

Council

20/11 A meeting of the Council was held in Room 201, Carrington Building, on Monday 16 March 2020 at 2.15 pm.

The President
The Vice Presidents (Mr R.E.R. Evan and Mrs K. Owen)
The Vice Chancellor
The Deputy Vice Chancellor
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor M. Fellowes)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor E.M. McCrum)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D. Zaum)

Mr T. Beardmore Gray
Professor J. Board

Miss M. Cleaver
Mr K. Corrigan
Mrs P. Egan
Professor C.L. Furneaux

Miss G. King
Mr J. Magee
Mr P. Milhofer
Mr S.C.C. Pryce
Mr N. Richards
Mr J. Taylor

In attendance:

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary
The Chief Financial Officer

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had originally been scheduled to be held at the
been relocated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ing held on 2 January 2020 were confirmed and

20/13 Annual Financial Return to the Office for Students (Item 3)

The Council noted the University's Annual Financial Return submitted to the Office for Students in January 2020.

20/14 Documents sealed and to be sealed (Item 4.1)

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The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Council of the principal features of the new University Strategy, explained the supporting KPIs in detail and indicated how progress would be monitored, which would involve tracking achievement across the full period of the strategy.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that the University's thinking about the proposed KPIs in relation to the engaged university were the least mature and that the KPIs might be reconsidered in due course in the light of experience.

In response to questions, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the KPI on financial sustainability (cashflow from operating activities as a percentage of income excluding exceptional items) reflected the measure used by the Office for Students (OfS) to evaluate institutional sustainability. The Chief Financial Officer noted that the OfS did not consider the surplus generated by an institution in its monitoring process and while the surplus or other measures could be used as the KPI for financial sustainability, they would not readily allow comparison with the sector A

'That the new University Strategy (including Key Performance Indicators), now submitted, be approved.'

20/17 Trusts (Item 6.1)

The Council received a paper providing legal advice on Managing Conflicts of Interest where the Council was acting in respect of Trusts where the University was the sole Trustee.

The Director of Legal Services advised Council that her advice and Council's discussion on this matter were confidential and legally privileged.

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'That the Trustee provisionally approves the settlement reached between the Committees in the Report to Council and directs the NIRD Trust Committee to enter into negotiations with the University Negotiating Committee as to the existence and terms of a "loan" to the University.'

Resolved:

'That the Council accept the account of the historical issues relating to the NIRD Trust as set out by the University Negotiating Committee and the NIRD Trust Committee.'

'That the Council provisionally approve the settlement reached between the Committees in the Report to Council and directs the **RD** Trust Committee to enter into negotiations with the University Negotiating Committee as to the existence and terms of a "loan" to the University.'

Items of report

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Miss Cleaver was pleased to report that Mr Ryan ~~id~~, the new RUSU Chief Executive Officer, had now taken up his post and was in the process of identifying his initial priorities in the role. [Redacted, section 40].

Miss Cleaver and Miss King thanked the Council for having welcomed them so warmly to membership of Council, and for Council's enthusiastic and constructive support for RUSU throughout the year; they believed the positive relationship between Council and RUSU distinguished Reading from many other universities. They were concerned that the relationship between Council and RUSU should be strengthened further, and, to this end, invited Council members to email them with comments on what they valued in the RUSU officers' contribution and how the RUSU officers could better inform Council's discussion. The President thanked them for their contribution and noted how effective they had been in bringing the student perspective to life in discussions.

20/21 Report of the Student Experience Committee

changing circumstances, including growing anxiety among students and their desire to return home, the MIT had how agreed to recommend to the University Executive Board that the University move to online teaching only.

section 43] complex at Thames Valley Science Park The proposal would create up to 3,000 jobs in the local area, and would provide opportunities for collaboration between Blackhall Studios and the University. [Redacted, section 43]

- (e) The Chief Financial Officer reported that the University's appeal in respect of planning permission for the proposed development of land at Cutbush Lane South had been successful.

Resolved:

"That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, now submitted, be approved."

20/23 Report of the Senate (Item 9)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 4 March 2020.

Resolved:

'That the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 4 March 2020, now submitted, be approved.'

20/24 Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 10)

The Council received a Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 2 March 2020 relating to items for report.

The Council noted the University's Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) return to the Office for Students. The President explained that the return offered rich data which, notwithstanding its limitations, provided a useful perspective on the University's financial model. He noted that the University recovered less than 60% of its research costs which meant that research could only be sustained on the basis of substantial surpluses from other areas of University activity. In response to questions, the Vice-Chancellor indicated that the usefulness of the methodology had been compromised by the introduction of FR502, which required that potentially large exceptional items be included in annual accounts, and he explained that the volatility in some of the data was due to the inclusion of exceptional items and/or substantial changes in student numbers.

The Council noted a paper on the University's subject areas in the fourth quartile of the Times league table and looked forward in due course to an update on the wider work in relation to teaching, learning and the student experience which were expected to improve the University's league table position.

The Council noted the Financial Reports for Quarter 2 and that the forecast was in line with the previous projection and the budget, subject to the achievement of the budgeted £3m improvement. The Chief Financial Officer advised caution, however, given the likely impacts of the COVID-19 emergency on the economy in general and the University's activity in particular. She indicated that both cashflow and investment in capital projects were tightly constrained. In response to questions, the Chief Financial Officer explained that, in due course, receipts from the sale of Cutbush Lane South A would substantially assist the University's cashflow position, but that, in the short term, the University's income from commercial activities had declined sharply due to the COVID-19 emergency and the University could incur major liabilities in the event of large scale voids in halls of residence. The President

