



University of the
West of England

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held at 3.00pm on Tuesday, 26 January 2010 in the Dartington Suite, Wallscourt Farmhouse, Frenchay campus

Present: Gillian Camm (Chairman), Bob Barnett, Chris Booy, Prof Paul Gough, Iain Gray, Dr Jane Harrington, John Laycock, Katy Phillips, Rt Rev Barry Rogerson, Lise Seager, Prof Graham Upton, Graham van der Lely, Prof Steve West

Apologies: Rosamund Blomfield-Smith, Sherrie Eugene-Hart, Wil Harris, Sonia Mills

In Attendance: M Armstrong (for minutes G10.1.6-7), B Fenix (for minutes G10.1.6-7), Bill Marshall, Katie Owen-Jones, Prof Ron Ritchie (for minutes G10.1.1-5), John Rushforth

MINUTES

G10.1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

G10.1.2 Professor Ron Ritchie made a presentation to the Board on UWE-School Enhanced Partnerships, and Professor Paul Gough went on to set such partnerships in the broader context of the University's knowledge exchange and public engagement strategies.

G10.1.3 Professor Ritchie explained that enhanced partnerships were relatively new but characterised the sort of University UWE wanted to be with a key civic role and contributing to local society as an intrinsic part of its strategy. The University had identified the under-achievement in Bristol schools as an area where it could make a real difference and promote opportunities for young people. It was now engaging with a broad range of schools, and through them the wider community. The impact on results was already being seen, though it would take time to realise fully the potential of the partnerships.

G10.1.4 Professor Gough reminded governors of the knowledge exchange strategy and from that an approach to public engagement that focussed on partnership, dialogue and reciprocity. It covered a range of partners: academic, business, public and community. This work was an intrinsic part of what UWE did, and was now being supported by other policies such as the new 'UWE Academic' which recognised public engagement activities as an important part of the academic role. It involved not only academic staff, but services and others as, for instance, facilities were made available to the community. Noted that the Vice-Chancellor had recently made a keynote address on university's public engagement and civic role, and this was now available on YouTube (*search Professor Steven West*).

- G10.1.5 Governors welcomed the presentations and the clear commitment shown to partnerships. Points covered in discussion included:
- the impact on students of the development of the partnerships both for volunteering opportunities but also to help the University engage with the schools to support students' transitions from school to University, especially for those from backgrounds with no experience of higher education;
 - the focus on Bristol schools had been led by a strategic decision to invest where it could make the biggest difference and the need to use limited resources in the way that would have greatest impact. The University did though have links with schools across the South West. The difficulty was proving to be managing the demand from other schools as the University's reputation in this area grew;
 - the work being done to raise understanding of the value of higher education by engaging with parents and the wider community through the schools. The schools were central to it but could not make the change alone, and specific projects that were being developed in this area;
 - the sustainability of such schemes at a time of increasing financial pressure;
 - that the University's main contribution could be from its expertise in expertise and the guidance it could provide in governance to the new schools and to help sustain the with long-term commitment;
 - the difficulty in finding the capacity to engage as much as the University would wish with business, especially as demand grew;
 - how the University could measure success but also convey that to others. It was agreed that a communication strategy was very important. Work on that was underway, and would be part of the revised strategy.

It was reported that the revised knowledge exchange strategy would be brought to the next meeting of the Board. The Board thanked Professor Gough and Professor Ritchie.

Minutes G10.1.6 - 10 are confidential to the Board.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- G10.1.11 Further to minute G09.11.16, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that: the action plan had been launched; the first statements of standards had been developed and these would be finalised and launched shortly; the fire assessment of student residential accommodation had been completed and would be reviewed by Avon Fire Service; a new reporting system would be tested in February; and, a training course for managers was being procured. Regular progress reports on implementation would be brought to the HR Committee and the Board.

HE FRAMEWORK

- G10.1.12 Received, Paper G10/1/1, a report on the implications of the HE Framework 'Higher Ambitions' for the University and summary of its progress on related strategies. The Vice-Chancellor presented the paper and commented on the status of the Framework in the current political context. He drew particular attention to: what the Executive was doing to establish a change management programme to co-ordinate the various projects underway, in particular to meet the challenge of 15% savings; and, the progress summaries for strategies on which more regular reports would be made to the Board. The Vice-Chancellor also reported on the annual conversation with HEFCE, which had confirmed its

confidence in the leadership, direction, finances and governance of UWE.

- G10.1.13 The discussion focussed on the vision and strategy for the University, that that had to be revisited in the changing external context and that that would be the main item for debate at the Board's awayday in April. It covered:
- whilst it was important to take stock against policy documents such as 'Higher Ambitions' it was also important for the University to have a clear vision for the future to follow;
 - the HE Framework appeared to be changing fundamentally the idea of what a university of the future would look like, and that there needed to be a debate about that both across the sector and within the University. At UWE that debate would be held both in Academic Board and the Board of Governors to reach a view on the future size and shape of the University, and what that meant for the curriculum, research and other activities;
 - the range of activities and projects currently underway, how that was being co-ordinated and decisions made about resourcing of activities that were not 'core business', and how the Board could monitor the whole range and the progress and contribution of activities prioritised. The overarching change programme was important for ensuring co-ordination, that the debates about priorities took place and that the right decisions were made in a time of funding constraints, and then that the changes were carried through. But the Board had to set the direction and targets, and then receive information to monitor progress. That had to go beyond financial information and KPIs as the Board needed to be assured that the decisions being made through planning and the way in which things were being done ensured the sustainability of the University;
 - that a key aspect of the debate was what being a 'comprehensive' university meant for UWE in the future, and the relationship between different activities;
 - a small group of Governors was looking at the role of the Board and the information it required, and that would feed into the discussion;
 - a revised strategic plan and proposals relating to drawing together the enabling strategies would also be brought to the awayday.

- G10.1.14 Governors looked forward to the debate at the awayday.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

- G10.1.15 The Chairman recommended the appointment of Felicity Brown, Financial Director of the Merchant Venturers Society and formerly a merchant banker, as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee. The appointment of Ms Brown was **APPROVED**.

HEFCE GRANT LETTER

- G10.1.16 The Vice-Chancellor reported on the implications of the government's grant letter to HEFCE that included significant cuts in funding for the higher education sector (Paper G10/1/3). It was anticipated that reductions would continue in future years. Individual institutions' grant letters would follow in the next few weeks, but the University was beginning to model against its assumptions particularly in setting student number targets for the coming year.

Minutes G10.1.17 - 18 are confidential to the Board.

- G10.1.19 The changing external context meant that the strategy of recruiting as many full-time undergraduate students as possible would have to be revisited, with the consequences of that for income. As indicated earlier in the meeting, this would be part of the discussion at the awayday about the 'comprehensive university' and some of the scenario setting work being done would be provided. It also raised issues about the wider decline of some disciplines and whether HEFCE's role in strategic oversight of specific vulnerable subjects might be extended.

CHARITIES ACT

- G10.1.20 Noted, Paper G10/1/4, a briefing paper on the Charities Act and HEFCE's role as principal regulator for HE institutions. Further papers would be brought to future meetings of the Board.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- G10.1.21 A report summarising matters recently considered by the University's Senior Management Team and not appearing elsewhere on the agenda was received (Paper G10/1/5). The Board noted in particular: the University's success in the recent Xcel awards including that for the best institute for widening participation, and recent prestigious national Research Council awards, and asked that its congratulations be conveyed to those involved.

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORTS

- G10.1.22 Received, the annual reports on complaints under University procedures (Paper G10/1/6) and complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) (Paper G10/1/7). Noted, that the University could expect further increases in the number of complaints both from students and from the community about the anti-social behaviour of students. Governors commented on: the time that it had taken to conclude some complaints and hoped that could be improved; and, the number of disabled students apparently making complaints to the OIA and requested clarification of that data in future reports.

ACADEMIC BOARD

- G10.1.23 Received, Paper G10/1/8, the minutes of the meeting of Academic Board held on 9 December 2009.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- G10.1.24 23 March 2010.

Minute G10.1.25 is confidential to the Board.

WORKING GROUPS

- G10.1.26 The Chairman reported on the two working groups of governors.
- One group was meeting with members of the Executive as the discussions and plans for the use of the Research and Enterprise land developed. The group was beginning to look particularly at the links with the academic strategy, the student experience and links with the masterplan. It was likely that proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

- The other was looking at the role of the Board and committees in the context of the changes agreed in principle at the last meeting.

HARTPURY COLLEGE

- G10.1.27 The Hartpury College Chairman reported on a successful Ofsted visit to the College, resulting in an outstanding grading. He was asked to convey the Board's congratulations to the Principal.

SWINDON

- G10.1.28 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that HEFCE had confirmed that it could no longer support the development financially and that therefore the RDA would not continue with its support. The University had advised the local authority and the MP that in view of the withdrawal of funding it would be rethinking its strategy to support the students already in Swindon, indicating that it remained supportive of the higher education need in the town.

Meeting closed 5.45pm.