

**Notes of meeting no 8 of the special, combined JNC held on Friday 17 April 2020**

**Present (virtually)**: Adam Tickell (Vice Chancellor) (AT); Stephen Shute, Pro Vice Chancellor, (Planning and Resources) (SS); Peter Brook, Interim Director of HR (PBr); Bridget Edminson, General Counsel and Director of Governance and Compliance (BE); John Hallam, Interim Assistant Director of HR (ER) (JH); Andrew Chitty (UCU) (AC); Joanne Paul (UCU) (JP); Michael Moran, Regional Officer, UCU (MM); Paula Burr (UNITE) (PB); Claire Colburn (UNISON) (ClCol); Luke Murphy (UNISON) (LM); Caroline Fife, (UNISON) (CF).

**Apologies**: Chris Chatwin; Jo Pawlik; Elaine Stephen; Tim Westlake; Daniel Hyndman; Max O’Donnell-Savage.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Actions |
| 1/8 | **Notes of the previous meeting (no 7, 7 April 2020)**These were agreed as a correct record subject to noting the request made by Mike Moran (UCU) in the last meeting that the University consider payments to staff of up to £6 per week towards home-working costs. |  |
| 2/8 | **VC Update**The VC said that it was becoming very clear as losses ‘crystalized’ that the likely cost impact of C19 in this financial year would be approximately £10m. The likely out-turn was a small surplus for 2019 / 20. The autumn remained highly uncertain and risky. The potential exposure in international recruitment was in the region of £70m. It was very difficult to estimate the actual likely impact but it seemed reasonable to assume an impact in the range of 50% or less on international income.In response to a question from ClCol, the VC said that some modelling was currently being undertaken to assess the financial impact of suspending car parking charges. An announcement on this would be made soon.UUK have made a proposal to DfE / Treasury for a funding package of around £2b. The Government has already made it clear it will not support or subsidise loss of income from accommodation fees or international students. It seemed likely any funding provided would be contingent on it being used to support a managed re-structuring of HE across the UK. The VC noted that the language of UUK was about managing strategic change in an orderly manner. There were no specific details on this as yet but what was clear was that the ‘footprint’ of HE would be smaller in the future.In response to a question from AC about the University’s level of financial dependency on international income, the VC said that the University’s QR funding was relatively low – 50% of research staff have not generated QR funds over successive REF periods – international income had subsidised this. |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 3/8 | **Financial Regulations Guidance (FRG)**The VC noted that the new, revised FRG had now been launched. He suggested it was best to ‘agree to differ’ on this as the position was not going to change further, following the extensive discussions that had taken place on the first iteration. The Trade Unions had circulated a joint statement ahead of this meeting via e-mail. AC said the TUs remained opposed to much of the FRGs and did not consider them to be justified by the current circumstances. UCU would be consulting members to campaign against the application of the FRGs. ClCol echoed this and said the absence of a specific savings target was a concern, along with equality and cultural concerns on the application of the FRGs. PB said many staff were anxious. AC said the original FRGs had led to deep dissatisfaction. MM said there was a view amongst staff that the C19 crisis was being cynically exploited by the University.The VC reminded AC that an apology had previously been extended over the original FRGs. He noted that the scope and timing of the changes had been discussed at every single past SCJNC meeting. There was no exploitation of the situation and to assert this was utterly specious. Planning and work had been undertaken to support the delivery of the Sussex 2025 strategy but the current situation had changed everything completely. He acknowledged the fact of staff anxiety and said that both the present and the future were uncertain. He expressed regret over UCUs decision to campaign against the FRGs. The OBR was predicting a 35% reduction in GDP. The OBR had also indicated HE was a ‘risk’ sector. The FRGs were a prudent attempt to preserve cash as much as possible. No one welcomed the circumstances. However, there was no point in discussing further changes to the FRGs.PBr said he welcomed the acknowledgement by the TUs in their e-mail statement of the changes that had been made to the FRGs following the earlier consultation. SS noted the FRGs were to address present circumstances.  |  |
| 4/8 | **Voluntary Severance Scheme (VS)**SS and PBr noted that design principles had been discussed with TUs. These discussions had been positive and constructive. Work on the design of a scheme was on-going. A further meeting was due to be held next Wednesday (22/4).MM said that notwithstanding the constructive discussions, the TUs did not accept the business case being put forward by management to support VS. JP asked if there was a specific savings target. CF asked what the ‘window’ would be for VS. SS said the scheme would open in May probably to July. There will be a centralised approval process. These points could be discussed further next Wednesday. It was noted that the VS sub group was formally part of the SCJNC although it was expected that most of the work regarding the VS scheme would be done within the sub group. |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5/8 | **Government Job Retention Scheme (JRS) – ‘Furlough’ scheme**The VC said there was a continuing lack of clarity about eligibility of HE for the furlough scheme. The VC had spoken to the Education Minister about this. Clarification was awaited. PBr said the Chancellor of the Exchequer had just announced the scheme would be extended to the end of June 2020. The scheme portal would be opening on Monday but applications could be made retrospectively. PBr said HRBPs were working with senior managers to identity suitable roles for furlough such as Sports Tutors, Catering staff and Library Shelvers. Key qualifying criteria were that the scheme applied to roles that could not function on campus and could not work from home. PBr confirmed that the intention was that for any furloughed worker that the University would top up the salary paid under the scheme by 20% (to 100%, including the Government’s 80%) and that pension contributions would be paid in full. The reason for ambiguity was that the Government had said that posts would not be covered by the furlough scheme if they were publicly funded. The complexity of funding arrangements in research and for some technical staff meant that individual roles would need to be reviewed on a case by case basis for eligibility. PBr said it was clear HMRC would be reviewing cases strictly and this was why it was important cases put forward were realistic. The VC noted that Universities taking an apparently more generous approach to furlough staff outside of the dates / terms of the scheme were doing so on an ‘at risk’ basis. The VC confirmed that any staff furloughed would not be at any detriment in terms of future employment. AC asked that this be ‘headlined’ in the relevant FAQs. PBr said that the JRS FAQs being worked on by HR would be shared with the Trade Unions. Further information about which roles and numbers would be available by next Friday (24/4). |  |
| 6/8 | **Date of next Meeting**The next joint combined meeting was scheduled for Friday 24/4 @ 14.00 |  |

17 April 2020