



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

12 February 2024, meeting held online

Minutes

Present: Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Convener)
Douglas Alexander, General Council Assessor
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Sharan Atwal, President, Students' Association
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

In attendance: Lewis Allan, Senior Governance Advisor to the Vice-Principal & University Secretary
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
Gary Jebb, Director of Place
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
Daniel Wedgwood, Head of Court Services
Damien Toner, Director of Estates (items 7-9)
Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability (item 10)

Apologies: None received

1 Minute

Paper A

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 were approved.

2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

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

- trends in student recruitment across the sector;
- independent analyses recently published on the UK and Scottish higher education sectors;
- the recent award of 'Educational Partnership of the Year' to the University's partnership with Zhejiang University in the China-Britain Business Council's

China-Scotland Business Awards, further recognising what was already widely regarded as a model partnership.

Discussion centred on the UK and Scottish political and policy context as it might affect the financial position of universities. It was noted that the University, the Russell Group, UUK and Universities Scotland were engaging with political parties, including in relation to their potential manifesto commitments for a UK general election.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Finance

Paper B

Director of Finance's Report

The Director of Finance's Report was reviewed.

TRAC

PRC noted that the University's TRAC (Transparent Approach to Costing) return had been submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) ahead of the deadline in January. It was noted that, in accordance with the SFC's rules, the initial submission had been made without the Principal's signature and that authorisation to apply this signature was now sought, in order to complete the process.

PRC noted the contents of the paper and authorised the Principal, as the University's Accountable Officer, to sign the University's 2022-23 TRAC return.

5 People Report

The People Report was noted.

6 People & Money Systems and Roadmap Update

Paper D

The Committee received an overview of recent and planned work in relation to the continued implementation of improvements and enhancements to the People & Money (P&M) system. It was noted that the full programme of work, the 'roadmap', was not yet available, being timetabled for consideration by the University Executive later in February 2024. A more detailed paper would therefore be provided to the next meeting of PRC and then to the April Court meeting. The costs of the work were similarly to be provided at a later date, pending thorough scoping and forecasting work.

New governance arrangements around the implementation work had been put in place, the P&M Enactment Group having completed its work and P&M now being one of four major projects reporting to the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB).

The Committee welcomed the emerging plans and the degree of additional clarity they provided and noted the commitment to provide greater detail in the near future. Discussion included the following points:

- Committee members sought and received assurances that a clear process owner model was in place.
- It was agreed that a schematic overview of the governance structures around the P&M work should be produced and shared with the Committee, to give further clarity regarding the new structures and their integration with existing accountability mechanisms.
- Progress should increasingly be pursued through standard operational structures and roles. It was noted that the move to the UIPB reporting structure and away from a stand-alone group represented a shift in this direction. This would also allow P&M and the other major projects under UIPB to derive insights from one another.
- Communication with the University community remained a high priority and a key part of this should be to equip those in leadership positions across the institution to engage with staff in a fully informed, authoritative way. UIPB had adopted this model for planned communications. Wider communication was to start imminently with a series of planned all-staff meetings.

7 Small Works Programme and Statutory Compliance Budget Allocation

Paper E

It was noted that the rolling Small Works Programme had proved successful in making significant positive impact on the staff and student experience through a range of small-scale improvements to the estate.

Committee members expressed support for the programme, recognising its past and potential impact on the student and staff experience.

PRC noted the content of the paper and recommended to Court approval of the allocation included within the current capital plan for the Small Works and Statutory Compliance Programme 2024/25.

8 Proposed Multiyear Energy Efficiency Programme

Paper F

The Committee noted proposals to establish a multiyear energy efficiency programme, including project evaluation methodology, governance and proposed level of priority investment. It was noted that the establishment of such a programme had been supported by Estates Committee. Behavioural change would be a key element in driving improvements in this area, but a variety of technical works were also required.

PRC supported the proposals and recommended to Court approval of funding from the amount allocated in the current Capital Plan.

9 Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update

Paper G

The Committee received an overview of progress in tackling the presence of RAAC in University buildings, in the context of national concerns over the resilience of this material. The University had committed to carrying out work on all relevant sites and these were being prioritised with a view to protecting key activity and the student experience while also addressing the most urgent structural issues. It was noted that

the practicalities of carrying out the work and decanting on-going activity were complex in a number of cases.

A further report would be presented to Estates Committee in March 2024 and, thereafter, to PRC and Court, following further preparatory work.

PRC noted the update and commended the level of assurance provided by the detailed overview that had been supplied.

10 Forests and Peatlands Programme First Annual Report 2022-23

Paper H

PRC received the First Annual Report of this programme, noting that around 20 months of activity were reported on in total. Land had been purchased as planned and, in other cases, contracts completed to bring about desired partnerships with landowners. There was extensive engagement with communities local to the relevant projects, with improvements in access to land made in a number of cases. While the primary purpose of the programme was to provide for in-house carbon offsetting, planning also focused on maximising the value of acquired land for research, teaching and enhancements to the student experience. Significant grant income had already been secured for a related research project. Approvals and grant funding were now awaited before forest planting could commence.

The following points were made in discussion:

- PRC members commended the programme and noted the importance of communications both, externally and internally, to ensure it received due recognition. It was noted that wider communications were planned for the future, when a range of concrete achievements could be showcased.
- The high degree of community engagement was welcomed.
- It was recognised that carbon offsetting, however successful, could only form one element of the strategy towards net zero.
- PRC commended the work of Yvonne Edwards (Forests and Peatlands and Rural Land Manager) in driving the programme forwards.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

11 Estates Committee Report

Paper I

PRC noted the report.

12 Investment Committee Report

Paper J

PRC noted the report.

13 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 25 March 2024, 14.30-17.00