

Joint Meeting of Strategic Development and Finance & Resources Committees

Minutes

Meeting reference: SDC/F&R 2022-23/04

Date: Monday 22 May 2023

Location: Boardroom (Braham Room 019)

Members present: Andrew Comrie, Board Member (Chair, SDC)
Katrina Hodgson, Board Member (Chair, F&R)
Jenny Hamilton, Board Member
Jenni Harrison, Board Member
Derek Waugh, Board Member
Michael Buchanan, Board Member
Todor Pavlov-Kennedy, Student Board Member
Margaret Cook, Principal
Charlea Jefts, HISA Perth Depute President Activities & Welfare

In attendance: Lorenz Cairns, Depute Principal
Veronica Lynch, Vice Principal (External)
Catherine Etri, Vice Principal (Academic) (Until Item 6.3)
Iain Wishart, Vice Principal (Operations)
Katy Lees, Head of HR & Organisational Development
Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board

Apologies: Graham Watson, Interim Chair of Board of Management
Heather Cormack, Board Member
John Dare, Staff Board Member

Chair: **Katrina Hodgson**

Minute Taker: Ian McCartney

Quorum: 7

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Minutes:

Item		Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies Chair F&R welcomed all present to the meeting, and noted apologies. Chair welcomed Jenni Harrison to the meeting and introductions were made. Principal noted that she would require to leave the meeting for a period of time as she was due to host local MPs and MSPs at 5:30pm	
2.	Additions to the Agenda There were no additions to the Agenda.	
3.	Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item There were no declarations made.	
4.	Minutes of Joint Meeting of Strategic Development Committee and Finance & Resources Committee held on 02 March 2023 The minutes were agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting.	
5.	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes All action items were either complete or tabled on the Agenda for this Joint meeting. Board Member queried progress re Item 6.4 (Estates Strategy) with particular reference to the Visioning process and Short-Life Working Group. Principal noted that a Visioning session for Board, SMT and Sector Directors had been organised for June 5 th with the SLWG to be formed thereafter.	
	Finance & Resources Committee Business	
6.1	HR Systems Procurement Head of HR & Organisational Development summarised Paper 2, noting the online process that had been undertaken to approve an initial recommendation, however advised Committees that contracts had not been signed due to issues with the supplier, and that a full open tender process. or a new Framework, would now be undertaken via APUC in September 2023.	

	<p>Chair SDC queried whether costs would change for the project. Head of HR confirmed this would be likely, however there may be another Academic Partner ready to sign up by September which may mitigate costs somewhat.</p> <p>Head of HR clarified that paper approved online had included costs, however this will now need revisited in September, and current contractual agreements will need to be reviewed due to extended timescales.</p> <p>The withdrawal of the procurement process outlined in Paper 2 was NOTED.</p>	
<p>7.1</p>	<p>Estates Update</p> <p>Depute Principal presented Paper 3, which had been prepared by the new Head of Estates, noting progression in key areas since this appointment.</p> <p>Depute Principal advised that HE Estates Maintenance budget had been cut by 77% across the Sector, which translates as £150k for UHI Perth, which will impact on some areas due to be addressed. Health & Safety will be prioritised but planned maintenance will be deprioritised, as will developmental projects such as installation of solar panels. Chair SDC urged that investment priorities continued to be looked at as financial pressures need not be completely addressed via cuts.</p> <p>Paper 3 was NOTED.</p>	
<p>8.1</p>	<p>HR Update</p> <p>Head of HR & Organisational Development presented Paper 4, noting that the Action from the previous meeting around sector comparisons was still being worked through with regards to alignment with other colleges (both days and percentages were in use).</p> <p>Board Member queried similarity of increase in short-term absence re academic staff and increase in mental health/stress-related absences. Head of HR noted that this was the first occasion where mental health had been highest reported numbers, and that this was a sectoral issue – issues raised via 2 stress surveys and stress focus groups were being reviewed to address this issue.</p> <p>Board Member sought clarification on the definition of short- vs long-term, and any trends in specific groups. Head of HR noted that the definition fell at 4 weeks, however the level of granularity re trend analysis referred to are only beginning to be looked at.</p>	

	<p>Chair F&R queried the likely impact of Action Short of a Strike declared by EIS. Vice Principal (Academic) advised that the likely impact would be around submission of marks, and discussions were ongoing around potential mitigations to address this.</p> <p>Student Board Member noted that a number of students had expressed concern around this action, particularly around anxiety over conditional offers and other progression. Student Board Member further noted that students felt as if they were being used as leverage in this situation. Head of HR advised that there would be an update on this action to the Board meeting in June. Student Board Member noted that students needed communication re alternatives or compromises if the matter is not resolved. Principal and Vice Principal (Academic) AGREED to take this matter forward.</p>	Principal/ Vice Principal (Academic)
9	<p>Committee Minutes for noting</p> <p>Committee NOTED the following minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.1 – EDIT Committee, 09 February 2023 • 9.2 – JNC (Support Staff), 02 March 2023 • 9.3 – JNC (Lecturing Staff), 02 March 2023 	
	Items for Discussion (Joint)	
10.1	<p>UHI Perth Financial Update: Year to 30 April 2023</p> <p>Vice Principal (Operations) summarised Paper 6, noting an estimated loss of circa £2.4m for the full year was now being predicted.</p> <p>Vice Principal (Operations) advised that impacts on cash were being tracked. As National Bargaining was unlikely to be settled soon, there is a risk that UHI Perth may need to seek overdraft facility from EO.</p> <p>Vice Principal (Operations) noted that College Financial Directors had met with SFC where it was confirmed that clawback would be happening this financial year, with an impact of approx. £2m.</p> <p>Chair SDC queried the picture with regards to AST. Vice Principal (External) advised this was a mixed picture with regards to finishing and new contracts. Vice Principal (Operations) noted that AST were budgeting for a loss position for 2023/24. Chair F&R advised that AST Board have requested a plan for growth as the deficit budget picture does not fit well with current College position.</p> <p>Board Member queried opportunities around Tay Cities Deal given collapse of Tayside Aviation. Vice Principal (External) advised that</p>	

	<p>there may be potential opportunity around ATC training, however pilot training is not an area that AST would currently be able to offer. Vice Principal (External) further advised that further involvement if AST beyond current proposal would require a scope change exercise within the TCD, and the administration process would be required to be completed first.</p> <p>Board Member queried whether Risk Register had been updated around the cash position. Vice Principal (Operations) noted that cash goes across the ERM document but will undertake a piece of work to collate this detail for the Board.</p> <p>Board Member sought clarification on a Risk Appetite Statement. Vice Principal (Operations) noted that Risk Appetite was reviewed several months ago and linked to Strategic Objectives. Chair SDC requested that, in the light of new Board Members joining, that the Risk Appetite be included in Board papers. This course of action was AGREED.</p>	<p>Vice Principal (Operations)</p> <p>Vice Principal (Operations)</p>
<p>10.2</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability</p> <p>Principal provide Committee with a presentation that had previously been given to Trade Unions on Friday, noting that presentation would be circulated to Board after the meeting, and that more detail would be tabled for discussion at the June meeting of the Board of Management, before opening the issue for discussion.</p> <p>Board Member queried whether alternative arrangements for ASW could be considered. Principal advised that potential options were being actively looked at with the College' lawyers.</p> <p>Chair SDC asked how SMT can be sure changes outlined will deliver savings. Vice Principal (Operations) advised that Phase 1 will deliver a specific amount and Phase 2 will fill any gaps based on specific objectives, eg cash position of the College. Chair SDC noted there were 2 sides to the equation, cuts versus loss of income, and the financial forecast provided will need to reflect this.</p> <p>Chair SDC queried how SMT had arrived at, and provided a rational for. these proposals. Principal assured Committee that everything will be modelled and the supporting logic presented.</p> <p>Chair SDC queried the proposals around Business Development, which should be generating profit for the College. Principal advised that funding had been withdrawn in several areas, affecting profitability levels.</p> <p>Student Board Member suggested that heads of departments should be invited to the Board to discuss the proposals and their impact on</p>	

the student experience. HISA Perth Depute President additionally noted that Strategic Plan references empowering staff, which requires listening to them before reaching any decision. Principal advised that this would not be appropriate as it's the role of the SMT to look at all the data and make considered proposals to the Board – heads of department's views will be taken into consideration within the Consultation process.

Principal noted that Trade Unions had informed staff within an identified area of proposals immediately after meeting on Friday, despite requesting confidentiality, which had not helped SMT in engaging in constructive dialogue.

Board Member queried implications on growth at a macro level with specific reference to the government's position squeezing of the College sector. Principal agreed that it did look like a managed decline of the sector despite continual reference to "skills". The College sector has had a tendency to be fairly compliant with government policy due to reliance on the public purse, which is not the case in the University sector.

Board Member queried why the college was not receiving a share of the staff costs savings at EO via the top-slice? Principal advised that recruitment was still ongoing at EO, and that a figure of around 1% reduction in the top-slice was under consideration to be offered to academic partners.

Board Member stated that impacts in other areas such as mental health re closing leisure, and disadvantaging women in the case of the nursery need to be considered within non-financial impacts of decision-making.

HISA Perth Depute President voiced concern over impact on student experience, and queried whether a phased approach could be considered to minimise and/or mitigate such concerns. Principal responded that college cannot continue in its current format when £3m is being removed out of the college's income.

Board Member noted that criticisms from students should be directed at government rather than College decision-makers. Chair SDC agreed and advised that communications were needed to reflect this position.

Principal noted that the next steps for the process were to present to Board on June 7th, and further noted that two meetings with Unions would have taken place by then. Principal advised that there will be an iterative process during the Consultation period, including individual consultation, so what will come to Board will not be the final

	<p>version therefore an additional Extraordinary Board meeting or an online decision-making process will be required over summer.</p> <p>Board Member returned to communications and queried how a Board Statement on the issues could be generated. Clerk suggested using Chairs' Committee as most appropriate vehicle for this purpose, particularly as 3 members of that Committee were in attendance. This solution was AGREED.</p> <p>Chair SDC queried whether top-slice was to be discussed with Chair of UHI Court. Principal agreed that this was necessary.</p>	Chairs' Committee
10.3	<p>UHI Perth Budget 2023/24</p> <p>Vice Principal (Operations) provided a top-level draft budget for information, however this was unlikely to be retained given discussions within Item 10.2 and would need to be brought back to the Board at a later date.</p>	
10.4	<p>UHI 2024 Update</p> <p>Principal provided an update on activities surrounding the various UHI 2024 workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Services – hopefully reaching tipping point re new HR system, and Admissions systems were being looked at; • Focused EO – Principal now sits on this group, and focus is on what academic partners need from AO and what they are prepared to pay for it, underpinned by Service Level Agreements; • Governance – limited progress; • Strategy – some local work to be done ahead of UHI Court receiving proposals in June; • People & Culture – focusing on Data Sharing Agreements; • Curriculum review – consultant has provided presentation re HE courses with RAG ratings/new areas to move into. Modelling is required. 	
10.5	<p>Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>Depute Principal presented Paper 10, noting areas of progress and referencing evolved targets, before highlighting that the narrative statements across all 36 objectives had been included for information.</p> <p>Depute Principal repeated offer of Lead Authors to attend subsequent meetings around presentation of the Balanced Scorecard. Chair F&R welcomed opportunity to hear from authors that would have specific</p>	

	<p>focus on timely challenges and issues, eg student recruitment. Vice Principal (Academic) added that each meeting could invite lead authors in those areas with changing baselines. Committee AGREED to this approach, and Depute Principal to implement from Cycle 1 of 2023/24.</p> <p>Board Member queried why, when student recruitment was being mentioned in relation to this area, there was no specific KPI in this area? Vice Principal (Operations) advised that this sits within the Risk Register.</p> <p>Student Board Member noted that references to SVR in Paper 10 referred only to HISA Perth, whilst the college's Quality Unit was also involved. Depute Principal agreed to review this section.</p>	<p>Depute Principal</p> <p>Depute Principal</p>
11 & 12	<p>Review of Meetings:</p> <p>It was AGREED that Terms of Reference for both Strategic Development and Finance & Resources Committees had been met.</p>	
13	<p>Dates and times of next meetings (provisional):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDC: Monday 19 September 2023 • F&R: Monday 03 October 2023 	

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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 1998? **Yes** **No**