

JOINT COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 7 February 2019

PRESENT

Ms Sarah Buck (Chair)

University Representatives

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Steve Smith

Registrar and Secretary, Mr M Shore-Nye

Chief Financial Officer, Mr A Connolly

Interim Director of People Services, Mrs Imelda Rogers

Trade Union Representatives

Dr Sharon Strawbridge (UCU)

Dr James Cresswell (UCU)

Ms Rhian Keyse (UCU)

Mr Andy Holcombe (Unison)

Also in attendance

Assistant Director of People Services, Mr A Johnson

HR Policy Adviser, Mrs E Hilton

Ms Philippa Davey (Regional Officer, UCU)

Apologies

Provost, Professor Janice Kay

Mr Tim Hortopp (Unison)

Mr Chris Forest (Unite)

18.21 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 (JCCN/19/01).

18.22 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 (JCCN/19/01).

18.23 University Finances

The Chief Financial Officer gave a presentation on the University finances (attached as an appendix to these minutes). He informed the Committee that the University Annual Report for 2017/18 is now available on the University website¹. The new format of the report for this year included more comprehensive information about the University than previous annual financial statements. Key points:

- a) This year was the first full year since the 0.5% increase in undergraduate student fees.
- b) Two student residences are being demolished and rebuilt at the expense of a third party in an arrangement which is financially advantageous to the University.
- c) While capital expenditure has been lower over the last three years, smaller projects have been progressed (for example, the new Nursery) and there has been continued investment in the existing infrastructure to continue business as usual (for example, the Physics and Engineering buildings). The new Capital Strategy provides for continued investment.

¹ www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/financeservices/pdfs/Financial_Statements_2017-18.pdf

- d) Staff costs are increasing faster than income: this is not sustainable since income from student fees are fixed.
- e) No definite decisions have yet been made regarding employer contributions to the USS pension scheme.
- f) There is continued uncertainty regarding student fees: the outcomes of the Augar Review, once they are published, will be discussed by all Colleges/Departments, with changes potentially taking effect from autumn 2020.

18.24 Professional Services Strategy

The Registrar and Secretary advised the Committee that the Professional Services Strategy was launched last year with a particular focus on how Professional Services works as a team across the University. The key themes are Partnership, Performance and Alignment. The Committee was advised that a series of workshops are taking place for colleagues to 'Become Registrar for the day' and spaces on these are filling quickly. An initial project was looking at linking data held by different departments in order to make it simpler to communicate both internally and externally.

18.25 Vice Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee:

- a) of the possible implications for the HE sector and the University of Exeter of a 'deal' or 'no deal' Brexit. If the Withdrawal Agreement was agreed then funding would continue. In the event of no deal, funding from the European Research Council and for Erasmus + funding would cease. The Committee was advised that the University was supporting the Russell Group and UUK to influence the Government to protect the sector.
- b) that the University welcomed the decision of the Government to waive the fee for EU citizens applying for settled status.
- c) that College Executives were considering the College-level outcomes of the 2018 Employee Engagement Survey. The University-level results and College-level results would be shared with all employees next week. In response to a question from the trade unions, the Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that the University was changing the way strategy is developed and that there would be a greater opportunity for staff to contribute to the development of strategy.

18.26 Professional Services Savings

Dr James Cresswell representing UCU asked for information on vacancy savings in Professional Services and how the grade profile within Professional Services had changed over the last 5 years. He advised the Committee that one-third of staff in the Employee Engagement Survey had said that the level of stress was not acceptable. He asked whether the level of stress experienced by employees in areas where TERS for colleagues had been approved and whether business planning looked at the redistribution of workload and any additional stress this may cause. In response, the Registrar and Secretary advised the Committee of the steps the University is taking to improve services, and the reviews which take place after implementation to ensure that planned outcomes have been achieved. He gave examples of projects where additional resources had been provided following these reviews.

18.27 Postgraduate Teaching Assistants

In response to a question from the trade unions, the Interim Director of People Services advised the Committee that the changes to the employment arrangements for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants introduced on an interim basis in 2018/19 were intended to provide fairer employment. There were continuing challenges in Colleges being able to provide complete and timely information to People Services due to changes to teaching allocations. The Strategic Development Unit will be conducting a process review to identify what actions are necessary to improve the process.

The Committee agreed the importance of the Trade Unions and the University working together to improve the process for the future.

18.28 Trade Union Engagement Report

The Committee noted the report of the Assistant Director, People Services (JCCN/19/02), summarising engagement since the last meeting of the Committee in November 2018.

18.29 Any other Business

a) Recruitment of new Vice-Chancellor

The Registrar advised the Committee that the Vice Chancellor will be retiring in 2020 and that a recruitment process for his replacement will commence shortly. The Chair of the Committee confirmed that she would arrange a separate meeting with all three recognised Trade Unions to discuss the process and the job description. It was agreed that this meeting would take place before the end of March.

b) Employee Engagement Survey

Trade Unions requested sight of the College and Professional Services Employee Engagement Survey reports before they were made available to all staff. The Interim Director of People Services advised the Committee that these reports would be shared with Trade Unions as soon as possible after they had been discussed by College Executives and before they were made available to all staff.

c) Before closing the meeting, the Chair thanked Andy Holcombe for his services on the Committee as he will be leaving the University at the end of March.