

Update from the Meetings of the Council held on 8 October and 27 November 2009

1. Appointment of Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer and Membership of the University Council

The Registrar reported to the Council that he and Mr David Holmes (a lay member of the Council until 1 August 2009) had canvassed the views of members of the Council as to the individual best placed to replace the current Pro-Chancellor at the end of his term of service on 31 July 2011, and who would shadow the current serving Pro-Chancellor until this date during 2010/11.

The Council appointed Sir George Cox into the role of Pro-Chancellor for four years from 1 August 2010, and extended the period of office of Mr Brian Woods-Scawen as Honorary Treasurer through to 31 July 2014.

It was reported to the Council that, on the recommendation of the Nominations Committee, Mr Glenn Howells had been appointed to lay membership of the Council for the period through to 31 July 2014. The Nominations Committee continue to pursue the appointment to the remaining one vacancy in lay membership.

2. Strategic Topics: Progressing Towards Vision 2015 and Refreshing the University Strategy

The Council discussed the University's progress towards achieving the aims of Vision 2015.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that excellent progress was being made, and that the underlying principles of income generation, increasing excellence in teaching and research, and raising the University's international profile remained central to the University as it moved into the next phase of strategy implementation.

However, it was recognised that the University was operating in a very different financial environment to that under which the strategy was formulated and as such, careful reprioritisation of goals needed to be undertaken and consideration given to where resources should be focused to ensure maximum impact.

At the November meeting of the Council, the Vice-Chancellor commenced a discussion as to how we can refresh the University's strategy, retaining our ambitious goals and our distinctiveness and enhancing our global reputation for excellence and innovation. He highlighted that the University may need to think radically in some respects to do this, but it was well-positioned to be able to succeed.

3. University Financial Plan 2009-2013, and the University Statutory Accounts 2008/09

Every year, the Council considers the University Financial Plan for the next five years prior to its submission to the HEFCE, following its review by the Senate. As members of the Senate will recall from the September meeting, a number of revisions were required following initial consideration given in July 2009. The Treasurer and Financial Director presented the key features of the plan to the Council, alongside the Statutory Accounts for the previous year.

The Council approved the plan for submission to the HEFCE and it was made available to all members of the Senate.

4. Report from the Senate

The Council considered and adopted a report of the recommendations and resolutions on selected items considered at the meeting of the Senate held on 7 October 2009.

5. School of Life Sciences

The Council received a report from the extraordinary meeting of the Senate held on 16 November 2009 to discuss the School of Life Sciences project.

The Council heard a summary of the discussions at the Senate, and that the Senate had voted on and approved the implementation proposals.

6. Corporate Planning Statement

The University's Corporate Planning Statement (CPS) is required to be submitted to the HEFCE as part of the 'Single Conversation' together with the University's financial plan and accounts, an Annual Monitoring Statement, and reports from the University's internal and external auditors and the Audit Committee.

The CPS is an outline of the University's key attributes and strategic goals over the coming year. The CPS then breaks each main goal of the University's strategy, Vision 2015, into three sections: the key priorities for 2008/09 that were submitted in the CPS last year, the progress achieved against them throughout 2008/09 and the key priorities for 2009/10.

Taking into account the comments received from members of the Steering Committee and the Senate, the Council approved the CPS for submission, noting that it was somewhat premature to identify in detail priorities for the year as we look to refresh the University's strategy. The CPS submission is available at warwick.ac.uk/go/governance/corporateplan.

7. University Risk Status and University Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

At regular intervals, the Council considers the status of a number of key institutional risks, as approved by the Steering Committee. The risks are measured using traffic-light status indicators, and the status assigned informs decisions made by the institution in areas around each relevant risk.

The University KPIs are a more recent project, and are reported to the Council annually, this being the second time they have been reported. They measure performance of the University in ten key areas, and are aggregate indicators from over 160 individual pieces of data. They are again reported to the Council using traffic-light status indicators.

This year, the link between the two areas was reflected more explicitly in the reports, and this will continue to be developed in future iterations. The Council acknowledged that the KPIs showed that the University was generally performing well at the current time, however, that the risks to the University over the next four years were high and that management measures were being implemented where it was possible and appropriate to do so to reduce the risk of the University not achieving its strategic goals.

8. Finance and General Purposes Committee

As well as the Financial Plan and the University Accounts, the Council was advised of the other key financial issues discussed by FGPC, including the status of the Students' Union refurbishment and the building of new student residences.

9. Audit Committee

The Council considered a report from the Audit Committee that contained, amongst other things:

- The Annual Report from the Audit Committee and Committee Opinion on Data Quality, in which the Committee concluded that the University's audit arrangements and internal controls for the 2008/09 financial year were satisfactory.
- The Internal Audit Annual Report
- Information about Student Number Data Returns and the Upcoming HESES Audit. It was noted by the Council that the University would be audited in 2010 and may be found not to be fully comply with the revised, and in some respects flawed, methodology being deployed.

10. Code of Corporate Governance, Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Delegated Authorities

The University's Code of Corporate Governance is a summary of decisions taken by the University in relation to corporate governance and related procedural matters. It sets out the University's principles of governance and management and includes information on the appointment and terms of office of members of Council.

The Statement of Primary Responsibilities of the Council outlines the powers and responsibilities of the University Council derived from University Statutes, and includes details of where those powers and responsibilities are delegated to other Committees.

Copies of both of the approved documents can be found on the governance website at warwick.ac.uk/go/governance .