

Minutes of the 311th COUNCIL meeting, Wednesday, 28th November 2018

PRESENT:	Dame Yve Buckland (Chair) Amanda Allen Professor Alec Cameron Dr Stuart Doughty Professor Helen Higson Dr Sue Noffke Neil Scott Dr Mike Wright	Amna Atteeq Lance Doughty Dr Melanie Gibbs Professor Kevin Morley Dr Vij Randeniya Professor Kate Sugden
APOLOGIES:	Dr Fiona Lacey Dr Rob Perrins	Toby Lewis
IN ATTENDANCE:	Saskia Loer Hansen* Kerrie Holland** John Walter (Secretary) * For minutes 18/37-39	Andrew Harris** Marc Hornby** **For minutes 18/43-45

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Welcome

18/31 RESOLVED:

To join the Chair in welcoming Professor Kate Sugden to membership of the Council following her recent nomination as the representative of the Senate on Council.

Declarations of Interest

18/32 NOTED:

That there were no new declarations of interest from members of Council or from those in attendance with respect to any agenda items.

MINUTES AND UNIVERSITY NEWS

Minutes

18/33 RESOLVED:

To approve the Minutes of the 310th meeting of the Council, held on 17th October 2018.

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

18/34

RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/15 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, noting the following points:

i) Campus Security

- It appeared that the number of security incidents had declined since the last Council meeting, which was understood to be linked to an enhanced police presence in the vicinity of the campus. The University was continuing to liaise with the West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council (BCC) and other organisations with a view to identifying and implementing measures to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.
- The concerns of the University and those of the other Birmingham Vice-Chancellors, had reached the attention of the Chief Constable of the WM Police, who has contacted the Vice-Chancellor's office to arrange a call on 4th December.
- BCC had recently held an open consultation on a Public Service Protection Order (PSPO) for the City Centre of Birmingham (including the Aston Campus and immediate surrounds) which would give police increased powers to manage Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Aston has responded in favour of the PSPO.

ii) Student Recruitment and Financial Implications

- The tuition fee forecast to Council, at the last meeting, predicted a shortfall to target of £6.2m (after release of the under-recruitment contingency provision). This position had now improved modestly by £0.2m to a shortfall of £6.0m, mainly due to an improvement in Degree Apprenticeship recruitment.

iii) University Superannuation Scheme (USS) Update

- It had recently been reported that "the employer consultation showed 'near-to-unanimous backing' for the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) recommendations concerning the 2017 USS valuation as a basis for ongoing management of the scheme. Employers hoped to see a view from USS and the Pensions Regulator in the near future and to be presented with a more detailed explanation around the level of risk in the scheme. Importantly, 90% of employers would be content with the 20.1% employer contribution rate suggested by the JEP, but for a sizeable minority, this would only be acceptable as a short-term measure."
- Aston had expressed support for the 20.1% employer contribution as a short-term measure to stave off the implementation of much higher contributions (up to 24.9%) that would be automatically triggered in the event of no agreement between the relevant parties. Aston had emphasised that it did not see this as a sustainable, long-term solution.
- The USS Trustees and the Pensions Regulator had yet to pass their view on the proposed arrangements, and it was not certain that they would agree to all terms, in the absence of which the matter remained unresolved.
- USS development updates would continue to be made to Council and its committees.

iv) Brexit

- The Prime Minister had presented to parliament a Brexit 'deal' which had been negotiated with the EU. While this deal largely addressed, at least in the short-term, the issues raised by the UK HE sector, there was considerable uncertainty as to whether this deal would be ratified.
- There remained a high-level of uncertainty as to what the impact of a 'no deal' exit would be, as it depended heavily on unilateral actions which the UK government might take. The main issues for Aston and other UK universities impacted by Brexit were: the status of EU staff (currently and in the future); EU students recruited in the future by Aston, specifically relating to fee, loan and visa arrangements; and EU

funding programmes from which Aston received funding, including Erasmus+, ERC grant funding (Horizon 2020), and grants from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

- The government had established procedures for issuing “settled status” for EU workers currently employed in the UK, and had prioritised the processing of HE staff. Aston HR had informed affected staff of these arrangements and was assisting them in submitting the necessary applications.
- The University had not yet experienced any reduction in levels of EU applications to advertised academic positions at Aston.
- It was expected that, in the absence of any Brexit ‘deal’, EU students would be treated as international students, with fees set at ‘international’ levels, and without the upfront fees for EU students continuing to be funded by the UK Student Loans Company. This was anticipated to result in a decrease in EU student numbers, partially offset by the higher revenues per student.
- The respective upsides and downsides were likely to vary by Institution. 5% of Aston’s students were from the EU. Aston received a comparatively high proportion of its research funding from EU sources and had been particularly successful in attracting Erasmus+ funding in support of students who pursue placement opportunities outside the UK (and particularly in Europe). It was expected, but not certain, that the UK would provide funding streams to replace EU streams in which the UK was unable to participate in the event of ‘no deal’. If so, Aston would need to develop its capacity to be equally successful in such new programmes, as it had been to-date with existing EU programmes. Aston had a representative on the UUK group which was working with the DfE to design the preferred Erasmus+ replacement. A further risk of ‘no deal’ was the cessation of funding to existing research programmes which were in receipt of EU funding, which, in turn, directly funded the salaries of some Aston research staff. While the government might step in to fill any such funding gaps, this had not yet been committed. The PVC Research would be submitting a detailed report on Aston’s potential exposure in relation to EU-funded projects to the Executive on 10th December which would be shared with FIC and Council.

Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council’s Report

18/35

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Pro-Chancellor that she, together with the Vice-Chancellor and Provost, had attended a recent meeting of the Students’ Union Senate which had proved to be interesting and valuable.

President of the Students’ Union’s Report

18/36

RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/16, and a report from the President of the Students’ Union (SU) which identified a number of issues raised by students and suggested some possible solutions. The following points were noted:

- The SU proposed that a system be established that would enable students going on placement to contact other students going on placement in the same city or region, so that they could potentially share accommodation and thereby reduce living costs. This could have the benefit of encouraging more students to take up placements, particularly those from low income backgrounds who might be deterred by the high cost of renting accommodation for a year. It would also reduce the risk of students becoming isolated whilst on placement.

ACTION: *Provost and Careers and Placement Team to investigate with the SU the development of an accommodation network for students on placement*

- On-campus accommodation prices had been increasing annually for many years, and this was now the highest upfront cost for students who do not live at home. The SU provided a report to Council of the costs of accommodation at other universities in the City of Birmingham. The SU asked the University to consider how it could help students to reduce the cost of their accommodation and in so doing, increase the attractiveness of Aston to potential applicants and their parents. The Chief Operating Officer reported that the University annually negotiated a nominations agreement with the main provider of on-campus accommodation, Unite, in order to secure guaranteed places for new students. The University had recently commissioned Cushman and Wakefield to conduct a review of best practice in relation to nominations agreements. The University could seek to influence the level of Unite's accommodation fees during the negotiation of the next annual nominations agreement, but could also consider approaching other providers to establish if they would be willing to charge preferential rents to Aston students in the context of a nominations agreement. In the longer term, Aston could consider the development of accommodation on campus via a joint venture scheme. The President suggested that there appeared to be some discounting of accommodation fees for students who applied late, which appeared to be somewhat unfair to those students who applied early and had to pay the full fees.

ACTION: *COO to work with the SU in efforts to negotiate reduced accommodation costs for students.*

STRATEGIC ISSUES

International Student Recruitment

18/37 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/17 and a presentation from Saskia Loer Hansen, PVC International, which outlined the reasons behind the disappointing 2018/19 international student recruitment figures and detailed the actions identified to address the situation.

18/38 [FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

18/39 RESOLVED:

- i) To thank the PVC International for her informative presentation, which had identified the causes for this year's disappointing international recruitment position and detailed the positive actions being taken to turn this position around.
- ii) That the Executive should consider the development of a business case for any further investment required to support the achievement of international student recruitment and associated revenue targets for consideration at the next FIC meeting (28.1.19).

ACTION: *The Executive to consider the preparation of a business case for additional investment in international recruitment*

Council's Key Performance Indicators

18/40 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/18, presented by the Chief Operating Officer, which proposed the content and format for a data dashboard, which reflected the 10 beneficiary-focused KPIs already agreed by Council and an additional three financial targets (surplus as a percentage of income, net liquidity days (cash) and EBITDA (cash flow)). It summarised the target for the KPIs and historical performance for the last four years and, where available, the current year forecast. It provided an overview of trends in performance versus target and from this a RAG assessment could be made.

18/41 NOTED the following points:

- Aston had traditionally focused its KPI reports on 'lag' indicators. Much of the data and information produced by the University (and the sector) has been geared towards compliance with regulators. As such Aston's data assurance systems and resources were focused on measuring lag indicators rather than data/information that assisted the management of activity. These assurance returns did not enable activity to be monitored in 'real-time' nor for corrective action to be taken ahead of outcomes.
- A considerable amount of work was therefore required to transform Aston's data capacity and capability from one geared to satisfy external regulators to one that provides regular, timely, transparent and accurate information to enable management to monitor and drive performance in-year. This change would require new processes, improved systems (especially connectivity of data flows) and clarity around data ownership and in-year data quality.
- The proposed dashboard was the first step in the development of an integrated management information system. The Integrated Business Intelligence Project would be an important early stage in this journey.
- Council members recommended that the University should focus on the development of robust and timely lead indicators in respect of the delivery of one or two strategic objectives (eg revenue targets and student experience-related objectives) rather than wait for the completion of the large scale Business Intelligence Project which would be likely to take some considerable time and resource to complete.
- Council members highlighted the importance of the achievement of Aston's revenue targets in order to support the borrowing necessary for investment in the development of the estate and infrastructure.
- Council members recommended that the Executive should draw upon the professional expertise available in ABS and EAS for assistance with the development of lead indicators and KPIs.

ACTION *COO and Vice-Chancellor to focus on development of KPIs and lead indicators for Revenue and Student Experience.*

Student Satisfaction and Student Communications Actions

18/42 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/19, presented by the Provost, which provided a report on how the University had taken forward the recommendations of Council members (17.10.18) to assist efforts to enhance student satisfaction and incorporated them into Aston's NSS Action Plans. The University was working in close partnership with the Students' Union on all activity, including: increasing and focussing student communications; ensuring that any actions over which the University had control were completed; achieving some short term quick wins whilst working on medium term plans; learning about good practice elsewhere in the sector (ie from seven different institutions); and visiting Schools to ensure they were progressing their NSS action plans. The Provost and the SU President had worked with the Marketing and Communications team to agree a weekly communications plan to students. Issues to be communicated to students included extra block grant for the SU, the price of graduation ball tickets to be capped, dictionaries to be issued for examinations, extra mental health support, improved examination feedback, appointment of 156 new academic staff over the last two years, and additional staff on security duty. The Council watched an example of a weekly video communication being sent out via social media and computer screens, wherein the SU President and Provost discuss positive changes to enhance the student experience.

Development and Alumni Relations Strategy, including Campaign Funding Priorities

18/43 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/20 and a presentation from Andrew Harris, Executive Director of Campaigns, Kerrie Holland, Director of Supporter Engagement, and Marc Hornby, Director of Fundraising, on development and alumni relations activities, including the impact of the 'Pioneers for Change' Campaign launched in April 2016 and some benchmarking information. They also reported that there was a need to realign the Campaign to the new University Strategy. Revised funding priorities had been presented to the University Executive and approved in October 2018, and also shared with the Campaign Board and other volunteer boards. The paper set out these priorities for consideration and endorsement by Council.

18/44 NOTED the following points:

- The significant impact delivered by recent case studies of giving which included: the Sir Doug Ellis Pathway to Healthcare Programme and the Bradshaw Introduction to Healthcare Programme; UG student scholarships; a clinical trial; sponsored a team to compete in Formula Student, an international competition run by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers; Formula Student; Languages for All programme - 80 student scholarships for 2nd year students; a programme to stop open-field burning after the harvest season in India (Energy Harvest); capital for the SU building and the Aston Medical School; funding for research, PhDs and postdocs in EAS and ABS; Degree Apprenticeships; and supporting spinout companies.
- The Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) had access to 78,341 contactable alumni spread across 130 countries. There was much potential for charitable and philanthropic support and volunteers for University priorities. This was a complex group of people and the University needed to ensure that its approaches were tailored to the individual - one size did not fit all.
- DARO was aligned to deliver broad engagement and regular giving to the wider alumni community, and targeted work with individuals and organisations who could make significant and transformational gifts and contributions.
- DARO engaged with alumni operating in a wide range of prestigious companies, which was paying dividends in terms of guest lectures, student mentoring, student placements and graduate employment opportunities.
- A Midlands Alumni Network had been established by alumni themselves, which had provided useful employer insights and contacts which the DARO team would build upon.
- Matthew Crummack, Chief Executive Officer of the GoCompare, had helped DARO to establish some important links to a number of other Aston alumni in influential positions which had resulted in some really important and beneficial initiatives.
- The campaign aimed to achieve £15m by 2020 and £8.2m of new funds has been raised to-date.

18/45 RESOLVED:

- i) To thank the colleagues from DARO for the interesting and informative presentation.
- ii) To endorse the proposed funding priorities for the next stage of the campaign.

ACTION: *Executive Director of Campaigns.*

Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Return to the OfS 2017/18

18/46 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/21 presented by the Provost, which indicated that the University was required to complete a monitoring return annually for the Office for Students (OfS) to demonstrate whether it had met key targets and milestones and financial expenditure as outlined each

year in its Access and Participation Plan. The OfS required that Council be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the University's compliance with the provisions of the Plan and its progress in achieving the objectives set out in it. The return was due on 23rd January 2019. As there was not a Council meeting before then, the report was presented to Council as work in progress and to show the progress against targets and milestones, as well as the expenditure required to carry out the associated work.

18/47 RESOLVED:

That a draft of the Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Return be submitted to the Pro-Chancellor and the Chair of Nominations and Remuneration Committee for endorsement on behalf of Council, prior to its submission to the OfS.

ACTION: *Provost, Pro-Chancellor and Chair of NRC*

STRATEGY REPORTS

References from Committees

Report from the Audit Committee

18/48 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/22 which summarised issues considered at the Audit Committee (AC) meeting held on 19th November 2019 (the full minutes of which would be received at the next meeting).

Annual Accountability Returns 2018

18/49 RESOLVED:

To approve the following papers for signature by the Chair and/or Vice-Chancellor, as appropriate, for submission to OfS as part of the Annual Accountability Returns 2018:

- BDO's External Audit Highlights Report for the year ended 31st July 2018 (paper CO/18/37).
- University Financial Statements for 2017/18 and letter of representation to the BDO (paper CO/18/38).
- OfS Financial Commentary for December 2017 (paper CO/18/39).
- Financial Statements and letter of representation for Conference Aston Limited for the year ended 31st July 2018 and a letter of support from Aston University in respect of Conference Aston (paper CO/18/40).
- Annual Report of the Audit Committee for 2017/18 (paper CO/18/41).
- Annual Report of the Internal Auditors, PwC, for 2017/18 (paper CO/17/41a).
- Accountable Officer's Annual Return to OfS, 2017/18 (paper CO/18/24).

Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statement

18/50 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/25, and a report from the Chief Operating Officer that the Audit Committee had considered a new version of the Strategic Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statement which had been revised in the light of the Committee's comments. The Executive had agreed that the impact rating for Appropriate Student Recruitment should be increased given its importance to the University's overall revenue as this drove investment in many other activities. The Executive had also agreed that it would be necessary to embrace some additional risk across the range of activities in implementing the new Strategy within an

environment that was likely to be increasingly uncertain and competitive. The Executive had agreed that, for the next iteration of the Register, the financial consequences of each of the individual risks should be specified, including whether they were short term (ie 12 months or less) or longer term. The Audit Committee had asked the Executive to review the Risk Register in the light of the mappings of the HE risk environment provided in the annual reports of the internal and external auditors to ensure that all significant risks were covered going forward.

18/51 RESOLVED:

That PwC, the University's internal auditor, be asked to lead a session on the external risk environment and the development of the Risk Register and Appetite Statement at the next Council/Executive Away Day.

ACTION: COO

Procurement of Internal Audit Services

18/52 NOTED:

That a tender for provision of the Internal Audit Services was to be issued in January 2019, with a panel (to include at least one member of the Audit Committee) being convened to assess the submissions.

Report from the Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC)

18/53 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/26 which summarised issues considered at the FIC meeting held on 12th November 2018 (the full minutes of which were contained in the Resources and Background Material).

Estates Strategy Update

18/54 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/27, and a report from the Chair of FIC, that the Committee had received an update on progress with taking forward Option 5A as the "preferred option" and as the basis for the development of a new estates vision and strategy. FIC members had noted that the Estates Strategy Procurement Plan identified a relatively large number of Project Managers and queried the need (and likely cost) for this. They queried why a design and construct approach had not been adopted. They suggested that the University should explore how other universities had managed such projects. FIC agreed that reports on the implementation of the estates strategy should be scheduled at key decision points/milestones for consideration at meetings of FIC and Council. A five-year rolling implementation plan should be regularly updated and presented, which would help to ensure visibility of how the strategy was being taken forward and reduce the need for ad hoc decisions.

Revenue Stream Analysis

18/55 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/28, and a report from the Chair of FIC, that the Committee had FIC received an analysis of University revenue streams which included a profile of the University's current income streams and how they were planned to change over a five-year period, as efforts were made to diversify income, reducing the current over-reliance on Home/EU

undergraduates. Total income was planned to increase by 33% over five years. Separate papers focussed on the most significant areas of income growth: international student recruitment, Aston Online and degree apprenticeships.

FIC had emphasised that the implementation of the capital development programme, which would require significant additional borrowing, was contingent on the achievement of the planned growth in revenue. FIC members had suggested that, given the continuing uncertainty around all of the above-mentioned income streams, it would be appropriate to consider more substantial and innovative means to secure the long term financial sustainability and growth of the University, including: strategic partnerships, different organisational structures for new markets, and accelerated degree programmes. The Vice-Chancellor was asked to provide a paper setting out some possible more radical alternative strategies for the development of the University in the face of growing uncertainties and competition.

Financing Update

18/56 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/29, noting that FIC had approved the procurement process for securing future financing for the University and agreed to delegate authority to the Vice-Chancellor to approve the award of the tender.

Bid for an Institute of Technology for Manufacturing in Birmingham

18/57 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/30, noting that FIC had endorsed a proposal that the University should proceed to sign and submit a letter of intent by the 21st November deadline to participate in a second stage application for funding for the Greater Birmingham and Solihull 'hub and spoke' Institute of Technology (GBSIoT) focused on advanced manufacturing and engineering, bringing together leading sector employers, four universities, three FE colleges and multiple stakeholders across the GBSLEP area.

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

18/58 RESOLVED:

To approve the FIC's decision that the University should proceed to sign and submit a letter of intent to participate in a second stage application for funding for the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology.

Digital Strategy

18/59 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/31 which summarised the proposed Digital Strategy (the full Digital Strategy report was contained in the Resources and Background for the meeting as paper CO/18/46). The Chief Operating Officer reported that the FIC and the Audit Committee had discussed proposals for a five-year Digital Strategy and Framework (2018 to 2023), which drew upon the new Aston Strategy 2018 to 2023, to guide the University towards a future which was increasingly enabled by digital functions. Nous Group had been commissioned to produce the Strategy and the work to develop the new vision, principles and strategic priorities had been informed by student workshops and over 50 interactions with staff and stakeholders. Their report made important recommendations that were not limited to IT services and IT systems, but included culture, staff capability, processes and governance.

On the recommendation of the Audit Committee, the Chief Operating Officer had discussed the proposals at some length with Lance Doughty and the following points were noted:

- The analysis by Nous of the current position and the digital needs arising from the new University Strategy was sound and useful, but its assessment of the plan and its implementation was less convincing.
- The Strategy did not give an adequate vision of what life would be like and what beneficiaries and stakeholders could expect after its implementation.
- The costings were not realistic and underestimated both internal and external costs associated with implementation of the Strategy. There appeared to be insufficient focus on affordability and return on investment, whether financial or otherwise. There was a need to show that investment would enable the University to make efficiency savings and improve processes. A robust business case should be prepared for each project.
- The Strategy document appeared to be unfinished, particularly with regard to the later sections, and contained a number of inconsistencies and required a thorough proof reading.

A Senate breakout group had also discussed the Digital Strategy proposals and had provided extensive feedback, which echoed the above comments. A report would be made to the next meeting of the FIC on the development and implementation of the Digital Strategy.

ACTION: COO

Report from the Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NRC)

18/60 RECEIVED:

A brief oral report from the Chair of NRC on the Committee's held prior to this Council meeting.

18/61 NOTED:

- That NRC had considered and approved proposals for future Executive pay review, bonuses and benefits which would help to ensure that the University's investment achieved value for money, as well as being competitive enough to ensure the attraction, retention and motivation of top talent. These proposals had been prepared in the light of the recommendations from a report prepared by Innecto Reward Consulting, following its benchmarking review of Aston's senior remuneration and associated governance arrangements.
- That NRC had reviewed the composition of Council and its Sub-Committees for 2018/19 and noted those members who would be completing terms of office on 31st July 2019. The number of independent members needed to be reduced from the current level of 11 to nine. The Pro-Chancellor would be meeting with the members concerned to discuss their capacity and interest in continuing to serve. The Committee would then determine whether or not it would be necessary to seek new appointments, having regard to the skills mix and diversity of Council. The Committee had agreed that it would be appropriate to appoint an Associate Council member who could act as an independent advisor on HE matters and academic governance.

Report from the Senate

18/62 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/33 which summarised issues considered at the Senate meeting held on 21st November 2018 (the full minutes of which would be received at the next meeting).

Senate's Annual Report to Council on Academic Governance

18/63 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/34 which summarised the Senate's Annual Report to Council on Academic Governance (the full Report was contained in the Resources and Background for the meeting as paper CO/18/45), which was intended to support the Senate's recommendation to Council that the University had in place effective systems and processes for ensuring:

- i) the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes, including action plans. This includes evidence from the University's periodic review processes, which fully involve students and includes review by external peers and/or professional/accrediting bodies.
- ii) that the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are robust and appropriate
- iii) that the standards of the University's academic awards have been appropriately set and maintained.

The Provost reported that a Senate Breakout Group had considered the Senate's Annual Report in detail and had recommended that Council endorse it and, in so doing, authorise the Vice-Chancellor to sign and submit the OfS Annual Assurance Return for 2018 confirming the above. They based their recommendation on the comprehensive nature of the report and the work that had been undertaken behind it. They were pleased to see significant external evidence to back up assertions, as well as data driven evidence of impact, and challenging action plans for the coming year to ensure further continuous improvement. They saw clear evidence of a focus which put students clearly at the centre of all that was being done. The Breakout Group had also made some useful recommendations to improve the format and effectiveness of the Annual Report for next year. They also recommended that it would be desirable for Council to appoint a member with experience of HE who could engage more closely with Senate and be in a position to provide independent assurance to Council on its effectiveness.

18/64 RESOLVED:

To endorse the Senate's Annual Report to Council and on that basis to authorise the Vice-Chancellor to sign off the Annual Assurance Return for 2018 for submission to the OfS.

University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council

18/65 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/35 which summarised the University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council (the full Report was contained in the Resources and Background Material for the meeting as paper CO/18/44), which had been discussed by the Senate. The Report provided an overview of actions taken during the year relating to the University's Prevent duty, including a review and refreshment of the University's Prevent risk assessment and an updated action plan addressing any issues identified. Appended to the report was the annual Prevent data return to OfS. The Report demonstrated that the Prevent duty had been implemented in a proportionate and risk-based manner, whilst ensuring that freedom of speech and academic freedom were protected within the context of current legislation. A relatively high proportion of Aston's staff had undertaken compulsory Prevent Training and Unconscious Bias Training. The University tended to treat Prevent concerns within the context of its general welfare and safeguarding policies and procedures. No student had been identified as being at risk of radicalisation during 2017/18. Aston continued to work closely with Prevent partners, local institutions and statutory agencies and the Students' Union in relation to its Prevent obligations. Senate had recommended that Council endorse the Annual Prevent

Report and, on that basis, authorise the Pro-Chancellor to sign off the Annual Accountability Statement and the Prevent Data return for submission to the OfS.

18/66 RESOLVED:

To endorse the Annual University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council for 2017/18 and to authorise the Pro-Chancellor to sign off the Annual Accountability Statement and the Prevent Data return for submission to the OfS.

Annual Report on Student Complaints

18/67 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/43, the Annual Report on Student Complaints for 2017/18, noting that relatively few complaints had been received and that the small number of complaints relating to the industrial action by UCU members appeared to have been resolved amicably.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18/68 NOTED:

That the next Council meeting was scheduled for 13th February 2019.

REVIEW OF 311th MEETING

18/69 NOTED:

That members suggested that, in future, the number of detailed strategy presentations should normally be limited to one per meeting, and the November meeting should focus primarily on the approval of accountability returns. They also recommended that the Resources and Background Material be provided in separate files to assist with downloading on to their devices.

JGW/4.12.18