

19/11 **Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor stated that he would welcome UCU engagement with the ongoing discussion about the University Strategy and hoped that an official response would be possible before the deadline of the end of May. The official report of the responses to the consultation would be submitted to the University Executive Board and then to Council. The Acting President of Reading UCU undertook to attempt to obtain feedback from members before the deadline.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Voluntary Redundancy scheme had not met the target savings, but senior management had decided against pursuing the possibility of compulsory redundancies at the moment and would wait to make any further decision until recruitment position was known. An announcement would shortly be made to staff. The Acting President of Reading UCU commented that the scheme had been launched at a time of political uncertainty, which might have affected staff response to the scheme; she stated that UCU maintained its opposition to compulsory redundancy.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had submitted its formal response to the Universities Superannuation Scheme and had recommended the third of the three options proposed, which involved the lowest immediate cost to the University. He anticipated that this would be a position shared across the sector.

19/12 **Report of the Acting President of Reading UCU**

The Acting President of Reading UCU raised the following concerns which she felt members were likely to contribute as feedback on the consultation over the University Strategy:

- (a) strong feeling was still being expressed by members about the vote of no confidence in senior management which had been passed recently. This had arisen from the sense that high-level decisions were being made without sufficient input from staff, who were adversely affected by the decisions taken and who felt disenfranchised. In her view the sense of community within the University had been damaged over the past few years, with Schools being set up to compete with each other, to the detriment of collaboration on joint programmes. The use of external consultants at high cost was seen as problematic.

In response, the Vice-Chancellor commented that he welcomed the opportunity to engage with criticism -making, and concurred that the use of external consultants should be minimised; internal staff were being employed in relation to devising and pursuing the University Strategy, for example. He noted that the introduction of student fees and the external competitive environment had been significant factors in changes to the internal financial model;

- (b) concern was being expressed nationally about governance and representation on University decision-making bodies, and the suggestion had been made that Senate might

Mrs Pellow noted that there was national interest currently in the question of representation on governing bodies in universities, together with concern that representatives might not have a clear mandate to consult their constituents.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that members of Council took these issues seriously, were aware of the need to engage with staff in Schools and were happy to do so;

- (c) the results of the staff survey, published recently, suggested that staff were still dissatisfied with senior management. There was frustration at the perception that the University considered this could be resolved by an increase in top-down communication.

The Acting Preseident also raised the following issues:

- (d) the draft relationships policy was felt to need some revision, and she undertook to provide detailed feedback in writing. The University Secretary undertook to circulate for comment the draft social media policy once it had been considered by UEB. The Director of HR undertook to arrange a meeting to look at the changes proposed as part of the review of non-academic contracts;
- (e) staff had expressed widespread concern about the new parking regime, which involved the levying of a fine without further warning for a parking infringement. This was likely to disadvantage staff with caring responsibilities and those with disabilities, since it was not always possible to find a space at busy times of the day, and some staff needed to park close to their work location in case of an urgent summons. The Vice-Chancellor commented in response that the regime was primarily aimed at cars parked without permits, and that staff with specific requirements should be able to apply for a designated space. He undertook to ask the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) (Professor Fellowes) to take the matter forward, as Chair of the Estates and Environment Committee. He suggested that UCU representatives might wish to take up contextual parking issues, such as the proposed town-wide car park levy, with the local council.

JOINT UNIVERSITY/UCU COMMITTEE

Minute and action	Action for	O OutcomeO
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19/10 Matters arising:

Code of Practice on the REF

The Acting President of Reading UCU reported that a recent survey had been conducted to ask University staff their views on the proposed Code of Practice on the REF, and 65% of the responses indicated rejection of the proposals. She would forward the results and comments to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Yaqoob and summarise the findings for the consultation group.

Right of appeal against redundancy

The Acting President of Reading UCU