



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

25 February 2020

Minute

- Present:** Peter Mathieson (Convener)
David Argyle, Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Gavin Douglas, David Gray, Lee Hamill, Gary Jebb, Richard Kenway, Wendy Loretto, Gavin McLachlan, Dorothy Miell, Theresa Merrick, Dave Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, Sarah Smith, Sandy Tudhope, Andrew Wilson and Moira Whyte.
- In attendance:** Phil Copestake, Managing Director, Ariel Rainbow, Manager, Ines Beveridge, Business Analyst (Cubane UK), Barry Neilson and Helen Taylor (for item 1), Dave Gorman and Grant Ferguson (for item 7), Simon Edgar (Director of Medical Education, NHS Lothian), Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.
- Apologies:** Hugh Edmiston, Colm Harmon, Andrew Morris and James Smith.

1 UniForum Briefing

Verbal

Prior to the formal meeting, the Executive received a presentation on the UniForum benchmarking exercise from Cubane. UniForum is a multi-university study of administration and professional services, which compares the way we deliver and resource our professional services with 18 Russell Group institutions in the UK currently participating in the programme. It was noted that this was the third year of participation, providing the opportunity for a level of trend analysis. There was discussion of the devolved control of budget responsibility; the balance between transactional and non-transactional activities and the increase in spend across both of these. It was noted there would be further more detailed sessions for senior managers across the University.

2 Minute

**Paper A1
Paper A2**

The Minute of the meeting held on 21 January 2020 and the note of the away day on 31 January 2020 were approved.

3 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A3

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

4 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal reported:

- That this was day two of fourteen planned days of industrial action by UCU and national negotiations were ongoing;
- The recent Coronavirus outbreak, noting that whilst, based on the latest advice, the risk to people in the UK is low, travel restrictions may prevent new or returning students taking up their courses and there could also be

disruption to English language tuition and assessment. There were a number of risk mitigation scenarios being developed and it was noted that in addition to incident management there also needed to be business continuity measures in place for the longer term;

- At the previous meeting, Hugh Edmiston's new role as Senior Vice-President with the Singapore Management University had been reported and a decision had now been made to replace the Director of Corporate Services role with a two year secondment opportunity and in that time commission an external review of professional services, noting the date from Cubane would be helpful to inform this. Jonathan Seckl will be designated as Senior Vice-Principal and the research portfolio will move to a new Vice-Principal to lead on research and commercialisation. Jonathan will also take on the Senior Responsible Officer role for City Deal after Hugh's departure.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5 Director of Finance's Report

Paper B

The Executive noted the operating surplus was ahead of the budgeted position at this point of the financial year, however this reflected an annual trend and such a positive variance was not expected at year end, with the Quarter One forecast projecting our operating surplus will be behind the Court approved budget by year end.

Noting the ongoing industrial action, there was a brief update on the current position in relation to the USS pension and it was noted that staff had access to pensions information through the University's pension team.

There was a summary of Russell Group financial benchmarking analysis with key insights noted, including: Edinburgh's earnings before interest, depreciation, tax and amortisation (EBITDA) as a % of total income has been reducing each year, this is a measure for internal cash generation. In discussion, members noted the need to focus on containing costs through the next planning round, driving efficiencies and investing in income creating areas in order to fund the ambitions set out in Strategy 2030.

6 Gujarat Biotechnology University Update

Paper C

The Executive considered an update on plans for a strategic partnership with the Government of Gujarat (GoG) for the University to have a key role in the development of the Gujarat Biotechnology University (GBU). It was noted that a business case for entering into a staged commitment had previously been approved. As discussions have progressed with the GoG, the direction of travel was to reduce the scope of the University's commitment and de-risk the project, in particular the University will not operate the GBU on behalf of the GoG and instead will provide academic and specialist expertise.

Members welcomed the proposed approach in addressing many of the risks previously raised and noted the intention to generate surplus while noting the importance of assuring control of the University brand. The Executive supported the

proposal and approved the next steps to finalise the project details and agree the content of a binding Memorandum of Agreement, to be brought back to the University Executive before progressing to Policy and Resources Committee and Court.

7 Responding to the Climate Emergency

- **General Update**

Paper D1

The Executive considered the update on the set of actions agreed at the summer 2019 away and subsequent paper of 29 August 2019. There was discussion on the City of Edinburgh Council carbon neutrality target of 2030, noting that further discussions were required to understand any opportunities for collaborative working in this area.

- **Position on Carbon Sequestration and Carbon Offsets**

Paper D2

The Executive considered the proposed statement of how we define our carbon net zero approach, and which approaches we propose to use and approved the position paper on carbon sequestration and carbon offsets.

- **Direction of Travel and Resources Implications of Planning**

Paper D3

The Executive considered the progress and direction of travel on a range of initiatives covering heat and energy, aviation and forests.

There was discussion of the challenge of delivering our carbon ambitions with a 'mixed economy' required, both reducing carbon costs where we can and sequestering our emissions where we can't. The University has invested significantly in our heat, power and cooling networks to utilise combined heat and power engines to generate electricity, recovering the waste to supply our heat networks. However the carbon emissions associated with on-site electricity generation now exceed that provided by the rapidly decarbonising electricity grid and the University must take a long view over the two decades to 2040 to maintain effective and resilient.

The Executive had agreed to convene a short-life working group, chaired by Sandy Tudhope, to review proposals for climate conscious travel, including a presumption against UK flights, a levy (effectively an internal tax) on flights and recycling of the levy to pay for forests/land and other carbon/travel projects. The group plans to consult during March and April and to recommend an approach in May 2020. In discussion the Executive was broadly supportive of a levy if it was linked to specific proposals to address the climate emergency. One discussion has been around purchasing or leasing land to plant trees, noting the need to work in partnership with local communities and ensure sustainable and biodiverse ecosystems and the opportunities for a philanthropic and participative approach.

The Executive noted the update and that a substantial package of proposals was expected to return for consideration in due course.

8 Service Excellence Programme (SEP) Update

Paper E

The Executive considered the update on the Service Excellence Programme (SEP) noting the additional costs associated with the delay in delivery of phase one of the People and Money Systems Programme (previously Core Systems) due to delays in completing the Process Design Documents and the lack of standardisation and devolved processes of the past. The Principal reported that Court had been informed at its meeting on 17 February and had agreed to convene a Sub-Group review the programme to date and make recommendations on approval of the additional spend.

The SEP Board had also received an update on the Student Administration & Support Programme and approved the planning round submission from Service Excellence to include the request for the full student administration and support costs, while working on the alternative option presented regarding prioritisation of funds for Student Experience. There was concern that the Student Experience Action Plan should not be used to fund core business and assurance that the key elements to be funded through Student Experience would be part of the transformative approach to student support.

9 Freedom of Expression

Paper F

The Executive considered a draft statement on freedom of expression that could be used to guide the University's decision-making.

Following the Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights on the state of free speech in UK universities, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Scotland, produced in 2019 a new 'Freedom of Expression' Guide for the sector as a whole. The draft statement aimed to distil this into a shorter document and feedback was welcomed, with comments already received that it needed to be less legalese in language and shorter with clear principles set out at the beginning.

In discussion it was noted that there was clear distinction between academic freedom and freedom of expression; students may need support to develop the skills to manage exposure to views they find challenging; the statement will not resolve the challenges of conflicting views but would provide a set of principles to support decision making.

The Executive supported development of the statement on freedom of expression, noting there would be further iterations to develop a final statement.

10 Reputational Due Diligence

Paper G

The Executive had commissioned a Task and Finish group to review current procedures and make recommendations on future processes relating to reputational due diligence on both contractual and philanthropic income to the University from all sources, to ensure robust processes that demonstrably align with our values. There was discussion on ensuring the balance between local decision making processes

and ensuring institutional due diligence where appropriate, noting reputational risk was not always proportionate to the amount of income.

The Executive welcomed and approved the replacement of the current Ethical Fundraising Advisory Group with a new Income Due Diligence Group (IDDG) and asked that there was an appropriate level of academic representation on the membership.

11 People

- **People Report** **Paper H1**

The update on people related matters was noted.

- **Pending Employment Legislation – the ‘Good Work Plan’** **Paper H2**

The Executive noted legislative changes arising from the UK Government’s ‘Good Work Plan’, a number of which will come into effect from 6 April 2020 and noted the action plan to ensure full compliance and associated short-term risk.

12 Information Services

- **Research Publications and Copyright Policy: Open Access** **Paper I1**

The Executive noted that the University had adopted LERU’s Open Science Roadmap in 2018 and one of the recommendations included the move to full Open Access. To enable staff to publish their work in a journal of their choice and still meet funder requirements for Open Access, it was proposed to update the Research Publications Policy. The Executive noted the proposed new Research Publications and Copyright Policy confirmed the current practice that members of staff own the copy to their scholarly works and in addition that each staff member grants to the University a non-exclusive, irrevocable, sub-licensable, worldwide licence.

The Executive approved the new Research Publications and Copyright Policy, subject to consultation with relevant College Research Committees and Human Resources Policy Development Group.

- **Internet Access Management – URL Filtering** **Paper I2**

The Executive noted that the Network Replacement project provided an opportunity to deploy additional information security risk management, including the introduction of URL filtering to manage internet access. In discussion, it was noted that staff and students require legitimate access to a wide range of information via the internet and the desired outcome was not to limit access to that information but to support appropriate internet access. The decision on the categories to include would require wider discussion and it was noted that there would be additional governance and stakeholder engagement before progressing this.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

13 University Sub-Committees and Standing Committees Paper J

The Executive noted the summary of the current standing and sub-committees under its auspices.

14 AI & Data Ethics Advisory Board Annual Report Paper K

The Executive noted the AI & Data Ethics Advisory Board Annual Report and the intention to draft a statement of the values and principles governing the University's development and use of AI.

15 Closure of Agreed Management Actions from Internal Audit Reviews Paper L

The Executive noted the update on closure of agreed management actions arising from Internal Audit reviews

16 Creation of New Chairs Paper M1 Paper M2

The Executive approved the creation of a Charles and Ethel Barr Chair of Cancer Research in the College of Medicine and Veterinary medicine and a Chair of Digital Manufacture in the College of Science and Engineering.

17 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 24 March 2020 at 10am in the Raeburn Room.