UHI | PERTH

Extraordinary Board of Management

Minutes

Meeting reference: Board 2025-26/E04
Date and time: Thursday 02 July 2026 at 5.00pm
Location: Online

Members present: Justine Mitchell, Chair, Board of Management
Sarah Cordwell, Board Member
Deirdre Joy, Board Member
Chris Lusk, Board Member
David Macluskey, Board Member
Ian Robotham, Board Member
Chris Whatley, Board Member
Catherine Etri, Interim Principal & Chief Executive
Corben Bruce, Student Board Member
Richard Fyfe, Staff Board Member
Patrick O'Donnell, Staff Board Member
Ronnie Dewar, Trade Union Board Member

In attendance: Jill Elder, Depute Principal
Xander McDade, Governance Growth & Change Manager
Gail Dunn, Chief Financial Officer
Sarah Reddie, Director of Finance
Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board
Vicki Nairn, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, UHI (Item 4 only)
Roger Sendall, University Secretary, UHI (Item 4 only)
John McGee, Campus Transformation Officer (Item 7 only)
Ross Keillor, Turner & Townsend (Item 7 only)
Andrew Stupart, Reiach & Hall (Item 7 only)

Apologies: Johnathan Doran, Board Member
Mary Fraser, Board Member

Chair: **Justine Mitchell**
Minute Taker: Ian McCartney
Quorum: 10

MINUTES

Item		Action
1.	**Welcome and Apologies** Chair thanked all present for their attendance	
2.	**Additions to the Agenda** Chair noted late addendum to Paper 1 (under Item 4) and the late tabling of Paper 4 (under Item 8).	
3.	**Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item** There were no Declarations of Interest noted.	
4.	**UHI Accord** Prior to UHI attendees joining the call, Chair provided a brief update to Board Members around the recent meeting of UHI Court, plus subsequent conversations with Chair of UHI Court and Principal of UHI. Chair noted that there were concerns across the Partnership that the Accord would not be legally binding, however UHI were content that the Accord should be interpreted as a statement of intent for all parties, and Boards were being invited to sign the Accord on that basis, with an opportunity to submit caveats and concerns. Chair clarified that, while there is pressure on UHI to secure SFC funding to take the Transformation process forward, the signing of the Accord was not a pre-condition for this funding. Based on these conversations and the letter from UHI contained in the addendum to Paper 1, Chair recommended to Board that the Accord be signed, with concerns and observations being provided to UHI at the same time. Chair noted that there is an expectation that models being presented to the UHI Court meeting in September would be open to challenge if required. UHI Principal & Vice-Chancellor and UHI University Secretary joined the meeting at this stage, and Board were invited to ask questions or seek clarification from UHI around Paper 1. Staff Board Member queried what steps would be taken to gain consensus around those areas that have generated criticism relating to the process. Principal & Vice-Chancellor, UHI advised that there had been a round-robin response note ahead of these meetings, hence the clarification being provided about the “statement of intent” element of the Accord; there was a danger in getting caught up in the detail at this stage, which might not help around strategic direction – detail will come later but UHI recognise that UHI Perth is an important part of taking the project forward.	

	Board Member queried where Research fits into the Transformation project. Principal & Vice-Chancellor, UHI noted that work needs to be done to see where Research best fits, including around funding, and there is a need to learn from commercial models to best place Research within a Tertiary organisation. These issues will be looked at within the new operating model, but needs to be discussed with all Academic Partners. There being no further queries for UHI representatives at this time, UHI Principal & Vice-Chancellor and UHI University Secretary left the meeting. Chair opened floor to Board Members for discussion on Paper 1 and feedback received from UHI. Board Member queried how other Academic Partners were responding to the issues presented. It was clarified that consensus appeared to be on signing the Accord, albeit with concerns being provided alongside the signed document, however the calendar is very tight to achieve this within UHI's declared timescales. Board Member noted that there was little choice other than signing but favoured restating of points that had previously been asked and not answered, and adding new points of concern. Trade Union Board Member sought clarification of the known areas of shared concern. Interim Principal advised that the main areas of shared concern focused on the curriculum, the Top-Slice, and shared services. Board Member queried whether in 5 years' time, all Academic Partners will look and operate the same way outside of shared services? Interim Principal advised that this was difficult to predict, however the difference with this process id the SFC intervention and the clear indication that, should UHI not proceed quickly with Transformation, the funding would likely go to other institutions who are moving forward, particularly given the likely changes across the whole public sector. Governance Growth & Change Manager stressed importance of taking the opportunity offered to draw a line in the sand re agreed red-line issues such as International as part of the negotiating parameters. With Chair receiving agreed consensus to sign the Accord, approval was sought around the draft response to UHI as presented in the addendum to Paper 1. This draft response was **APPROVED** by Board.	

5.	**UHI Perth Financial Forecast Return (FFR)** Director of Finance presented the FFR for approval prior to onward submission to SFC, and noted that the FFR required a reconciliation from the Budget previously approved by Board due to assumptions provided by SFC (as noted in Appendix 1 of Paper 2) Director of Finance noted that SFC guidance requires UHI Perth to show a break-even position and advised that the main assumptions for the current FFR focuses on pay awards for both academic & support staff, the repayment of cash advances, and the addition of assumed inflation figures. Staff Board Member queried whether the reduction in staff costs noted were as a result of the Curriculum Review. Depute Principal clarified that the cost savings noted in the Paper are linked to savings outlined in the Financial Recovery Plan. Curriculum Review would be discussed at the next JNC meetings on an assumption of no connected job losses. Board Member queried the reference to repayment of advances and SFC's likely approach to these. Chief Financial Officer advised that nothing concrete had been advised by SFC as yet, but there was no commitment to a repayment timetable as yet. Board **APPROVED** Paper 2.	
6.	**Strategic Plan 2027-32** Interim Principal provided an introductory presentation to the Board on the likely timetable and required engagements around the 2027-32 Strategic Plan for UHI Perth, noting the key drivers such as alignment with Scottish Government policies in connected areas such as childcare and poverty and alignment of the curriculum with employer needs. Interim Principal advised that there will be an underlying operational plan to deliver the Strategy, and identified KPIs will be meaningful and focused. The intention is for Board to sign off the final draft by March 2027, and the processed would be internally resourced through the Governance, Growth & Change team. Board Members queried what level of involvement the RSB would have in the process, or if there was full local ownership, and the level of expected input from Board. Interim Principal that RSB would be kept informed at appropriate times, however this was fundamentally a Strategic Plan for UHI Perth. Governance Growth & Change Manager noted there were some statutory obligations and required direction from SFC, however there was a relatively large	

	degree of scope for local strategic developments such as Campus Transformation. Further opportunity for Board to look at key aspirations would be provided at the planned Board Away-Day in August.	
7.	**Campus Transformation Update** Campus Transformation Officer presented an update on progress regarding the Campus Transformation project over the last 6 months, as noted in Paper 3, before advising that a Feasibility Study was being worked on ahead of presenting this to SFC at the end of July. Turner & Townsend and Reiach & Hall then presented some outline designs of how a post-Transformation campus may look, and the steps that would need to be taken to provide this. Student Board Member queried the extent students had been consulted in the process. Campus Transformation Officer advised that there was a need to involve different people at different times, and students would be brought in at each relevant stage. There was a need for "Campus Champions" and this would allow the student voice to be heard throughout the project. Board Member suggested the presentation was a vision rather than a business case, and queried the costings for the proposals. Turner & Townsend advised that the current focus was around design ideas at this stage, however there would need to be a strategic case made for each element of the project. Board Member queried achievability of 6-month timeline if there was no idea of costs as yet. Campus Transformation Officer advised there was a broad idea of costs but it was important to gain support of SFC in the first instance as there may be specific opportunities there than can be utilised, and the project was still at the planning stage. Board Member queried the value of producing the vision without appropriate consultation of students and staff, and given these would not be possible until students and staff return to campus it seemed difficult to see the timescales as deliverable. Turner & Townsend advised that timelines can be adapted to suit. Campus Transformation Officer cautioned against opening the process up before gauging whether the route of travel is acceptable to SFC. Trade Union Board Member advised that staff were very excited therefore it would be useful to have something for them to discuss and help them define what "campus transformation" will mean. Student Board Member sought clarification on the consultation timelines. Campus Transformation Officer confirmed there will be a	

	meeting with SFC at the end of July, and consultation will follow if SFC give the green light to progress the project further. Interim Principal noted that there will be regular meetings with SFC over the summer and beyond to build on the huge amount of work that has taken place to get to this position, and that the July meeting would include a campus tour as well as a presentation on the vision, following which a decision on whether to proceed is expected to be provided relatively quickly. Some from of Steering Group is likely to require to be established which would include input from students, staff and other key stakeholders. Governance Growth & Change Manager advised that it was intended to run a workshop at Staff Conference in August around Campus Transformation, with a similar session also to be organised with students. Governance Growth & Change Manager further advised that local government elections next year will also need to be factored into timelines. Board **NOTED** Paper 3, and thanks were extended to those providing presentations/updates on the matter.	
8.	**Campus Transformation Project Governance** Following on from Item 7, Interim Principal provided a brief update on likely governance arrangements around the Campus Transformation project, noting that discussions were ongoing with SFC around their expectations around level of involvement, and noting that there would require to be corresponding levels of Board scrutiny. Board Member queried how Turner & Townsend were being funded at this stage. Interim Principal advised that SFC had authorised the feasibility study. Board Member sought assurance this had been confirmed in writing. Interim Principal noted that a guarantee had been made in front of the UHI CFO, however funding levels will be based on agreements made at the meeting at the end of July. Board Member expressed a level of discomfort at this approach, particularly if no funding was agreed at the next meeting. Board Member stressed that students' views need to be take on board at the earliest possible stage. Interim Principal noted that proposals had not been received until very recently, so there was nothing to show students and staff before the end of term. The project is still aspiration at this stage, so wanted to avoid giving students and staff false hope. Board Member responded that consultation is about finding out what isn't working and what the needs of the users are, which should inform the "vision" stage which has effectively been arrived at without this input. Depute Principal advised that, while there hasn't	

	been any specific consultation on the project as yet, there have been a number of different forums and engagement opportunities that have provided opinion on these areas, and these ideas have been taken into account. Governance Growth & Change Manager added that around 70% of issues raised by Student Voice Reps are Estates-related and there have been specific survey around issues such as the Library which has informed progress to date, however there is agreement that consultation needs to happen, including with the Board. Chair thanked everyone for their thoughts on this important area, noting the split opinions around the table, and closed the discussion for the moment, pending feedback from SFC.	
9.	**Any Other Business** No other business was raised.	
10.	**Date & Time of Next Scheduled Meeting** • Tuesday 13 October 2026 at 5:00pm	

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Notes taken to help record minutes are also subject to Freedom of Information requests, and should be destroyed as soon as minutes are approved.

Status of Minutes – Open

An **open** item is one over which there would be no issues for the College in releasing the information to the public in response to a freedom of information request.

A **closed** item is one that contains information that could be withheld from release to the public because an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies.

The College may also be asked for information contained in minutes about living individuals, under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018. It is important that fact, rather than opinion, is recorded.

Do the minutes contain items which may be contentious under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018? **Yes** ❒ **No** ☑