



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

17 September 2021 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

Present: Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Convener)
Douglas Alexander, General Council Assessor
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor
Ellen MacRae, President, Students' Association
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Jonathan Seckl, Senior Vice-Principal
Sarah Smith, Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance; and
University Secretary

In attendance: Leigh Chalmers, Deputy Secretary Governance & Legal
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
Gary Jebb, Director of Place
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Rona Smith, Director of Strategic Planning & Insight
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer & Librarian
to the University (for Item 8)
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change (for Item 8)
Dave Robertson, Vice-Principal and Head of College of Science &
Engineering (for Item 8)
Ashley Shannon, Director of Operations, Corporate Services (for Item
9)
Sandy Tudhope, University Lead on Climate Responsibility and
Sustainability (for Item 10)
Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability (for
Item 10)

Apologies: Hugh Mitchell, Co-opted Member

1 Minute

Paper A1

Janet Legrand, Convener, noted apologies and welcomed new member Douglas Alexander and new attendee Rona Smith to their first meeting.

The Minute of the meeting held on 31 May 2021 was approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

There were no matters arising and the action log was reviewed. Outdated actions proposed for removal were agreed, noting that discussions will continue with the Students' Association and the University on collaboration on external income generating events such as the Edinburgh Festivals.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, reported on:

- Graduation celebrations held at Edinburgh Castle over four evenings in late August with 5,000 students and 10,000 guests attending. The celebrations have felt to be a morale booster for all involved and for the City more widely;
- Welcome Week, with a positive atmosphere on campus from those joining and those returning, including some second year students arriving on campus for the first time;
- Student survey satisfaction measures have remained disappointing and while a recent external quality assurance report (the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review) has recorded a good outcome overall, the University is expected to produce a follow-up report documenting changes made in response to some findings within a year;
- The Universities UK annual conference, which was held in-person for the first time since the pandemic began;
- UK Government ministerial changes, with a new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi MP; a new Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, George Freeman MP; and an expanded role for Michelle Donelan MP, who is now Minister of State for Higher and Further Education and will attend Cabinet.

Members commented on the success of the graduation celebrations, the University video produced for Welcome Week, the UK government's ministerial reshuffle, the return of many staff to campus on a more regular basis and positive feedback on this, and the on-going TestEd programme to evaluate a new high throughput method for detection of SARS-CoV-2 in participants' saliva.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Student Recruitment – 2021/22 entry

Paper B

An overview of the likely outturn of the student recruitment cycle for 2021/22 entry, including actions taken to mitigate the risk of under- and over-recruitment and implications for the 2022/23 cycle was reviewed.

5 Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030

Paper C

A progress update on the development of the Strategic Performance Measurement Framework including proposed strategic indicators for reporting to Court and a complementary set of measures for internal monitoring by the University Executive was reviewed. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Considering leading measures for student experience, such as investment in student experience measures and more generally, whether students feel proud to be part of the University;
- Whether a more easily quantifiable measure, such as company formation, may be suitable for a Data-Driven Innovation measure than adoption of Data-Driven Innovation techniques by organisations;
- The financial health of the University features implicitly but not explicitly in the measures and this could be considered for explicit inclusion; and,
- The extent to which the proposed measures enable external comparison or are more internal and annual planning focused – noting that this iteration includes more measures suited to external benchmarking and this has been an important consideration in further development of the measures.

6 Intentions for Planning and Budgeting for 2022-27

Paper D

A proposed approach to planning and budget-setting to be undertaken during 2021-22 was considered. The intention to ‘re-set’ the planning approach to a medium-term five-year horizon, with year 1 being firm and years 2-5 being strongly indicative in order to allow integration of the planning approach with the existing five-year financial scenario process and the emerging five-year capital investment plan was approved.

7 Director of Finance’s Report

Paper E

An update on the draft financial results for 2020-21, Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) benchmarking data for 2019-20, and the outcome of the recent Universities Superannuation Scheme valuation was reviewed.

8 People & Money System

Paper F

A revised plan for the implementation of the People & Money System (the programme delivering the core IT system for HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement) was reviewed. It was agreed that there was initial support for the recommended option subject to further work on governance proposals. The Sub-Group will meet to consider finalised governance proposals before making a recommendation to the Committee in time for the Committee to make an onward recommendation to Court.

9 Edinburgh BioQuarter – Update on Formalising Partnership Arrangements and Procurement of a Private Sector Partner

Paper G

An update on the planned formal partnership between the University, Scottish Enterprise and the City of Edinburgh Council and preparations to launch a public procurement process to select a private sector partner to help develop the next stage of the BioQuarter site through the creation of a Health Innovation District was reviewed. Members of the Committee’s Commercialisation Sub-Group, which reviewed an earlier draft paper, confirmed their support and it was agreed to support the proposals to formalise the partnership and to seek delegated authority from Court for the proposed procurement process as set out in the paper.

10 Carbon Sequestration through Forests and Peatland

Paper H

Proposals to invest in carbon sequestration through forests and peatland to aid the University in meeting the 'Zero by 2040' carbon strategy were reviewed. Having considered a market approach to offsetting carbon or a land purchase approach or working with existing landowners, a portfolio approach encompassing an element of the latter two measures is proposed. It was agreed to recommend to Court expenditure of capital to enable a land purchase for carbon sequestration (also subject to approval by Estates Committee) and expenditure of the associated revenue elements, noting that this would be found from within existing resources for 2021-22 and factored into the University's planning rounds for future years.

11 People Report

Paper I

The report was noted and an update provided on the announcement that University & College Union branches will consider balloting members for industrial action on pay and/or on the outcome of the recent Universities Superannuation Scheme valuation at individual institutions.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

12 Research and Commercialisation Statistics Annual Report

Paper J

Annual statistics for research and commercialisation activity in academic year 2020-21 were reviewed.

13 Investment Committee Report

Paper K

The report was noted and the positive investment performance reported welcomed.

14 PRC Commercialisation Sub-Group Report

Paper L

The report was noted.

15 Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the Committee's People & Money Sub-Group will submit a recommendation to the Committee on the People & Money System implementation for onward recommendation to Court following a meeting scheduled on 23 September 2021.

16 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 8 November 2021, 2.30pm-5pm