



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1 February 2021 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

- Present:** Alan Johnston, Co-opted Member (Convener)
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor
David Law, Co-opted Member
Ellen MacRae, President, Students' Association
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Hugh Mitchell, Co-opted Member
Jonathan Seckl, Senior Vice-Principal
- In attendance:** Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member
Leigh Chalmers, Deputy Secretary Governance & Legal
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Gary Jebb, Director of Place
Pauline Manchester, Interim Director of Strategic Planning
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal (Interim) Corporate Services
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer & Librarian to the University (for Item 6)
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change (for Items 4 and 6)
- Apologies:** Sarah Smith, Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance; and University Secretary

1 Minute Paper A1

The Minute of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 was approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log Paper A2

There were no matters arising and the action log was reviewed.

3 Principal's Communications Verbal

The Principal reported on:

- UK Government developments: i) university staff in England have been defined as critical workers, allowing their children to attend school if required. This is not currently the case in Scotland where discretion lies with local authorities and schools and does not usually include university staff; ii) lateral flow testing for Covid-19 is being encouraged to take place on university

campuses in England. The current position in Scotland is that testing is for those with symptoms and is offered at NHS testing sites and does not use the lateral flow method;

- Scottish Government budget – a 2.7% uplift in higher education funding was announced, with some additional spending to help reimburse some costs related to the pandemic also expected;
- Next steps in work to address contemporary and historic racism have been announced – alumnus Professor Sir Geoff Palmer will chair a steering group to create a forum for debate, seek views from local and global communities and provide recommendations on outcomes from a review of the University's history with respect to race. A panel event was also held on 22 January that brought together students, academics and members of the public to discuss the renaming of the David Hume Tower and Hume's legacy more generally.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Adaptation & Renewal Team Report

Paper B

A report on the work of the Adaptation and Renewal Team was reviewed. Recent activities have centred on responding to increased public health restrictions announced by the Scottish Government on 19 December and 4 January, with the outcome that teaching and assessment for undergraduate students will be digital-only for the duration of the semester for the majority of students, with limited exceptions. Some in-person postgraduate teaching may be able to resume later in the semester depending on the extent of public health restrictions in place. A review of the planning assumptions for the academic year 2021/22 is underway, as is consideration of the future arrangements for the Adaptation & Renewal Team as responding to the pandemic becomes a core element of 'business as usual' in the coming months and years. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Responses from students to University communications on the impact of the new public health restrictions on the new semester – there has been general acceptance that the current phase of the pandemic has necessitated a move to offer digital only teaching for most undergraduates. Some queries have arisen in regard to requests for tuition fee refunds and practical requests such as collecting belongings from student accommodation;
- Thinking about the University's approach in the event that greater discretion is allowed for institutions to consider their own path to re-starting greater in-person activities, although it is expected that physical distancing rules will remain in place across society for a prolonged period; and,
- Ensuring fair assessment of students in the current circumstances – the University has worked with other Russell Group institutions to develop a consistent approach and is communicating this with students.

5 Finance

• Director of Finance's Report

Paper C1

An update on the forecast financial position to 2024/25, the outlook for the Accommodation, Catering and Events subsidiary and progress in discussion relating to the Students' Association's financial position were considered. Members discussed growing industry income, noting that while this is unlikely to be a source of

income substantial enough to make a large contribution in covering the overall running costs of a university, recent performance has been encouraging and there is potential for continued growth.

- **Covid-19 Short and Medium-term Financial Funding Update** **Paper C2**

The update was noted and recommendations to Court agreed.

- **2019-20 Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) Results** **Paper C3**

The annual Transparent Approach to Costing results and associated full economic cost rates were reviewed. It was agreed that these could be signed off by the Principal and submitted to the Scottish Funding Council and UK Research & Innovation. The use of the underlying data set for external and internal benchmarking was discussed, with a paper on peer group benchmarking to follow.

6 People and Money Implementation **Paper D**

A revised plan for the implementation of the People & Money System (formerly known as Core Systems – the programme delivering the core IT system for HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement) was considered and authority delegated to a Sub-Group comprising Alan Johnston, Doreen Davidson, David Law and Peter Mathieson to make a recommendation to Exception Committee or Court.

7 Social Finance Anchor Investment **Paper E**

A proposal to make a social finance ‘anchor investment’ was approved.

8 Global Open Finance Centre of Excellence **Paper F**

The incorporation of the Global Open Finance Centre of Excellence as a not-for-profit company was approved.

9 People Report **Paper G**

An update on people related matters being taken forward by Human Resources and other University departments was noted.

10 Estates Committee Report **Paper H**

The report was noted and the heat decarbonisation strategy and likely significant capital expenditure required for its implementation discussed.

11 Estates Committee Terms of Reference **Paper I**

Minor revisions to the Terms of Reference for Estates Committee were approved as set out in the paper.

12 Research and Commercialisation Statistics Update **Paper J**

A statistical update on research and commercialisation activity for the period from August to December 2020 was noted.

13 PRC Commercialisation Sub-Group Report **Paper K**

The report was noted.

14 Investment Committee Report **Paper L**

The report was noted.

15 Staff Benefits Scheme Contingent Asset Address Amendment **Paper M**

Doreen Davidson declared an interest as a Trustee of the Staff Benefits Scheme and abstained from decision-making on the item.

It was agreed to recommend that Court agree to the proposed switch of asset under the amended address set out in the paper.

16 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 12 April 2021, 2.30pm-5pm.