

## STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Strategy, Performance and Resources Committee was held on Wednesday 21 May 2008 in Committee Room A, Northcote House.

- PRESENT: Vice-Chancellor, Professor S M Smith (Chair)  
Pro-Chancellor, Mr K R Seal  
Pro-Chancellor, Mr P Lacey  
Treasurer, Mr G A Sturtridge  
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor J M Kay  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor N Armstrong  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor R J P Kain  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor M Overton
- Mr D J Allen  
Mr C J Allwood  
Ms J J Dow
- Professor J A Littlechild  
Professor R Rylance  
Professor R Van de Noort
- Director of Planning Services, Mr P J Kennedy (Secretary)
- IN ATTENDANCE: Acting Permanent Secretary to the Students' Guild, Ms T Costello  
Dean of the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Professor H M Lappin-Scott  
Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Mr J C Lindley  
Executive Officer to the Registrar and Secretary, Ms G L Weale
- APOLOGIES: Dame Suzi Leather, Professor M Macnair, Sir Robin Nicholson,  
Ms M I Shoebridge, Professor N J Talbot

08.34 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March were **CONFIRMED** (SPRC/08/51).

08.35 **Matters Arising**

**08.32 Science Strategy Board** – Professor Kain reported on progress towards the new investments in Science, made up of £9m SDF funding and a further £3m provided in School business plans over three years. Bids for investment from the 5 thematic areas were currently being evaluated.

08.36 **Vice-Chancellor's Report**

The Committee **RECEIVED** a report from the Vice-Chancellor (SPRC/08/52).

**Research** - the Vice-Chancellor drew particular attention to the Research Excellence Framework, and the profound implications for Exeter, and the sector as a whole. Particularly in science, the introduction of a metrics-based system that would drive future funding meant that a failure to attract external income through grants would mean that research could not be sustainably pursued.

Although the University's research grant income had been increasing quite rapidly, the data showed that as few as 10% of staff were generating 90% of the research grant awards. Some Schools, or parts of Schools, did not seem to consider competing for research grants to be important activity. The Vice-Chancellor expressed his determination, shared by the DVC Research and the Committee as a whole, that a renewed focus on research grant success

should be made. The DVC Research would report back at the next meeting on his meetings with Directors of Research scheduled for May. The Vice-Chancellor also urged Heads of School to ensure that their staff were directly engaging in the national debates, at subject level, that would determine how in practice the metrics approach to assessment and funding would be applied to specific subjects.

Reports on the following matters were also received:

- (a) **Keith Zimmerman** – congratulations were extended to Keith Zimmerman, Academic Registrar, who would be taking up the position of Director of Student Administration and Services at Oxford University in September 2008.
- (b) **League Table positions** – Exeter was placed 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> respectively in the recent *Guardian* and *Independent* UK rankings, further consolidating the top 20 performance. The *Times* ranking, which had most impact on the market, would be published in June, followed by the *Sunday Times* in September.
- (c) **Undergraduate intake 2008** – on account of a very strong growth in both applications and acceptances, there was a strong probability of an above target intake, of around an additional 150 undergraduate students for 2008 entry. Whilst this issue was not without challenge, the circumstances were indicative of the University's strengthening reputation. Plans were being put in place to ensure that sufficient accommodation was available.

The Registrar and Secretary **REPORTED** on significant progress being made to improve the management arrangements for the Tremough Campus, which followed the resolution made at Council's April meeting. Tremough Campus Services would now oversee all service delivery on campus, with the exception of services agreed to be of a highly specialist nature. In particular, these changes would give the University much greater input and control over the delivery of infrastructure and services in Cornwall.

#### 08.37 **Financial Forecast 2007/08**

The Committee **RECEIVED** the financial forecast for the year to 31 July 2008 (SPRC/08/53 attached for Council).

The forecast historic cost deficit of the University had improved to £1.5m, compared to the forecast deficit approved by SPaRC at its March 2008 meeting of £4.7m. The operating surplus had improved by £3m to a projected £4m surplus, compared to the target £0.55m operating surplus. The contingency of £0.5m to manage a potential clawback of teaching grant by HEFCE (relating to 2006/07) was retained, although the Director of Planning believed that the probability of that clawback being applied was relatively low. The improved position was on account of a combination of factors – improved positions anticipated by Schools and Services comprising both improved income and lower expenditure, together with a series of corporate adjustments. The Committee noted that although monthly monitoring processes would continue, the financial outturn for 2007/08 would be measured against this forecast.

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE:**

#### 08.38 **Residences and Loan Arrangements**

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE:**

#### 08.39 **Middle East Initiatives Progress Report**

**08.40 Innovation Centre Phase 2 Update**

The Committee **RECEIVED** an update on the Innovation Centre Phase 2 (SPRC/08/56 attached for Senate and Council). The report demonstrated a very promising start to the new Centre, and provided a high quality, fit-for-purpose space for staff and student entrepreneurs, as well as the businesses that would interact with the University's research interests. The Committee welcomed the progress to date, in particular the space occupancy levels. It was noted that the Centre could be an important part of marketing the University, the city and the region to potential newcomers.

**08.41 Forum**

(reference minute 08.10)

The Committee **RECEIVED** an oral report on the Forum from the Registrar and Secretary. The investment appraisal would be considered by the Committee at its 25 June meeting, then at Council on 15 July. The budget was capped at £40m, and was likely to provide around 9,000 square metres of floor space. A good deal of evidence-based research had already been conducted into how the University's future learning and teaching plans should influence the Forum. The Registrar also confirmed that the designers would be selected through a competition. The University's internal project manager, Debbie Brett of Corporate Services, had now been appointed and had commenced work.

**08.42 Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) Return 2008**

The Committee **RECEIVED** a paper on the destination of leavers in higher education (DLHE) return 2008 (SPRC/08/57(revised) attached for Senate and Council). The data gave the Committee an early view on performance in this key performance indicator – graduate employment.

The data presented for the 2007 graduating cohort showed a further improvement in the percentage of graduates in graduate level occupations (either employment or further studies), with 71.7% of the students available for employment being recorded as in graduate level occupations 6 months after graduation. This outcome was circa 3% points higher than for the 2006 graduating cohort. Comparative data for our peers would become available later in 2008, and as yet a firm conclusion could not be reached on whether Exeter's improvement exceeded any growth in the peer group. Nonetheless, this outcome was clearly a very positive one and reflected well on the work of our Schools and Services, and of course the Guild and the student community itself. Looking forward, the DVC Education was ensuring that we were putting into place a number of measures to meet the 77% target.

**08.43 Cornwall Campus Management Group**

The Committee **RECEIVED** a report from the Cornwall Campus Management Group meeting held on 18 April 2008 (SPRC/08/58 attached for Senate and Council).

**08.44 Cornwall Campus Strategy Group**

The Committee **RECEIVED** a report from the Cornwall Campus Strategy Group meeting held on 23 April 2008 (SPRC/08/59 attached for Senate and Council). The Committee **APPROVED** the Group's recommendations regarding the future reporting structures for the University's Cornwall activities, including membership details and terms of reference.

08.45 **Education Committee**

The Committee **RECEIVED** a report from the Education Committee meeting held on 18 March 2008 (SPRC/08/60 attached for Senate and Council). The DVC Education also noted that Senate had confirmed its agreement with the proposal for the Education portfolio to be treated within Dual Assurance from the beginning of the 2008/09 session. She reported on a forthcoming conference which had attracted delegates from as far as Bath and Chichester.

08.46 **Dual Assurance**

The Committee **RECEIVED** Dual Assurance reports as follows:

- (a) External Affairs & Corporate Social Responsibility (SPRC/08/61)
- (b) Fundraising & Alumni Relations (SPRC/08/62)
- (c) Marketing/Brand (SPRC/08/63)
- (d) Research (SPRC/08/64)
- (e) Sport & Wellness (SPRC/08/65)
- (f) Information Services (including C&IT infrastructure) (SPRC/08/66 revised)

These reports included summaries of decisions taken under Dual Assurance as well as progress reports, and would be made available to staff via the intranet.