



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Web Version

3 June 2019

Minute

Present: Anne Richards, Vice-Convener of Court (Convener)
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Sarah Smith, Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance; and
University Secretary
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor
David Bentley, Co-opted Member
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor
Susan Rice, Co-opted Member
Eleri Connick, President, Students' Association

In attendance: Hugh Edmiston, Vice-Principal Business Development & Director of
Corporate Services
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
Leigh Chalmers, Director of Legal Services (for Item 9)
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services

Apologies: Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Jonathan Seckl, Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy
Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning

1 Minute

Papers A1

David Bentley, Eleri Connick and Charlie Jeffery were thanked for their service and advice provided to the Committee during their terms of office

The Minute of the meeting held on 5 April was approved subject to minor amendment.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

The Action Log was reviewed and there were no matters arising.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal reported on:

- A recent Scottish Government event that considered lessons from recent Swiss experience of restricted access to EU research funding;
- The publication of the report of the Post-18 Review of Education & Funding in England ('Augar Review'), with the report's recommendations to be considered by the UK Government over the coming months;

- A new option for consultation proposed by the Trustees of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) in relation to the 2018 valuation. This would establish contribution levels for an interim two year period while the Joint Expert Panel undertakes its next phase of work. Members discussed the likely views of trade unions and other employers on the proposal.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Draft Strategic Plan: 2019

Paper B

A draft Strategic Plan 2019 was reviewed prior to submission to Court. Progression of an updated draft to Court was supported, with the following comments made in discussion:

- Support for the values and link with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;
- A reference to financial sustainability in the ‘Our University, then and now’ section was requested;
- Widening references to partnerships to include national, international and third sector partners was suggested;
- A reference to ‘high quality students’ could be amended to ‘students with strong potential’ or similar;
- Where appropriate, broaden references to categories of students and staff to be more inclusive;
- Communication of the new Plan when finalised to consider visual communication of key words or phrases across the campuses, student-submitted photographs and dissemination by the senior team.

5 Undergraduate Access Scholarships

Paper C

Proposed changes to the cost, financial value, eligibility criteria and operation of the University’s access scholarship programme from 2020 entry were reviewed. The proposed changes were recommended to Court for approval, with the following comments for consideration:

- Strong support for the simplification proposed;
- An upper estimate of possible costs could be included given that the scheme is demand-led and the planned communications may lead to higher uptake than anticipated;
- Important when implementing to make prospective students aware of the scholarships as early as possible, e.g. flagged on website, at beginning of application process; and,
- Support for a subsequent wider review of all scholarships, prioritising support for low income groups where possible.

6 Director of Finance’s Report

Paper D

The Quarter Three full year forecast, the latest iteration of the Ten Year Forecast and a special focus update on tax implications for international working in the University were considered. It was noted that a Staff Benefits Scheme consultation (the in-house pension scheme for professional services staff below Grade 6) had

concluded. The proposal of raising contribution rates on a cost sharing basis with no change to benefits had generated a small number of responses, largely positive, and would now be implemented, with an employer cost estimated at under £2 million. The Committee discussed communicating the benefits of the scheme to members as a follow-up to the consultation.

The improved Quarter Three forecast and City Deal funding profile was welcomed. The complexity of international tax implications in respect of both employees and the University was noted, with the intent to provide greater guidance and oversight for individual initiatives to ensure appropriate protections are in place.

7 Project Bearing Update

Paper E

An update on the University's financial controls and assurance project for 2019 was reviewed. Members discussed the establishment of an information security team to respond to increased risk levels in this area, costs of replacing manual controls and quantifying project costs and benefits. Oversight will continue to be provided by Risk Management Committee and Audit & Risk Committee.

8 Estates

• Peffermill Sports Village: Indoor and Outdoor Sports

Paper F1

A funding request for a new indoor sports pavilion, improved outdoor sports facilities and an indoor tennis centre within a Masterplan for a Sports Village at the Peffermill site was considered. Student experience benefits, improved capacity for community use and the opportunity to host national and international tournaments upon delivery of the residential accommodation component of the Masterplan was welcomed. Information on conditions for receipt of external funding for the tennis courts was requested. The Committee agreed to recommend to Court approval for funding from University resources to deliver a sports pavilion, outdoor hockey pitch, archery range, event car parking and associated landscaping and a contribution for a four court indoor tennis centre subject to securing external funding.

• Small Works Programme Budget

Paper F2

Following approval by Estates Committee of a new process for agreeing small works budgets across the University as part of the overall planning process, the first annual small works programme budget was reviewed prior to submission to Court. Collaborative projects for co-hosting services and support for the new process at School-level were encouraged. It was agreed to recommend to Court that the small works programme budget allocation 2019/20 is approved as set out in the paper.

9 China Merchants Group Update

Paper G

An update on the proposed strategic partnership with the China Merchants Group (CMG) and initial 8 month feasibility assessment was reviewed. It was noted that proposed additional areas of interest had been discussed. It was agreed to support the ongoing development of the partnership with CMG including signature of a Consultancy Agreement and development of a tripartite Partnership Framework Agreement under which each project proposal developed under the Consultancy

Agreement will be agreed, developed and delivered (subject to further approval prior to sign-off).

10 People Report

Paper H

The People Report was reviewed, noting the 2019/20 sector-wide pay negotiations and new leave and family friendly policies using the Russell Group median as a benchmark. The potential for UK government policy changes relating to indefinite leave to remain was discussed, with a desire to respond quickly as appropriate.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

11 Investment Committee Report

Paper I

The report was noted.

12 Estates Committee Report

Paper J

The report was noted.

13 Research and Commercialisation Statistics

Paper K

The report was noted and the applications and awards to date for 2018/19 discussed. While lower than the 2017/18 figures, it was noted that the previous year included a disproportionate number of irregular large applications and awards, with the three year average continuing to show a strong position.

14 Any Other Business

The Director of Corporate Services reported on:

- Progress with development plans for the BioQuarter campus following a Board meeting of the four partners held earlier in the day – an update is anticipated for the next meeting;
- An ongoing bidding process to provide key aspects of a national high performance computing service known as ARCHER2. Court approved in April 2017 a Parent Company Guarantee for the University's bid and this remains in place – any substantive changes will be submitted for approval.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 16 September 2019, 2.30pm.