

# UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL COURT

Friday 3 December 2021

## MINUTES

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

### **Members**

#### **Category 1 – Elected Members**

M Austin, R Barry, U Brandenburg, T Brewer, C Burns, A Carr, R Dufton, S Ellwood, M Evans, A Franks, S Gilbert, A Glykis, M Lee, L Malt, J Metcalfe, T Mitchell, M Partington, H Phillips, J Phillips, C Scowen, V Smith, S Sparks, G Stirrat, A Waterman-Pearson, L Wilson, M Young.

#### **Category 2 – Nominated Members**

T Aditya, A Bates, X Bell, S Crew, H David, J Holmes, S Jirde, H Michallat, A Parekh, A Pepperell, S Powell, A Raikes, S Raynes, C Reddington, G Richardson, S Savant, D Speed, C Turner, S Wilson.

#### **Category 3 – Ex Officio**

A Sheng

#### **Category 4 – Additional Members**

C Callender, S Cayzer, J Darley, J Dyrhauge, J Longhurst, C Millward, C Morgan, A Nahar, K Peck, O Sweeney, D Watson, R Wheeler, O Whitehouse.

### **In Attendance**

#### **Senior Team**

H Brady, E Fay, T Jessop, R Kerse, B Mac Ruairi, L Parr, S Purdy, J Squires, P Taylor.

#### **Board of Trustees**

M Bhabuta, G Bowen, J Boyer, K Bright, J Cecil, S Clarke, I Craddock, L Fletcher, N Joicey, J Khawaja, S Robertson.

#### **Deans**

J Tavaré, S Tormey.

#### **Sabbatical Officers**

S Key, L Macey, M Tahir.

#### **Elected individuals from UoB staff**

C Baldwin, M Baptist, E Clark, M Costain, R Ellis-Haque, T Henderson, R Logan, J McAllister, P Mutesva, T Mwarewangepo, A Rahman, P Walters, A Williams.

#### **Facilitators**

L Collins, D Jennings, S Johnson, C Lippert, A O'Grady, C Preist, M Wiles.

#### **Support**

M Blackie, H Cole, S Daniels, L Dineen, C Gully, A Hatcher, S Johnson, S Marshall, A Sahni.

#### **Observers**

L LeFaou, L O'Shea.

## **1. WELCOME**

- 1.1 The Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting and NOTED that there were no items requiring a decision, and that all questions would be answered together at agenda item 10.

## **2. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS**

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor addressed Court, noting that this would be his last Court meeting before leaving the University of Bristol after 7 years in his role.
- 2.2 The following points were NOTED:
  - 2.2.1 That the response of the University community to Covid had been inspiring. Of particular note were the efforts required to quickly move educational delivery online and the outstanding research response with focused efforts on collaboration and multi-disciplinary working.
  - 2.2.2 The outstanding civic response, including volunteering by staff and students, the manufacture of hand sanitiser, and the key role of many academics in advising the University and the government, working in partnership with Public Health England.
  - 2.2.3 Plans to build research capacity in the new strategy to address the big issues of our time, for example Digital Futures. Ambitions to build research scale through partnership and impact, for example using philanthropic funding to establish the Perivoli Africa Research Centre and other bilateral agreements.
  - 2.2.4 Efforts to diversify the student population. Bristol had increased the proportion of UK state school entrants by 15%, and specific interventions funded by alumni were in place to address Black student recruitment.
  - 2.2.5 Significant research awards including funding for large multidisciplinary projects in Quantum and Digital Futures. The development of MyWorld which would focus on creative technologies, building on strengths in the University and city region.
  - 2.2.6 The rapidly changing external environment and significant geopolitical tensions, but also new opportunities, for example the strengthening of biomedical sciences, and the need to contribute to economic recovery in the city region.
  - 2.2.7 That rankings were important for students and academics choosing institutions, and for potential partners considering where to invest. Bristol aimed to be in the global top 50 institutions.
  - 2.2.8 The strengths and differentiators of Bristol compared to peers, which include the institution's location within the region and the city. That the University was one of the biggest employers in Bristol and a substantial partner with most of Bristol's knowledge and technology intensive industries. The importance of enhancing the relationship with the City of Bristol and the value of Court feedback.

## **3. OUR UNIVERSITY STRATEGY (CRT/21-22/001 and Presentation)**

- 3.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost introduced the item.
- 3.2 The following points were NOTED:
  - 3.2.1 The presentation of the University Strategy 2030. That Court had received the white paper version of the Strategy and subsequently there had been consultation and discussion to finalise the Strategy and present it to the

Board of Trustees. That the Strategy was approved at Board on November 19 2021.

- 3.2.2 That there was a clear aim to be in the global top 50 and to offer an outstanding student experience which would drive the aim to be UK top 10 UK. There were challenging Net Zero targets for 2030, which would be discussed today. Through the breakout groups, Court were invited to contribute to these challenges and provide guidance.
- 3.2.3 That the Strategy was structured around key cornerstone elements, some of which would be discussed in breakout sessions. The cornerstone of Inspiring Education and Transformative Student Experience was used as an example of how the Strategy was structured.
- 3.2.4 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost highlighted the need to work in partnership with students to build understanding, and co-create a high-quality experience, looking at what the University teaches and how it is taught. Some challenges included how to address flexibility and offer different sorts of learning, as well as a need to invest in the physical and digital learning environment.
- 3.2.5 The importance of being a global civic institution, clearly embedded within the city region but with a strong global profile, reputation, and engagement. The aim to work together to co-create a prosperous and sustainable future for the city including key investments in the new University Library and Temple Quarter which would drive the civic mission and reshape how the University engaged with local communities.
- 3.2.6 The key enablers of the Strategy, particularly the University's people and how to invest in people to support and nurture diverse career choices. The need for a world class campus and support for capital programmes and digital infrastructure, whilst maintaining our commitment to sustainability.
- 3.2.7 The three cross-cutting themes of the strategy (internationalism, sustainability, EDI) which would be embedded in all activities, in a way which would drive the University's global ambitions whilst also mapping out a strong integration with education and learning.
- 3.2.8 Ongoing work on the detailed sub-strategies within the overarching strategic framework.

#### **4. RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE SUB-STRATEGY**

- 4.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise introduced the item.
- 4.2 The following points were NOTED:
  - 4.2.1 The key elements of the research strategy including enterprise and innovation and a shift towards asking 'what we are good for?' rather than 'what we are good at?'
  - 4.2.2 The need to work in partnership to address core issues relating to Brexit and the pandemic.
  - 4.2.3 That whilst Research Council funding was relatively flat, funding for innovation had almost doubled. The University needed to reshape its offer and show its relevance to attract funding.
  - 4.2.4 A focus on impact and place, including responding to the levelling up agendas, and place-based calls which could have local, national, and international impact.
  - 4.2.5 The need to use research for the public good, with a focus on disciplinary and interdisciplinary excellence.
  - 4.2.6 That the University had secured £45m in investment for advanced gene therapy through a spin out company and was ranked seventh in the UK

for spin outs and joint fifth for life sciences spin outs. Significant investment had been secured from Pfizer for a new Centre of Excellence and one of the University's spin out companies had been referenced in the government's Innovation strategy.

- 4.1.7 Plans to establish a brand to pull together current excellent but fragmented provision, creating a single-entry point so that external partners could navigate the institution more easily. Efforts would be directed to work more effectively at the interface between the University, the City and Government. A Steering Group had been established with external membership to drive this forward and an Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Innovation had been appointed to provide leadership.
- 4.1.8 That the next steps were to establish a Strategic Board to provide commercial and external viewpoints and to establish engagement, awareness and culture change across the institution, raising the potential and ambition of academics.
- 4.1.9 Special purpose vehicles would be established in particular sectors which would be wholly or partly owned by the University, allowing access to funds which could not be awarded directly. Work was ongoing to confirm a budget, establish aspirations and appoint a core team with dedicated staff and resources.

## **5. BREAKOUT SESSIONS (CRT/21-22/002)**

- 5.1 Members of Court joined colleagues in two breakout sessions.

## **6. FEEDBACK FROM THE BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

- 6.1 The Theme Leads were invited by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost to present feedback from the breakout sessions.
- 6.2 Attracting and Inspiring Students: Working Together for a More Diverse Future. The following points were NOTED:
  - 6.2.1 The challenges of balancing local and national initiatives, investment and support and the importance of establishing the context of the University's efforts to diversify the student intake.
  - 6.2.2 The complexity of lifelong learning and the significant opportunities to work in partnership with the City on this issue.
  - 6.2.3 The level of investment required, whether internal or from government.
  - 6.2.4 The impact of student loans and financing, and the need to focus on disabled student provision
  - 6.2.5 How to seize on opportunities to keep graduates in the local area, creating more internships for local and mature students.
  - 6.2.6 The need to maintain focus on South Bristol and working in partnership with head teachers and how the University can support local schools to raise attainment levels.
- 6.3 Intensifying our Focus on Sustainability. The following points were NOTED:
  - 6.3.1 The excellent contribution of Court in responding to the tensions, choices and prioritisation which would be required.
  - 6.3.2 Consideration of restricting international research travel and the potential impacts and opportunities, including how this might impact on research excellence. The potential for a partial exemption for research seeking sustainable solutions.
  - 6.3.3 How to prioritise in relation to education and the challenges of the footprint of our estate.

## **7. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (CRT/21-22/003)**

- 7.1 The Chair of the Board of Trustees presented his report to Court. The following points were NOTED:
- 7.1.1 That the audited statement of accounts was presented at item 7, paper CRT/21-22/004.
  - 7.1.2 The changes to the University Charter, Statutes and Ordinances, particularly that there had been no changes made in relation to Court and that Ordinances 11 and 12 brought together information in relation to Alumni and the Students Union respectively.
  - 7.1.3 That notwithstanding many challenges, the University was in a better financial position than many peer institutions and was well placed to address the new Strategy.
  - 7.1.4 That the Board of Trustees had returned to in person engagement with a focus on the new Strategy, including in-depth discussion on cornerstones and challenges. The annual Board of Trustees Development Day had focused on research and additional meetings had been held in relation to Temple Quarter.
  - 7.1.5 That the Board of Trustees had regard to the impacts of Covid and the intention to build a stronger world class University which was ready to address new and emerging challenges.
  - 7.1.6 That there had been limited structural changes, but that membership had been rebalanced across the Board of Trustees Committees, including the introduction of Deputy Chairs.
  - 7.1.7 That the Board of Trustees was leading the appointment process for the new Vice-Chancellor and was thankful to Professor Brady for his great leadership and enormous contribution to the City, the region and the institution. The appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor was anticipated in Spring 2022.
  - 7.1.8 That the Board of Trustees was engaged in an external effectiveness review and findings would be reported to Court at their next meeting.
  - 7.1.9 Thanks to Trustees who had stepped down, namely Sheila Elwood, Keith Stanton, Kate Ashley, Jason Palmer and Ore Odubiyi.
  - 7.1.10 The appointment of new Trustees, namely Caroline Relton, Ian Craddock, Kirsty Bright, Kiran Sithamparapillai and Sarah Clarke.
- 7.2 The Chair of the Board of Trustees thanked the Vice-Chancellor and his team for their commitment and hard work. He acknowledged the collective endeavour of the institution, including Court, and welcomed their input in to the new strategy.
- 7.3 The Chair of the Board of Trustees acknowledged and thanked Court for their efforts to help the University deliver on its ambitions.

## **8. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2020/21 (CRT/21-22/004)**

- 8.1 NOTED the University of Bristol Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020/21 for information.

## **9. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING DECEMBER 2020 AND WORKSHOP MAY 2021 (FOR APPROVAL) (CRT/21-22/005)**

- 9.1 APPROVED the minutes of the December 2020 meeting of Court and the May 2021 Court workshop,

9.2 NOTED the update from the May 2021 Court workshop.

## 10. OPEN FORUM QUESTION TIME

10.1 The Chancellor NOTED that any questions received in advance had been responded to and that responses were published online.

10.2 The Director of External Relations, Alicia O'Grady, facilitated the discussion. The following issues were DISCUSSED.

10.2.1 Steps that the University was taking to provide ongoing support for student and staff welfare. The Vice-Chancellor noted that mental health and wellbeing was a significant challenge for the whole sector, with increasing numbers of students seeking support, and a growing need for staff support. The University had put in place comprehensive mental health and wellbeing strategies and increased levels of support. The network of Residential Life Advisors and Student Wellbeing Advisors had served students well during the pandemic and the model had been replicated by other institutions. Support had pivoted online during the pandemic with good take up from students and staff. Significant additional support had been established for students in residences who could not return home, or were self-isolating, and students who could not return to residences had received refunds. The University was appreciative of the differential impacts of the pandemic on its communities and had engaged specialist counselling services. Staff mental health champions had been introduced and the University was part of the MIND Healthy University pilot.

10.2.2 Communication and engagement with the Emeritus Professor community, which had been somewhat frustrated by Covid. The need to enable communication within the community

### **ACTION: Head of Governance.**

10.2.3 Actions that were being taken to improve NSS performance. The Bristol Institute for Learning & Teaching was working with programme teams to design online assessment, and the Curriculum Enhancement Programme was taking an evidence-based approach to improving assessment and feedback. A common unit feedback system had been introduced across the University and would provide early indications of programmes which were not performing as expected. The Deans were leading on the timely return of feedback to students and ensuring that students had enough formative assessment in advance of the summative assessment.

10.2.4 How much of the 3% increase in staff FTE had been academic staff recruitment. The Annual Report clarified that academic colleague numbers increased from 3,326 in 2020 to 3,438 in 2021 (a 3.4% increase).

10.2.5 The University's plans to address the removal of the Erasmus scheme. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that Bristol was engaged in the Turing scheme but would also invest institutional funds and develop partnerships to ensure inter-institution mobility.

10.2.6 How the Strategy addressed regional challenges. Noted the introduction of a civic pillar to the Strategy which emphasised the contributions to the city region. The University had strong links which extended across and beyond Bristol, with students living in all areas of the City, the campus at Langford and regional hospitals. This was complemented by student engagement in volunteering, research and enterprise activities. The University's enterprise agenda was an opportunity for collaboration with industry and enterprise, working with WECA and the Western Gateway.

Plans to diversify the student body were discussed in a breakout session and included extending widening participation and access initiatives beyond Bristol to the region.

- 10.2.7 Whether the University recognised the need to extend access and participation from outside the UK. Hardship funding had been extended with a particular focus on hardship for international students and consideration was being given to the challenge of how to make sure support services and access strategies considered international students in a more comprehensive way. Work was also underway in relation to recruitment including government arrangements, sponsorship and partnerships.
- 10.2.8 Whether accessibility had been considered in relation to the design of the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus and if advice had been sought from disabled people as to the design. The Chief Property Officer noted that although good professional advice had been received and the building was designed to be fully accessible, he would follow this up further with the relevant Court member.
- ACTION: Chief Property Officer**
- 10.2.9 How the blended working trial had been received by staff. Feedback would be sought via a survey in December 2021, followed up in March 2022 with focus groups. Early indications were good and had shown benefits for team cohesion. The University was open to working in ways that worked for everyone, enabling flexibility and inclusivity.
- 10.2.10 The importance of students seeing role models who reflected their lived experiences. The University was working hard to develop a diverse talent pipeline, but acknowledged a culturally homogenous senior team. Noted the developments underway in diversifying recruitment at all levels including working with colleagues in the city through the Race Equality Strategic Leaders Group, creating employment opportunities, and changes to the promotions framework and recruitment strategy.

- 10.3 The Chancellor thanked Court for their engagement in the meeting, and noted the benefits of working with a wide group of stakeholders.

Date of Next Meeting (updated after December 2021 meeting): 2 December 2022