



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

14 May 2019

Minute

Present: Peter Mathieson (Convener)
David Argyle, Leigh Chalmers, Eleri Connick, Chris Cox, Gavin Douglas, Hugh Edmiston, David Gray, Lee Hamill, Gary Jebb, Charlie Jeffery, Richard Kenway, Gavin McLachlan, Dorothy Miell, Dave Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, James Smith, Sarah Smith and Moira Whyte.

In attendance: Fiona Boyd, Rachael Robertson and Kirstie Graham.

Apologies: Wendy Loretto, Andrew Morris and Jane Norman.

1 Minute

Paper A1

Prior to the start of the meeting the Convener noted this was the final meeting for Eleri Connick, EUSA President, with thanks for all her work for the University, in particular her contribution to student community and engagement.

The Minute of the meeting held on 23 April 2019 was approved as a correct record.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

There were no outstanding matters arising and the action log was noted.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal reported the sudden and tragic death of Professor John Peterson, Professor of International Relations, with profound sympathy to John's family and friends in the academic community and beyond.

He reported on ongoing Senior Leadership Team discussions on increasing the ability to afford our plans by addressing the cost base through efficiency savings, noting that the University Executive away day in 13 June will consider this for half the day, with the second half of the day considering our response to the climate emergency; international applications were well ahead, which was a strong position but colleagues were reminded of size and shape discussions and the need to converge on agreed targets so we can accommodate and support all our students. Individual programmes may seek agreement to utilise Clearing if needed, however the Clearing project for Rest of UK and international students will be cancelled. The SIMD20 Clearing project will continue. He also reported on a recent UUK meeting and the review commissioned by the government for Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Director and Chief Executive of the Alan Turing Institute, to provide independent advice on the design of UK funding schemes for international collaboration on research and innovation, as a contingency in the event of the UK ceasing to be an associate member of European research agencies post Brexit.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4 Strategic Plan

Paper B

The Executive considered the latest update of the Strategic Plan. Members welcomed the values led approach and the articulation of our longer-term ambitions for 2030. In discussion, a number of points were raised, including a greater focus on demonstrating our ambition, especially with regard to transformative international partnerships, student community and our role in the city. Taking into account these comments, the Plan would now progress to Policy and Resources Committee and Court.

5 Transport Options Appraisal

Paper C

Following updates in June and December 2018 in relation to transport options, the Executive considered a summary and recommendations (including associated costs) from a University-wide public bus study undertaken by Peter Brett Associates. Members welcomed the report, which reviewed public bus services, campus and residential connectivity, shuttle bus provision, ticketing options and benchmarked these against other institutions.

There was discussion of the issues raised; noting the current level of subsidy provided by the University and the importance of ensuring this was used to support an equitable, cost effective and environmentally friendly offer for commuting and general, non-urgent intercampus travel. The proposed new approach would provide a significantly discounted student rate with the providers of the City-wide bike hire membership scheme and a reduction in price for students for the Lothian Buses Ridacard scheme, with alternative arrangements to be investigated for the very small number of students who currently require urgent King's Building /Central intercampus travel for academic reasons. The Executive supported the proposal, noting the difficulty of engaging with Lothian Buses and that there would be continued effort to negotiate for student friendly ticketing products, fare discounts and improved bus services.

6 Director of Finance's Report

Paper D

The Director of Finance reported on the management accounts (excluding subsidiaries) up to the end of March 2019 (period eight) and the Quarter Three forecast position and noted the Special Focus Update on the tax implications surrounding international working in the University and the help available from the Tax team in the Finance department. Congratulations were noted to the Finance team for receiving a highly commended award at the 2019 Public Finance Awards in the category of Achievement in Financial Reporting and Accountability.

7 Service Excellence Programme Update

Paper E

The Executive considered an update on the Service Excellence Programme (SEP), particularly two major elements: the Student Administration & Support Programme and the Core Systems Programme. In relation to Student Administration & Support, the SEP Board had approved a compelling vision: 'to place students and

staff at the heart of an excellent student administration and support environment, providing consistent, high quality and digitally enabled service across our university', which would benefit both students and staff and release efficiencies to reinvest in improved services. There had been a number of challenges in the implementation and the Programme Director and Sponsor had requested internal audit undertake a programme healthcheck, which had helped inform an action plan to strengthen the future work programme.

The core systems procurement and due diligence process was complete with contracts negotiated and signed with Oracle Corporation and InoApps Ltd to deliver an integrated system for finance, human resources, payroll and procurement. To support the effective design, planning and delivery of the implementation, the current plan is to roll out new processes and systems in 3 phases.

The Executive noted the amount of work and number of colleagues involved in the ambitious programme and the major milestones reached and the importance of collective responsibility for ensuring buy-in for implementation as a shared priority was emphasised.

8 Annual Strategic Risk Report

Paper F

The Executive considered the Annual Strategic Risk Management Report, summarising risks identified across the University noting that this was a new approach to the risk management process and was intended to be more bottom up and strategic in identifying key themes. It was noted that the risks were based largely on issues identified by Colleges and Professional Services as part of the Planning Round beginning November 2018, so there was latency inherent in the reporting system. For example, the current report identified risks posed by the perceived lack of a shared strategic vision, particularly with respect to size and shape, however there has since been a comprehensive review of the University's Strategic Plan. It was agreed it would be helpful to provide some context around this before it progressed to governance committees.

9 Undergraduate Access Scholarships

Paper G

The Executive considered proposed changes to the cost, financial value, eligibility criteria and operation of the University's access scholarship programme from 2020 entry, to replace the existing access scholarships with a single, consolidated and simplified access scholarship programme named the Access Edinburgh Scholarships. This was intended to align more effectively with the Widening Participation strategy, reflected the findings of a recent review and evaluation of scholarships and was intended to be fairer, with the same offer across the UK, more impactful by recognising materiality of award levels and being easier to communicate, and consequently a more effective use of resource. Members welcomed the simplified and equitable approach, recognising the need for more effective advertising of scholarships at the pre-application stage and approved the proposal.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

10 Procedures for Consultancy

Paper H

The Executive approved an update to the existing Procedures for Consultancy.

11 International Education Agents

Paper I

The Executive approved changes to our International Education Agents to introduce a contractual recruitment cap to be implemented from summer 2019.

12 Palm Oil Policy

Paper J

The Executive approved the new Palm Oil Policy.

13 University Executive Communications

Verbal

The Executive agreed there would be communication on the Strategic Plan, Transport Options, Service Excellence Programme, Undergraduate Access Scholarships and Tax Implications of Working Internationally.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 25 June 2019 at 10 am in the Raeburn Room.