Friday 25 May 2012

Present: Mr Denis Burn (Chair), Mr Josh Alford, Mr Gus Baker, Ms Sophie Bennett, Professor Tim Bond, Professor David Clarke, Mr Roy Cowap, Professor Gary Foster, Dr Andrew Garrad, Mr Colin Green, Dr Moira Hamlin, Professor Sally Heslop, Ms Pru Lawrence-Archer, Professor Nick Lieven, Dr John Manley, Mr Robert Massie, Mr Bob Morton, Mrs Dinah Moore, Mr David Ord, Professor Guy Orpen, Mrs Cindy Peck, Mr Andrew Poolman, Mr Mohammed Saddiq, Ms Anne Stephenson, Professor Eric Thomas, Dr Trevor Thompson, Mr James Wadsworth and Mr James Wetz.

In Attendance: Miss Kelly Archer, Ms Sue Paterson, Mr Patrick Finch, Ms Helen Galbraith, Mr Guy Gregory, Mr Andy Nield, Ms Angela Milln (for the Access Agreement item only), Dr Moger Woolley (presentation sessions only), Mr Paul Charlton, Mr Tom Flynn and Ms Alessandra Berti.

Apologies: Cllr Simon Cook, Ms Victoria Stace, Ms Lynn Robinson and Mr Bill Ray.

Session 1:
Presentation from the Dean of Science: The Faculty of Science Annual Report
RECEIVED: A Presentation from the Dean of Science, Professor Jon Keating, The Dean of Science made his biennial presentation, covering recent achievements and developments in research and teaching, outlining the Faculty's key strategic goals, and reviewing its financial position.

The Chair of Council thanked Professor Keating for his inspiring and informative account and asked that Council’s thanks be passed on to colleagues in the Faculty for their continued hard work and commitment. It had been a very successful year for the Faculty. Council wished the Faculty well with its exciting and ambitious programme of work for the coming year.

Presentation from the Finance Director: Budgets 2012/13, Capital Programme and longer term financial plans
RECEIVED: A presentation from the Finance Director, Mr Andy Nield, setting out: the University's key business objectives for 2012/13; the anticipated financial landscape for Bristol and for the sector; and the University's financial strategy in the
short-medium term. Council thanked Mr Nield for his straightforward and detailed account of the University’s financial situation and future strategy.

Session 2: Formal Meeting of Council

1. Apologies for Absence / Announcements
   1.1 The Chair NOTED the apologies received. He then welcomed the three new Students’ Union Sabbatical Officer members of Council: Paul Charlton, Tom Flynn and Alessandra Berti. All three were attending as Observers before they became formal Council members from 1 July 2012.

   1.2 The Chair then passed on Council’s thanks and good wishes to the three retiring Sabbatical Officers: Gus Baker, Josh Alford and Sophie Bennett, who were attending their last Council meeting. They would be formally standing down from their sabbatical posts on 30 June 2012. The Chair congratulated them on what had been a very successful year for them and their sabbatical team. On behalf of Council, the Chair wished them well with their future careers.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting
   2.1 CONFIRMED: The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2012.

3. Matters Arising and Actions Register
   3.1 Members had previously received a copy of the Action Register which had been used to incorporate actions agreed at the 23rd March 2012 Council meeting. Completed items were asterisked and would be removed from the Register for the next meeting.

   3.2 It was NOTED that there were no outstanding actions on the Action Register.

4. Chair’s Business
   RECEIVED: Council Chair’s Business, reference CN/12/140 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

   Staff Elections to Council
   4.1 Notices had been issued to all staff who were eligible to stand for election to Council. If more nominations were received than there were vacancies, elections would be held with a final announcement date of 6 July 2012.

   University Committee Schedule
   4.2 RECEIVED and NOTED: The University Committee Schedule of meeting dates for 2012/13, reference CN/12/140 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book). Members were encouraged to enter the relevant dates into their diaries as quickly as possible.

   4.3 NOTED: That graduation ceremonies for 2013 had been scheduled to take place from 29th January to 1st February 2013 inclusive and 12th to 19th July 2013 inclusive. The Chair urged Council members to try to attend the graduation ceremonies.
Summary/Reflection on Council Awayday

4.4 Discussions on the outcomes of the awayday had continued and input had been sought from the Senior Team and from Linda Holbeche, Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership (THP). It would be important for the Executive team to steer this work and any resultant proposals would be considered in detail by the Personnel and Health & Safety Committee before being presented to Council. This thinking would be informed by the outcomes of the staff survey that was currently being conducted.

Attendance at Council Meetings and related sessions

4.5 NOTED: That in accordance with sector good practice, members’ attendance at formal Council meetings, briefing, presentation and awayday sessions, would be recorded from 2012/13. An annual attendance report would be produced for Council as part of its effectiveness review.

6th July 2012 Council Meeting

4.6 Members were reminded that the July Council meeting would take place at Langford. There were a number of elements to fit into the programme and it was anticipated that the day would need to begin at approximately 9.30am and run through to 3.45pm.

5. Vice-Chancellor’s Matters

5.1 RECEIVED: The Vice-Chancellor’s Report, reference CN/12/141 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

Appointment of University Secretary

5.2 APPROVED: In accordance with Statute 9, the appointment of Robin Geller as University Secretary with effect from 18th June 2012 and the granting of authority to Robin to undertake the statutory and regulatory functions of this role.

5.3 Council asked that its appreciation to Sue Paterson and Jane Bridgwater be recorded. Sue and Jane had been acting as the University Secretary since Dr Tony Rich’s departure from the University earlier in the year.

Student Growth Project

5.4 The Vice-Chancellor reported that the government had recently announced that English universities would be able to take unlimited numbers of students who achieved ABB in their A levels in 2013. In the light of significant and increasing pressures on the Department for Innovation and Skills (BIS) budgets, the Secretary of State had asked HEFCE to exercise caution in its estimation of the numbers of students in the ABB+ population in order to reduce the risk of unanticipated student support costs from 2013 onwards.

5.5 Council received an update on the various work streams that were being overseen by the Student Growth Project Steering Group and noted that strategies for responding to the increased student numbers were now being implemented across the University. Despite the increase in student fees,
overall, application behaviour at Bristol appeared not to have changed significantly in comparison with the previous year.

5.6 Council noted that the University had continued to take a purposeful and planned approach to this project and had consulted with students throughout the whole process.

League Tables

5.7 Since the last report to Council, the Complete University Guide 2013 had been published. Bristol had placed 11th overall – the same position as last year. The Guide had scored Bristol as the 8th highest ranking Russell Group university. Bristol’s performance in the individual subject tables had been impressive, appearing in the top twenty for 28 subjects and appearing in the top three for Social Policy; Drama, Dance & Cinematics; (both ranked 2nd); Civil engineering; Mechanical engineering; Music; and Russian (each ranked 3rd).

Key Information Sets (KIS)

5.8 Council received an update on the University’s progress with development of its new KIS. The KIS, which were a HEFCE requirement, comprised a series of comparable standardised sets of information about undergraduate courses, designed to provide key information to prospective students. From September 2012, all UK HEIs would be required to publish this key information on their websites. The KIS included areas of information which students had identified as useful, namely:
   (a) Student satisfaction.
   (b) Course information.
   (c) Employment and salary data.
   (d) Accommodation costs.
   (f) Financial information, such as fees.
   (g) Students’ Union information.

5.9 The University’s internal auditors, Mazars, had undertaken a review of processes in relation to KIS and their initial report had concluded that substantial assurance could be given to the adequacy of the control environment and the effectiveness of controls relating to the effective management of the risks associated with KIS.

National Composites Centre (NCC)

5.10 Council noted that the NCC had enjoyed a challenging but broadly successful first year. The space in the NCC building was being filled and the industry-led NCC Steering Board felt that there was significant strategic potential for expansion of this space and of the NCC more generally. There were current possible sources of grant funding available to finance an expansion and these were being cautiously pursued. Further expansion would, however, present a number of risks and opportunities to the University and these would need to be carefully assessed before any final decisions were made.
5.11 The key risks of expansion were noted to be: (i) the University might need to bear an increased working capital and management burden; (ii) the way that the NCC contracts operated placed a significant proportion of the risk burden upon the University (as opposed to the NCC business partners). This risk spread would need to be revised if significant expansion of the NCC were to be agreed.

5.12 Council also noted that there were potential risks associated with not expanding the NCC. Demand for further development in particular sectors was high throughout the UK and there was concern that if Bristol did not capitalise on this demand, other regions/clusters might.

5.13 Council agreed that the University’s primary focus in relation to its involvement with the NCC should continue to be the delivery of academic benefits rather than expansion or development of the NCC as a ‘standalone’ venture.

Health & Safety Matters
5.14 In common with a number of other UK HEIs, Bristol had recently received a number of bomb threats. The University continued to monitor the situation very closely and was having regular meetings with the Police. The Police had reassured the University that the way in which it was dealing with the situation was both appropriate and considered. Staff and students had been advised to remain vigilant and report anything suspicious to University Security.

Grants and Awards
5.15 NOTED: The list of recent grants and awards that had been secured by Bristol staff and students outlined in paragraph 29 of the report. Council congratulated all of the recipients and asked in particular that its congratulations be passed onto the four Bristol academics who had recently been elected as Fellows of the Royal Society: Professors Varinder Aggarwal, Alasdair Houston, Richard Kerswell and John McNamara.

6. Finance Report
6.1 RECEIVED: The Financial Update report from the Finance Director, reference CN/12/142 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

Overall Financial performance
6.2 The year to date operating surplus was £8.5m, with a full year forecast of £7m. The full year forecast surplus for the year had been increased by £1m during May 2012 to reflect the performance to date and the decreasing risk of adverse variances. The forecast decline from the year to date position to the full year reflected a number of factors including:

   (i) the profiling of non-salary faculty and divisional spend which was to some degree ‘back end loaded’ as budget holders delayed commitments until closer to the year end.

   (ii) the assumed use of the remaining contingency provision.
(iii) the sensitivity of the figures to relatively small percentage movements in cost and income.

6.3 Operating cash flows remained positive with a net cash inflow, although it was anticipated that this position would reverse during the next couple of months as the capital programme progressed and the positive in-year working capital position on student fees and HEFCE grant funding reversed.

Submission of Financial Forecasts 2011/12 to 2014/15

6.4 CONSIDERED: The proposed financial forecasts 2011/12 to 2014/15, as set out in document CN/12/152 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

6.5 The University was required by HEFCE to submit its financial forecasts (2011/12 to 2014/15) by 20 June 2012. These submissions would usually be made in December each year but, in view of the significant financial uncertainty facing the HE sector (e.g. the new tuition fee regime, deregulation of student numbers, changes to HEFCE grant funding levels), HEFCE had changed its approach.

6.6 The submission reflected the financial projections set out in the operating budget 2012/13, capital programme and financial plans 2013/14 and 2014/15 (see also document CN/12/156).

6.7 Finance Committee, at its meeting on 9 May 2012, had reviewed an earlier draft of the financial forecasts and approved their onward recommendation to Council.

6.8 APPROVED (for submission to HEFCE) the proposed financial forecasts (subject to final amendments and checks) as set out in document CN/12/152.

Operating Budget 2012/13, Capital Programme and Financial Plans 2013/14 and 2014/15

6.9 RECEIVED: The proposed operating budget 2012/13, capital programme and financial plans for 2013/14, as outlined in document CN/12/156 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

6.10 Each of these issues had been considered and endorsed by Finance Committee on 9 May 2012 and by the University Planning and Resources Committee (UPARC) on 15 May 2012.

6.11 An operating surplus of £7m (including a contingency provision of £1.6m) had been forecast for the full year. The draft 2012/13 budget planned for an operating surplus of £6m (ca. 1.4% of turnover) which was slightly lower than the current forecast for 2011/12. The cash flow generation after financing costs was £24m (ca. 5.4% of turnover).

6.12 A contingency of £5m had been included to allow the University to respond to a number of key financial uncertainties including:

   (i) The potential for an in-year HEFCE grant funding cut.
(ii) Any shortfall against the assumed home undergraduate intake of students (including the projected growth targets).

(iii) Any shortfall in home postgraduate student numbers (to reflect sector-wide trends).

(iv) Any shortfall in overseas student numbers.

(v) The outcomes of the negotiations about the August 2012 pay award (the University had assumed a 1% award but the Union had submitted a claim of 7%).

6.13 The current ten year core capital programme of ca. £413m had been used as a planning base. A further £65m had been indicatively added to this base to reflect any required additional investments related to the student numbers expansion programme, for example: increased residential accommodation needs; additional Library/student study space.

6.14 Council noted that the overall capital programme did not currently meet all identified capital needs, including, for example: anything over and above the basic refurbishment of the Fry Building to house Mathematics; refurbishment/redevelopment of the Victoria Rooms; or any major investment in either the Queens (Engineering) Building or the Medical Sciences Buildings.

6.15 APPROVED: The operating budget 2012/13 and the capital programme as outlined in document CN/12/156.

6.16 NOTED: The outline financial plans for 2013/14 and 2014/15 as outlined in document CN/12/156.

7. Matters for Discussion and/or Approval

Access Agreement

7.1 RECEIVED: A report from the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions proposing the University’s 2013/14 Access Agreement for submission to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), reference CN/12/143 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

7.2 The proposals had evolved in discussion with the Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Participation Strategy Group, with the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group and with the University of Bristol Union President and Vice-President (Education). The Agreement built upon the 2012 Agreement and much of the content remained unchanged. However, Council members’ attention was drawn to the following key points:

(a) The 2012 OFFA guidance implied an expectation that 35% of additional fee income would be re-invested in access measures. 2013 guidance referred more explicitly to 30% re-investment. As planned growth of undergraduate numbers would increase fee income, it had been possible to reduce the percentage of additional fee income which
the University had committed to re-investing to 30%, without adversely impacting the activities to be funded.

(b) Bristol’s student finance package had been retained in its 2012 form (including the £2k bursary option agreed with UBU in March). However, recognising the need to evaluate the impact of this package as it bedded in, the University had included a commitment to undertaking research to inform any necessary refinements for future cohorts.

(c) While student growth would increase fee income, the University did not anticipate any accompanying increase in numbers eligible for financial support (beyond that already built into modelling to reflect widening participation aims).

(d) Activity-based progress measures in the 2012 Agreement had been expanded to reflect collaborative work but application and intake measures had been reduced to a smaller set of core indicators. New measures had been added to facilitate assessment of application to intake conversion - an area where the University had seen good progress.

(e) Application- and Intake-related measures had been re-cast as hard numbers rather than percentages of the total student population so as to prevent student number growth from masking any progress made.

(f) Some adjustments had been made to outreach/retention plans to reflect changes in OFFA guidance and to reflect the Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Participation Strategy Group’s view that a bigger proportion of funding should be allocated to outreach activity, this being where the greatest challenges were.

7.3 Council recognised that it may take a number of years (once current school children had begun to apply for University places) before any meaningful feedback about the effectiveness of the University’s outreach activities could be collated. Initial feedback about the impact of the University’s financial student support package could, however, be collected and analysed from the end of the current academic year.

7.4 It was suggested that the outreach work that the University was currently undertaking in partnership with the SS Great Britain Trust should be mentioned within the ‘Outreach’ section of the Access Agreement report.

7.5 Although no concerns about the content of the proposed Access Agreement had been raised, there was a suggestion that Council members should in future be given an opportunity to contribute to the development of widening participation and related strategies at an earlier stage. It was noted that the theoretical end date for the current Widening Participation Strategy was 2016.
and it would, therefore, be timely to initiate a review of the current Strategy in 2013 or 2014, once the impacts of the new tuition fee regime were better understood. The University would value further input from Council members in this review process and the Deputy Registrar (Education and Students) together with the Chair of Council would consider how this could best be achieved. Suggestions included: a Council awayday on the theme of widening participation; or establishment of a Council Chair’s Advisory Group to consider widening participation issues. An update would be given to Council in due course.

7.6 The President of UBSU confirmed that he and his team had been very happy with the level of engagement between the University and the student body in relation to widening participation and wider Access Agreement issues and he hoped that this would continue in future years.

7.7 APPROVED: The 2013/14 Access Agreement as set out in document CN/12/143, for onward submission to OFFA.

7.8 Following OFFA approval, the 2013 Access Agreement would be published on the university website and details of the student finance package would be advertised in prospectuses.

Senate Report

7.9 RECEIVED: The report of the Senate meeting on 8th May 2012, reference CN/12/144 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

7.10 APPROVED: The award of Visiting Professor Status to the following individuals:
   (a) Mr Howard Green, a leading figure in the development of school leadership for the National College and the Training and Development Agency for Schools, as a Visiting Industrial Professor in the Graduate School of Education.
   (b) Dr Gabriel Scully, a leading figure in Public Health practice, as a Visiting Professor in the School of Social and Community Medicine.

7.11 NOTED: The following items within the Senate Report:
   (a) That the following people had been elected to the 2012/13 UBSU sabbatical team:
      (i) President: Paul Charlton
      (ii) Vice President Education: Tom Flynn
      (iii) Vice President Community: Alice Peck
      (iv) Vice President Welfare & Equality: Alessandra Berti
      (v) Vice President Sport & Health: Hannah Pollak
      (vi) Vice President Activities: Martha West
(b) The proposed “common University Rules for the Progression of Students on the Professional Programmes” (as outlined in Annex A of the report).

(c) The amendments to the Student Disciplinary Regulations (sections 3.3 and 8.3), as set out in paragraph 2(ii - iii) of the report.

(d) Minor amendments to the Exam Regulations, relating to procedures for handling serious cases of cheating and plagiarism (as outlined in Annex B of the report).

(e) The Programme changes/withdrawals, as outlined in paragraph 2(v) of the report.

Potential Redundancy Cases: Fixed-Term Contract Policy (Ordinance 26)

7.12 RECEIVED: The latest six-monthly report from the Human Resources Director, updating Council about the projected redundancy activity resulting from the application of Fixed-Term Contact Policy, as set out in document CN/12/145 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

7.13 APPROVED: The institution of redundancy procedures in respect of cases arising from application of the Fixed-Term Contract Policy (Ordinance 26). The Vice-Chancellor would now appoint a panel to oversee the procedures and to make decisions. The panel will sit for approximately 12 months when a further report would be presented to Council.

Capital Investment Programme Board

7.14 RECEIVED: The latest report of the Capital Investment Programme Board (CIPB), setting out recently approved allocations of capital funding by the Vice-Chancellor and/or Finance Committee, document CN/12/147 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

7.15 NOTED: That at its meeting on 9 May 2012, Finance Committee, on the advice of CIPB and UPARC, had approved the following allocation of capital funding:

(i) Up to an additional £3.6m for the Richmond Building project (previously the Queen’s Road Building project) and an additional £0.5m as contingency. The additional funding was required following the need to deal with significantly more asbestos than initial surveys had identified, whilst keeping the project as close to the original schedule as possible. The current budget for the Richmond Building project was now c.£29m (including this additional funding).

(ii) Additional funding of up to £900k for the Life Sciences building project so that the ‘shell and core’ space could be fitted out for research laboratories. The current budget for the Life Sciences Building project was now £55.1m.

(iii) Up to £1.12m + VAT for improvements to Wyndhurst Farm Phase 2 at Langford, taking into account the fact that Finance Committee had
approved £800k of this in May 2011. The increased costs reflected the fact that the project would now provide, amongst other things, a new milking parlour and would allow the farm to cater for a larger herd, and the changes to Revenue practice that resulted in much of the VAT to be incurred not being able to be set off.

(iv) Up to £350k for improvements to student facilities at Langford including the conversion of the former Comparative Pathology barn for student study space, the conversion of the former large animal surgery for teaching clinical skills and the conversion of the former student common room for a gym. (This approval was subject to detailed agreement of the scheme and final costings).

7.16 NOTED: That the Vice-Chancellor, on the advice of UPARC and CIPB, had approved the following allocation of capital funding:

(i) Up to £300k for the Wills Memorial Building way-finding project. This would include the provision of new signage, a new reception function and redevelopment of the Porters’ Lodge. The project would also include the creation of a building design handbook which would include detailed design of lighting and decorative improvements and a DDA compliant evacuation lift (the actual works for which would be scheduled as part of the capital maintenance programme).

(ii) Up to £300k for small energy efficiency works during the remainder of 2011/12. This would be the second instalment of a rolling programme of investment of £3.5m over ten years.

7.17 NOTED: That CIPB had approved the following small amounts of capital funding (up to £250k):

(i) Up to £75k for the refurbishment of 81-83 Woodland Road for the use by Engineering, from October 2012.

(ii) Up to £30k for the reconfiguration of existing space within the teaching labs in Experimental Psychology to cater for the 2012 student intake.

7.18 NOTED: That CIPB had authorised the disposal of five properties on the Langford Estate, to use some of the funds raised to refurbish two other properties and to authorise the expenditure required for fees associated with investigating the future options for two other areas of farmland.

RESERVED BUSINESS

7.19

RESERVED BUSINESS

7.20
Chair Appointments

7.21 RECEIVED and NOTED: A report setting out the Chair appointment activity that had taken place since the previous meeting of Council in March 2012, reference CN/12/150 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

Student Complaints Annual Report

7.22 RECEIVED and NOTED: The Annual Report of the Student Complaints Officer, summarising cases reviewed during the academic year 2010/11, document CN/12/146 (previously circulate, copy in the minute book).

7.23 The paper, which had previously been reviewed by the Student Affairs Committee, contained useful statistical information about the complaints and appeals received from students for the year 2010/11. Council was content that the process appeared to be running effectively and did not feel that there were any particular areas of concern but suggested that it would be helpful if future reports could include an explanation about the reasons for any outstanding actions, together with a narrative about any key issues/trends/themes emerging from the report and/or any lessons learned.

8. Committee Reports

Estates Committee

8.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: The summary report of key business discussed at the Estates Committee meeting on 27th April 2012, reference CN/12/151 (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

8.2 The Bursar reported that the University had now engaged the services of a Barrister to advise whether or not it would be appropriate for the University to launch a High Court Challenge against North Somerset Council’s decision regarding planning permission for the Long Ashton site.

Audit Committee

8.3 The Committee had been informed that the University had reported two separate ‘serious incidents’ to HEFCE. The formal reporting process for serious incidents was as follows:

(i) Chair of Audit Committee and HEFCE to be notified of the incident at the earliest opportunity;
(ii) Audit Committee to be notified (at earliest opportunity, usually the next meeting);
(iii) Internal Auditors commissioned to undertake an internal audit of the incident.

8.4 The incidents had been: (i) a data security breach resulting from the theft of two laptops containing potentially identifiable personal information about research subjects; and (ii) a discrepancy in the records of use and storage of controlled drugs in a research laboratory. The data security breach was reported to the Information Commissioner’s Office, which carried out an investigation and decided that no further action was necessary. The University was working with the relevant departments and with advice from the internal auditors to ensure that appropriate measures were put in place in response to these incidents.
9. Faculty Annual Reports
9.1 RECEIVED AND NOTED: The Annual Reports of the following faculties (both previously circulated, copy in the minute book):
   (i) Faculty of Science, reference CN/12/154.
   (ii) Faculty of Arts, reference CN/12/155.

9.2 The Chair asked that Council’s thanks be passed on to both Professor Jon Keating, Dean of Science and Professor Charles Martindale, Dean of Arts, for their informative reports. Council looked forward to receiving presentations from the Deans of both faculties next year.

9.3 NOTED: That Professor Charles Martindale would be standing down as Dean of Arts at the end of the current academic year. Council thanked Professor Martindale for his excellent leadership of the Faculty and wished him well in his retirement and with his continuing academic career. Interviews for Professor Martindale’s successor would be held in due course.

10. Date of Next Meeting
10.1 NOTED: That the next meetings of Council had been scheduled as follows:
   Friday, 6 July 2012
   Friday, 5 October 2012
   Friday, 23 November 2012
   Friday, 8 February 2013
   Thursday, 14 March 2013
   Friday, 15 March 2013
   Friday, 10 May 2013
   Friday, 5 July 2013