



**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**7 February 2022 (Videoconference)**

**Web Version**

**Minute**

**Present:** Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Convener)  
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member  
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor  
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  
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  
Jarmo Eskelinen, Director, Data-Driven Innovation Initiative (for Item 7)

**Apologies:** Douglas Alexander, General Council Assessor

**1 Minute Paper A1**

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted. The Minute of the meeting held on 8 November 2021 was approved.

**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**

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

- The Senior Leadership Team – David Argyle, Head of the Veterinary School is acting as the Interim Head of College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine; Professor Kim Graham and Professor Christina Boswell have been appointed as the incoming Provost and Vice-Principal Research & Enterprise respectively; the recruitment process for new Vice-Principals and Heads of College for the College of Science & Engineering and the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences respectively is nearing conclusion; and, a recruitment process for a new University Secretary will begin shortly;

- Staff morale and the present state of the pandemic – a mixture of uncertainty and optimism is present, with justified optimism that the most significant stages of the pandemic in terms of public health impacts are receding but with the feeling of uncertainty brought by the pandemic still evident;
- Industrial action – the University & College Union has given notice of a planned ten days of discontinuous strike action over mid-to-late February and early March in disputes on pay and on proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). A contingency group is meeting weekly to manage the impact of the industrial action;
- Activity in the capacity of the Universities UK and Russell Group leads on national security as it applies to higher education; and,
- The encouraging levels of interest in the University shown by both prospective students and prospective senior staff.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **4 Finance**

- **Director of Finance’s Report**

**Paper B1**

The Director of Finance’s Report was reviewed, including the first quarter forecast for 2021-22 and a summary of the financial results of the University’s subsidiary companies in 2020-21. On the financial results for subsidiary companies, the strong performance of Edinburgh Innovations was welcomed.

- **Long Term Debt Review Proposal**

**Paper B2**

An overview of the University’s current long-term debt arrangements and a proposed review of these arrangements was considered. It was agreed to recommend to Court that more detailed work be undertaken and a short-life Sub-Group established, with the proposed membership of the Sub-Group to be considered further and submitted to Court following discussion with the Senior Lay Member.

- **Annual TRAC Return 2020-21**

**Paper B3**

The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) return for 2020-21 and full economic costs rates for research from February 2022 onwards were reviewed and recommended for submission to the Scottish Funding Council and UK Research & Innovation.

### **5 Development of a New Capital Plan 2021-2027**

**Paper C**

A new Capital Plan aligned to the five year financial planning cycle was presented following development by the Capital Plan Working Group and initial review by Estates Committee. It was noted that this is the University’s first capital plan to bring together all elements of capital expenditure, including the digital estate, although digital projects are increasingly classed as revenue rather than capital expenditure, with revenue funding to be sought through the Planning Round as usual. The plan includes baseline projects such as mandatory compliance and maintenance work, projects which are already underway and proposed prioritised projects. All proposed

prioritised projects remain subject to approval of a business case and final funding approval, continuing existing practice. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Learning from the experience of the Capital Plan Working Group in bringing together consideration of physical and digital infrastructure, with the Principal considering this further and a senior academic high performance computing specialist proposed to join Estates Committee (see Item 11 below);
- New opportunities may arise at short notice and necessitate reprioritisation, with the Capital Plan to be viewed as dynamic rather than fixed;
- More detailed plans for the redevelopment of the Central Area – there is a prioritised project placeholder for refurbishing decanted and existing Schools in the Central Area and further thought is required on future needs in light of the experience of the pandemic;
- Managing approvals for prioritised projects in the context of a changing aggregate picture – every approved project will be tracked in the overall financial model and affordability monitored before proposals are submitted for approval;
- Whether the plan is sufficient to meet expected student accommodation demand – the University is currently able to meet its student accommodation guarantee, noting that this does not extend to returning students. Student accommodation provision in general will continue to be monitored closely; and,
- Other themes from the Estates Committee discussion that could be returned to, such as stewardship of the historic estate.

It was agreed to recommend the proposed Capital Plan for approval by Court, noting that approval for Full Business Cases and funding for individual projects will be sought in due course from Estates Committee, Policy & Resources Committee and Court, as necessary.

## **6 Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030 – Mid-Year Report Paper D**

A mid-year update on the performance of the Strategy 2030 Key Performance Indicators was reviewed. Some measures were highlighted in the introductory remarks to highlight their varied nature and development: Measure 1: widening participation student application data for the year to date is very encouraging; Measure 6: Research quality/competitiveness – the outcome of the recent UK Research Excellence Framework exercise is expected in May and will feed into this measure; Measure 16: Net Zero carbon emissions – the targets for 2025 have been reached early and new interim absolute and relative targets will be developed and will appear in the next iteration of the report.

Communicating the performance measures in visually impactful ways across the University was discussed. It is planned to develop an interactive dashboard that will allow disaggregated as well as aggregated data to be viewed. This will aid College or School level analysis of many of the measures. It was noted that internal reporting on the Data-Driven Innovation initiative ‘mainstreams’ the initiative within the performance measures but separate external reporting to Government funders on the initiative will continue (see Item 7 below).

## **7 Data-Driven Innovation Initiative Progress Report, year 2021**

**Paper E**

A progress report on the Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) initiative one year on from the last report to Court was considered. The DDI initiative includes capital funding from the UK and Scottish Governments as part of the City Region Deal to establish six innovation hubs, five at the University of Edinburgh and one at Heriot-Watt University in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh. The Bayes Centre hub is fully operational, with three other hubs planned to launch in 2022 (Edinburgh International Data Facility, National Robotarium, Easter Bush Innovation Hub) and the remaining two in 2023 (Edinburgh Futures Institute, Usher Innovation Hub). A successful annual progress review was held by the UK and Scottish Governments in November 2021, with a substantial mid-way review expected in 2023/24. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The welcome results to date for many of the TRADE (Talent, Research, Adoption, Data, Entrepreneurship) objectives;
- Communicating success to date more widely – the intention has been achieve tangible results at first then to communicate these more widely. The five-year milestone in 2023 is envisaged as a suitable point for a step-change in external communications; and,
- Harnessing the reputational benefits of the success of the initiative to attract further major funding programmes.

## **8 People & Money System Update**

**Paper F**

An update on the implementation of the People & Money System (the programme delivering the core IT system for HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement) was reviewed. It was noted that the phase 2 (payroll, pensions & timesheets) implementation will be moved by one month from March 2022 to April 2022 with no subsequent impact on the phase 3 implementation date of August 2022. This is for the purposes of reducing risk in the move to the new system through reducing the volume of data to be migrated, simplifying the resolution of tax year issues, providing more time for mitigations required in payroll/pensions and increasing training time for staff using the new system.

## **9 People Report**

**Paper G**

The report was reviewed and it was noted that many staff are involved in work on a number of key programmes such as the People & Money System, Curriculum Transformation Programme and changes to the student support system, with concerns over workloads and prioritisation arising from this. With an increase in staff working regularly on the campus following the latest Scottish Government advice, Human Resources are working with Health & Safety to support this. The importance of considering the provision of suitable meeting spaces and work places for staff within the future development of the estate was commented on.

### **ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL**

## **10 Research and Commercialisation Statistics Mid-Year Report**

**Paper H**

The report was noted.

## **11 Estates Committee Report**

**Paper I**

The report was noted and a minor amendment to the Estates Committee's Terms of Reference to add Professor Mark Parsons, Director of EPCC (formerly the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre) to the membership, was approved.

## **12 Investment Committee Report**

**Paper J**

The report was noted.

## **13 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **14 Date of Next Meeting**

Monday, 4 April 2022, 2.30pm-5pm