

# Minutes Unrestricted

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**Meeting title:** Council (Strategic meeting)

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**Date:** Tuesday 29 September 2009

**Time:** 1.00pm

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**Location:** Room 3028, Building 53 (Mountbatten Building).

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**Present:** Dame Valerie Strachan (*in the Chair*), Professor IT Cameron, Professor NH Foskett, Professor R Holdaway,\*\* Mr A J Jukes, Mr P Lester,^ Professor JD Kilburn, Mr M Killingley, Mr A Morgan,^ Mr T O'Brien, Mr S O'Reilly,\* Professor W Powrie,\*\* Dr MP Read, Ms R Rivaz, Mr MJ Snell, Professor AA Wheeler, Professor DM Williams and Mrs J Wood

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**In attendance:** The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, the Director of Finance, the University Secretary, Professor AD Fitt, Professor PA Nelson and Dr K A Piggott

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**By invitation** Professor D Nutbeam, Vice-Chancellor Designate

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\*not present for restricted business \*\* not present for full duration of business meeting ^ not present for full duration of informal strategic meeting

Dame Valerie welcomed members to the annual strategic meeting of Council, and particularly welcomed Professor Nutbeam, the Vice-Chancellor Designate, who was attending primarily to input to the second part of the meeting which would focus on strategic issues. She reminded members that the meeting was structured such that the first section would follow a formal business agenda, and the meeting would then move into a time of structured, but more informal, discussion of strategic issues.

## 1. Conflicts of interests

The Chair asked members to identify any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda. None were notified. (Subsequently Professor Kilburn declared an interest as the former Head of the School of Chemistry in respect of restricted agenda items 22.1 and 22.3 (minute 16)).

## 2. Council Standing Orders and Statement of Primary Responsibilities

**Received** Proposed amendments to the Council Standing Orders for 2009-10.

The Registrar and Chief Operating presented the paper, explaining that the majority of changes proposed were minor, and were to improve clarity, to take account of title changes, or to correct omissions of detail. The main point of significance was an amendment to paragraph 23, such that responsibility for approving the 'list of items of business, approval of which was delegated to a particular committee or officer' was now specified to rest with Council, rather than with the University Executive Group (UEG).

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer apologised that the Statement of Primary Responsibilities was not available for this meeting – it would be presented to Council in November.

**Resolved** That the revised Standing Orders of Council dated September 2009 be approved.

## 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2009

**Resolved** That the Minutes (unrestricted) of the meeting held on 9 July 2009 be approved and signed.

## 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

### 4.1 Vice-Chancellor's report: Economic Challenge Investment Fund (minute 131.2)

The Director of Finance reported that it was now unlikely that further feedback on the unsuccessful bid would be received, and the University was therefore pursuing other avenues to obtain funding.

### 4.2 Voluntary Severance Scheme (minute 131.3)

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer updated members on the number of applications received and approved under the voluntary severance scheme. Staff accepted under the scheme would leave by 30 September 2009 but salary savings would not be seen until the following year, as the offer equated to a year's salary (with a reduced amount for those leaving within less than 5 years of retirement).

#### 4.3 **Procedures for governing research misconduct** (minute 132)

An interim procedure was now in place for 2009-10 and had been published in the Calendar, but there will be further consultation on the arrangements in the coming academic year.

#### 4.4 **Health and Safety Audit committee proposed amendment to title and terms of reference** (minute 141.4)

The committee would be putting forward the proposals for amendments to its title and terms of reference after its November meeting.

#### 4.5. **Code of Practice to Ensure Freedom of Speech** (minute 147)

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer reported that as agreed at Council in July Mr Henderson had submitted comments suggesting amendments to the Code of Practice; however because of the summer break it had not yet been possible to take this matter forward, as more substantial changes to the Code would require wider consultation. He would be pursuing this in the coming months.

### 5. **Vice-Chancellor's report**

In the Vice-Chancellor's absence Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Wheeler drew attention to:

*Student Recruitment:* Recruitment of Home/EU students was likely to be on target (which would optimise funding). The current prediction was that recruitment of international students would be over target by 131. The target income from international student fees had been set at £32million, and if current predictions were correct, this income was likely to reach £34 - £35million. There was also an increase in postgraduate taught students and a small increase in postgraduate research students. He paid tribute to everyone involved in recruitment, and particularly to the work of Pro Vice-Chancellor Fitt, in steering the process to a successful conclusion for the year.

*National pay negotiations:* Members were updated on the current position, following the employers' offer of a salary increase of 0.5%.

*Future public spending cuts:* Informal feedback had been received that the Research Councils were being asked to scenario plan for some extremely deep cuts; this would no doubt impact upon the University's future research income.

*Academic Misconduct:* The Vice-Chancellor had recently concluded an academic misconduct case. A second case was currently under investigation.

### 6. **University staff and student access to unrestricted, non-confidential Council papers**

**Received** A paper from the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer dated 21 September 2009, seeking Council's views on enabling wider access to non-confidential, unrestricted Council papers and minutes for staff and students in the University.

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer presented the paper and sought Council's views on the proposal to make non-confidential, unrestricted papers and minutes available to staff and students via a group site accessible through the University's internal web portal. Members were strongly supportive of the proposal, and indeed suggested that such papers and minutes could be made publicly available through the University's main website. It was however agreed that publication of papers should take place after the Council meeting, and only confirmed minutes should be made available. Nor should this be implemented retrospectively – publication should begin after the next Council meeting. It was emphasised that it was essential that papers and minutes continued to include all the information Council needed, and were designed for this purpose, not prepared with a view to 'telling a story' for publication. In particular it was important that, where necessary, Council should be presented with 'options' papers, recognising that it might not always be appropriate for all the options considered subsequently to be publicised. Paper authors would perhaps need to give more thought to whether any papers or elements thereof should be regarded as 'commercial in confidence'.

**Resolved** That non-confidential unrestricted Council papers and confirmed minutes should be made available electronically to staff and students of the University, following each Council meeting; and that this should be effective from the next meeting of Council, not implemented retrospectively.

7. **Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee of Council, 4 September 2009** (agendum 9)

**Received** The minutes of the above meeting of Standing Committee of Council.  
(The paper circulated is commercial in confidence, restricted to members of Council only).

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the lease for the space at the General Hospital had now been signed. Dr Read drew attention to the relational issues raised by the negotiations, which were discussed briefly. The importance of building good relationships at all levels with Southampton University Hospitals Trust (one of the University's key partners) was emphasised, although it was recognised that the complexity of the Trust as an organisation could sometimes make this difficult. It was suggested that the meeting of Standing Committee had been difficult because Council members had not been aware in advance of the nature of the relationship with the Trust and of the specific issues relating to the lease and the 'knock-for-knock' agreement, and there had been a lack of information about the costs involved. Standing Committee therefore felt it important that Council should receive a briefing on such issues at a future meeting.

**Resolved** That the report be noted and the decisions taken by Standing Committee endorsed.

8. **Report from the meeting of the University Executive Group, 9 September 2009** (agendum 10)

**Received** The report from the above meeting of the University Executive Group.

In the Vice-Chancellor's absence Professor Wheeler presented the report, highlighting the following:

*The Broadlands Archive (item 2):* The University had an opportunity to purchase the Broadlands Archive, a collection of international importance and a major resource for academic and research work, which had been held on loan by the University since 1989. Discussions and actions had been put in hand to explore how the purchase might be funded.

*Halls of Residence: Chamberlain Hall (item 3):* UEG had considered various recommendations relating to the future of Chamberlain Hall (which was in need of substantial refurbishment). Council briefly discussed the financial and practical implications. The Vice-Chancellor Designate commented that he was mindful that there were a number of creative ways to address the long-term issues of providing residential accommodation for students; he had therefore asked the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer to lead a small group to review this matter strategically. Issues relating specifically to Chamberlain Hall would be considered as part of this. Members commented that the development and management of the residential estate were long-standing issues, which it was important to consider strategically, rather than focussing on individual halls of residence, and this needed to be taken forward as quickly as possible. The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer indicated that he would hope to bring proposals to Council in Spring 2010.

*University committees (item 4):* UEG had approved appointments to the Audit Committee and amendments to membership of the Research and Enterprise Committee and Safety and Occupational Health Committee.

**Resolved** To note the report.

9. **Report from the Meeting of the Finance Committee, 21 September 2009** (agendum 11)

**Received** A report from the above meeting of the Finance Committee, proposing the approval of a revised Treasury Management Policy.

It was noted that this proposal was brought directly to Council rather than coming via the University Executive Group because of the timing of meetings - UEG would not meet until October and Finance Committee considered it appropriate to have the revised policy formalised as soon as possible. The Director of Finance commented that the previous Treasury Management Policy had had two key aspects - a minimum rating on the deposit taker's long term stability and a maximum amount per deposit taker. However, because of the volatile financial situation, the University had been operating outside

this policy, with the University's deposits instead being concentrated in banks that were 'too big to fail'. Council had been kept informed of these developments. Now that the financial climate was again becoming more stable it was important to reconstruct a Treasury Management Policy. The Treasurer highlighted that in the policy the security of the cash deposited was of paramount importance.

**Resolved** That the Treasury Management Policy be approved, and that the report be noted.

## 10. Minutes of the Audit Committee

### 10.1 Meeting held on 13 July 2009 (unconfirmed minutes) (agendum 12.1)

**Received** The minutes of the above meeting (note: since the circulation of the papers, the minutes had been confirmed)

Mr Morgan, as the new Chair of the Audit Committee, drew attention to the key issues for note, as highlighted in the cover sheet to the minutes:

- The potential impact of a reduction in external funding (minutes 42 and 43)
- The importance of the Risk Register as a management tool (minute 44)
- The proposals for follow up relating to data quality assurance (minute 45)
- The arrangements for School assurance for 2009/10 (minute 47)
- The approach to Business Continuity Planning and issues arising (minute 48.4)
- Continued focus on the recommendations in the Internal Auditors' report on the maintenance of the residential estate (minute 49.2)

**Resolved** To note the report.

### 10.2 Meeting held on 21 September 2009 (oral report)

Mr Morgan drew attention orally to two issues from this meeting:

- Further discussions had taken place in respect of business continuity planning, specifically in the context of swine 'flu, but the scope was clearly broader.
- The process would begin in October to undertake market testing for the appointment of internal auditors for 2010-11; this had now been decoupled from the process for appointing the external auditors, for which market testing would take place for 2011/12.

## 11. Report from the Nominations Committee (agendum 13)

**Received** A report from the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer on behalf of the Nominations Committee, dated 22 September 2009, concerning nominations to Class 2 membership of Council.

The Registrar and Chief Operating Officer reported that the proposals now before Council had been agreed unanimously by the Nominations Committee following consultation by e-mail. Council fully supported the proposals. The importance of taking into account the issues of ethnicity and gender balance when considering future vacancies was, however, emphasised.

**Resolved** That Mr John Trewby and Mr Peter White be appointed to Class 2 membership of Council for an initial period of approximately three years, from 1 October 2009 until 31 July 2012.

## 12. Minor amendment to statement of Health and Safety Policy (agendum 16)

**Received** A paper from the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer dated 14 September 2009 and headed 'Items approved on Chair's Action - minor amendment to the summary statement of University health and safety policy.

Members were reminded that at its July meeting Council had agreed that Chair's action could be taken to approve a minor amendment to the summary statement of health and safety policy (see minute 141.4). The amendment as approved by the Chair had been circulated to members for information.

**Resolved** To note the amended statement of Health and Safety Policy 2009-10, as approved on Chair's action.

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