

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Friday 9th July 2021

Meeting held via Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Mr J Boyer (Chair), Professor H Brady (Vice-Chancellor), Dr M Bhabuta, Ms G Bowen, Mrs K Bright, Professor A Carr, Ms J Cecil, Ms S Clarke, Professor I Craddock, Ms L Fletcher, Mr N Joicey, Dr J Khawaja, Mr A Poolman (Treasurer), Mr M Saddiq, Mr S Robertson, Professor J Squires (Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) and Provost), Professor K Syrett, Mr K Sithamparapillai.

Secretary: Lucinda Parr

In attendance: Robert Kerse, Hannah Quinn (Clerk)

Apologies: Dr A Raffel

1 WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members, noting apologies from Andreas Raffel and welcoming Ian Craddock to his first meeting as academic staff trustee and Kirsty Bright to her first meeting as professional services staff trustee.
- 1.2 NOTED that this was the last meeting for Keith Syrett and the Chair would make remarks at the end of the meeting.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 2.1 Kiran Sithamparapillai declared an interest in item BT/20-21/073 COO Report, in relation to the annual SU Accounts and would recuse himself for that item.
- 2.2 Stephen Robertson and the Vice-Chancellor declared interests in item BT/20-21/075 Chairs Report and would recuse themselves for that item.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board of Trustees on 27 May 2021 were APPROVED as a fair and accurate record.

4 ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 Noted the action register and that completed actions would be removed from the register.

5 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT AND QUESTIONS

- 5.1 The following points were NOTED:
 - 5.1.1 The level of sector activity to influence the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), which could have significant sector implications including the potential return of Augar and changes to research funding. **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**
 - 5.12 The development of a national innovation strategy and the involvement of Bristol colleagues. It was likely that the strategy would emphasize industry-led research and place-based impact with a focus on the levelling-up agenda. An

increased focus on the Life Sciences was also anticipated which could benefit Bristol.

- 5.1.3 That significant pressure had been applied by Conservative backbenchers and peers to restore Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding next year, however the Treasury remained restricted in terms of budget.
 - 5.1.4 Thanks were noted to staff who had managed the recent assessment period, and the recent graduation ceremonies for the Dental, Medical and Veterinary programmes were commended.
 - 5.15 The recent Teaching Award celebrations, which had been a great success with 860 different staff members having been nominated by over 1000 staff and students.
 - 5.1.5 In relation to Covid-19, that the Delta variant had led to a significant increase in cases and hospitalisations locally and nationally. Significant concern from scientists and experts about the implications of removing restrictions from the 19th July. Although less cases were resulting in hospitalisation, impacts were still present to the NHS, to operations and workload. Bristol had the 28th highest case rate in the UK, with 86% of cases among the under 40s.
 - 5.1.6 That guidance had been received from the Department for Education (DFE), but remained conflicting. The importance of working closely with Public Health England (PHE) was recognised in guidance but it would be important to be able to flex mitigations depending on local circumstances, and lobbying continued in this area.
 - 5.17 Good progress locally in vaccination roll out with a focus on younger people and delivering second vaccines earlier. The recent student outbreak had now been closed by PHE. There were 18 active student cases and 118 students self-isolating with 42% students having left University residences. A recent staff cluster of 14 cases in relation to a social event had been recorded, but there was no evidence of transmission in campus spaces.
 - 5.1.8 Progress in the strategy consultation process with the launch of the strategy website, a series of live streams, and good engagement across the institution. The sub-strategies for each theme area had been submitted for review and each theme had been assigned a theme lead to develop implementation plans by mid-August.
 - 5.1.9 That the University Management Team Residential was planned for early September and would consider the revised Strategy white paper, the draft sub-strategies and implementation plans, and key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs would return to the Board (in February 2022) post strategy approval.
 - 5.1.10 Good engagement with Bristol City Council who were also developing their strategy, particularly on emerging issues and intersections with the University Strategy. It had been agreed that Strategy would include a section on the contribution to the City region.
 - 5.1.11 That there was some debate around the emerging research strategy in relation to the six research foci. Staff were concerned that discovery-led, individual scholarship was also represented, and there remained a need to articulate this more clearly.
- 5.2 The following points were DISCUSSED:
- 5.2.1 The level of clarity that could be expected from the CSR, the opportunities of an increased focus on the Life Sciences and ongoing concerns that allocations could freeze or reduce with an expectation of cuts to the UKRI budget.
 - 5.2.2 The positive engagement from staff with live stream events and strategy consultation.
 - 5.2.3 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**
 - 5.2.4 Plans for student vaccinations. The Executive confirmed that the University was working with PHE to encourage take up of vaccinations and that international students would become eligible for vaccination once they entered the UK.

- 5.2.5 Plans to engage students in the Strategy consultation and the need to have the student experience at the heart of the strategy. Plans were in place for a dedicated student live stream with the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience, and there had been positive discussions with the new Full-Time Officer Team at the Students Union, despite the challenging timing of consulting during student vacation.
- 5.2.6 The potential impacts of Augar, particularly if costs were passed on to students rather than borne by universities. The Executive confirmed that scenarios were regularly run which considered the impact on admissions and how we might support students financially. The least damaging option to the institution would be changes to the loan system and Bristol was well placed in terms of being STEM heavy, working closely with industry and plans for Temple Quarter.
- 5.2.7 The likely redistribution of research funding and how the University could respond to increases and decreases of funding in certain areas.
[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests] Concerns about staff workload and exhaustion and the need for the Strategy to meet this risk, rather than trying to do too much. The Executive confirmed that this tension had been recognised and that theme leads had been challenged to reduce and focus.
- 5.2.8 The potential for a period of austerity for the region and the country. The Vice-Chancellor agreed that partnership would be important, as regionally, the South West was not a top government priority. Consideration was being given to making use of existing vehicles, forging additional collaborations and accessing different money, as well as a focus on international research partnerships to provide access to expertise and technology. This focus would be a key element for the new Pro Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement.

6 KEY UNIVERSITY RISK REVIEW (reference BT/20-21/066)

- 6.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Registrar & University Secretary (Lucinda Parr) introduced the item.
- 6.2 NOTED the University's risk profile and the controls in place to manage the Key University Risks.
- 6.3 NOTED that this paper reflected the situation at the time of writing, and that the risk environment was still changing rapidly.
- 6.4 The following points were NOTED:
 - 6.4.1 That the paper had been discussed at University Executive Board and Audit & Risk Committee.
 - 6.4.2 That in relation to the Student Experience risk, the main concern was in relation to the capacity of external services including the NHS. Additional specialist support had been contracted to maximise efficiency and a new cross-city wellbeing group had been established.
- 6.5 The following points were DISCUSSED:
 - 6.5.1 Whether risks were emerging in the ability to recruit staff. The DVC & Provost confirmed that Higher Education had not been as affected as other sectors, and Bristol was still seen as an attractive employer.
 - 6.5.2 The potential impact of any changes to education metrics, including the TEF. The DVC & Provost noted that the OFS was still engaged in consultation but it was unlikely that subject level TEF would be introduced. Further consultation was underway on the role of the NSS with clarity likely in the Autumn.
 - 6.5.3 The likely impact of the winter season on student physical and mental health. The Executive confirmed that forward planning was underway with a focus on preparing students to return, community building and networking, and an enhanced outdoor welcome activity offer. Professional Services teams were

reviewing their plans to meet the increase in demand for online service provision.

- 6.5.4 Whether the University had sufficient internal capacity to address the high-level risks. The Vice-Chancellor noted the role of the Strategy to meet the risks and opportunities identified and implementation plans that would underpin those.

- 6.6 The Board CONSIDERED the overall level of risk and ACCEPTED the Risk Profile as presented, while acknowledging that this is outside the normal risk tolerance.

7 NEW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY (reference BT/20-21/068)

- 7.1 RECEIVED the paper. The DVC & Provost (Judith Squires) introduced the item.

- 7.2 DISCUSSED the progress of the Campus Heart Programme to date and considered current projects and future challenged to be addressed.

- 7.3 The following points were NOTED:

7.3.1 That the Campus Heart Programme Heart programme had been initiated in 2017 to transform the centre of the precinct into a welcoming heart of the University to serve students, staff and the public. The Programme had been paused during 2020 and had now been refreshed and re-established.

7.3.2 Completed projects within the Programme included the refurbishment of the Sports Centre, the redevelopment of 5 Tyndall Ave, and Phase 1 of Senate House. These had been successful developments in response to student demand and pressures on services and student and staff wellbeing. Senate House particularly had provided more space for student facing activities at the heart of campus including student services, a food Court, and Student Union space.

7.3.3 That Phase 2 of Senate House was underway, addressing the upper levels of the building to include an additional Student Union Living Room, the Global Lounge, and a Prayer Room.

7.3.4 That the New University Library had gained planning approval in March 2021, allowing a three-year window for construction to start by 2024, providing the ability to sequence developments alongside Temple Quarter and other commitments. A further extension had been sought in case further flexibility was required and approval was pending. The timeline in the paper had been recommended by the Finance & Infrastructure Committee.

7.3.5 That the Public Realm element of the development would create a visible campus heart including a civic space between Senate House and the Library with adjusted transport links and a change to the flow of traffic. There had been some challenges from local neighbours, particularly Bristol Grammar School but the plans had met these concerns to the satisfaction of Bristol City Council.

7.3.6 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

- 7.4 The following points were DISCUSSED:

7.4.1 The need to phase the project to avoid the most significant points of risk for Temple Quarter, and ensure that significant breadth and depth of management capacity was available.

7.4.2 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

7.4.3 That the Hawthorns space was currently being well used as enhanced student study space capacity and had the potential for use as additional teaching space. The space would continue to be used to its fullest until demolition.

7.4.4 The need to manage the impact on students of any disruption and construction across campus. Although there would be minimal disruption over the next two years it was important to socialise and promote plans in advance. The Executive confirmed that focus would also be on those students who would not benefit from the developments and ensuring they felt invested in

through a rolling programme of interim developments such as the Humanities Building.

7.4.5 Trustees requested further information on the Prayer Room

ACTION: DVC & Provost

7.4.6 The need to design spaces to promote collaboration, which was a core model for the Estate, including student residences

7.4.7 That although Trustees supported plans, concerns were raised about the financial and operational strain.

7.5 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests].**

8 ASSET SALES: AUGUSTINE'S COURTYARD (reference BT/20-21/069)

8.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chief Operating Officer (Robert Kerse) introduced the item.

8.2 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests].**

8.3 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

8.4 APPROVED the disposal of Augustine's Courtyard **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

8.5 DELEGATED authority to the Chair of the Board or the Chair of the Finance & Infrastructure Committee to agree any amendment to these terms should they arise prior to completion.

9 STUDENT MATTERS (reference BT/20-21/070)

9.1 RECEIVED the paper. The DVC & Provost (Judith Squires) introduced the item.

9.2 APPROVED revisions to the University of Bristol Degree Outcomes Statement 19/20 (Appendix One). The COVID impacts and mitigations were noted, and the particular importance of monitoring outcomes in this context. The report showed a stable outcome compared to the 5-year trend. Agreed to provide further information in relation to the degree attainment gap including further disaggregation of student groups and to discuss this further at the EDI Oversight Committee.

ACTION: DVC & Provost

9.3 APPROVED updates to the Student Agreement for 2021/22 (Appendix Two), subject to minor adjustments.

9.4 APPROVED updates to the Student Protection Plan for 2021/22 (Appendix 3), subject to minor adjustments.

9.5 NOTED the annual Student Complaints and Appeals Report 2019/20 (Appendix 4) and an increase in the number appeals and complaints received, as expected due to the pandemic. Assurance had been received from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator that internal processes were robust.

10. TEMPLE QUARTER UPDATE REPORT & SHEDS FIT-OUT (BT/20-21/071)

10.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chief Operating Officer (Robert Kerse) introduced the item. The Senior Programme Manager (Nicola Key) joined for this item.

10.2 The following points were NOTED:

10.2.1 The range of developments in relation to the Temple Quarter site including CM1, residential accommodation, the Sheds, the new Dental School and discussions about the use of the Kawasaki site.

10.2.2 The recommendation from Finance and Infrastructure Committee in relation to funding for the Sheds, which would house the MyWorld and BDFI research projects and enable the dispersal of Research England funding required by

March 2022. The value in showing tangible progression and stakeholder impact.

10.2.3 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests].**

10.3 The following points were DISCUSSED in relation to the Sheds business case:

10.3.1 The risk of procurement overruns and the availability of resources. That a contingency had been maintained within the cost estimates however the sourcing of IT equipment could be challenging. That any change to the budget would be subject to Board approval, if the project remained viable.

10.3.2 The risk of losing RPIF funding in the event of any delays.

10.3.3 The operating model, which would be presented to the Executive by October

10.4 The challenges of the CM1 project and the development of a series of checks for the next two gateway decisions. The need to ensure continued viability, and provide assurance to stakeholders, whilst acknowledging pandemic funding pressures.

10.5 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.6 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests].**

11 CHAIR'S REPORT (reference BT/20-21/072)

11.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Board of Trustees (Jack Boyer) introduced the item. The Director of Legal Services was also in attendance for this item.

11.2 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.3 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.4 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.5 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.6 NOTED the update from the Effectiveness Review Steering Group and the content of the report.

12 REPORT FROM COO (reference BT/20-21/073)

12.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chief Operating Officer (Robert Kerse) introduced the item.

12.2 CONSIDERED the financial performance for the 10 months ended 31 May 2021, including whether management was taking appropriate action to address areas of underperformance.

12.3 The following points were NOTED:

12.3.1 That the forecast year end financial performance had improved by between £5 and £10 million since the paper had been issued.

12.3.2 That it was important to ensure that the University maintained a strong financial headroom to meet the challenges of the pandemic, and the potential changes in relation to Augar and research funding.

12.3.3 That the University had backfilled the gap in ODA funding cuts and continued to operate tightly to pre-empt unexpected change. Further resources had been held back to be able to invest strategically in line with the new University Strategy.

12.3.4 That Unison were balloting their members for Industrial Action in relation to the lack of a cost of living award. That UCU were likely to formally ballot their members in relation to four matters after their conference in September.

12.3.5 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

12.4 APPROVED the establishment of a pilot Evergreen Fund for investment in early stage University spinout companies **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]** and NOTED that an evaluation of the Fund would be presented to the Board **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**. The following points were DISCUSSED:

12.4.1 That the fund would pilot a suite of interventions and would invest charitable funds, ancillary to our charitable objects, and aligned with our objectives, in a manner which was relatively high risk but with a high reward.

12.4.2 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

12.5 APPROVED the Bristol Student Union Budget for 2021/22.

12.6 NOTED the level of financial support (£4.5m) obtained through the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which had now ended. The University had made use of the scheme to avoid redundancies and an audit by HMRC had revealed no irregularities or concerns.

13 REPORT FROM DVC (reference BT/20-21/074)

13.1 RECEIVED the paper. The DVC & Provost (Judith Squires) introduced the item.

13.2 APPROVED the new role of Associate Professor and implementation of a new pay scale and associated pay progression arrangements from 1 August 2021. This change was the outcome of significant discussion and consultation on pay and progression. The change of title from Reader to Associate Professor would have national and global recognition and the changes to pay scales reflected that staff were expected to be on a trajectory to become Professor.

13.3 The following points were NOTED:

13.3.1 The Equal Pay audit, and further information in the Reading Pack.

13.3.2 The Senate Report and developments in blended learning

13.4 The following points were DISCUSSED:

13.4.1 Recruitment for the Pro Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement, further to the departure of Erik Lithander. An academic candidate with strong leadership skills would be sought to focus on global civic and international academic partnerships.

13.4.2 Recent rankings which had seen Bristol move downwards and decisive action required to address this downward trend. That there were strong positive messages below the headline results, including for the Faculty of Engineering.

14 REPORT FROM REGISTRAR (reference BT/20-21/075)

14.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Registrar & University Secretary (Lucinda Parr) introduced the item.

14.2 NOTED the content of the report. NOTED the interim findings in relation to an OfS-requested review of compliance with ongoing condition C1 (consumer protection law).

14.3 NOTED the update on the constitution, APPROVED the Board Delegation Schedule, and DELEGATED authority to the Chair to approved required changes during the vacation.

14.4 APPROVED that the Ordinances and Delegation Schedule would become effective from 1st August.

14.5 DISCUSSED the admissions update further to the 30 June UCAS deadline. Noted that applications were up across the sector, **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**, however volatility and planning challenges remained. The University

Executive Board had agreed to avoid any potential for overshooting targets. There were risks to international student arrivals in relation to travel restrictions however charter flights were being pursued, alongside an increase in online conversion activity and lobbying at sector level for additional concessions. There was no significant concern about change in A Level results policy and the impact of deferrals from last year had been built into the modelling.

15 REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (reference BT/20-21/076)

- 15.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Nomination Committee (Jack Boyer) introduced the item.
- 15.2 APPROVED the reappointment of Andrew Carr, Jessica Cecil, Linda Fletcher, Nicholas Joicey and Hazel Phillips for second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024 on the recommendation of Nominations Committee.
- 15.3 APPROVED that a vacancy was held on Finance & Infrastructure Committee until January 2022 on the recommendation of Nominations Committee.
- 15.4 APPROVED that a vacancy was held on Pensions Task and Finish Group until January 2022 on the recommendation of Nominations Committee.
- 15.5 NOTED that in September 2021 the Committee would be asked to recommend to the Board of Trustees the reappointment of Julie Goldstein for a second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024, subject to further discussions.
- 15.6 NOTED that in Autumn 2021 the Committee would receive an update on the potential reappointment of Raman Bedi for a second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2024.
- 15.7 NOTED the update on Governance Apprenticeship Scheme.

16 REPORT FROM FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE (reference BT/20-21/077)

- 16.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Board of Trustees (Jack Boyer) introduced the item in the absence of the Chair of Finance & Infrastructure Committee (Andreas Raffel).
- 16.2 NOTED the report of the Finance & Infrastructure Committee meetings held on 22 April 2021 and 10 June 2021.

17 REPORT FROM EDI OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (reference BT/20-21/078)

- 17.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the EDI Oversight Committee (Jessica Cecil) introduced the item.
- 17.2 APPROVED the amendments to the EDI Oversight Group terms of reference and membership as highlighted in Appendix A.
- 17.3 NOTED the rest of the report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Group from its meeting on 30 March 2021.
- 17.4 DISCUSSED the tendency for the equivalent committees in corporate organisations to be consider Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

18 REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (reference BT/20-21/079)

- 18.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee (Mohammed Saddiq) introduced the item.
- 18.2 NOTED the report of the meeting.

19 REPORT FROM AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE (reference **BT/20-21/080**)

19.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee (Andy Poolman) introduced the item.

19.2 NOTED the written report from the meeting on 12 April and the verbal report from the meeting on 28 June.

19.3 APPROVED the re-appointment of the internal auditors RSM for one year, and the external auditors PwC for two years.

19.4 NOTED that the Committee had considered a recent whistleblowing report. An investigation would be carried out and a reportable event had been submitted to the Office for Students.

20 REPORT FROM PENSIONS TASK & FINISH GROUP (reference **BT/20-21/067**)

20.1 RECEIVED the paper. The Chair of the Pensions Task & Finish Group (Andy Poolman) introduced the item.

20.2 CONSIDERED the employer consultation responses to the USS 2020 valuation agreed by the Pensions Task & Finish Group.

20.3 NOTED that there had been two meetings of the Task & Finish Group and that at the most recent meeting, the Group had supported option A, which was to support the revised covenant support package proposed by UUK. The outcome of the negotiations by the Joint Negotiating Committee was awaited to inform the next steps.

21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.1 The Chair thanked Keith Syrett for his service as an Academic Staff Trustee since 1 August 2018. The Chair noted that Keith had worked in academia since 1994, initially at the University of East Anglia, then at Bristol, and latterly at Cardiff University, before returning to Bristol in 2017 to take up a Chair in Health Law and Policy in the School of Law. During his tenure, Keith had provided particular focus on legal matters, the staff and student experience, and had been a member of the University's Pensions Task and Finish Group. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Keith, on behalf of the Board for his contributions.

22 Date of Next Meeting: 24 September 2021