

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

**Joint Committee for Consultation and Negotiation: Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2022**

PRESENT

Sir Richard Atkins (Chair)

University Representatives

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lisa Roberts

Provost, Professor Janice Kay

Director of Human Resources, Imelda Rogers

Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Connolly (via Teams)

Deputy Registrar and Chief College Operations Officer, Linda Peka (for Registrar)

Trade Union Representatives

UCU, Professor Andrew Gilbert, (via Teams)

UCU, Dr Charles Masquelier (via Teams)

Unite Branch Secretary, Chris Forrest (via Teams)

Unison Branch Secretary, Tim Hortopp (via Teams)

Also in attendance

UCU Regional Officer, Alison Chapman (part) (via Teams)

Assistant Director of Human Resources, Andrew Johnson

Programme Director, Sean Fielding (via Teams)

Executive Officer to Director of Human Resources, Rachael Cameron (via Teams)

Apologies

Registrar & Secretary, Mike Shore-Nye

21.28 Minutes (JCCN/22/01)

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

21. 29 Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor gave an oral update and advised the Committee of the following:

- The publication of the much-anticipated Augar report had been further delayed within Government.
- The Levelling Up White paper was published on 2 February. While it does not include clear commitments, the references to increasing R&D investment outside the greater south east offers potential that funding might be diverted to the south west. It also suggested opportunities for greater devolution across Devon and Cornwall. On skills, the White Paper refers to students receiving skills needed by employers, with the Exeter Maths School being mentioned as an exemplar.
- The Office for Students has three significant consultations all closing on 17<sup>th</sup> March
  - B3 condition student outcomes and minimum baselines
  - Future of TEF
  - Construction of new student experience and student outcomes for the sector .
- Horizon Europe still delayed, and the UK government underwrite needs to be deployed.

## 21. 30 Shaping Our Future Structures Together

The Committee received a presentation and oral update on the consultation which closed on 8 February. Key points included academic structures and groupings, naming conventions, Cornwall structures, the pace of the timeline (both positive and negative), the PS divisional departments and change fatigue. All feedback is being reviewed by the senior team next week and some modifications are anticipated. When this is finalised, proposals will be taken to Senate on 9 March for their approval ahead of Council on 17 March for their final approval. If approval is given, the next stage will be to appoint to new leadership roles during April/May.

A further set of slides (which had previously been shared with Senate) was shared outlining possible sub-departmental structures and roles, with increased departmental accountability and responsibilities.

UCU representatives expressed concern that the consultation was going too fast for consultation to be genuine and requested further consultation after the senior team review next week ahead of Senate. The Vice-Chancellor advised the meeting that while some people had said the timeline was too fast, others wanted the changes implemented earlier so that improvements to ways of working, removing barriers etc can be delivered sooner. There will be transition period as the new arrangements will take a few months to bed in. The University has been as transparent as possible during the consultation, which is different to Big Conversation. The University has followed its standard approach and its ordinances and unless the proposals were significantly different there will not be a further consultation. UEB will make decisions on the final proposals for submission to Senate for approval and then to Council for final approval. A summary of the consultation with the response of the University management, together with the final proposals will be shared with Senators in good time before Senate so they can consult with their constituencies.

UCU representatives suggested that the new structures provided an opportunity to embed more democracy.

Unison's representative expressed concerns around pace of timeline on the workload of some staff such as Exeter IT, which already had a full programme of work. Would some projects have to be delayed to facilitate the changes? University representatives advised the meeting that a working group (with resources) was assessing the hierarchy of needs, including business as usual and projects, to identify what needs to be done for September and what can be progressed later.

Trade union representatives asked if access could be provided to Senate minutes.

- **Action: Unison to let Sean Fielding know of specific concerns around IT systems.**
- **Unison requested sight of Senate minutes as not available online. Action: AJ**

## 21. 31 Universities Superannuation Scheme

The Committee noted a letter from UCU and the University's response.

UCU representatives expressed the view that the current valuation was based on extreme prudence and took place at a low point due the pandemic – assets had grown since then. UCU was concerned that there would be significant detrimental impact, particularly on younger staff, of the current proposals. Protecting current benefits would have a positive impact on staff wellbeing, commenting that staff who have confidence in their pension scheme are less likely to experience stress.

The Committee noted that a further proposal had now been submitted by UCU. UCU representatives were seeking the support of the University to these proposals.

The Chief Financial Officer advised the meeting that employers were aiming to provide a pension which was good and affordable. Full details of the latest UCU proposal were not yet available but it was clear that the UCU proposals would require significant increases in contributions from employees as well as employers. By April 2024, staff would be contributing 42% more than today. These increases could have a negative impact on staff wellbeing and lead to more staff opting out. The University had not seen evidence that staff would pay a lot more to maintain the current benefits. For the University, the proposals would require additional funding of £4m each year from April 2022,

rising to £30m each year from April 2024. These increases were unaffordable. While asset values may have increased since the valuation, valuations took a long term view of stock market fluctuations. He explained the timeline for completion of the current valuation, which require a plan to be agreed by the end of February. The current proposals were based on a package of measures – including increased employer support and benefit reform – to avoid significant increases in contributions.

UCU representatives advised the meeting that the increases proposed were not major increases and that members did not share the University's concerns. Employees would be better able to afford increases in contributions if pay had not declined in real terms.

#### 21.32 Trade Union Engagement Report (JCCN/22/02)

The meeting noted the varied scope of engagement and the progress made on various issues.

In relation to point 4 appendix C, trade union representatives requested that this year's facility time be notified to Heads of Department. **Action: AJ**

In response to questions from UCU representatives regarding FEFA (appendix D), the Director of HR advised trade unions to refer these to the next FEFA focussed meeting with trade unions (where Ginny Russell represents UCU).

Next meeting Monday 09 May 2022