

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 IN ROOM RS103, REGENT STREET AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT: M X Wang (Chair) V Foster¹
J Bairamian T Sketchley (from Minute 24.3)
Professor P Bonfield T Toumazis

IN ATTENDANCE: M Chan (Secretary) E McMillan (Clerk to the Court)
P Harding C Molloy
C Hinge R Poole¹
H Jones (Minute 24.9)

APOLOGIES: D Hoyle I Wilmot

ABSENT: A Ajayi

24.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

24.1.1 The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

24.1.2 Members noted the absence and apologies recorded above.

24.1.3 Members did not declare any conflict of interest for the matters on the agenda.

24.1.4 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss the starred agenda items (Minutes 24.13-24.15).

24.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2024/25

24.2.1 The Chair presented the draft terms of reference and the schedule of business 2024/25 (Document 240912A).

24.2.2 In relation to a member's question about reviewing financial regulations, the Clerk to the Court of Governors clarified that the Resources Committee, in accordance with its terms of reference, oversees revisions to financial regulations, while the Audit and Risk Committee addresses financial risks and receives assurance on implementation of the regulations through internal audit reviews. The Clerk to the Court added that both committees contribute to the approval of the revised regulations by the Court of Governors.

24.2.3 A member commended the draft schedule of business as clear and helpful.

24.2.4 Responding to a member's query on major capital projects, the Interim Director of Finance agreed to provide a capital programme report at each Committee meeting to cover major projects.

24.2.4.1 **ACTION** The Interim Director of Finance to provide a 'capital programme report' to the Committee in all future meetings.

24.2.4.2 **ACTION** Committee Secretary to add 'capital programme report' in the schedule of business 2024/25.

24.2.5 **AGREED** Members recommend the draft terms of reference to the Court of Governors for approval.

¹ Attended via Microsoft Teams

24.2.6 **APPROVED** Members confirmed that the schedule of business 2024/25, including the capital programme report, delivers the responsibilities outlined in the terms of reference.

24.3 SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

24.3.1 The Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) updated members on discussions at the Staying Safe: Business Continuity Group, noting key internal audit outcomes and the auditors' commendation of the health and safety culture, the absence of significant accidents, planned improvements to fire evacuation routes and the roll-out of the senior leadership health and safety briefing.

24.4 ANNUAL STRATEGIC KPI MONITORING REPORT 2023/24 (EXTRACT)

24.4.1 The Director (PCW), the Interim Director of Finance, the Director of Information Systems and Support (ISS) and the Director of Estates Planning and Services (EPS) presented the relevant enabler extract of the annual strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPI) monitoring report 2023/24 (Document RES 240912B).

24.4.2 The Interim Director of Finance reported that while the surplus in the KPI report was slightly below target as of May 2024, the year-end financial report indicates it exceeded the target.

24.4.3 In response to a member's query on digital priorities and technical debt, the Director (ISS) highlighted the challenges of balancing long-term planning with emerging demands, emphasising the need for a secure and up-to-date IT infrastructure capable of supporting future growth.

24.4.4 In response to a member's query on space utilisation, the Director (EPS) informed members of the sector benchmark and noted that the University is at the lower end. Members heard the challenges and initiatives for optimising space usage.

24.4.5 Given the limitations of the survey in accurately reflecting the actual space usage, a member suggested reconsidering the relevance of the KPI.

24.4.6 The Director (EPS) presented the recommended target for Physical Environment KPI 5 (Document RES 240912Bb), highlighting the positive results from the two questions in the recent National Student Survey, which have set a high standard for the KPI 5 target.

24.4.7 A member questioned whether students might misinterpret 'environment' in the survey question. The Director (EPS) confirmed that it is placed under the "Built Environment" section, making its context clear to students.

24.4.8 **AGREED** Members recommend the proposed target of the Physical Environment KPI 5 to the Court for approval.

24.5 STRATEGIC UPDATE – PEOPLE STRATEGY

24.5.1 The Director (PCW) reported positive KPI progress and updated members on key activities, including the work of various focus groups, the setup of a Programme Board to oversee initiatives proposed by the focus groups, over 50% engagement in the Performance Development Review (PDR) process, the launch of the Professional Development Academy and the collaboration on strategic workforce planning.

24.5.2 In response to a query on KPI target setting and line manager performance, the Director (PCW) and the Vice-Chancellor explained that University Executive Board (UEB) members set performance objectives aligned with the University's strategic priorities and objectives, cascaded to line managers and colleagues, with performance assessed through surveys and feedback and recorded in PDR records as a transparent and auditable process.

24.5.3 On another member's query about integrating student and colleague experiences, the Director (PCW) and the Vice-Chancellor detailed how PDRs and student feedback contribute to improving teaching quality.

- 24.5.4 The Director (PCW) stressed that PDR is part of the ‘focus on the fewest things that matter’, aimed at reducing workload, streamlining processes and improving efficiency.
- 24.5.5 Members discussed the presentation of KPI progress, suggesting a focus on annual progression, trend data or descriptive indicators alongside numerical values.
- 24.6 STRATEGIC UPDATE – ESTATE STRATEGY**
- 24.6.1 The Director (EPS) updated members on the physical environment, focusing on areas not covered in the annual KPI monitoring report 2023/24 (Document RES 240912C).
- 24.6.2 A member queried the financial implications of closing the Marylebone Student Halls of Residence from June 2025. The Vice-Chancellor assured members that the team will conduct a thorough financial assessment and exploration of investment options for the building.
- 24.6.3 For the 29 Marylebone Road (MR) project, members noted that a further discussion will take place at the November meeting when there would be more clarity on costs. A member shared insights from a recent project meeting, highlighting an early alert from contractors about the costing, alternative options and associated liabilities.
- 24.6.4 The Clerk to the Court reminded the Committee that any project funding exceeding the approved budget of [REDACTED] must receive prior approval from the Resources Committee and the Court.
- 24.6.5 **AGREED** Members delegated authorisation to the Committee Chair to decide whether to recommend to the Court any revised budget requests for the 29MR project if a decision is needed before the November Committee meeting. The Committee Chair is required to consider Committee members feedback prior to deciding.
- 24.6.6 Members discussed the impact of any additional budget request for the project, with the Chair emphasising accountability and the culture of ownership.
- 24.7 STRATEGIC UPDATE – DIGITAL STRATEGY**
- 24.7.1 The Director (ISS) presented the strategic update on the digital environment, focusing on areas not covered in the annual KPI monitoring report 2023/24 (Document RES 240912D).
- 24.8 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT – JULY 2024**
- 24.8.1 The Interim Director of Finance presented the management accounts report – July 2024, which was reviewed by UEB on 10 September 2024 (Document RES 240912E).
- 24.8.2 The Interim Director of Finance reported strong year-end financial performance, which is pending external audit finalisation. Members heard that this performance provides the University with flexibility to navigate the anticipated challenges in 2024/25.
- 24.8.3 A member raised concerns about budget forecasting and spending, particularly considering inflation. The Interim Director of Finance emphasised balancing prudent budgeting with sufficient resources, noting that the major variance in 2023/24 was due to pension liabilities.
- 24.8.4 The Interim Director of Finance agreed to a member’s suggestion to include trend data in future to provide an overview over time.
- 24.8.4.1 ACTION** The Interim Director of Finance to enhance future management accounts reports by including trend data.
- 24.8.5 In response to a member’s query on loan covenants, the Interim Director of Finance explained that it is primarily negotiated with lenders based on standard terms, including debt-to-income, service cost to cash generated and surplus levels.
- 24.8.6 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the University’s financial resilience amid the student recruitment challenges in 2024/25 and emphasised maintaining the accelerated cost at base levels while enhancing performance and colleague wellbeing.

24.9 ANNUAL UPDATE ON SUSTAINABILITY

24.9.1 The Chair welcomed Holly Jones, Head of Sustainability, to the meeting.

24.9.2 The Head of Sustainability presented the annual sustainability update (Document RES 240912F), highlighting:

- Further updates to be made on the draft reports on impact and case studies, following the first Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) Coordinating Group meeting.
- Ongoing data collection for the Environmental Report.
- SDG Impact Ranking 2023/24 results and institutional submission for the 2024/25 exercise.
- Continued efforts to enhance utilities performance.
- Colleague movement in the sustainability office and the student sustainability team.

24.9.3 Members praised the report's thoroughness and discussed improving its impact, making the following suggestions:

- Explore better presentation methods for enhanced readability.
- Emphasise the recognition of the University of Westminster Students' Union, noting there are two student members on the SDG Coordinating Group.
- Consider applying for external awards.

24.9.4 The Head of Sustainability reported that the University applied for three awards last year and will apply again this year.

24.9.5 In response to a member's query on balancing embodied carbon with building efficiency, the Head of Sustainability recommended refurbishment over rebuilding. The Director (EPS) highlighted the complexity of the issue, citing the 29MR project's focus on recycle building and the Student Hub project's planning application on the demolition option.

24.9.6 The Head of Sustainability reported progress on refreshing the Supplier Sustainability Charter and the plan for a pilot monitoring scheme.

24.9.6.1 ACTION The Head of Sustainability to follow up on the refreshed Supplier Sustainability Charter and the monitoring pilot scheme, and report the progress to the Committee in the mid-year sustainability report at the April meeting.

24.9.7 Members commended the Head of Sustainability for her exceptional work over the past academic year.

24.10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

24.10.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2024 (Document RES 240912G) were an accurate record.

24.10.2 Members noted the summary of progress against actions and any matters arising from previous meetings (Document RES 240912H).

24.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24.11.1 The Director (PCW) reported the completion of this year's pay claim negotiations, with instruction from UCEA (Universities and Colleges Employers Association) to the University on the new payroll implementation and UCU (University and College Union) consulting its members on the offer at present.

24.12 MEETING EVALUATION

24.12.1 A member requested more alerts on potential financial changes, such as the financial impact of the recent student recruitment challenges on the University and departments. The Vice-Chancellor assured members that the University is well-positioned to address these challenges.

24.12.2 A member praised the Chair's inclusive approach in fostering collaborative discussion within the Committee.

24.12.3 The Chair expressed gratitude to the Director (EPS) for his dedication and contributions to both the Committee and the University over the past years, as this marked his final Committee meeting.

24.13 29 MARYLEBONE ROAD PROJECT UPDATE

24.13.1 Members noted the update of the 29 Marylebone Road project (Document RES 240912I).

24.14 STUDENT HUB AND REGENT STREET PROJECT UPDATE

24.14.1 Members noted the update of the Student Hub project and Regent Street rooftop and façade refurbishment (Document RES 240912J).

24.15 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 13 November 2024 at 10.30am²

Thursday 16 January 2025 at 4:00pm³

Thursday 13 February 2025 at 4:00pm

Thursday 24 April 2025 at 4:00pm

Thursday 19 June 2025 at 4:00pm

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

² The meeting is from 10.30am to 1.30pm. The Committee joins the Audit and Risk Committee from 10.30am to 11.30am.

³ Provisional – only goes ahead if required to consider urgent major project proposals.