A meeting of the Council was held in Room 201, The Carrington Building, on Monday 30 January 2012 at 2.15pm.

Present: The President
The Vice-President (Mr R Dwyer)
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor G Brooks)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor S J Mithen)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor C M Williams)
Mr T Bartlam
Professor J Board
Mr R Buller
Dr B Cosh
Mrs B Edwards
Professor R H Ellis
Dr P Erskine
Mr J D Fishburn
Mr K Hobley

Professor A M Hodge
Professor G Marston
Dr I Mueller-Harvey
Mr H W A Palmer
Dr P R Preston
Dr A P Reed
Mr S Sherman
Mr A Slater
Professor G H Tucker

The University Secretary

In attendance: The Provost-designate (Professor R L Robson)
The Director of External Affairs
The Director of Estates and Facilities Management
The Director of Finance and Corporate Services
The Director of Student and Academic Services

Apologies were received from Mr Evans, Professor Hawker, Mrs Scott, Sir John Sunderland and Ms Woodman. The President welcomed the Vice-Chancellor to his first meeting of the Council.

The President reported the deaths of:

Emeritus Professor Harry Nursten who had been appointed Professor of Food Science in 1976 and had retired in 1992.

Dr David Grimes who had been appointed to the University in 1990 and had been Reader in African Meteorology at the time of his death.
12/02 The minutes (11/53-11/74) of the meeting held on 25 November 2011 were confirmed and signed.

**Items of Report**

12/03 **New Years Honours**

It was reported that the following appointments had been made in the New Year Honours List:

Knight Bachelor – Sir John Armitt, Chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority and an honorary graduate of this University (HonDSc, 2008), for services to engineering and construction.

OBE – Professor Dianne Berry, Professor of Psychology, for services to scientific research

12/04 **Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee**

* The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 25 November 2011 relating to items for report.

**Resolved:**

“That the Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 25 November 2011 relating to items for report, now submitted, be received.”

12/05 **Museum of English Rural Life and Special Collections Review 2010-11**

* The Council received the Annual Review of the Museum of English Rural Life and Special Collections for 2010-11.

12/06 **Documents sealed and to be sealed**

* The Council received a list of documents sealed and to be sealed.

**Resolved:**

“That the Council approve the action taken by the Officers and Members in affixing the University Seal to documents sealed since the last Ordinary Meeting of the Council and authorise the Seal of the University to be affixed to the documents to be sealed as now reported.”

12/07 **Freedom of Speech: Annual Report**

The Council received the Annual Report on Freedom of Speech for 2010-11, prepared by the University Secretary.
Resolved:

“That the Annual Report on Freedom of Speech, now submitted, be received.”

Items for Discussion and Decision

12/08 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor spoke of his pleasure at taking up office and described the steps he was taking to familiarise himself with the workings of the University. For now, he could rely only on first impressions but intended to bring a more considered view to the Council at its next meeting. Turning to specific matters, the Vice-Chancellor:

(a) reminded the Council of the major developments that were newly concluded, in train or emerging – in particular, the Halls Accommodation Project, the University of Reading Malaysia and the Academic Investment Project – and set these in the context of the Three-Year Planning process which had afforded him an early opportunity to drill into some operational detail;

(b) was pleased to report that, despite continuing turbulence and uncertainty for the higher education sector as a whole, undergraduate applications to the University of Reading for entry in 2012 had increased significantly, outperforming almost every other institution in the Russell and 1994 Groups at a time when applications nationally had decreased. The University now faced the considerable challenge of converting applications into enrolments but there were grounds for cautious optimism and all who had contributed to this notable achievement were to be congratulated.

(c) reported that he was actively engaged in raising the University’s media presence and thus its local, national and international profile. Recent visits by Government ministers had brought positive publicity and events such as the Africa Forum, which drew together a number of Reading’s traditional strengths, and the University’s participation in the International Space Innovation Centre, which exploited new synergies, had all attracted attention and played their part in enhancing reputation.

In thanking the Vice-Chancellor for his inaugural report to the Council, the President spoke of his wish to see ambition as fundamental to the culture of the University in the years ahead, and the Vice-Chancellor readily endorsed this.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, now submitted, be approved.”
“That the thanks of the Council to Professor Downes and his senior colleagues for their achievements throughout the period of vacancy in the Office of Vice-Chancellor be placed on record.”

12/09  Reports of the Strategy and Finance Committee

*  The Council received the Reports of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 25 November 2011 relating to items for discussion and decision.

In regard to item 4(a), the Financial Report: October 2011, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that a budgeted deficit of £3.9m remained the likely year-end outcome and that the financial position of the Henley Business School, the Institute of Education and Catering continued to warrant particularly close attention. In response to a question, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that student footfall through the various catering outlets was less than expected and that this may be, in part, attributable to recessionary times. Work was in hand to reduce costs and to increase efficiency wherever possible.

In regard to item 4(b), the Report of the Health and Safety Committee, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Brooks) reported that negotiations with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in relation to the University’s risk status had led to a pragmatic, if not entirely satisfactory, solution but the University remained watchful, and alert to the consequences of any further unannounced changes of policy on the part of RBFRS. In such an event it was agreed that the concern of the Council should be expressed firmly and directly to the Service.

To the satisfaction of Mr Dwyer, the member of the Council with particular oversight of health and safety matters, the HASMAP indicators which underpinned the health and safety audit programmes had been adapted, the better to suit the circumstances of the University; and a newly introduced system of annual reporting by Faculties and the Directorates to the Health and Safety Committee was working well. In regard to stress at work, Dr Mueller-Harvey again expressed regret that a self-referral facility for staff to the student counselling service was no longer available.

In regard to item 4(c), Academic Investment, the President reported that an additional meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee had taken place on 27 January 2012. At that meeting, the Vice-Chancellor had emphasised the importance to the University of investing in its academic strength at this juncture, not only to secure its position amongst its research-intensive peers but also to signal its ambition to thrive, compete and excel in the years ahead. In essence, what was now termed the Academic Investment Project proposed the recruitment, in two phases, of fifty additional Academic Staff across six, chiefly interdisciplinary, areas.
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) described the means by which these areas had been identified and explained that the on-going costs of the posts were intended to be met by a carefully targeted and sustainable increase in overseas student numbers together with additional research income that the newly recruited staff would be expected to attract. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services estimated the total additional recurrent expenditure required by the Project to be in the order of £5-6m per annum and explained that this, together with the anticipated increases in revenue, would be factored on a phased basis into the Financial Forecasts that were to be presented to the Strategy and Finance Committee at its next meeting.

In discussion, members sought to understand the reasoning behind the scope and scale of the proposals and were reassured that an appropriate balance had been struck between achievability on the one hand and ambition on the other. The Vice-Chancellor explained that, in his view, the Project would stretch but not over-extend the University and, in so doing, would convey the image of a strong and confident institution to its key audiences. This was not, however, the limit of the University's ambitions and further initiatives could be expected in due course. Against this background, and mindful of the time-critical nature of the exercise, the Strategy and Finance Committee had agreed that the advertising process for the first phase of the Project be initiated immediately in such a way as to achieve maximum impact. A more detailed report would be made to the Council at its next meeting.

Resolved:

“That:

(a) the Financial Report: October 2011, now submitted, be received;
(b) the Report of the Health and Safety Committee, now submitted, be received;
(c) the paper on Academic Investment, now submitted, be received.”

12/10 University of Reading Malaysia

In connection with the intention to establish a branch campus of the University in Malaysia, the President reminded the Council that it had agreed at its last meeting to appoint a sub-group of four lay members (subsequently confirmed to be the President himself, Mr Bartlam, Mr Evans and Mrs Scott) to approve on its behalf a decision to proceed with the project. On the authority of that sub-group, the University had entered into a Development Agreement and Agreement to Lease on 11 December 2011 at a ceremony in Iskandar, subject to a condition precedent requiring the approval of the Council no later than its meeting on 26 March 2011. Thus a formal proposal, incorporating the business plan and financial forecasts, was to be brought to that meeting by the Strategy and Finance Committee.

The Council now received a presentation (copy inserted in Minute Book) from the Vice-Chancellor and Professor Robson, Provost-designate of the
University of Reading Malaysia. In subsequent discussion, members sought to understand the risks inherent in the project and the means by which it was intended to replicate the ‘Reading experience’ overseas, and were reassured to learn not only of the ways in which capital risk was to be contained but also of the enthusiastic support being offered by alumni in the region, well versed in Reading’s ways. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor encouraged members to raise any other matters of concern to them with him or Professor Robson in advance of the meeting on 26 March in order that properly evidenced responses might be provided.

Resolved:

“That the position in relation to the University of Reading Malaysia be noted and that a formal proposal be submitted to the Council at its next meeting for approval.”

12/11 Halls Accommodation Project

* The Council received a Report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which confirmed the completion on 21 December 2011 of the transaction with UPP for the future management of the University’s Halls of Residence and set out the details of financial closure, investment in the special purpose vehicle established by UPP to manage the contract with the University, and the arrangements for operational oversight. The Council expressed it thanks to all those who had played a part in bringing the matter to a successful conclusion and the President noted the beneficial effect of the transaction on the University’s balance sheet.

Resolved:

“That the paper on the Halls Accommodation Project, now submitted, be received.”

12/12 Effectiveness of the Council

* The Council received a preliminary paper on the Effectiveness of the Council prepared by Mr Palmer who had been appointed to chair a review body.

Introducing the paper, Mr Palmer described the fundamental intention of the review body as to ensure that, in the discharge of their responsibilities for governance, members of the Council found themselves better equipped to add value to the management function of the University by means of well-informed, timely and constructive challenge. He intended that the review should range widely in its work but have a particular focus on the fitness of the governance model to support and further the strategic ambitions of the University. Evidence was to be gathered in a variety of ways and the review body planned to make its final report to the Council on 9 July 2012.
Resolved:

“That the paper on the Effectiveness of the Council, now submitted, be received.”

12/13 Report of the Development Board

* The Council received a Report from meetings of the Development Board held in the calendar year 2011.

Mr Fishburn, as Chair of the Development Board, explained that this was the first such report to be made direct to the Council but that submission on an annual basis would henceforth be a routine occurrence. He commended the sector-leading achievements of the Development and Alumni Relations Office and drew attention to the various ways in which fundraising activity articulated with the University’s strategic needs.

Resolved:

“That, the report from meetings of the Development Board held in the calendar year 2011, now submitted, be received.”

12/14 Report of the Senate

* The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 7 December 2011. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the importance that was properly accorded by the University to the work of its Research Ethics Committee.

Resolved:

“1. That, with reference to item 1, Professor S.N. Chandler-Wilde be re-appointed as Head of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences for the period from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014;

“2. That, with reference to item 2, the following be accorded the title of Visiting Professor:

School of Biological Sciences:

Professor J.W. Almond (Sanofi Pasteur), for a further period to 30 September 2014

Professor Sir Ghillean Prance (Eden Project), for a further period to 30 September 2014

School of Systems Engineering:

Mr M. Baker (Alcatel-Lucent UK), for the period to 31 December 2014
School of Literature and Languages:

Professor Z.G. Baranski (University of Notre Dame), for a further period to 30 September 2014

Institute of Education:

Dr Le Ha Phan (Monash University), for the period to 31 December 2014

Real Estate and Planning, Henley Business School:

Dr S. Tsolacos (Property & Portfolio Research/CoStar), for the period to 31 December 2014.

“3. That, with reference to item 3, the following members of the Academic Staff be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from 1 January 2012:

Mrs C.A. Davidson
Dr M.L. Parsons
Dr B.M. Richards.

“4. That the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 7 December 2011, now submitted, be approved.”

12/15 Major Capital Projects

* The Council received a report on Major Capital Projects.

The Director of Estates and Facilities Management noted that the Institute of Education had successfully relocated to London Road and the University Secretary announced that members would have an opportunity to view the refurbished facilities in connection with the Yearly Meeting of the Court on 26 March 2012. Phase 2 of the Halls Redevelopment Project remained on target for completion in August 2012.

Resolved:

“That the report on Major Capital Projects, now submitted, be received.”

12/16 Dates of further meetings of the Council in the Session 2011-12

Monday 26 March 2012 at 2.30pm (following a meeting of the Court in the morning)
Monday 9 July 2012 at 2.15pm