UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2025 IN ROOM MG321, MARYLEBONE CAMPUS AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	T James (Chair) J Ball (up to Minute 24.65) A Bertone Professor P Bonfield	N Gururani[1] (Up to Minute 24.64) T Sketchley (Up to Minute 24.64) T Toumazis[1] (Up to Minute 24.64)
IN ATTENDANCE:	M Chan (Secretary) T Delaitre K Kinsella E McMillan (Clerk to the Court)	C Molloy N Nelson (for Minute 24.65) D Stubbs I Wilmot

24.59 ANNOUNCEMENTS

24.59.1 The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

24.59.2 Members noted the attendance of Thierry Delaitre - Head of IT Developments, representing the Director of Information Systems and Support (ISS).

24.59.3 Members noted there were no apologies for the meeting.

24.59.4 Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.

24.59.5 The Chair acknowledged requests for discussion on the following starred agenda items:

- Item 16: Sports hall impact and post-occupancy report (Minute 24.73)
- Item 18: University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) block grant bid and strategic plan 2025/26 (Minute 24.75).

24.60 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

24.60.1 Caragh Molloy - Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW), reported that the Colleague Wellbeing survey would not be run for the current year due to a transition to a new survey platform.

24.60.2 The Director (PCW) shared preliminary workforce data covering gender, professorial and ethnic diversity, pay gaps, and sickness and absence, highlighting its alignment with the University's priorities of equality, inclusion and wellbeing.

24.60.3 The Director (PCW) also outlined some recent initiatives contributing to these outcomes, such as prioritising internal recruitment, participating in the Women in Higher Education Network programme to support Black women academics' career progression and expanding the membership of the Professors and Readers Awarding Committee.

24.60.4 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted that recent changes to the academic colleague profile have enhanced teaching capacity while maintaining overall staffing costs, which in turn helps to reduce workload and support colleague wellbeing.

24.60.5 The Chair invited members to share comments and questions for the Director (PCW) to respond to after the meeting. Members made the following queries:

- Actions behind the reported outcomes of gender equality, their measurable impact and long-term sustainability.

[1] Attended via Teams.

- The importance of effective benchmarking, including exploring alternatives where data is unavailable (e.g., external reward specialists) and ensuring comparisons with other London universities.
- Future reporting to be clearly aligned with the People Strategy.
- Potential impact of changes to the academic colleague profile on teaching quality.

24.60.5.1 **ACTION Director (PCW)** to provide a response to the above queries after the meeting.

24.60.6 A member queried the causes of sickness absence apart from mental health, to which the Director (PCW) responded that the top three were colds/flu/Covid, mental wellbeing and recovery from surgical procedures.

24.61 ESTATES STRATEGIC UPDATE

24.61.1 Ken Kinsella - Director of Estates Planning and Services (EPS) updated members on the progress of the Estates Strategy and major capital projects (Document RES 25619A).

24.61.2 A member asked about the status of Zone29 and the Director (EPS) confirmed that it is behind schedule, which will increase costs.

24.61.3 A member who has worked closely with the Zone29 team noted that the delay and the potential cost increase were due to an unforeseen power issue that the University was unable to identify during the planning stage. Other than the cost of the delay referred to earlier, the member and the Director (EPS) confirmed they do not anticipate any further major cost increase as the project nears completion.

24.61.4 Given the complexity of the Zone29 project and other major capital projects, the Chair proposed a separate session for a more detailed discussion to review current progress, understand challenges and assess alignment with the Estates Strategy.

24.61.4.1 **ACTION Committee Secretary** to arrange the session.

24.61.5 A member queried the timeline for the Marylebone Hall project, citing concerns over rising maintenance costs and potential reputational risks. The Director (EPS) and the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (USCOO) confirmed that approximately six months would be needed to complete the review and develop recommendations aligned with the refreshed Residential Strategy.

24.61.6 On the sale of the International House, a member advised adopting a more efficient approach, particularly in expediting the due diligence process. Members noted that the University Executive Board (UEB) will consider the sale proposal in the following week.

24.61.7 **AGREED** Members confirmed support for sale of the property to one of the three preferred bidders as presented in the paper, subject to the outcome of the UEB discussion.

24.62 DIGITAL STRATEGIC UPDATE

24.62.1 Thierry Delaitre - Head of IT Developments presented an update on the Digital Strategy (Document RES 250619B).

24.62.2 In response to a query on the ISS capital budget reduction, the Head of IT Developments explained that more computers would be refreshed this year in line with the Windows updates to reduce demand next year and extend their lifespan. The Director of Finance and Commercial Services (Director of Finance) stressed the need for prioritisation of capital expenditure. The USCOO clarified that the reduction is based on the forecast budget and is less significant if compared to the current year's capital expenditure budget.

24.62.3 Responding to concerns about cyber risks from extending computer lifespans, the Head of IT Developments assured members the risk is low. The USCOO added that the University continues to invest in cybersecurity training, highlighted recent phishing simulation campaigns, and noted the ongoing focus on IT business continuity.

24.62.4 A member raised a query about the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) by colleagues. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University is embracing AI strategically to enhance student employability and operational efficiency, while supporting critical thinking and preserving the human element in teaching.

24.62.5 The Vice-Chancellor noted the appointment of a Director for Digital Capability and AI Leadership to lead campus-wide AI adoption and highlighted the University's recent accomplishment in the Microsoft UK University Cloud Challenge.

24.62.6 Continuing the discussion, a member underscored the need for academic colleagues to engage with students on AI's cultural, ethical and education implications. Other members observed the growing corporate trend of developing AI agents and the importance of built-in risk assessment when deploying AI, particularly in sensitive areas like safeguarding data.

24.62.7 Addressing a query about precautions around emerging digital technologies, the Head of IT Developments emphasised the importance of educating students and researchers on data polices and processes, highlighting the risks of using external platforms without appropriate safeguards.

24.62.8 The Chair thanked the Head of IT Developments for incorporating colour coding into the report, which helps members more easily track the progress of initiatives.

24.62.9 The USCOO informed members that the Director of ISS has left the University and thanked the Head of IT Developments and the Head of Digital Transformation for leading the department until the appointment of a new Director.

24.63 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT – APRIL 2025 and Q3 FORECAST

24.63.1 The Director of Finance presented the management accounts report for April 2025 and Quarter 3 forecast (Document RES 250619C), noting a slight reduction in the projected surplus due to higher agency fees and confirming the balance sheet remains strong with healthy cash flow.

24.63.2 In response to a query about why the forecast income from Tuition Fees and Education Contracts is lower than the actual income to date, the Director of Finance explained that the forecast includes anticipated tuition fee refunds for students who drop out.

24.63.3 Addressing a query on bad debt, the Director of Finance stated that it primarily relates to international student tuition fees and explained that UEB is considering proposals to minimise this source of debt.

24.63.4 Responding to a question about whether the University has sufficient capacity to utilise the planned capital budget given the actual spend as of April 2025, the Director of Finance and the Director (EPS) assured that efforts are underway to align spending with institutional needs and priorities for the remainder of the academic year.

24.63.5 On IT capital project budget risks, the Head of IT Developments noted that risk levels are expected to be lower next year due to this year's major computer refresh and Windows upgrade, which will reduce future resource demands.

24.64 UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2025/26

24.64.1 The Director of Finance presented the proposed University budget 2025/26 (Document RES 250619D), outlining key internal and external considerations, planning assumptions, scenario analysis and financial projections.

24.64.2 Given the uncertainties, particularly around student enrolment, a member suggested that scenarios 4 or 5 might provide a more cautious base for planning. The Director of Finance cautioned that these options could cause greater disruption to the workforce compared to the proposed scenario 3, especially as student numbers are not confirmed until September 2025.

24.64.3 A member noted that scenario 3 incorporates a double contingency, covering assumptions for both workforce and student enrolment, with each assumption interdependent. The Director of Finance stressed the need to manage staff costs through technological efficiencies and natural attrition.

24.64.4 On the timing of potential recovery actions, the Director of Finance suggested that a clearer picture of student enrolment in September would be an appropriate trigger point. Members agreed that September should serve as the first checkpoint for assessing the plan and identifying any necessary adjustments.

24.64.5 A member recommended early development of contingency plans and remedial actions to address potential risks. The Director of Finance confirmed ongoing close collaboration with the international student recruitment team to support informed decision-making.

24.64.6 **AGREED** Members accepted the planning assumptions underpinning scenario 3 and recommend the University budget proposal 2025/26 to the Court of Governors for approval, noting that the Committee would review remedial actions in September 2025.

24.64.7 The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the University's cautious approach in financial planning to manage coming challenges. The Director (PCW) added that the approach of prioritising internal recruitment is impacting the workforce positively and aligns with the People Strategy by supporting colleague progression and promoting diversity and inclusion.

24.65 SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

24.65.1 The USCOO/Co-Chair, Staying Safe: Business Continuity Group updated members on the preparations for Martyn's Law – the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme and the upcoming Open Day, noting that a pro-Palestine march in central London on the Open Day weekend would not pass near the campuses.

24.65.2 Niamh Nelson - Head of Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHW), briefed members on the annual health and safety legal register (Document RES 250619E), noting that current priorities include managing risks related to estate maintenance and colleague stress, and enhancing internal SHW risk management processes.

24.65.3 The USCOO noted that the report includes a colour-coding scheme to indicate the compliance status of each item, in response to a suggestion from the Committee.

24.65.4 In response to a query about third-party health checks, the Head (SHW) explained that internal audits are conducted annually, supported by external insurers' reviews.

24.65.5 Regarding Martyn's Law, the Director (EPS) confirmed that the University began preparations two years ago and is ahead of the sector. The USCOO added that the Martyn's Law Working Group is developing relevant policies and processes, with sector guidance expected to be available early in 2026.

24.65.6 On the Procurement Act 2023, the Head (SHW) confirmed that the University takes a risk-based approach to assess suppliers' compliance with environmental legislation.

24.65.7 Responding to a question on campus-wide risk integration, the Head (SHW) assured members that SHW risk registers are maintained across various areas, regularly reviewed and overseen by the SHW Committee, which meets three times a year and provides an annual report.

24.66 RESOURCES COMMITTTEE ANNUAL REFLECTION

24.66.1 Given that meeting agendas are often full, and members may have limited time to reflect during the session, the Chair proposed introducing an optional online form to allow members to provide more thoughtful and detailed feedback after the meeting, which would support a more meaningful annual evaluation of the Committee's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

24.66.1.1 **ACTION Clerk to the Court and the Committee Secretary** to propose an online survey to gather post-meeting feedback from members.

24.67 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

24.67.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025 (Document RES 250619G) were an accurate record.

24.67.2 Members noted the summary of progress against actions and any mattes arising from previous meetings (Document RES 250619H).

24.68 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24.68.1 Members did not raise any other items of business.

24.69 MEETING EVALUATION

24.69.1 Members noted the earlier suggestion that members' feedback will be collected via an online survey.

24.70 SICKNESS ABSENCE AND ILL HEALTH POLICY

24.70.1 **AGREED** Members recommend the Sickness absence and ill health policy (Document RES 250619I) to the Court for approval.

24.71 DISCIPLINARY POLICY (COLLEAGUES)

24.71.1 **AGREED** Members recommend the Disciplinary policy (colleagues) (Document RES 250619J) to the Court for approval.

24.72 PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

24.72.1 **AGREED** Members recommend the Professional boundaries and personal relationships policy (Document RES 250619K) to the Court for approval.

24.73 SPORTS HALL IMPACT AND POST-OCCUPANCY REPORT

24.73.1 Members noted the Sports hall impact and post-occupancy report (Document RES 250619L).

24.73.2 The Chair proposed adopting a standardised format for evaluation reports across all projects to enable easier comparison, ensure alignment with project objectives and support continuous learning through reflection on lessons learnt.

24.73.2.1 **ACTION Director (EPS), Director (ISS) and USCOO** to agree a consistent format for evaluation reports.

24.74 UWSU FINANICAL STATEMENTS 2023/24

24.74.1 Members noted the UWSU financial statements 2023/24 (Document RES 250619M).

24.75 UWSU BLOCK GRANT BID AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2025/26

24.75.1 Members noted the UWSU block grant bid and strategic plan 2025/26 (Document RES 250619N), which was approved by the UEB on 13 May 2025.

24.75.2 In response to a query about the UWSU's budget allocation, the USCOO and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed agreement of the allocation follows a structured process, including discussions between UWSU and UEB on the bid, which is based on an activity plan to support student clubs and activities to enhance students learning experience.

24.76 RATIFICATION OF DECISION BY CIRCULATION

24.76.1 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair between meetings in relation to the amendments to the Financial Regulations (Document RES 250619O) relating to procurement regulations.

24.77 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 18 September 2025 at 4:00pm
Monday 17 November 2025 at 5.30pm*
*Thursday 15 January 2026 at 4:00pm ***
Thursday 12 February 2026 at 4:00pm
Thursday 23 April 2026 at 4:00pm
Thursday 18 June 2026 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.