



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on the 4th October 2010

10/01 Attendance

1.1. Present

Mr J Pallett	Chair
Dr H Barrett	
Mr J Bateman	
Ms J Bruce	
Mr M Collins	
Ms O Fielding	
Professor D Green	Vice Chancellor
Mr S Lewis	
Professor J Low	
Mr M Newitt	
Mr T Patrickson	
Mrs J Quallington	
Mrs E Spalding	
Mrs J Swan	
Mr P Swinburn	
Professor T Thompson	
Mr P West	

1.2. In Attendance

Dr M Doughty	Pro Vice Chancellor (Resources)
Mrs P Finch	Director of Finance
Professor R Foskett	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Professor G Elliott	Director of Regional Engagement
Mr J Ryan	Registrar & Secretary
Ms G Slater	Director of Personnel
Dr M Stowell	Director of Quality & Educational Development

1.3. Apologies

Professor M Clarke	
Mr L Probert	
Ms A Hannaford	Director of ILS
Ms H Johnstone	Assistant to the Registrar & Secretary

1.4. Election of Chair

Mr Julian Pallett was re-elected as Chair of the Board of Governors for the 2010/11 session.

1.5 Membership

The Chair welcomed Ms Odette Fielding, Staff Governor, to her first meeting of the Board.

1.6 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.7 Terms of Reference

The Board received for information, at the start of the new session, a copy of the Constitution and Proceedings of the Board of Governors [BG10/01].

10/02 Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 5th July 2010 [BG10/02] were confirmed as a correct record.

2.2. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

10/03 Presentation on the University's Media Coverage and Strategy

3.1 The Board received a presentation from the Head of Communication and Development which outlined the University's media strategy, which was to engage fully with the local and national media, seeking every opportunity to promote positive coverage of the University and also to engage in debate about current issues in higher education. Ms Moss illustrated the strategy by reference to examples of recent media coverage, especially in relation to the 2009/10 admissions cycle and coverage of various aspects of the University's research and related activities. She confirmed that at the core of the strategy was the promotion of the University of Worcester as a good place to study. At local level, a primary objective was to demonstrate the very positive contribution the University makes to the region.

3.2 Members of the Board welcomed the presentation and acknowledged that the media coverage achieved was impressive. There was a discussion about the risks involved in actively seeking national coverage, particularly in the context of addressing controversial matters, but it was agreed that the benefits outweighed any risks. Members acknowledged that there needed to be specific but related strategies for local and national media and recognised that good progress had been made in securing good local coverage, particularly in the Worcester News and local radio stations, although it was inevitable that adverse coverage would occur from time to time. In response to a query about penetration of the media in Herefordshire, Ms Moss, confirmed that numerous press releases with a "Hereford angle" were released, with some success and this would continue to be the strategy. However, interest, especially of local newspapers, was relatively slight.

3.3 The Chair thanked Ms Moss for both the presentation and for the contribution she and her staff made to raising the public profile of the University which was very important, and likely to become increasingly so.

10/04 Chair's Business

4.1 The Chair congratulated the University officers on the University's success in achieving Research Degree Awarding Powers.

10/05 Vice Chancellor's Report (BG10/03)

The Vice Chancellor presented his report to the Board and drew members' attention to the following:

- 5.1 RDAP – the award of RDAP represents a significant step in the University's evolution and will help to strengthen the University's research and consultancy work.
- 5.2 City Campus – the new facilities had been universally well-received and had the potential to transform the way people think about University.
- 5.3 Summer Refurbishments – the refurbishments, especially the work on the Students' Union have contributed further to the general improvement in facilities at the St John's Campus, an important objective.
- 5.4 Student Experience – the further slight decline in the University's performance in the National Student Survey is a cause of concern but there is some evidence that the work done in 2009/10 is beginning to have an impact in other areas, including rates of progression and achievement. A number of initiatives are in progress and the University must continue its efforts to address levels of student satisfaction. In this connection, a further staff conference will be held in November, to which governors will be invited, on the broad theme of improving Worcester students' educational experience, participation, achievements and outcomes.
- 5.5. Current Climate – there was inevitably, given the uncertainty relating to future funding, an "unsettled" atmosphere amongst staff. Whilst there was a recognition that the University was in a good position to meet the challenges ahead, it was important that there is effective communication with staff about current issues and their implications for the University. An all-staff meeting was planned to coincide with the outcomes of the Browne Review and the CSR to ensure that staff were kept informed and the Vice Chancellor emphasised the senior management team's commitment to effective communication with staff and students.
- 5.6 Staffing – the Vice Chancellor referred to current staffing levels, which had been discussed at Finance and Development Committee, especially in the context of staff costs which in 2009/10 had been 50% of total expenditure. This indicated that the University was "efficient" in comparison with other institutions but the Vice Chancellor emphasised that this had to be balanced with ensuring a satisfactory student experience. The University's approach was to take a prudent approach, releasing posts where there was a demonstrable need, but ensuring that the University did not over-commit itself, recognising that a growing number of institutions were being required to introduce redundancy schemes.
- 5.7 TDA – the Vice Chancellor reported that the TDA had not announced future funding arrangements but had withdrawn support for national advertising campaigns to encourage applications to teaching training courses. There were various rumours about significant changes to the arrangements for teacher training that if implemented would have serious consequences for universities but as yet there have been no formal communications.
- 5.8 Public Spending – there was much speculation about the outcomes for HE of the Comprehensive Spending review and the Browne Review with predictions of significant (40% plus) cuts in funding for teaching and the removal of the cap. This was adding to the unsettled atmosphere referred to previously.

5.9 The Chair thanked the Vice Chancellor for his report and stressed the need for the University to respond positively to the challenges ahead, and expressed his confidence that the Board itself and the staff of the University would so do.

5.10 A number of queries were raised, including:

- Members asked about the arrangements in place to co-ordinate the response to the NSS and were informed of a series of measures (through the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee; through the work of the NSS group; through communication and discussion with student representatives at course and University level; through a “you told us, we did.....” programme of communication; through a review of personal tutoring, etc)
- Members asked whether steps were being taken to manage and monitor the impact of the move to a multi-site university and were informed that this was being closely monitored, and that the Director of ILS, who is now located at the City Campus, has been given specific responsibility in this area.
- Members agreed that in deciding priorities for resource allocation, adequate staffing levels to support the student experience should remain a priority and welcomed the Vice Chancellor’s comments in this regard.

5.11 The Vice Chancellor thanked the Board for their supportive comments.

10/06 Student Numbers, 2010/11

6.1 The Registrar presented a report on the current position on recruitment and student numbers, 2010/11, recognising that the final position would not be known until the registration process is complete.

6.2 The Board noted that recruitment to all branches of Nursing and Midwifery had achieved their targets. Recruitment to TDA courses, especially at primary level, was extremely buoyant. The final outcome was likely to be slight over-recruitment across all courses; discussions with the TDA about virement between primary and secondary had been very positive, and as a result sanctions relating to over-recruitment may be avoided.

6.3 Recruitment to HEFCE courses has gone well, and the majority of subjects have either met or exceeded targets. Current indications are that the University should achieve the ftes required to avoid a reduction in the ASN funding (4630). At present, the assumption is that we may achieve 50% of the UMF (University Modernisation Fund) ASNs. This would result in clawback (£5110 for every fte below the UMF target, and also the loss of a proportion of the efficiency saving funding). Members noted that this may improve but that there was a contingency built into the 2010/11 budget to allow for under-recruitment.

6.4 The Board congratulated all concerned on an excellent outcome and acknowledged that it has been anticipated that recruitment to UMF numbers would always be challenging and that the availability of accommodation had been a limiting factor.

10/07 Forecast Out-turn 2009/10 [BG10/4a]

7.1 The Board received the income and expenditure account for 2009/10 (subject to audit and as at 22nd September 2010)

7.2 The Board was pleased to note that the forecast out-turn prior to the release from the revaluation reserve of £1,123,000 (1.7%). The Board noted that the accounts incorporated provision for the interim development costs relating to the second phase of the City Campus.

- 7.3 The Board acknowledged that the underlying financial position of the University remained healthy, which was important in the current economic climate, and in the context of the continued confidence of external funding bodies and financial institutions.
- 7.4 The Board was informed that the accounts included a negative position for FRS17 pension adjustments of £972,000. This remains provisional until clarification was received nationally from the Accounting Standards Board regarding the accounting treatment of the gain arising from the change in indexation of pensions from RPI to CPI. The outcome of this could result in a significant (positive) change to the outturn of the year.
- 7.5 The Board congratulated University officers on a good financial out-turn for the year.

10/08 Students' Union Business [BG10/05]

- 8.1 The Board received a report from the Students' Union officers. The Board congratulated the officers on a most comprehensive report which demonstrated a vibrant and dynamic organisation. Members were particularly pleased to note the excellent progress in enhancing student academic representation and the quality of leadership provided to students, particularly in the context of issues around student behaviour and community relationships.

10/09 Reports from Committees

9.1 Finance & Development Committee [BG10/06]

- 9.1.1. In addition to the report on the Forecast Out-turn (see above) the Board received a report on changes to the Revised Model Financial Memorandum between HEFCE and Higher Education Institutions.
- 9.1.2 The Board notes that as a result of the consultation on the proposed changes HEFCE has re-considered its position, especially in the context of the power to require a governing body to remove the Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, and the placement of a specific responsibility for the Board to assure itself of the academic standards and quality of the institution's provision. Like the Committee, the Board welcomed the changes in the final document, but still regretted the tone of parts of the document and still considered that elements of the document represented an over-reaction to governance related issues that had arisen at a small number of institutions.
- 9.1.3 The Board welcomed the proposal at para 4 of the Report that the Registrar and Secretary will prepare for the next round of meetings a paper illustrating the sources of assurance that the Board relies on to discharge its responsibilities under the Financial Memorandum.
- 9.1.4 The Board received the Committee's report.

9.2 Report of the Audit Committee [BG10/07]

- 9.2.1 The Board received a revised Institutional Register, which the Audit Committee had recommended for approval. The Board notes that the revised Register took into account the changed circumstances and developments that have taken place in the 2009/10 period and also anticipated future developments. It also incorporated matters included in the Committee's report in May on new developments relevant to each of the ten over-arching risks.
- 9.2.2 The Board shared the view of the Audit Committee that the updated Register demonstrated that it is a "live" document and noted that individual members of the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Group with responsibility for individual areas of risk had been fully involved in reviewing and updating the Register.

9.2.3 The Board approved changes to the Register and noted the next formal review will take place in April 2011.

9.2.4 The Board received the Audit Committee's Annual Report on Risk Management Activities, and agreed that it demonstrates that the University's responsibility for risk management is being discharged effectively.

9.2.5 The Board noted for information a number of further items in the Report of the Committee:-

i) the audit schedule for 2010/11

ii) internal audit reports on the following areas:

- Budget Setting and Control (Adequate Assurance)
- Creditors and Payments (Substantial Assurance)
- Compliance with UUK/GuildHE Code of Practice for the Management of Student Accommodation (Adequate Assurance)
- Risk Management (Core Annual Processes and Risk Maturity Follow-Up) (Substantial Assurance)
- Quality Control of Data Returns of HEFCE (Adequate Assurance)
- Transparent Approach to Costing (Adequate Assurance)

10/10 Date of Next Meeting

10.1 Wednesday 24th November 2010

..... (Chair)

..... (Date)