



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

27 March 2023, Videoconference

Web Version

Minute

Present: Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Convener)
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal & University Secretary
Ruth Girardet, Co-opted Member
Kim Graham, Provost
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Hugh Mitchell, Co-opted Member
Kathryn Nash, Trade Union Academic Staff Member
Niamh Roberts, President, Students' Association

In attendance: 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, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Kirstie Graham, Deputy Head of Court Services
Jamie Tait, Governance Manager
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley, University Lead for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (for Item 8)

Apologies: Douglas Alexander, General Council Assessor

1 Minute

Paper A1

Janet Legrand, Convener, welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

The minute of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 was approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

There were no matters arising. The action log was reviewed.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

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

- People & Money;
- Industrial relations: negotiations have concluded on the 2023/24 sector-wide pay offer, with an impasse reached and employers have been asked to implement the offer, with the first phase to be undertaken in the March payroll.

Strike action from the University & College Union has taken place earlier this month, with a ballot for a renewed mandate for industrial action closing on 31 March. Greater optimism is evident in discussions on the Universities Superannuation Scheme and it is hoped that benefits can be restored to pre-April 2022 levels and contribution levels reduced;

- Visits by Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition and by the University's Chancellor, with the latter including a student entrepreneurship event hosted at the Palace of Holyroodhouse;
- A recent Russell Group Board meeting, which included presentations from YouGov on voter intentions and from sector body JISC on developments in Artificial Intelligence and implications for the sector. Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students, is leading work at the University on how artificial intelligence is considered with assessment processes and teaching and learning more generally;
- Recent celebratory events have included graduations at McEwan Hall for cohorts whose ceremonies could not take place during the pandemic and an event at the Royal College of Physicians to celebrate Professor Moira Whyte's tenure as Head of the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Involvement of Court members from Professional Services and Senate in the external review of People & Money [*Secretary's note: Richard Blythe, Senate Assessor, is a member of the tender review panel and it is expected that the external review will engage with members of Court as appropriate.*]
- Any further developments regarding the Exascale supercomputer service since the UK Government's Spring Budget announcement – the Spring Budget included an announcement of £900m in funding for an Exascale supercomputer and an Artificial Intelligence Research Resource. The funding allocation between the two projects and the timescale for the funding and location of both are not yet known.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Director of Finance's Report Paper B

The Director of Finance's Report was reviewed.

5 People & Money System Update Paper C

An update on the implementation of the People & Money system was presented. Work since the previous meeting has centred on addressing priorities such as improving the administration of research finance in the new system, staff recruitment and training, and enhancing reporting. The volume of calls to the helpdesk was discussed, noting that whilst the number of new calls is reducing, totals included some historic calls still logged on the system, and staff perceptions at present, with improvements in areas such as student payments but concerns remaining in others, notably research finances. Once the plan for the period beyond the next few months has been agreed this will be communicated with an aim of building staff confidence.

6 Estates

• Residential Strategy 2023 – 2030

Paper D1

A draft Residential Strategy 2023 – 2030 was reviewed. The strategy has been developed drawing upon work on size and shape, sustainability, transport, financial support and intends to enable a continued accommodation of all students eligible under the current accommodation guarantee and provide 20% of stock for returning students or other categories. Current turbulence in the student accommodation market was noted. The focus on inclusion in the strategy was welcomed and adaptations for neuro-divergent students discussed, such as considering colour and fabric patterns in furnishings and potential noise issues. The extent to which the strategy marked a short-term adaptation to external pressures or longer-term change was discussed, noting that the planned level of provision for returning students has increased compared to previous plans in response to external pressures but this may remain into the longer term. The action within the strategy to create a model of financial support to assist residents in need has been welcomed by the Students' Association, who are keen to engage with the next steps and wish to ensure accessible and affordable accommodation for all. It was agreed to recommend the Residential Strategy 2023 – 2030 to Court for approval, noting the intention to review and update the strategy on an annual basis given present market volatility.

• Edinburgh College of Art

Paper D2

A funding request for the redevelopment of the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) site at Lauriston Place was presented. It was noted that the intention to redevelop the site can be traced to the merger with ECA in 2011 and a desire to achieve benefits from co-locating more of the enlarged School's activities on one site. ECA has performed strongly since the merger and a robust case has been made for funding for the redevelopment – this was initially agreed by Court prior to the pandemic, deferred during the pandemic and has now been updated. Estates Committee's review of the updated business case was discussed, noting that it had been first reviewed at the December Estates Committee meeting and further updated following feedback and considered in revised form at the subsequent March meeting and given full support. Noting that the proposed funding is included in the prioritised Court-approved Capital Plan, it was agreed to recommend to Court that approval for capital funding be granted to progress the project to completion.

• Teviot Row House

Paper D3

A funding request for refurbishment and improvement work on the Teviot Row House building was presented. It was noted that this encompasses modernisation, compliance and student experience enhancement works but will necessitate the closure of the building for the duration of the works, requiring a decant strategy to mitigate disruption during this period. Discussion at Estates Committee had highlighted the strong case for upgrading what is a well-used and historic building, the importance of the construction work timetable in minimising disruption and that, while an historic building, it is one that the University is familiar with from an estates perspective. Support from the Students' Association for the project was highlighted and the importance of an effective decant strategy, particularly for study spaces and collaborative working spaces, emphasised. Potential financial impacts on the

Students' Association during and after construction was discussed, particularly mitigating impact from the closure period during the Festivals. It was agreed to recommend to Court approval of capital funding to progress the Teviot Row House project to completion, noting that funding is included in the prioritised Court-approved Capital Plan for the modernisation and compliance elements and an additional sum is sought for student experience enhancement work.

7 Edinburgh BioQuarter – Update on Procurement of a Private Sector Partner **Paper E**

An update on the procurement of a Private Sector Partner to join the existing partnership between the University, Scottish Enterprise and the City of Edinburgh Council to create a health innovation district at the Edinburgh BioQuarter site was reviewed.

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- **Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2023** **Paper F1**
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Report 2023** **Paper F2**

The Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2023 and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Report 2023 were considered. It was noted that the mainstreaming report highlights success in embedding equality, diversity and inclusion principles and responsibilities, while recognising that more progress is needed in a range of areas, including improving the experience of students and staff with disabilities, accelerating anti-racist work and addressing variances in student outcomes. It was noted that the data report provides University-level data for publication, with School-level data to be made available internally. Corresponding with the equality outcomes report, the data report shows encouraging progress in some areas and highlights other areas where more progress is needed, such as inequalities in representation at higher staff grades and encouraging greater declaration levels for those with disabilities.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Progress made was welcomed and all colleagues involved thanked for their contributions enabling this;
- The intention to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion within the Planning Round with the involvement of the EDI Committee was supported, noting that this is key to achieving long-term momentum;
- Recognising and resourcing work by those undertaking equality, diversity and inclusion service and scholarship in addition to their usual duties, e.g. recognising this work within promotion panels, and other citizenship work that benefits the University more widely, e.g. contributing to governance, and could be considered by the Staff Experience Committee in the first instance;
- Communicating the reports and key messages from these in an accessible way was encouraged, along with considering other means of highlighting progress and generating support for future work, such as submitting nominations for awards or other forms of external recognition that would be valued by the University community;
- The equality outcomes report includes a section responding to reporting requirements under Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act

2018 – this is a timely reminder with a Court member recruitment exercise currently underway and is being considered as part of the recruitment, alongside other aspects of diversity;

- Separately, an invitation to attend an Edinburgh Race Equality Network Senior Leaders Meeting will be circulated to Court members by a committee member in contact with the network.

9 Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030 – 2022-23 Mid-Year Report Paper G

The 2022-23 mid-year report on the performance measures to support Strategy 2030 was reviewed, noting that comments are sought on the measure for Key Performance Indicator 5: Staff Engagement, proposed as an aggregation of equally weighted responses across five questions in the recent staff survey. Support was expressed for the weighted aggregated measure based on experience in other organisations and likely volatility in responses to some questions over time, with the recommendation to be submitted to Court.

10 People Report Paper H

The regular update on people-related matters was considered, noting that work is progressing on reviewing some elements on the pay grade scales and other areas, such as fixed term contracts, with good working relations with local unions evident and contributing to progress in these areas.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

11 Small Works Programme and Statutory Compliance Budget Allocation Paper I

It was agreed to recommend to Court approval of the Small Works Programme and Statutory Compliance Capital allocation included within the Capital Plan and the means of apportioning funds.

12 Investment Committee Report Paper J

The report was noted.

13 Estates Committee Report Paper K

The report was noted, including the appended Transport Plan.

14 PRC Commercialisation Sub-Group Report Paper L

The report was noted.

15 Meeting Dates for 2023/24 Academic Year

The Committee approved the following meeting dates for 2023/24:

- Tuesday 12 September 2023, 14.30-17.00
- Monday 13 November 2023, morning (exact time to be confirmed)
- Monday 12 February 2024, 14.30-17.00
- Monday 25 March 2024, 14.30-17.00
- Monday 3 June 2024, 14.30-17.00

16 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 5 June 2023, 2.30-5pm (online meeting)