



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 26th MAY 2023

BURGES SALMON, ONE GLASS WHARF, BRISTOL, BS2 0ZX MINUTES

Present: Mr J Boyer (Chair), Professor E Welch (Vice-Chancellor), Ms G Bowen, Mrs K Bright, Professor A Carr, Ms J Cecil, Professor I Craddock (until 11.00), Mx R Day, Mr H Gorst, Ms L Fletcher, Mr H Gorst, Mr N Joicey, Dr J Khawaja, Mr F Quek, Professor C Relton, Mr S Robertson, Professor J Squires (Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) Provost).

In attendance: Mick Axtell (Chief Financial Services Officer), Lucy Barling (Deputy Head of Governance), Paula Coonerty (Dir. Education & Student Success) – for item 9, Adam Finn (Prof of Paediatrics) – for item 8, Lucinda Parr (Registrar and University Secretary), Hannah Quinn (Chief of Staff), Matthew Shute (Head of Planning & BI) – for item 6.

Apologies: Ms O Adesanya, Dr A Raffel.

1 WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies. The Board also noted that Sir Paul Nurse, Chancellor, would be attending the September meeting of the Board of Trustees.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 None were declared.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The Board **APPROVED** the minutes of the 30th and 31st March meeting of the Board of Trustees (*on file*), subject to an addition requested by Dr J Khawaja which better emphasised the extent of the Board's support for Bristol Innovations.

4 ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING

4.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED** (*on file*).

4.2 **NOTED** that the outer years financial forecast presentation would be discussed at the FIC meeting on 8th June, and then presented to Board in July.

4.3 **NOTED** that a training session for the Board on Academic Freedom of Speech would be scheduled for some time in the Autumn 2023 term.

Action: Head of Governance

5 EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT AND QUESTIONS (reference BT/22-23/051) (*on file*)).

5.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: the report of the Executive.

5.2 The Vice-Chancellor, the DVC & Provost and the Registrar highlighted key headlines arising from the report, with a particular focus on key risks and any major issues. These were as follows: Freedom of Speech Bill and other external conversations with local and national policy makers; industrial relations and the Marketing & Assessment Boycott (MAB); changes to University structures and new appointments and; international projects and programmes.

5.3 The following points were **DISCUSSED**:

5.3.1 The new U.K. Government Immigration Bill and the potential impact on the University.

REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

5.3.2 The planned signing of a University Civic Agreement on 5th June with Bristol City Council, the City Office, the University of the West of England (UWE) and the City of Bristol College. The purpose of the Agreement was to work together in partnership to develop key focus areas which would affect positive change for Bristol and the wider region, particularly in areas such as educational attainment, social value, and economic regeneration.

5.3.3 The University's 'watching brief' on the first UK HEI's (namely, UCL) court case in relation to compensation for the impact of COVID19 on the student experience.

REDACTED: Section 30 Investigations & proceedings conducted by public authorities

5.3.4 The approach being taken by the University in relation to the current MAB, which could potentially continue until the end of September 2023. Bristol would be taking 50% pay deductions from staff, beginning from the point of time when the assessments were made available to staff during the assessment period. The University had been clear with staff that pay reductions would be continuous until the marking was completed. This approach was aligned with the broader HE sector.

5.3.5 The impact on the University so far of the MAB which was minimal and localised (namely Geography, Policy Studies, Sociology and Politics, Maths and possibly Film and TV), and where mitigations had been put in place. The Vice-Chancellor had also recently approved temporary regulations allowing the University to make decisions about varying assessments to allow students to graduate, whilst also preserving the quality of the degree.

5.3.6 The approach for communicating to students the MAB impact and any mitigations, in consultation with Bristol SU. The University had already launched some generalised communications but would soon be delivering targeted communications when it was clearer about the specific impact in Schools. The targeted communications would be crafted in consultation with Heads of School, Faculty Managers and the Industrial Relations Task Force.

5.3.7 The recent publication of a [report](#) from HEPI on the pay and conditions for academic staff in UK HEIs compared with the private sector. The report's conclusion was that pay and conditions for academic staff in UK HEI's were excellent.

5.3.8 The significant international engagement activities being undertaken by the Vice-Chancellor and the broader Executive team. The Board noted the recent letter from the OfS warning several institutions (including Bristol) of an over-reliance on China (*n.b.* no action was required by the OfS), and trustees were supportive of receiving a presentation at the meeting in July about the University's broader international recruitment strategy, and the impact of over-reliance on China on Bristol specifically. It was agreed that the presentation would include a breakdown of the University's overseas student recruitment numbers so that the Board could be clear about the exact proportion of students coming from China.

Action: DVC & Provost

5.3.9 The positive discussions held recently between the Vice-Chancellor and the BCC lead for fair rental agreements.

REDACTED: Section 41 Information provided in confidence

5.3.10 The positive discussions held at the April meeting of the University Senate in relation to REDACTED: S22. The University's position was that it would continue to work with countries to develop their sense of justice and equity rather than not work with them. It was important to continue to ask these countries the right questions and to emphasise Bristol's core values.

5.3.11 The importance of maintaining a good line of sight on the University's studentships 'pipeline', particularly how Bristol might compare with the broader Russell Group.

- 5.3.12 Since the Board entered into the CM1 construction gateway for TQ, construction works had remained on schedule with no reported delays and the Dental School also remained on schedule to open this summer. Occupancy decisions for CM1 were yet to be finalised, but it was clear that any occupancy needed to align with the vision and existing building design and business case.
- 5.3.13 The Audit & Risk Committee would be reviewing the University's health and safety arrangements.
- 5.3.14 The increase in cyber-attacks, noting that there had not been any major attack yet, but the University continued to keep a watching brief.
- 5.3.15 The recent Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (APVC) - Global Civic and International - appointments (Palie Smart and Liang-Fang Wong). The University would also continue to focus on improving ethnic diversity not just in the Executive team but also in terms of diversifying the workforce from the top all the way down the organisation.
- 5.3.16 The recent appointments of two new Heads of School – Jennifer McManus (Physics) and Christina Thirlwell (Medical School).
- 5.3.17 The recent appointment of an Executive Director of Faculty Operations – Ms Mary Millard.
- 5.3.18 The recent appointment of a Director of Marketing and Communications (name to be announced shortly).
- 5.3.19 The inclusion of a REF preparation update to a future Board meeting.
Action: Head of Governance
- 5.3.20 The recent academic restructure, specifically the appointment of three new Pro Vice-Chancellors (formerly called Executive Deans).

5.4 The Board **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED** an increase in the number of Pro Vice-Chancellors from three to six, and **DELEGATED** to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to determine the final job titles of the Pro Vice-Chancellor & Executive Deans. Their status and authority would be aligned with the existing PVCs, and all six PVCs would be members of the University Executive Board (UEB). Preferred candidates were Prof Ian Bond (Science & Engineering), Prof Jeremy Tavare (Health & Life Sciences), and Professor Esther Dermott (Arts, Law & Social Sciences). During discussions, the Board requested the following additional actions:

- 5.4.1 Circulation of the CV's / background information for each of the newly appointed PVCs.
- 5.4.2 Invitation to the new PVC's to attend the July Board dinner.
- 5.4.3 A future presentation to the Board of the key issues/problems where the University needed joint accountability, and which would be facilitated by this new academic structure.

Action: DVC & Provost

5.5 The Board **NOTED** that the above appointments were for two-years only, for a transition period, after which the PVC posts would be advertised externally and internally on a permanent basis.

Matt Shute, Head of Planning & BI joined the meeting.

6 SPI UPDATE (reference **BT/22-23/052**) (*on file*).

6.1 **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED** the latest six-monthly strategy performance report.

6.2 The following points were **NOTED**:

6.2.1 Performance to date was generally on track, with 8 of 11 goals being reported as Green.

REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

6.2.2 **REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests**

6.2.3 For each of the SPIs assessed as Red, the detailed goal reports explained the reason and corrective action in hand.

6.2.4 The University would be changing the way it reported SPIs in the future. The University would be investigating how it might reduce the number of SPIs that are maintained and report on a smaller number that tracked the outcomes that were mission-critical to delivering the strategy.

6.3 The following points were **DISCUSSED**:

6.3.1 REDACTED: Section 22 Information intended for future publication

6.3.2 The availability of the University’s ethnicity pay gap information on the University’s website, as well as on the staff Sharepoint site, and the associated governance structures currently in place to assist the University in overseeing this particular SPI.

6.3.3 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests the fact that the University was continuing to anticipate high demand in this area given the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of COVID, and the additional investment and support that had been provided to mitigate this. Specifically, the role of the Student Experience Programme in looking at these issues,

REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

6.3.4 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial interests

6.3.5 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

6.3.6 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

6.4 The Board **DISCUSSED** the future direction of strategic performance reporting, and was **SUPPORTIVE** of the following proposed guiding principles, as outlined in the paper:

- 6.4.1 Identify, quantify and track essential activities required to realise the Vision;
- 6.4.2 Alignment with Executive accountability and responsibilities;
- 6.4.3 Would inform decision-making and resource allocation;
- 6.4.4 Could be reported to, and easily understood by UEB, the Board of Trustees and by colleagues and students across the University;
- 6.4.5 Were integrated within a broader strategic performance framework that linked high-level strategic objectives, with function sub-strategies, and implementation plans.

6.5 The Board **AGREED** that a) this was not about reducing the number of SPIs, but instead highlighting the SPIs that really mattered, and drawing the attention of the Board to those ones in particular and; b) the entire SPI dashboard should be discussed by Board twice a year, with a view to focussing the Board’s attention on those areas that the Executive wanted to flag as being critical path indicators, and which goal owners wanted to identify as worthy of the Board’s attention.

Matt Shute, Head of Planning & BI left the meeting.

7 BUDGET AND CAPITAL PLAN (reference **BT/22-23/053**) (*on file*)).

7.1 The Board **CONSIDERED** the financial performance for the first eight months of the financial year that would end on 31 July 2023 and the forecast financial outcome for 2022/23 and **AGREED** that management was taking appropriate action to address areas of underperformance.

7.2 **NOTED** that the proposed budget for 2023/24 was reviewed by FIC on 20th April and was being presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. Appendix 2 of the paperwork (*on file*) reflected an update following decisions made at FIC. The papers also included an updated financial forecast for the three additional years to 31st July 2027. Approval was not being sought in this paper for these years. An updated paper would be presented at the Board of Trustee meeting on 7th July for approval for these three additional years. Further details would also be presented to the Board in July on the proposed mechanisms discussed at FIC which aimed to provide more flexibility for in-year strategic spending.

7.3 **NOTED** a verbal update on pensions from the Chief Financial Services Officer (CFSO):
REDACTED: Section 22 Information intended for future publication

[REDACTED]

7.4 **NOTED** that the paper being presented to FIC on 8th June had taken into account potential inflationary rises.

7.5 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

7.5.1 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

7.5.2 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

7.5.3 The results of the Professional Services benchmarking exercise and the role of the Professional Services Target Operating Model in reviewing in particular those areas where Bristol was showing as above the Russell Group benchmark [REDACTED]

7.5.4 The academic cash contribution
REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests

7.5.5 REDACTED: Section 43 Commercial Interests
Whilst it was helpful for FIC to receive regular updates on contingency levels, the Board **AGREED** that it would also be useful to receive the same information at Board meetings.

Action: Chief Financial Services Officer

7.6 **APPROVED**: the proposed budget for 2023/24 and the revised Capital Programme as outlined in the paper.

Prof Adam Finn (Prof Paediatrics) joined the meeting.

8 RESEARCH SENSITISATION: LIFE SCIENCES – POPULATION HEALTH & POPULATION STUDIES

- 8.1 **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED**: a PowerPoint presentation by Professor Adam Finn on his research (*on file*) followed by a Questions and Answer (Q&A) session.
- 8.2 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 8.2.1 The fact that the pandemic had significantly 'opened our eyes' to the possibilities what could operationally be achieved in an emergency situation and what people would be willing to do to assist.
- 8.2.2 How the University could continue to play a strong role in delivering commercially funded clinical trials and how well positioned it was to spearhead the solution.
- 8.2.3 The importance of nurturing the relationship between the University and the NHS and collaboration with other Universities particularly when it came to translational research.
- 8.3 The Board thanked Professor Finn for an insightful and interesting presentation.

*Prof Adam Finn (Prof Paediatrics) left the meeting.
Paula Coonerty, Dir. Education & Student Success joined the meeting.*

9 STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME UPDATE: KEY CHALLENGES AND HOW WE DECIDE ON AREAS OF FOCUS FOR DEEP DIVES (reference **BT/22-23/054**) (*on file*)).

- 9.1 **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED**: an update from the Registrar and the Director of Education & Student Success on the delivery of the Student Experience Programme (*on file*) followed by a Q&A session.
- 9.2 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 9.2.1 The work of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme particularly around inclusive practice, structuring learning opportunities to help students, and thinking more expansively about CPD for staff so that these sorts of matters would become more ingrained in the preparation of teaching.
- 9.2.2 The importance of continuous review and improvement to ensure that any solution provided to students, continued to be the best and most appropriate solution.
- 9.2.3 Two key challenges – process variance and data quality – and the importance of ensuring that those were addressed *before* the University embedded those different areas of the programme into business as usual. The Board noted that the Education Administration Enhancement team was working with Schools to help deliver the process improvement activity and prioritisation prior to then embedding into business as usual.
- 9.2.4 Whether there were any opportunities to benchmark Bristol against other UK or international institutions to see how they were doing in this particular area. This could be in addition to NSS and the iBarometer (international student) survey.
- 9.3 The Board thanked the Registrar and the Director of Education and Student Success for an excellent presentation.

Paula Coonerty, Dir. Education & Student Success left the meeting.

10 CHAIR'S REPORT (reference **BT/22-23/055**) (*on file*)).

- 10.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the report of the Chair of the Board.

11 UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S REPORT (reference **BT/22-23/056**) (*on file*)).

- 11.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**: the report of the University Secretary.

12 REPORT FROM FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE (reference **BT/22-23/057**) (*on file*)).

- 12.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**: the report of the Finance & Infrastructure Committee.

13 REPORT FROM PENSIONS TASK & FINISH GROUP (reference **BT/22-23/058**) (*on file*)).

13.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**: the report of the Pensions Task and Finish Group held on the 20th April 2023.

14 REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (reference **BT/22-23/059**) (*on file*).

14.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the report of the Remuneration Committee.

14.2 **NOTED** that there had been a request from the Sabbatical Officers to share the Executive team objectives with them to ensure that the Sabbatical Officer goals and Executive team goals were aligned. The VC had agreed with the Sabbatical Officers that they would annually mutually agree a set of collective objectives between SU and the University and that there would be named individuals on both sides who would be responsible for taking key initiatives forward.

15 REPORT FROM EEDI OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (reference **BT/22-23/060**) (*on file*).

15.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**: the report of the EDI Oversight Committee.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 The Board **AGREED** that for the July meeting, it would be important to hold a developmental session on Artificial Intelligence (AI), and how the University can identify its own abilities in this area as well as the capacity for the University to contribute to the economy and research in relation to AI. The session should cover how the University could enhance the ability to critically think in our students, how the University would use those capabilities to build on making it a world class institution, what thinking and advice could the University bring to the international debate that was currently taking place, and how would the University differentiate itself and provide that thoughtful leadership. Specially, the session would include:

- AI in professional services
- The University's role in start-ups and translations
- UoB as a large language body in its own right – how will we use AI to our own benefit.

Action: Head of Governance

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7 JULY 2023