

COURT**Draft Minutes of the Meeting held via Microsoft Teams on 1 December 2020**

Members: Kate Swann (Chair) Professor Udy Archibong
Professor John Bridgeman Professor Shirley Congdon
Professor Zahir Irani Terry Hartwell
Riley Power 33 Court members

In attendance: Georgie Schofield (Events and Partnerships Manager)
Eleanor Clyde-Evans, Associate Director (Alumni, Engagement and Development)
Liam Sutton Associate Director (Research and Innovation)
Bharti Mistry (Secretary)

Apologies: Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Chief Finance Officer)

1.20-21 Welcome address by the University Chancellor (video message)

1.1 The Chancellor welcomed Court members to the meeting.

1.2 The Chancellor stated that the Court:

- had been established as a networking body, whose members were ambassadors and friends of the University and represented an interest in the wider world.
- had formed engagement with local and regional stakeholders enabling meaningful interaction and dialogue.
- was a public forum where University activities were communicated and discussed.
- would feature an update on the University and a presentation on the Financial Statements.
- would discuss key matters relating to the University and its future.

1.3 The Chancellor noted:

- that the University had risen to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to deliver high quality learning and teaching and research during the current unprecedented and exceptional times.
- the University had played an important role in the wider regional response to the pandemic and continued to position itself in the heart of the city and region, showing its value and impact.
- the successful completion of the 2019/20 academic year and the successful start to the 2020/21 academic year.

1.4 The Chancellor expressed her best wishes to the students who had graduated this year, as they embarked on their future lives, as alumni of this University.

- 1.5 Court members were encouraged to continue to act as ambassadors for the University in order to help to shape its exciting future.

2.20-21 **University update by the Vice-Chancellor**

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chancellor and welcomed Court members to the meeting.

- 2.2 The Vice-Chancellor presented an overview of University activities, among the topics highlighted were:

- the contingency plans that had been put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- the blended approach to learning, teaching and assessment that had been undertaken in 2019/20, delivered through a combination of education technologies and face to face teaching on campus.
- the revised University Strategy and its substrategies: Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, Research and Innovation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Business and Community Engagement.
- changes to the University's senior structure. These changes were focussed on ensuring effective delivery of the University Strategy and would provide integrated strategic leadership of the core discipline areas and related professional services to enhance the University's capability to innovate, grow and strengthen its academic quality, research and engagement.
- the University's commitment to social inclusion and social mobility, and its values of excellence, inclusion, innovation, and trust.
- that three Athena Swan Bronze awards had been received which demonstrated the University's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- the publication of the Access and Participation Plan which articulated the University's commitment to improving equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed and progress in higher education.
- that the University was one of the first higher education institutions to sign up to the social mobility pledge, led by former Government minister and MP the Rt Hon Justine Greening.

- 2.3 The host thanked the Vice-Chancellor and invited the Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee, to introduce the Financial Statements.

3.20-21 **Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020**

- 3.1 The Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee, introduced the Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2020, noting that these had been approved by University Council in late November 2020.

- 3.2 In the absence of the Chief Finance Officer, the Vice-Chancellor presented the headlines from the Financial Statements, noting that the results for 2019/20 recorded an operating surplus, a positive cash inflow, and stronger net current assets. The narrative also included a section on

value for money which aimed to demonstrate what happened to student fees and explain how resources were looked at more generally.

3.3 The Financial Statements were available on the University's website:

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/governance/policies-and-statements/financial-statements/>

4.20-21 **Questions to the Vice Chancellor**

Question: what had been learnt from the extraordinary events of 2020, that might inform the thinking of the University's offer to students? What changes or disruption might the crisis generate in the HE sector and how would the University position itself to respond effectively to this change?

4.1 The Vice-Chancellor responded that the extraordinary events of 2020 had helped the University to better understand its students' circumstances and how best their needs could be supported to enable them to continue to engage with learning and teaching during this time.

4.2 The Vice-Chancellor stated that in order to give an inclusive learning experience to the students, the University needed to understand what resources the students would have access to. The Vice-Chancellor advised that the University continued to look to the future and assess how the changes experienced during the pandemic might lead to further change and how best to position the University in this context.

Question referring to the Financial Statements, and about how the University could support students who found themselves in financial difficulty?

4.3 The Vice-Chancellor responded that the University's hardship fund had been stretched significantly over this period as more students had requested support. The Associate Director of Alumni, Engagement and Development was invited to give further details of the Hardship Fund Appeal.

4.4 The Associate Director of Alumni, Engagement and Development stated that an appeal to support the University's students, their families and the wider community would be launched on 3 December 2020. The appeal would be sent to all staff, alumni, and city stakeholders.

4.5 The Vice-Chancellor commented that the University had received very few complaints during the pandemic and students had shown resilience and tenacity. Morrison's had provided food deliveries that had been distributed to University students.

Question of what the financial outlook would be for 2021.

- 4.6 The Vice-Chancellor responded that the financial outlook for 2021 looked positive, with the January 2021 intake looking to be particularly strong. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality who had been leading the recruitment, was optimistic that the student number target for 2020/21 would be met.

Question on how international postgraduate recruitment had progressed and what the prospects were for next year?

- 4.7 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality, noted
- that postgraduate international recruitment had been more favourable than anticipated and the January 2021 intake for the postgraduate international market was expected to improve this position further.
 - that PGT programmes with a January start date had increased from 15 in 2020 to 58 in 2021.
 - in terms of postgraduate home student numbers, a number of interventions had been put in place to mitigate risks. A campaign had been launched to support members of the community that had been recently made unemployed into postgraduate education with a significant fee discount.
 - by repurposing the University's September intake to have multiple intakes throughout the year and offering fee discounts and scholarships and through a determined effort to effectively communicate the student offer, the University was in a confident position.

5.20-21 **Sub-strategies in Focus**

- 5.1 The Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement presented an update on the new Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy noted that the strategy would enhance the quality of the student experience; create an inclusive learning culture and transformative University experience; and would ensure that learning and teaching continued to thrive within the context of a rapidly changing environment.
- 5.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Engagement presented an update on the new Research and Innovation Strategy, noting that it presented a clear approach to research and innovation with a focus on people, performance and place, and a vision to empower and encourage excellent research, delivered through a framework of continuous improvement.
- 5.3 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion presented an update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy which presented a clear approach to equality, diversity and inclusion with a focus on people, place and performance, and highlighted good practice in EDI.
- 5.4 The Associate Director for Research and Innovation presented an update on the Business and Community Engagement Strategy, noting that it had been developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders and would ensure a stronger interface between the University and the City and region. The strategy described a vision in which Bradford would

be a university city that shared knowledge in order to strengthen health, wealth and confidence across the many communities in which students, staff and alumni participated.

6.20-21 **Roundtable discussions**

- 6.1 Court separated into breakout rooms to discuss the University's sub-strategies and Court received feedback from each group.
- 6.2 The Vice-Chancellor noted the feedback and explained that the Executive Board would translate these sub-strategies into detailed implementation plans and would report progress on delivery through to the University Council.

7.20-21 **Vice Chancellor closing comments and event close**

- 7.1 In drawing the event to a close, the Vice-Chancellor answered one final question which focussed on how the University understood and was engaging with its students on their learning, teaching, research, and student experience.
- 7.2 Court was thanked for attending the meeting and for their support during an unprecedented and challenging year.

Secretary: Bharti Mistry

Date: December 2020.