

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CARDIFF UNIVERSITY FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021 AT 10.00AM VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Present: John Shakeshaft (Chair), Professor Colin Riordan, Hannah Doe, Tomos Evans, Professor Karen Holford, Chris Jones, Jan Juillerat, Dr Steven Luke, Professor Stuart Palmer and David Simmons.

Attendees: Dev Biddlecombe, Ms Katy Dale (Minutes), Rashi Jain, Alison Jarvis, Sue Midha, Dr Jonathan Nicholls, Melanie Rimmer, Ruth Robertson, Claire Sanders and Rob Williams.

Apologies: Professor Kim Graham

**731 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, especially Dr Jonathan Nicholls (who was undertaking a Governance Effectiveness Review on behalf of the University) and Ruth Robertson (Head of Corporate Governance).

**732 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Professor Kim Graham.

**733 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 (20/492C) were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were approved to be signed by the Chair.

**734 MATTERS ARISING**

Received paper 20/493, 'Matters Arising'.

NOTED

734.1 that it was expected an update on the Estates Strategy and estates disposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee, following review at Estates & Infrastructure Sub-Committee;

734.2 that the Chair had undertaken the following via Chair's Action:

- .1 approval of changes to the Tuition Fee Policy;
- .2 approval of amendments to the Fee and Access Plan for 2021-22 to allow submission to HEFCW.

**735 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Chair reminded the Committee members of their duty to disclose any potential conflicts of interest. Declarations of interest were noted from the Students' Union President and Vice-President Education in relation to the Students' Union Accounts 2019-20 and the Students' Union Block Grant.

**736 REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**

Received and considered paper 20/494C, 'Vice-Chancellor's Report to Finance & Resources Committee'. The Vice-Chancellor was invited to speak to this item.

## NOTED

- 736.1 that the University continued to review the provision of digital education and how teaching would be provided going forward, to ensure this was balanced between what students wanted and what staff could provide;
- 736.2 that there was a high rate of unconditional firm offers which referred to students who qualified for the programme of study and had accepted an offer from the University; this was higher than usual which was positive, but also contained a number of deferred students and was therefore not a guarantee of students commencing study in Autumn 2021;
- 736.3 that module evaluation results did not directly correlate as customer satisfaction data and were mainly used by academics running courses to evaluate how they were received; the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience was undertaking a project around the Student Voice to identify where student feedback is captured and reviewed and this would provide a more holistic view of student satisfaction.

**737 REPORT FROM INVESTMENT AND BANKING SUB-COMMITTEE**

Received and considered papers 20/495C, 'Report from Chair of Investment & Banking Sub-Committee'. The Chair of Investment & Banking Sub-Committee was invited to speak to this item.

## NOTED

- 737.1 that the bond tap had been successfully issued;
- 737.2 that in the future the Investment & Banking Sub-Committee would focus on ensuring funds are invested wisely, that fund managers produce good returns and that progress is made on the Bond Repayment fund.

**738 DECISIONS MADE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

Received and noted paper 20/496C, 'Decisions made by the Vice-Chancellor Under Delegated authority'.

**739 HR DASHBOARD**

Received and noted paper 20/497C, 'HR Dashboard'. The Director of Human Resources was invited to speak to this item.

## NOTED

- 739.1 that the report presented a snapshot of the University at a set time; the data within this report was from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021;
- 739.2 that headcount and FTE had reduced during the last twelve months by 1.6% and 1.4% respectively;
- 739.3 that the University continued to exceed the 30% International Academic Staff KPI and this remained stable;
- 739.4 that there had been a decline in sickness absence from 2.6% to 1.9% in the last year;
- 739.5 that due to recruitment controls, there had been a significant decrease in the number of adverts when compared to previous years;

- 739.6 that following a request at the last meeting to report on temporary staff, reporting on casual staff as defined within the HESA return as atypical would be included in reports from the next academic year;
- 739.7 that there was an increase in competition in the labour market in some areas (e.g. IT) but that opportunities from new ways of working allowed for recruitment from a wider pool; the University had not seen issues with retaining staff and was keen to develop those within the workforce alongside bringing in new skills;
- 739.8 that there did not appear to be significant changes in the pattern of stress related absence due to COVID-19; instances of stress were taken seriously and details monitored through the Health, Safety and Environment Committee; it was also noted that during COVID-19, there had been an increase in stresses outside work (e.g., financial, health) and therefore not all instances of stress would be work related.

## RESOLVED

- 739.9 for the Director of HR and University Secretary to discuss the future format of this report for Council;
- 739.10 for clarity to be provided on the difference between the categories of sickness absence called “all” and “all other”.

**740 PENSIONS UPDATE**

Received and noted paper 20/521C, ‘Pensions Update’. The Chief Financial Officer was invited to speak to this item.

## NOTED

- 740.1 that pensions had been identified as a risk on the University risk register;  
Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)
- 740.2 [REDACTED]
- 740.3 [REDACTED]
- 740.4 that discussions were ongoing with the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) around benefit reform;
- 740.5 that the USS board were meeting to consider a response to UUK; it was expected employers would receive a consultation paper from UUK after Easter, with the key areas being covenant support, benefit restructure and the contribution levels they would be prepared to pay;
- 740.6 it was expected USS would commence a formal consultation with members in the Autumn and any agreed changes implemented from Spring 2022;
- 740.7 [REDACTED]
- 740.8 [REDACTED]
- 740.9 [REDACTED]

740.10 that this remained a difficult issue for the sector as a whole;

Cardiff University Pension Fund (CUPF)

740.11 [REDACTED]

740.12 [REDACTED]

740.13 [REDACTED]

740.14 [REDACTED]

740.15 [REDACTED].

RESOLVED

740.16 that the Chief Financial Officer and University Secretary would discuss meeting with Dr Pretty Sagoo.

**741 FINANCE REPORT (FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS)**

Received and considered paper 20/501C, 'Finance Report'. The Deputy Director of Finance was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

741.1 [REDACTED]

741.2 [REDACTED]

741.3 the University had also benefited from some capitalisation and an increase in grant funding;

741.4 that there were a number of provisions in relation to this surplus:

.1 [REDACTED]

.2 [REDACTED]

.3 [REDACTED]

.4 [REDACTED]

.5 [REDACTED]

741.5 that the budget would be reviewed again after Easter and a further forecast undertaken.

**742 21-22 FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS UPDATE**

Received and considered paper 20/522C, '2020-21 Financial Projections Update'. The Chief Financial Officer was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

742.1 that it remained very early in the planning cycle and the paper provided an update on the direction of travel and current best estimates;

742.2 [REDACTED]

742.3 [REDACTED]

742.4 that there remained many moving parts in relation to these figures:

- .1 how the University was viewed internationally for its research and teaching;
- .2 what the learning experience would look like for 21/22;
- .3 that it appeared students were delaying making a firm decision until there was more clarity on the provision for 21/22; undergraduate and PGT Home student numbers looked strong but there remained some downturn in the PGT International market;

742.5 that discussions were being held with Schools on the budget position for 21/22 and the implications for student numbers;

742.6 that it was expected there would be a clearer understanding of the position in time for the Committee's next meeting in June; there would also be an update on future years at that meeting;

742.7 that the Committee welcomed the narrative and update provided by the paper.

### **743 CIC UPDATE**

Received and considered paper 20/498C, 'Cardiff Innovation Campus Update'. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

743.1 that there had been no further cost pressures to the project, other than those in relation to COVID-19;

743.2 that revised completion dates were included in the paper and a verbal update would be provided to Council at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April;

743.3 [REDACTED]

743.4 that where risks had been closed without use of the allocated budget or reduced in value, the remaining money was being moved into a contingency budget for the project.

### **744 STUDENTS' UNION ACCOUNTS 2019-20 AND IMPACT REPORT**

Received and considered paper 20/499C, 'Students' Union Accounts 2019-20 and Impact Report'. The Chief Executive of the Students' Union was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

744.1 that Daniel Palmer (Chief Executive of the Students' Union) joined the meeting to present this item;

744.2 that the Annual Accounts were being received later than usual, due to a delay in the audit of the accounts due to COVID-19;

744.3 that the Annual Accounts for 2019/20 had been approved by the Trustees and signed by the Students' Union President and the Auditors;

- 744.4 that despite the tough year, the Students' Union had performed well, being voted Welsh Students' Union of the Year for the second year running;
- 744.5 that the majority of the annual income had been raised by the lockdown in March 2020;
- 744.6 [REDACTED]
- 744.7 [REDACTED]
- 744.8 [REDACTED]
- 744.9 [REDACTED]

#### **745 STUDENTS' UNION BLOCK GRANT 21-22**

Received and considered paper 20/500C, 'SU Block Grant Request'. The Chief Executive of the Students' Union was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

- 745.1 that the ongoing extended lockdowns had reduced costs;
- 745.2 that the Students' Union remained optimistic for the 21/22 academic year and return of some activities, though expected there would not be a full return to normal operation; it was expected provision of services would continue in a blended format;
- 745.3 that the first semester of the academic year was important to create a strong financial position and offer support to students;
- 745.4 that thanks were extended to the University and Chief Operating Officer for their support;
- 745.5 [REDACTED]
- 745.6 that the Students' Union would welcome any further financial help should it become available;
- 745.7 [REDACTED].

RESOLVED

- 745.8 to recommend Council approve the Students' Union Block Grant for 2021/22.

#### **746 TRAC RETURN**

Received and considered paper 20/503C, 'TRAC Return 19-20'. The Chief Financial Officer was invited to speak to this item.

NOTED

- 746.1 that the TRAC return was an annual requirement and this year was required to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021;

- 746.2 that there had been an increase in the recovery of economic costs for public funded teaching but a drop in the recovery for non-publicly funded teaching; this was affected by COVID-19 but also other elements;
- 746.3 there had been an improvement in the recovery rate from research in 19/20; there was a sector-wide discussion on recovery rates for overheads as many institutions were seeing an issue in this area and UKRI were reviewing whether these should be held over;
- 746.4 that there had been an increase in the margin for sustainability and investment; due to previous deficits, this is a lower margin than the University was targeting in the future;
- 746.5 that due to COVID-19, time allocation data was gathered using time allocation surveys as opposed to the workload allocation model, as the model had been paused; in the longer term, the workload allocation model would be used and refined to produce a more holistic view;
- 746.6 that the University was reviewing allocation of resources across schools and would bring a paper on this to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

- 746.7 to approve the TRAC return for 2019/20.

**747 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

NOTED

- 747.1 [REDACTED]
- 747.1 [REDACTED]
- 747.1 [REDACTED]

**748 AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING**

Received paper 20/502, 'Agenda of next meeting'.

NOTED

- 748.1 that due to the business to be conducted, the next meeting would be extended.