UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2024 IN ROOM RS103, REGENT STREET AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	M X Wang (Chair)	V Foster[1]
	A Ajayi	D Hoyle[1]
	J Bairamian[1]	T Toumazis
	Professor P Bonfield	

IN ATTENDANCE:	O Adetona	C Molloy
	M Chan (Secretary)	A Norris (Minute 23.33)
	L Cole (Minute 23.32)	R Poole[1]
	C Hinge	I Wilmot
	E McMillan (Clerk to the Court)[1]	

APOLOGIES:	T Sketchley

23.27   ANNOUNCEMENTS

23.27.1   The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

23.27.2   The Chair welcomed Ayo Ajayi to his first meeting of the Committee as a member and Tom Toumazis to his first in-person meeting of the Committee.

23.27.3   The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Ian Wilmot for his new appointment as the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (USCOO).

23.27.4   Members noted apologies for the meeting as recorded above.

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

23.27.6   Members did not request to discuss starred items or items of business not on the agenda.

23.27.7   **Chair's report:** The Chair summarised the Committee's accomplishments and membership changes in 2023 and noted that she looked forward to further productive discussions in 2024 to fulfil the Committee's objectives.

23.28   SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

23.28.1   The USCOO briefed members on discussions at the Staying Safe: Business Continuity Group covering the current measles outbreak in the UK, the Martyn's Law Working Group and the unrest in the Middle East.

23.29   STRATEGIC UPDATES – DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

23.29.1   The Director of Information Systems and Support (ISS) presented a strategic update on the digital environment (Document RES 240215A).

23.29.2   In response to a query on colleague recruitment challenges, the Director (ISS) explained that it is specialism specific, and the University adopts a holistic approach to attract applicants.

23.29.3   In relation to a query on generative artificial intelligence (AI) projects, the Director (ISS) mentioned that these are focused on the Professional Services (PS) areas and assessments will be carried out with the PS Directors shortly.

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[1] Attended via Microsoft Teams

23.30   **STRATEGIC UPDATES – PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

23.30.1   The Director of Estates Planning and Services (EPS) updated members on strategic developments in the physical environment:

- Sustainability development plan
- Public consultation on project ideas for the building in New Cavendish Street
- One Public Estate project – Harrow campus developments
- Marylebone halls of residence upgrade
- New plan for International House
- Capital development work five-year forecast preparation
- Regent Street roof and façade project and inspection work
- Action plan to improve space utilisation

23.30.2   The Director (EPS) assured members that all capital work and investments prioritise safety, compliance, sustainability and enriching student experience.

23.31   **UPDATE ON 29MR PROJECT**

23.31.1   Linsey Cole, Director of Business Engagement (BE), updated members on the 29 Marylebone Road (29MR) project's latest cost estimates (Document RES 240215C), highlighting the main contract sum, provisional sum allowance and design efficiencies, aiming for cost optimisation while maintaining quality standards.

23.31.2   Members heard that work has started on-site and is progressing well and that students were given opportunities to participate in the project through shadowing work.

23.31.3   In relation to a member's query, both the Director (BE) and Director (EPS) confirmed that there is a penalty clause in the contract for any delays in project completion.

23.31.4   Responding to a member's query on the costs, the Director (BE) and Director (EPS):

- Clarified the latest cost estimates for design efficiency, emphasising recent savings.
- Reported that although the project contingency sum is relatively low, risk management will include oversight by an architect and daily quality monitoring by the on-site Clerk of Work, with all contingency spending subject to University approval.
- Noted that the Financial Regulations allow the project team to manage the budget details during operation, provided they stay within the overall approved budget.

23.31.5   Following a discussion on the contingency sum and risk management, a member suggested mitigating the cost to reduce the contingency need.

23.31.6   The Vice-Chancellor (VC) emphasised the importance of both timing and quality of the project, highlighting the need to foster a collaborative team culture among stakeholders to ensure good progress.

23.31.7   In response to a member's query, the Director (EPS) confirmed that the risk on the façade condition will be known in summer 2024.

23.31.8   The Director (EPS) updated the Committee on the on-going positive dialogue with the contractor of the neighbouring site regarding a shared boundary between the two sites.

23.32   **STRATEGIC UPDATES: PEOPLE, CULTURE AND WELLBEING**

23.32.1   The Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) gave an oral report on progress of the key priorities that set out in the Committee meeting on 14 September 2023:

- Colleagues are advancing actions to implement the refreshed People Strategy and the workstream charter.
- The Director (PCW) has finalised the PCW organisational structure with added resources for the Organisational Development and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) teams.

- Good progress has been made to deliver performance development reviews and system enhancements have improved data mining and the user experience. There will be a pilot AI project to assist colleagues in setting smart objectives.
- A roadmap and progress against the strategic key performance indicators will be reported at the next meeting.

23.33   EDI ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23: DATA MONITORING AND BENCHMARKING EXTRACT

23.33.1   Andy Norris, Head of Culture and Inclusion (CI), briefed members on the data section of the EDI Report 2022/23 (Document RES 240215D).

23.33.2   Regarding a member's query on the religion and belief disclosure, the Head (CI) clarified that it is a statutory obligation for the University to report such data. The VC underscored diversity and inclusion as core values guiding our work, exemplified by colleague networks like the Faith Spirituality and Belief Colleague Network, student societies and Westminster Café events.

23.33.3   In response to a member's question on benchmark selection, the Head (CI) acknowledged the benefits of using diverse datasets beyond sector averages, such as student characteristics, and confirmed that colleagues will explore the feasibility for future reports.

23.33.4   To foster inclusion, a member suggested adding 'intersex' as an option for gender in the future data collection and reporting.

23.33.5   The Chair thanked the Head (CI) for his contribution to the Committee in the past years and extended best wishes for success in his new role in another organisation.

23.34   UNIVERSITY FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

23.34.1   Oyin Adetona, Deputy Director of Finance, updated members on the latest financial performance to December 2023 (Document RES 240215E), including capital project expenditure, the balance sheet and the debtor position.

23.34.2   The Deputy Director reported that, overall, the net surplus surpassed the Quarter 1 (Q1) forecast due to the lower-than-expected dropout rate and savings from colleague vacancies.

23.34.3   The Deputy Director gave an oral report on the initial Q2 performance figures, reporting an expected surplus of **[REDACTED]**, which would exceed budgetary projections by **[REDACTED]**. Members noted that this is partly due to the adjustments made for the January intake and pension liabilities as well as benefiting from favourable interest rates.

23.34.4   The Deputy Director stressed the importance of prudent cost control and highlighted the impact on income resulting from changes in student recruitment patterns.

23.34.5   In response to a member's query on student recruitment, the Deputy Director noted a decline in international student applications across the sector due to the new Government policy on dependents. Members noted that the University's recruitment performance for international students outperforms other institutions.

23.34.6   The VC outlined the University's approach to mitigating risks in student recruitment, especially regarding the sector-wide decline in international applications. Referring to the latest Universities and Colleges Admissions Service data for 2024/25 admissions, the VC reported a promising 9% increase in local undergraduate admissions, attributing it to the University's academic excellence as demonstrated by the recent Silver award in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

23.35   CAPITAL PROJECTS

23.35.1   The Director (EPS) briefed members on the progress of the capital project proposals approved in June 2023 (Document RES 240215F).

23.35.2   Members noted that the University requires Committee approval before any formal binding contract commitments are made.

23.35.3   Members noted a disparity between the approved budgets and the proposed revised budgets. The Director (EPS) stressed the importance of enhancing future project estimates by conducting more thorough scope assessments at the initial approval stage.

23.35.4   In response to a member's query on utilisation rates, the Director (EPS) informed members that the Timetabling Working Group is investigating the root cause of the issue.

23.35.5   The VC reassured members that the University has enough space to support and enhance the learning and teaching experience of students.

23.35.6   **APPROVED** Members confirmed the business cases and revised total budgets for the following projects:

- Refurbishment of Life Sciences offices on Level 3 of the Copland Building - **[REDACTED]**
- Game Hub and ERM expansion at Harrow - **[REDACTED]**
- Phase 1: Little Titchfield Street Basement and Café Space refurbishment - **[REDACTED]**
- Refurbishment of Level 5 of the Copland Building for the School of Computer Science and Engineering - **[REDACTED]**

23.36   MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

23.36.1   **AGREED** Members confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 (Document RES 240215G) were an accurate record.

23.36.2   Members noted that there were no outstanding actions from previous meetings (Document RES 240215H).

23.37   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.37.1   Members did not raise any other items of business.

23.38   MEETING EVALUATION

23.38.1   A member suggested a tour of the Harrow campus as part of the induction programme for new governors.

23.38.2   The VC extended gratitude to members for their valuable contributions to the discussions, like the 29MR project, which significantly support the work of the University executive.

23.39   RATIFICATION OF CHAIR'S ACTION

23.39.1   **APPROVED** Members ratified a decision taken by the Chair between meetings to approve the IT server investment upgrade business case and proceed to contract (Document RES 240215I).

23.40   UNDERGRADUATE, POSTGRADUATE AND OTHER FEE PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26

23.40.1   **APPROVED** Undergraduate, postgraduate and other fee proposals for academic year 2025/26 (Document RES 240215J) to be implemented as presented.

23.41   STUDENT ACCOMMODATION FEES FOR 2024/25

23.41.1   Members noted the student accommodation fee proposal for 2024/25 (Document RES 240215K), which had been approved by the University Executive Board (UEB).

23.42   TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

23.42.1   Members noted the treasury management mid-year review report (Document RES 240215L).

23.43   ANNUAL REPORT ON SPACE UTILISATION SURVEY

23.43.1   Members noted the annual report on the outcomes of the space utilisation survey (Document RES 240215M).

23.44   INTERNAL AUDIT LIMITED ASSURANCE REPORT – ESTATES: PLANNED AND PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

23.44.1   Members noted the internal audit limited assurance report – estates: planned and preventative maintenance (Document RES 240215N), which had been discussed by UEB and the Audit and Risk Committee.

23.45   EXTRACT FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

23.45.1   Members noted the record of discussion of the annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2023 at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 14 November 2023 (Document RES 240215O).

23.46   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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.