry, P Nurse, A Sheng

Category 4 – Additional Members

A Farah, J Gill, K Gough, R Harris, L Holburn, R Leckie, K Libby, L Martin-Jones, M Mate-Kole, L McAllister Jones, S Rolt, J Royal, S Sayers, O Sweeney, H Williams, S Yelland

In Attendance

Senior Team

E Welch, E Fay, R Kerse, L Parr, J Squires, P Taylor.

Board of Trustees

J Boyer, K Bright, A Carr, I Craddock, R Day, H Gorst, J Khawaja, C Relton

Deans

M Powell, J Tavaré

Sabbatical Officers

N Antoine, I Russell, S Thambirajah

Elected individuals from UoB staff

G Brockington, J Church, L Clark, C Cowley, D Exon-Bartlett, R Harbour, T Khalid, R Logan, A Nansera, H Pearce, E Poletto-Lawson, B Shadwell, S Smart, N Smith, B Thomas, B Williamson

Facilitators

L Barling, J Davies, T Henderson, R Huffee, F Hyland, G Lambourne, D Law, J McWilliams, B Meller, K Miller, A Monk, J Nicholls, A O'Grady, A Paterson, R Scott, E Searle, D Smart, R Taffinder, P Tully, D Watson,

Support

H Cole, S Daniels, L Dineen, C Gully, B Harrold, A Hatcher, C Hickey, S Marshall, A Moody, T Riley, A Sahni, L Silvester

1. WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chancellor (Sir Paul Nurse) welcomed members of Court to the meeting, noting that it was the first in-person meeting for three years. He NOTED the arrangements for voting and confirmed there were no new conflicts of interest.

2. STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE THEME

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor (Professor Evelyn Welch) welcomed members to her first meeting of Court.
- 2.2 The following points were NOTED:
- 2.2.1 That Professor Welch had been in post since early September and that it was an honour to have been appointed. She introduced herself and thanked her predecessor, Hugh Brady, for his leadership.
 - 2.2.2 The extraordinary recent Research Excellence Framework results which judged Bristol as having 94% world leading research. Recent developments in research partnerships including the Perivoli Africa Research Centre, and the Quantum Technologies Innovation Centre, supported by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the Pfizer Centre of Excellence.
 - 2.2.3 The launch of Bristol Innovations, a new platform to build on innovation strengths, facilitate new partnerships and bring jobs to Bristol.
 - 2.2.4 The remarkable and unique nature of the city, and its attraction for students and staff. The divided nature of the city when considering educational outcomes and progression rates by postcode.
 - 2.2.5 The opportunity for the city and the University to make a real difference to any kind of global problem.
 - 2.2.6 The need for open discussion of the complex history which had shaped our University and to be able to move forward with understanding but without being bound by our past. Whilst our history could not be changed, we can choose how we present it, and what informs that choice. The launch of a public consultation in relation to building naming, and the commitment to review the logo and crest.
 - 2.2.7 The development of our Vision and Strategy, and today's focus on the Global Civic strand. The desire to move from strategic intent to real delivery, with the support of Court. Whilst the Vice-Chancellor had not been present for the Strategy development, she commended the bold new Strategy which would guide our future, with the city and the University working together to deliver for all who come to our campuses, and many others who would never set foot there.
 - 2.2.8 A video in relation to the Strategy was presented to Court.
 - 2.2.9 The aim to be a University for Bristol, not just in Bristol and the opportunities to collaborate with the city in research through ground breaking projects such as Children of the 90s.
 - 2.2.10 The development of the micro campus at Barton Hill, partnerships with UWE, local schools, the NHS, charities and businesses which would support the city, for example the opening up of warm spaces at the Barton Hill micro-campus.
 - 2.2.11 The region's expertise in sectors such as aerospace and creative technologies, which has helped to secure funding for a range of high-profile projects such as MyWorld, working with partners such as the BBC, Aardman Animations and Bristol Old Vic.
 - 2.2.12 The Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus which was central to our strategic aspirations and a major part of local regeneration in that area. The Research Hub had opened this year, and the Dental School would move into a new space next year, providing free of charge treatment with 1,000 appointments available to the local community per week.
 - 2.2.13 The aim to double the number of undergraduate students we recruit from our region and plans for new flexible programmes and short courses.
 - 2.2.14 That the Strategy could be considered to be designed for someone who is now 11 or 12, potentially your child, or niece, or nephew, who has only known a politically divided, digital world. We have a responsibility for their future by

delivering research into social justice, by creating jobs and new opportunities and many more.

2.2.15 The Vice-Chancellor's intent to listen to the wider community and understand what you value. Members were invited to contact the Vice-Chancellor personally.

2.2.16 The Vice-Chancellor thanked Court members for their warm welcome and continued engagement.

3. KEYNOTE SPEAKERS & WORKSHOP: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE GLOBAL CIVIC UNIVERSITY (CRT/22-23/001)

3.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost introduced the item. The following points were NOTED:

3.1.1 The establishment of a new Civic pillar as part of the Strategy and the support of Court at the 2019 meeting in designing this element of the Strategy.

3.1.2 The workshop would focus on how we could work together to implement the Strategy in partnership, to co-create a more equitable sustainable future locally, nationally and globally.

3.1.3 That the Global Civic theme aimed to articulate what it means to deeply rooted in our city and region but also globally civic through partnerships and networks across the world. It sought to address pressing global challenges in local contexts, sharing our solutions across the globe.

3.2 The Director of the Brigstowe Institute, Debbie Watson introduced herself and the workshop. Court members engaged in the Global Civic workshop.

4. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, INCLUDING CHANGES TO THE UNIVERSITY CHARTER, STATUTES AND ORDINANCES (CRT/22-23/002)

4.1 The Chair of the Board of Trustees addressed Court.

4.2 The following points were NOTED:

4.2.1 During the academic year 2021/22 the Board had undertaken two of its most critical activities to assure the future of the University, namely the appointment of Professor Welch as Vice-Chancellor, and the approval of the University Strategy.

4.2.2 The appointment of the Vice-Chancellor is a power reserved to the Board of Trustees, in consultation with Senate. The Chair had led the Board through a rigorous and successful selection process, which included consultation with almost 100 stakeholders, including a selection of Court members, a panel interview, presentation, stakeholder panels, and a media assessment. The Board held an additional meeting in mid-March and approved the unanimous recommendation of the Appointment Panel to appoint Professor Evelyn Welch as Vice-Chancellor. Professor Welch had performed outstandingly in all elements of the assessment and was particularly commended for her enthusiasm for the role, her alignment with our values, and commitment to making a difference to the community.

4.2.3 The Chair thanked Professor Judith Squires, who had served as Acting Vice-Chancellor from early July 2022 until the arrival of Professor Welch.

4.2.4 The Board focused on the development of the new University Strategy, from early stages, through to final approval. Since approval in November 2021, the Board has provided challenge and guidance on the development of the sub-strategies and the arrangements for governing the Strategy. The Board contributed to the development of Strategic Progress Indicators, which would be used to measure progress against the Strategy.

- 4.2.5 The Board had held the majority of meetings in person, visiting a variety of locations, including the Langford Campus and the Barton Hill Micro-campus.
 - 4.2.6 The Board took receipt of the Effectiveness Review report and have developed a challenging and exciting action plan to address the key points raised. The report provided confidence that our Board was effective and well run and provided opportunities to make further improvements including greater prioritisation of succession planning, a development programme for Trustees and opportunities for the Board to raise its profile within the University.
 - 4.2.7 The Chair thanked Trustees, who were stepping down - Kiran Sithamparapillai and Sarah Clarke, Madhu Bhabuta, Andy Poolman and Mohammed Saddiq.
 - 4.2.8 The Chair welcomed new Trustees Ruth Day, Harrison Gorst, Freddie Quek, and Ololade Adesanya.
 - 4.2.9 The Chair thanked all the members of University who were critical to its continued success and noted the collective endeavour of the whole University community.
 - 4.2.10 The Chair thanked members of Court for their valuable input into our strategy, their value and direction to the Board and the Executive.
- 4.3 NOTED that there had been no changes to the University Charter, Statutes and Ordinances that relate directly to Court, the Alumni Association, or the Students Union.
- 4.4 NOTED that the audited statement of accounts was presented at item 5, paper **CRT/22-23/003**
- 5. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2021/22 (CRT/22-23/003)**
- 5.1 The Chief Operating Officer introduced the item.
- 5.2 The following points were NOTED:
- 5.2.1 That the University's position was healthy but not wealthy.
 - 5.2.2 The reported deficit reflected the 2020 valuation of the USS pension scheme and the University's share of repayments against that deficit. However, valuations could be volatile and indications were that the current funding position of USS had improved. It would be important for all parties to complete the next valuation as swiftly as possible and pass any benefits back to staff.
 - 5.2.3 Without the pension charges, the underlying surplus was comparable to the year before. The surplus was used to invest in the estate and digital infrastructure, the new Dental facility and investment in digital experience enhancement.
 - 5.2.4 The University had grown its total activities by 10%. Income from education and research increased in tandem and 460 new jobs were created.
- 6. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING 2021 (FOR APPROVAL) (CRT/22-23/004)**
- 6.1 The Chancellor introduced the item.
- 6.2 APPROVED the minutes of the December 2021 meeting.
- 6.3 NOTED the update from the December 2021 workshop.
- 7. REAPPOINTMENT OF THE PRO-CHANCELLORS (CRT/21-22/005)**
- 7.1 The Chancellor introduced the item.
- 7.2 APPROVED the re-appointments of:
- 7.2.1 Mr Alex Willmott-Sitwell as a Pro-Chancellor from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026

7.2.2 Dr Andrew Sheng as a Pro-Chancellor, from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026

8. COURT STATUTES AND COMMUNICATIONS (CRT/21-22/006)

8.1 The Chancellor introduced the item.

8.2 RECOMMENDED to the Board of Trustees a review of the Statutes in relation to Court over the course of the next year with a view to bringing proposed changes via the Board of Trustees to Court for approval in December 2023. In summary, the review would look at better aligning the mechanisms of Court with its purpose, in order to support and improve member engagement.

9. OPEN FORUM QUESTION TIME

9.1 The Chancellor introduced the item and NOTED that answers to questions submitted in advance were published on the website.

9.2 The following questions were asked:

9.2.1 Clive Scowen asked how Court members would be engaged in the consultation on renaming. This information had been provided on the tables at the meeting, and would be circulated by email after the event. Almost 3,000 responses had been received to date.

9.2.2 Clive Scowen also asked whether community engagement by students would become the normal student experience at Bristol. The DVC & Provost confirmed that this how we operate and want to continue to do so. The Students Union contributed hundreds of thousands of volunteering hours annually, the University also arranged initiatives, employed students and engaged them as volunteers. The Bristol Futures curriculum identified citizenship as a specific attribute of the Bristol experience. Our Alumni networks also did great work providing mentoring, support and guidance.

9.2.3 Gordon Stirrat asked whether there had been any analysis of the changes to student mental health support, what has worked well and what else could be done. The Executive confirmed that there had been internal audit activity, and regular reviews reporting to the Board on the impact of changes and interventions.

9.2.4 Chris Burns questioned the pension contributions and provision in the accounts. The COO confirmed that this reflected our current contractual obligations, however it was likely that would change following the next valuation. Whilst there was volatility and uncertainty, the accounts accurately reflected our obligations.

9.2.5 Chris Burns also asked about the increase in staff numbers and whether this was mostly non-academic. The COO confirmed that it was a majority Professional Services staff, which represented investment into the NCC and student wellbeing. There had also been investment into apprenticeship schemes.

9.2.6 Carla Denyer asked whether the intended review of the Court Statutes intended to remove the opportunity for members to bring business. The Registrar confirmed that this was not the intention of the review.

9.2.7 Tom Aditya asked about the provision of adult education and language courses. The DVC & Provost confirmed that the Strategy aimed to increase provision for mature and local learners including new and more flexible programmes, with a more diverse student body. The University was working with other providers in the city to look at how we could extend our provision.

9.2.8 Martin Partington asked whether the University was being too modest about its achievements. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that she was happy to be less

modest and boast more. It was clear that Bristol absolutely punched above its weight, and we needed to remind people how great we are.

- 9.2.9 A Court member also asked about the aim to recruit 15% of students from the local population by 2030. The DVC & Provost confirmed that our commitment was to be working with the city to address inequalities. Current initiatives included co-sponsoring local schools and provision of mentoring. The University was looking at how we extend on those projects, through admissions policies and curriculum development and was working with the City to do this.
 - 9.3.0 Vince Smith asked the Chair of the Board about the review of Court Statutes and the opportunity for Court members to contribute. The Chair confirmed that there would be consultation.
 - 9.3.1 An anonymous question was posed through Slido in relation to Student Experience and answered outside of the meeting as follows – “Are you concerned about the below benchmark student experience as identified in NSS scores and what are you doing about it?”. The PVC Education confirmed that improving our NSS scores is a priority for the University and will be necessary to achieve the ambitions stated in our strategy. In common with the wider HE sector, Bristol saw a drop in our 20/21 NSS results, especially in relation to learning resources and assessment and feedback. The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) and the Curriculum Enhancement Programme team are working closely with colleagues in quality assurance, and with programme teams to address weak areas on the NSS. Our new unit evaluation tool is helping us to give us insight into areas of strength and problems students identify. We have a programme of curriculum and assessment design workshops running with all schools and programmes in the next six months to ensure that our new Assessment Strategy is fully implemented to bring about a consistent student experience. We are also piloting new models of personal tutoring to strengthen academic support in large schools. Our programme-level and system wide changes are in train to bring about improvements in the NSS. Adapting to growth and more diverse student body requires new ways of teaching and learning which we are investing in to ensure all students get an excellent quality higher education experience. Factors outside our direct control are rolling industrial action which we are working to mitigate within the limits of the law.
- 9.3 The Chancellor closed the meeting, thanking Court for their engagement in this important forum and for the quality of the questions both in writing and at the meeting.