

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

25 April 2022 – in the Great Hall, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Bailes, georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present: Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Chair), Craig Apsey, James Bromiley, Emma Collier, Helen Fairfoul, Dr Stuart Fancey, Sophie Haagensen, Peter Judge, Libby Orme [absent BG21/89 – BG21/91 and BG21/96 – BG21/111], John Taylor, Helen Thorne [to BG21/97], Professor Andrew Wathey, Simon Yellowley.

Apologies: Katherine Fawcett, Sally Pelham, Nick Pope, Amy Rice-Thomson, Ava Sjoberg.

Secretary: Georgina Bailes, Richard Elliott (Assistant Secretary).

In attendance: Professor Louise Bracken, Adam Dunlop, Jane Embley, Professor Steven Kyffin, Professor Tom Lawson, Professor George Marston, Daniel Monnery, Simon Newitt, Erin Peart [Estates Priorities and Programme], Emrys Pritchard [BG21/95], Professor Jon Reast, Lucy Winskell [to BG21/103], Professor Graham Wynn.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

Introduction [Oral Report]

The Chair noted that this was Professor Andrew Wathey's final Board meeting before his retirement; the Board thanked him again for his inspirational leadership of the University over the last fourteen years.

Vice-Chancellor's Report [BG21/88]

The Board of Governors considered an update on international, national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. A number of the Government's HE reforms were now in the process of being implemented via OfS, and consultations in progress on other proposals appeared likely to produce a "middle ground" result. The freeze in UK undergraduate tuition fees was becoming a more serious concern as inflation continued to rise. **The Board noted the report.**

University Strategy Extension [BG21/89 and Presentation]

The Board of Governors considered the approach to extending the University Strategy, in particular the prioritisation of Business Outcomes and the initiatives to achieve them, as well as changes to our KPIs, following feedback and endorsement from Strategic Performance Committee. As part of the extension, it was proposed to prioritise the 28 (of 48) Business Outcomes (BOs) that would make the most progress towards the Vision including a number of new BOs supporting the Education Strategy, and focus on the specific initiatives that would deliver them supported by allocation of resources through the annual planning process. KPIs had been reviewed to assess the impact of Covid or other changes in the external environment and developments in internal thinking. **The Board approved the approach to extending the University Strategy and changes to KPIs.**

University Strategy 2018 – 2023 Performance Report [BG21/90]

The Board considered the University Strategy Performance report as at period 8 2021/22 (31 March 2022). Performance for KPIs was four at green, two at amber and five at red; the forecast year-end position was three at green, one at amber, four at red and three with no predicted status. 23 Business Outcomes were defined as 'on-track', 14 had some issues that were being managed and were 'off-track' and 11 had 'no current status' while they were under review. **The Board noted the report.**

HE Reform Programme – Consultation Responses [Oral Report]

The Board considered the University's emerging response to the current Government consultations following the workshop on 7 April. Foundation years would remain an important part of Northumbria's offer – modelling would be updated once the Government's position was clear, and the University would ensure that the focus on quality was retained. **The Board noted the report.**

Student Recruitment 2022/23 [BG21/91 and Presentation]

The Board noted the position on student recruitment for 2022/23.

Estates Priorities and Programme [Presentation]

The Board considered short and longer-term priorities for the development of the Estate following detailed consideration by Employment and Finance Committee. Projects for summer 2022 delivery focused on teaching and research provision and on work to improve the student experience. In the longer term the Centre for Health and Social Equity (CHaSE) would be the largest element of development. The alignment of longer-term Estates planning for the wider development of the Campus with the next University Strategy and with the Education and Research Strategies would be critical. **The Board noted the presentation and commended its clarity of required steps and phasing in the context of the overall complexity. The development of CHaSE alongside related developments by Newcastle University had the potential significantly to raise the city's profile for health and social care.**

Students' Union Report [BG21/92]

The Board of Governors considered the Students' Union Report. The reduced Sabbatical Team had been working on homesickness support, accessibility and mental and emotional health; the recent elections for the Sabbatical Team for 2022/23 had confirmed Emma Collier as President. **The Board of Governors noted the report, congratulated the current Sabbatical Team on sustaining such effective support with reduced membership, congratulated Emma on her election as President and noted that the 2022/23 Sabbatical Team would be invited to meet the Board at the 27 June pre-meeting session.**

Monthly Finance Report Period 8 2021/22 [BG21/93]

The Board of Governors considered the University's financial position and performance at Period 8 (31 March 2022). **The Board noted the report and that the position for 2021/22 was favourable to budget.**

Subject Step Change Programme Progress Report [BG21/94]

The Board of Governors considered progress in implementing Business Outcome 27 which committed each subject to have a clear, ambitious development path to grow the quality of Research and Education commensurate with Northumbria's reputation. Reviews of Education and Social Work had now been completed; the speed of delivery of the review programme had been deliberately slowed to enable fuller challenge of the status quo. **The Board noted the report.**

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report Q2 2021/22 [BG21/95]

The Board of Governors considered the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report November 2021 – January 2022, which had already been considered by Employment and Finance Committee and Audit Committee. All buildings continued to be Covid secure and the continuation of social distancing and wearing of face coverings was still encouraged. Completion rates for statutory inspections carried out by British Engineering Services had improved and were at 95%, and mandatory training completion rates had improved and the average completion rate across the University was at 95%. Short and long term sickness absence had increased in Q2 against Q1, which was a usual trend for this time of year. **The Board noted the report.**

Revised Governance Documents [BG21/96]

The Board considered the proposed revised Governance Documents following endorsement by Nominations Committee. The review reflected not only the outcomes of the recent Governance Effectiveness Review but also decisions of the Board of Governors and developments in sector and national best practice, and did not result in any fundamental changes. Subject to Board approval, the new Governance Documents would generally come into effect on 1 August 2022. **The Board suggested a number of minor changes to wording and approved the revised Governance Documents subject to those changes. The Board considered the value that might be obtained by piloting an application-based approach to filling the Academic Staff Governor vacancy that would arise on 31 July 2022. The value could potentially include a higher level of interest among staff in becoming a Governor, and a more diverse range of candidates for the Board. The pilot would be evaluated and the results would be reported to Board early in 2022/23 to enable an early decision on whether to continue with the application approach for the appointment of the next Professional Support Staff Governor in summer 2024. The Board of Governors approved the revised Election Regulations, and that they be suspended for the appointment of the Academic Staff Governor in summer 2022, and that a pilot of an application-based process be carried out.**

Evaluation of Governance Structures and Processes [BG21/97]

The Board of Governors considered a proposed approach to strengthening the evaluation of governance structures and processes for implementation in summer 2022, following endorsement by Nominations Committee on 6 April 2022. To complete compliance with the 2020 CUC HE Code of Governance, on an

annual basis, Board and each Committee would undertake an exercise to self-evaluate effectiveness. An exercise to evaluate the performance of and confirm the reappointment of the Chair of the Board would be carried out every three years, aligned with the term of office of the Chair; the performance of Committee Chairs would also be evaluated every three years, as far as possible aligned to their terms of office. **The Board** noted that the formal evaluation exercises would supplement the current informal discussions between the Chair and all Governors, and requested that the surveys should provide for a light-touch annual evaluation of the Chair of the Board and the Chairs of each Committee. **The Board approved the proposed approach to strengthening the evaluation of governance structures and processes.**

Governor Succession Planning [BG21/98]

The Board of Governors considered issues arising as a result of Independent Governor terms of office coming to an end during the 2022 and 2023 calendar years, including the proposed reappointment of Craig Apsey as an Independent Governor and Chair of Strategic Performance Committee for one additional year of service, following endorsement by Nominations Committee on 6 April 2022. An exercise to recruit up to three new Independent Governors to fill the current vacancy and those that would arise over the short to medium term would begin shortly. **The Board noted the report and approved the reappointment of Craig Apsey as an Independent Governor and as Chair of Strategic Performance Committee for one additional year.**

Governance Effectiveness Review [BG21/99]

The Board of Governors considered progress in implementing the recommendations and suggestions of the Governance Effectiveness Review (GER). All actions had been categorised as ‘resolved’, to accommodate the position for some actions where the way forward had been agreed and work commissioned within the University that would now be managed as business as usual, but which could take some time to achieve formal completion. The GER Task and Finish Group had concluded at its 20 April meeting that its work was complete and it could be stood down. **The Board noted the report and commended the Task and Finish Group on the completion of its work.**

Governor Development Programme [BG21/100]

The Board of Governors considered the proposed approach to a Governor Development Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23; it included a suite of resources for Governors with access to different types of support, guidance, information and training, and a monthly Governor Bulletin summarising recent developments and upcoming events would be circulated. **The Board noted the report and commended the proposed approach.**

Pensions Update [Oral Report]

The Board of Governors noted an update on the University’s four pension schemes. For USS, the 28 February 2022 interim monitoring statement that followed the changes to the scheme showed no requirement for deficit recovery payments, indicating that the changes had had the intended effect.

Chair’s Report - Employment and Finance Committee: 14 March 2022 and 6 April 2022 [BG21/101]

The Board noted that at its 14 March and 6 April 2022 meetings the Committee had considered a full range of people-related items including the Culture Framework and the approach to the Voluntary Living Wage, considered the lessons from the unsuccessful IC3 bid and approved the extension of the University’s letter of support to the Amsterdam campus to a five-year basis.

Chair’s Report - Strategic Performance Committee: 24 March 2022 [BG21/102]

The Board noted that at its 24 March 2022 meeting the Committee had considered in depth the proposed approach to the extension of the University Strategy that had been reported to this meeting and considered the outcomes of the education-related, departmental “roadshow” events held over October and November 2021 covering the entire University.

Chair’s Report - Academic Board: 7 April 2022 [BG21/103]

The Board noted that at its 7 April meeting, Academic Board had considered some of the Education Strategy and NSS issues also addressed by Strategic Performance Committee and considered a summary of student appeals and complaints, which would be analysed in depth by University Executive to provide a diagnostic tool that could assist in driving quality.