

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25 APRIL 2024 IN ROOM RS103, REGENT STREET AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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PRESENT: M X Wang (Chair) V Foster<sup>1</sup>  
A Ajayi D Hoyle<sup>1</sup>  
J Bairamian T Sketchley  
Professor P Bonfield T Toumazis

IN ATTENDANCE: M Chan (Secretary) C Molloy  
L Cole (Minute 23.51) R Poole<sup>1</sup>  
C Hinge<sup>1</sup> J Robson (observer)  
H Jones<sup>1</sup> (Minute 23.54) I Wilmot  
E McMillan (Clerk to the Court)<sup>1</sup>

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**23.47 ANNOUNCEMENT**

- 23.47.1 The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.
- 23.47.2 The Chair welcomed Jane Robson, an independent governor, to observe the meeting.
- 23.47.3 Members noted that there were no apologies for the meeting.
- 23.47.4 Members did not declare any conflict of interest for the matters on the agenda.
- 23.47.5 Members noted that the Chief Executive Officer of the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) provided a response to the questions for the two starred items related to UWSU (Minutes 23.58 to 23.59) raised by a member before the meeting.
- 23.47.6 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss the starred agenda items (Minutes 23.58 to 23.61).

**23.48 SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE**

- 23.48.1 The University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (USCOO) briefed members on discussions at the Staying Safe: Business Continuity Group covering the business continuity plan, measles situation and precaution campaign, estates projects and the internal health and safety audit.

**23.49 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE REPORT – DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

- 23.49.1 The Director of Information Systems and Support (ISS) presented a strategic update on the digital environment and some statistics related to cyber security of the University (Document RES 240425A).
- 23.49.2 In response to a query on the IT Applications internal audit, members noted that:
- the University initiated the audit by TIAA (providers of internal audit services) to ensure thorough oversight;
  - achieving 'reasonable assurance' indicates positive outcomes with non-critical recommendations;
  - this audit result demonstrates notable improvements compared to previous assessments; and
  - the Audit and Risk Committee reviews all internal audit reports.

23.49.3 The Chair cited the recent cyber incident at the British Library and emphasised the importance of training sessions, such as a phishing simulation programme, to enhance cyber security awareness among colleagues and students.

23.49.4 Members exchanged personal experiences and ideas for phishing prevention and safeguarding against malicious software infections.

## **23.50 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE REPORT – PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

23.50.1 The Director of Estates Planning and Services (EPS) gave a verbal update on the key strategic developments in the physical environment:

- On-going work on the Student Hub and One Public Estate projects.
- Collaborating with the Director of Student and Academic Services on the student halls development as set out in the Residential Strategy.
- Advancing development of a proposal for use of International House.
- Implementing a new dashboard for project progress tracking.
- Preparing the annual report on strategic key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Follow-up actions from the Space Utilisation Report to be discussed by the University Executive Board.
- Long-term investment plan integrating infrastructure and sustainability needs, aligning with the five-year student number planning projection.
- A schedule of 69 potential investment projects over the next decade.

23.50.2 A member, who attends the Estates Advisory Group (EAG), noted that the priority, financial arrangements, and project oversights of the potential projects were clearly explained at the recent EAG meeting.

23.50.3 The USCOO and the Vice-Chancellor (VC) briefed members on capital expenditure planning:

- Expenditure aligns with projected cash levels, ensuring routine operations are sustained while allocating funds separately for special projects.
- Project prioritisation considers safety, compliance, student experience and return on investment.

23.50.4 The Chair thanked the Director (EPS) for the update and looked forward to a more comprehensive report at the next meeting.

## **23.51 UPDATE ON 29MR PROJECT**

23.51.1 Linsey Cole, Director of Business Engagement (BE), updated members on latest progress in the 29 Marylebone Road (29MR) project (Document RES 240425C).

23.51.2 The Director highlighted the positive press coverage of the Breaking the Ground ceremony, a site visit by students and guest lectures by the project team for curriculum development.

23.51.3 A member commended the new one-page dashboard template for its succinct presentation of essential project updates.

23.51.4 A member raised a concern about the use of 25% of the contingency fund early in the project, despite only 5% of the total funding being spent.

23.51.5 The Director (BE) explained that finalising several known unknowns at the contract start required draw-down from the contingency and assured members that, despite the low contingency, the Project Board is confident in the progress, given the expected budget spent for the next stage and the finalised derogation schedule and details.

23.51.6 Another member expressed concern on the intumescent paint provisional sum expenditure and suggested that members were given access to more details from the project cost report.

**23.51.6.1 ACTION Director (BE)** to share the Project Management Report from Gardiner and Theobald (GNT) with members after the meeting.

- 23.51.7 A member reminded other members that most risks are no longer the University's responsibility as the project is in stage two, and the inflation costs have already been factored into the contract sum.
- 23.51.8 In response to a member's suggestion for a broader project plan with consideration of deprioritising other projects due to the current reduced contingency level and in case of costing escalation, members heard that:
- the University has allocated sufficient funding from the cash reserve to ensure successful project completion; and
  - a review of project de-prioritisation could be conducted after the Committee receives a comprehensive capital project report from the Director (EPS) at the next meeting.
- 23.51.9 Regarding a member's question about the trigger point for increasing the contingency fund, the Director (BE) explained that risk management is closely monitored by GNT and the project team through monthly meetings and reports. Members noted that the Directors (BE) and (EPS) will promptly alert the University Executive Board of any anticipated risks.
- 23.51.10 The Chair emphasised the need for the University to consider the cost-effectiveness of the project, not only in terms of initial building expenses but also considering future operational costs.
- 23.52 PROPOSED ROADMAP AND MILESTONE KPIS ON PEOPLE, CULTURE AND WELLBEING**
- 23.52.1 The Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) presented the progress made since the report on the People Strategy in September 2023 (Document RES 240425D).
- 23.52.2 The Director highlighted the following developments:
- Response rate of the current Colleague Wellbeing and Engagement Survey has surpassed that of last year.
  - Significant improvements have been made to the Professional Development Review (PDR), which is now integrated into colleagues' daily routine.
  - The proposed milestone KPIs aim to ensure progress aligns with the target KPIs set for 2029.
- 23.52.3 A member shared the response rate of a similar engagement survey in their team in another organisation, emphasising the importance of demonstrating to colleagues that their feedback is valued and acted upon.
- 23.52.4 A member suggested that two metrics are presented for the KPIs, namely the response rate and the outcomes of the responses. The Director (PCW) acknowledged the suggestion, emphasising the importance of setting KPIs at a realistic and achievable level, while still maintaining ambition. Additionally, the Chair highlighted that the year-to-year progress helps effectively track overall KPI advancement.
- 23.52.5 In response to a member's query on the measurement of leadership through the KPIs, the Director (PCW) suggested incorporating additional measures alongside the set targets, e.g., the number of disciplinary and grievance cases, to give a fuller picture of the PCW developments.
- 23.52.6 A member pointed out a significant drop in the percentage of academic colleagues completing annual PDRs in 2023. The Director (PCW) attributed this decline to the transition from a manual self-reporting system to an online centralised PDR process recording the outcomes of quality conversations. A member proposed that future reports should display KPI results with a note explaining the background context of the 2022 and 2023 data to ensure data integrity and continuity.
- 23.52.7 Another member suggested that the senior leadership team should take the lead on PDR completion to enhance the rate. The Vice-Chancellor and the Director (PCW) elaborated on the current cascading practice in the PDR process. Another member also suggested developing a senior leader index, linking PDR completion rate with progression to drive cultural change.
- 23.52.8 Members also had some discussion on having different milestone targets for academic and Professional Service colleagues. The Director (PCW) stressed the need of setting realistic and achievable targets and reported that by anticipating gradual growth in percentage over the years,

senior leaders in Schools/Departments would be more confident to engage in quality conversations with colleagues to drive progress.

23.52.9 **APPROVED** Proposed milestone target KPIs to measure progress throughout the strategy period to be implemented with immediate effect.

### **23.53 UNIVERSITY FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

23.53.1 The USCOO briefed members on the financial performance for the first seven months of the financial year 2023/24, reporting a net surplus before exceptional items of £1.9M, exceeding the Quarter 2 budget forecast (Document RES 240425E).

23.53.2 Members had some discussion on the recent challenge of declining international student applications, which is a sector-wide issue influenced by several external factors beyond the University's control.

- The Vice-Chancellor outlined the University's risk management approach concerning student numbers and financial performance.
- The Vice-Chancellor also informed members about recent remedial measures taken to ensure international student intake numbers.
- The USCOO acknowledged the need for the University to adjust student number projections based on the current international student market.
- The USCOO reassured members that the University remains confident in achieving the planned income target for the year despite the challenge.

23.53.3 Members also discussed the level of surplus reduction and the worst-case scenario that would trigger an alert to the Committee and the Court of Governors.

23.53.4 Members noted that the University is in a healthy financial situation at present, although there are some challenges ahead.

### **23.54 MID-YEAR SUSTAINABILITY REPOPRT**

23.54.1 Holly Jones, Head of Sustainability, presented the mid-year sustainability report, highlighting the University's three main sustainability pillars: education, campus operations, and achieving net zero emissions (Document RES 240425F).

23.54.2 Responding to a member's query on the uptake of the carbon literacy training, the Head of Sustainability reported that 35 colleagues and students participated in a recent session and additional sessions are planned for June and July 2024. The Head of Sustainability also highlighted that School/Department-based sessions can more effectively reach out to the targeted participants.

23.54.3 Regarding another query on the Supplier Sustainability Charter signed in 2019, the Head of Sustainability confirmed that the Charter will be updated with the latest requirements.

23.54.3.1 **ACTION Head of Sustainability** to check with the Procurement team on the action taken when suppliers who do not comply with the Supplier Sustainability Charter.

23.54.4 Regarding the sustainable development goal (SDG) on education, the Vice-Chancellor reported that every student will graduate with an understanding of the SDGs starting from the next academic year.

23.54.5 In relation to a member's query on sustainability impact ranking, the Head of Sustainability explained that the ranking relies on the evidence provided on the University website and last year's application revealed that most of the sustainability-related information was on the internal intranet. Members noted that this is being addressed and the University will publish more information on the external-facing website.

23.54.6 The Chair thanked the Head of Sustainability for joining the meeting and sharing the University's sustainability initiatives with the Committee.

### **23.55 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

23.55.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 (Document RES 240425G) were an accurate record.

23.55.2 Members noted that there were no outstanding actions from previous meetings.

### **23.56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

23.56.1 Members did not raise any other items of business.

### **23.57 MEETING EVALUATION**

23.57.1 Members deliberated on the need for a better balance between presentations and discussions, suggesting more time for strategic-focused discussions addressing the bigger picture rather than delving into information details.

23.57.2 A member suggested simplifying the meeting papers by outlining key strategic issues and relevant key information succinctly in the cover sheet to help members to provide more meaningful scrutiny and strategic comments.

23.57.3 A member commented that when members share their external experiences it also helps to elevate the strategic thinking of the executive through insightful outside-in-discussions.

23.57.4 Another member queried how the Committee's discussions are conveyed to the Court of Governors and members noted that this could be achieved by reviewing meeting minutes and by observing a Committee meeting.

### **23.58 USWU FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022/23**

23.58.1 Members noted the UWSU financial statements 2022/23 (Document RES 240425H), which had been approved by the UWSU Trustee Board.

### **23.59 UWSU BLOCK GRANT BID AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2024/25**

23.59.1 Members noted the UWSU block grant bid and strategic plan 2024/25 (Document RES 240425I), which had been approved by the University Executive Board.

### **23.60 SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY – STATEMENT OF INTENT**

23.60.1 Members noted the updated Safety, Health and Wellbeing Policy – Statement of Intent (Document RES 240425J), which had been approved by the University Executive Board.

### **23.61 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

23.61.1 The Chair informed members that there is a possibility of a date change for the meeting on 12 November 2024 due to the University's graduation ceremony also being scheduled for that day. The Secretary will update members regarding the meeting date once it is confirmed.

23.61.2 Dates of future meetings:

Thursday 20 June 2024 at 4.00pm  
Thursday 12 September 2024 at 4:00pm  
Tuesday 12 November 2024 at 4:30pm\*  
Thursday 16 January 2025 at 4:00pm\*\*  
Thursday 13 February 2025 at 4:00pm  
Thursday 24 April 2025 at 4:00pm  
Thursday 19 June 2025 at 4:00pm

\* Late start time as preceded by attendance at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting from 4.30pm.

\*\* Provisional – only goes ahead if required to consider urgent major project proposals.

Members may participate in meetings via Microsoft Teams or onsite in Room RS103, 309 Regent Street.