

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 IN ROOM RS103, REGENT STREET AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	M X Wang (Chair) Dr P Bonfield V Foster ¹	D Hoyle ¹ T Sketchley ¹ P Wales
IN ATTENDANCE:	O Adetona M Chan (Secretary) L Cole (Minutes 23.3.9 to 23.3.14) A Foderaro	E McMillan (Clerk to the Court) ¹ C Molloy R Poole ¹ I Wilmot ² (Deputy Company Secretary)
APOLOGIES:	J Bairamian J Cappock (Company Secretary)	C Hinge

23.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 23.1.1 The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.
- 23.1.2 The Chair welcomed Alessandra Foderaro, Deputy Director of Capital Development, who was attending on behalf of Chris Hinge, Director of Estates Planning and Services.
- 23.1.3 Members noted apologies for the meeting as recorded above.
- 23.1.4 Members did not declare any conflict of interest for the matters on the agenda.
- 23.1.5 Members did not request to discuss starred items or items of business not on the agenda.
- 23.1.6 The Chair highlighted that there would be an informal evaluation at the end of the meeting, which is a new standing item as part of the implementation of the governance effectiveness review.

23.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

- 23.2.1 The Committee Secretary presented the terms of reference and schedule of business for 2023/24 (Document RES 230914A), summarising the changes in the terms of reference and membership, and the new items for the schedule of business for 2023/24.
- 23.2.2 **AGREED** The Committee will receive a twice-yearly sustainability report to better monitor the progress of the sustainability initiatives, which are mostly due for 2025.
- 23.2.2.1 **ACTION Committee Secretary** to add a mid-year sustainability report in the schedule of business for 2023/24.
- 23.2.3 **AGREED** Members recommend the proposed changes to the terms of reference to the Court for approval.
- 23.2.4 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the schedule of business for 2023/24 delivers the responsibilities outlined in the terms of reference.

¹ Attended via Microsoft Teams

² Ian Wilmot attended as Director of Finance and Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (USCOO)

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23.3 STRATEGIC UPDATES

Annual Strategic KPI Monitoring Report 2022/23 (Extract)

23.3.1 The Clerk to the Court of Governors and Head of University Governance introduced the new KPI monitoring report (Document RES 230914B).

23.3.2 Members noted that the report is an extract of the full report, covering the relevant enablers that under the remit of the Committee.

Periodic Strategic Updates – People Strategy

23.3.3 Caragh Molloy - Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) gave an update on the People Strategy (Document RES 230914C), which set out operational actions and highlighted availability of the right resources to better engage colleagues.

23.3.4 Members commended the plan, which they considered to be constructive, re-focusing on the main issues and with appropriate headlines.

23.3.5 In response to members' queries, the Director of PCW explained that:

- (a) the newly introduced Professional Development Review (PDR) is an online platform that sets out a framework for meaningful conversation between line managers and colleagues with auditable data to inform development needs and colleague support;
- (b) she would welcome any discussion with members offline to further refine/develop additional KPIs to monitor the Strategy; and
- (c) several activities are in the pipeline to address the expectation gaps between academic and professional colleagues as reflected in the survey results.

Periodic Strategic Updates – Estates Strategy

23.3.6 The Deputy Director of Capital Development gave an oral update on the Estates Strategy, including projects on Harrow Sports Hall, Copland Levels 2 and 7 and the Graduate School – Regent UG02. The Deputy Director noted that the project achievements were built on a lot of small and miscellaneous items dealt with by the project teams daily.

23.3.7 Members commended the impressive work of the project team. The Vice-Chancellor reported that the project team had made great achievements within a very short period of time to support teaching and learning in the University, including providing over 100 rooms to support authentic and personalised learning.

23.3.8 A member explored the possibility of having a tour of the new sports hall at the Court of Governors Away Day the following week.

23.3.9 Members noted that the project team, which comprises five people, is taking care of major projects (excluding 29MR) with a value of around £26m and there are two vacant positions in the team at present.

Update on 29MR Project

23.3.10 Linsey Cole, Director of Business Engagement, updated members that there will be a delay to the project as more time is needed for the project costing. The Director reported that the enabling work will be held up until next month, whilst colleagues and advisers work to bring the cost closer to the estimated budget.

23.3.11 The Director assured members that the delay would not affect the funding from the Office of Students, which has to be committed by 2025.

23.3.12 The Director informed members that a proposal will be submitted to the Committee at the November meeting for approval of the final costing.

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- 23.3.13 Members expressed disappointment about the delay but agreed that the University should not lose sight of the goal to deliver the project at a reasonable cost with high quality.
- 23.3.14 In response to a member's query on the possible rising cost due to the delay, the Director explained that a further four to eight weeks is expected for working out the costing with the cost manager.
- 23.3.15 Another member suggested more competition may be needed in the process of sub-contractor selection to manage the cost and noted that a more detailed analysis by the project team will be needed.
- 23.3.16 In general, members agreed that the University would have to responsibly investigate the costing again with more open competition for the selection of sub-contractors. Members noted that flexibility on cost management would be needed to mitigate the rising living cost to achieve the expected deliverables.
- 23.3.17 The Director shared with the Committee the achievement of three awards at this year's National Enterprise Educator Awards, out of a total of six awards offered for all UK institutions.

23.4 DIGITAL STRATEGY

- 23.4.1 The Director of Information Systems and Support (ISS) presented the refreshed Digital Strategy (Document RES 230914D).
- 23.4.2 Members heard that the refreshed Strategy is closer aligned to Being Westminster 2022-2029 and the authentic and personalised learning approach set out in the Education Strategy and that workshops and discussions with the University Executive Board (UEB) and other colleagues were held during the finalisation stage of the Strategy.
- 23.4.3 The Director of ISS thanked the specialist technical colleagues for their support in formulating the Strategy.
- 23.4.4 The Director of ISS clarified that the term 'data democracy' in the document refers to the ready availability of data to support users to carry out their work and emphasises data fluency, avoiding data silos within the University.
- 23.4.5 In response to a query about on-campus Wi-Fi connection, the Director of ISS assured members that there would be a balance between user experience and network security.
- 23.4.6 **AGREED** Members recommend the refreshed Digital Strategy to the Court for approval.

23.5 INTERNATIONAL HOUSE (withdrawn)

- 23.5.1 The Chair informed members that the item had been withdrawn after publication of the agenda and paper (Document RES 230914E).
- 23.5.2 The Acting USCOO briefed members on the history of the property and confirmed that, in view of the increasing demand for student accommodation in London, the property usage would be further reviewed, taking account of feedback from other colleagues, e.g., the student recruitment team, before finalising a proposal for consideration by UEB and the Committee.
- 23.5.3 A member suggested extending the length of the lease of the property to add value. Another member, with experience in negotiating lease length with the landlord of International House, volunteered to support colleagues in the negotiation process.

23.6 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – JUNE 2023

- 23.6.1 Oyin Adetona, Deputy Director of Finance, updated members on the latest financial performance in period 12 (July 2023), noting that the reported income and expenditure performance is unaudited.

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- 23.6.2 The Deputy Director reported a surplus of £20.8m for the year 2022/23 after the exceptional items and stated that both income and staff costs are ahead of forecast. The Deputy Director explained that higher income is due to strong student recruitment, while the net staffing cost has already absorbed the year-end pension provision and voluntary release scheme payments.
- 23.6.3 The Deputy Director confirmed that the pension item is in a surplus position this year and the balance sheet remains strong.
- 23.6.4 In response to a member's query, the Deputy Director clarified that the comment on a colleague recruitment issue in the School of Life Sciences mainly refers to teaching vacancies for delivering short courses and most of the vacancies have been filled.
- 23.6.5 In relation to another query on staffing FTE and actual costs, the Deputy Director explained that the disparity was due to the recruitment of Part-time Visiting Lecturers to fill vacant posts.
- 23.6.6 Members noted that the University maintains a regular dialogue with the banks on the interest rates for the University's borrowing.
- 23.6.7 The Vice-Chancellor commented that many institutions in the sector are having financial difficulties due to various reasons, e.g., trading issues, research funding, international student recruitment. Members noted that the University is broadening its international student recruitment to minimise political and economic impacts.

23.7 BANKING TENDER OUTCOMES

- 23.7.1 The Director of Finance presented the proposal to change the University's main clearing bank to Lloyds (Document RES 230914G), as a result of an open tender exercise and given the better package offered by Lloyds as compared with other competitors.
- 23.7.2 **AGREED** Members recommend the proposal to change the University main clearing bank to the Court for approval.

23.8 SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

- 23.8.1 The Acting USCOO gave a verbal update on safety, health and wellbeing matters.
- 23.8.2 The Acting USCOO assured members that student safety is well monitored through the on-campus work in progress.
- 23.8.3 Members heard that a project group may be set up to look into the contingency for a possible energy restriction in the winter.
- 23.8.4 The Acting USCOO assured members that no reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was reported in a survey conducted in 2019 for all University campuses and the University is completing another cycle of survey, in which no RAAC issue has been identified.
- 23.8.5 Members noted that the UCU marking and assessment boycott has been cancelled, and assessment marking has resumed. The Acting USCOO informed members that a five-day national strike will be held in the week starting on 25 September 2023, which is also the first teaching week for the University, and assured members that the University is developing plans to handle the industrial action.
- 23.8.6 A member raised a concern on the impact of the new COVID variance on campus. The USCOO confirmed that the University will monitor the development of the virus and the flu vaccine will be arranged for incoming new students.

23.9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 23.9.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 (Document RES 230914H) were an accurate record.

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23.9.2 Members noted the written response from Andy Norris, Head of Culture and Inclusion confirming that no direct correlation could be drawn between periods of industrial action and the response rate for the wellbeing survey.

23.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.10.1 Members did not raise any other items of business.

23.11 MEETING EVALUATION

23.11.1 Members made the following suggestions for the meeting:

- (a) A five-minute refresher training on Decision Time to encourage members to better use the platform to prepare for meetings.
- (b) Committee Secretary to inform independent (non-governor) members of the progress or outcomes of the items discussed at the meetings, in particular for those to be approved by the Court.
- (c) More readable and user-friendly online format of documents, especially those with charts or Excel spreadsheets.

23.11.1.1 **ACTION** Clerk to the Court of Governors and Committee Secretary to consider the suggestions.

23.12 UNIVERSITY'S INSURANCE TENDER

23.12.1 **APPROVED** Members retrospectively confirmed the outcomes of the insurance tender process.

23.13 ANNUAL UPDATE ON SUSTAINABILITY

23.13.1 Members noted the annual update on sustainability.

23.14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 5.30pm (preceded by attendance at Audit Committee from 4.30pm)
Thursday 18 January 2024 at 4.00pm (provisional - for urgent approval of major projects only)
Thursday 15 February 2024 at 4.00pm
Thursday 25 April 2024 at 4.00pm
Thursday 20 June 2024 at 4.00pm

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