

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF MANAGEMENT held via Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 01 December 2020**

- PRESENT:** Sarah Burton, Robyn Kennedy, Innis Montgomery, Chris O'Neil, John Wilson, Kelly Mackenzie, Ruth McFadyen, Gillian Galloway, Samantha Cribb, Andy Gray, Sally Blyth, Donald MacKenzie, Fiona Neilson, Leanne MacKenzie, Tina Stones
- CHAIR:** Sarah Burton
- APOLOGIES:** Vivienne Mackie and Director of Research and Innovation
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience  
Depute Principal Academic Development  
Director of Finance  
Director of External Relations  
Director of Student Experience  
Director of Curriculum  
Board Secretary

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were noted.

**1. MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON 06 OCTOBER 2020**

**Decision:** The minutes of the Board of Management Meeting held on 06 October 2020 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

**2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

**Decision:** The Committee noted that the two items on the outstanding actions list related to February and March 2021 and no update was required.

**3. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL**

- a) Standing Orders**
- b) Scheme of Delegation**

The Board Secretary advised that both the Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation for the Board of Management had been reviewed. No updates were found to be required and the documents had been recommended for approval by the Chairs Committee on 05 November 2020.

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**Decision:** Both the Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation were **APPROVED** by the Board of Management.

### c) Code of Conduct

The Board Secretary advised that the Code of Conduct for the Board of Management had been reviewed. Suggested changes to the document had been taken to the Chairs Committee on 05 November 2020 who recommended it for approval.

**Decision:** The Code of Conduct was **APPROVED** by the Board of Management.

### d) Rules for Election of Staff to Boards

The Board Secretary advised that the Rules for Election of Staff to Boards for the Board of Management had been reviewed. No updates were found to be required and the document had been recommended for approval by the Chairs Committee on 05 November 2020.

**Decision:** The Rules for Election of Staff to Boards was **APPROVED** by the Board of Management.

### e.) Staff Disciplinary Policy

The Board of Management were advised that the Staff Disciplinary Policy had been recommended for approval by the HR Committee on 12 November 2020. Following discussion the Board of Management requested actions be carried out before any approval of the policy can be considered.

**Decision:** The Staff Disciplinary Policy was **not approved** by the Board of Management.

#### **Actions:**

- The Principal to liaise with the Chair of the HR Committee to ascertain the Lead Officer/Review Officer within the Policy.
- The Principal to ascertain why the reference to the Preventing Fraud and Corruption Policy was deleted and whether the issue of fraud and corruption is covered within another policy.

### f) Email Usage and Retention Policy

### g) Information Security Policy

### h) University Partnership IS Acceptable Use Policy

The Interim Audit Chair advised that the Email Usage and Retention Policy, the Information Security Policy and the University Partnership IS Acceptable Use Policy had been reviewed and had been recommended for approval by the Audit Committee on 10 November 2020.

**Decisions:** The Email Usage and Retention Policy, Information Security Policy and University Partnership IS Acceptable Use Policy were **APPROVED** by the Board of Management.

#### 4. FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

The Chair of the Board of Management advised that approval was being sought for the following:

- Whether the FRP should be concluded and we enter into a period of consolidation and pro-active planning.
- Whether we maintain the VSS as per the authority granted by the SFC and Alternatives to Redundancy policy until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 in order that we can find and deliver further efficiencies particularly in a post Covid-19 and Brexit environment.

The Chair of the Board of Management advised that Board approval was not sought on whether the review of the SMT structure should be progressed as this was an operational matter not a strategic matter and responsibility for this lay with the Principal.

The Principal took the Board of Management through the background to the Financial Recovery Plan noting that the following are now in place:

- A shared Director of Finance
- The completion of the upgrade of financial systems
- Control of TSR's
- Continuation and development of training for all budget holders.
- Commencement of course costing work.
- Commencement of the Curriculum Review.

The Board of Management noted that we have been able to achieve the necessary changes to the financial management culture within a 6-7 month period rather than the expected 18 month period.

The Director of Finance advised the Board of Management that a meeting had taken place between himself, the Principal and the Chair of the F&GP Committee where the Chair of the F&GP Committee advised that prior to seeking approval of the conclusion of the FRP that we needed to be able to demonstrate that we have:

- Control of the TSR's
- Financial Controls in place
- The ability to produce reports
- Built in planning measures to ensure that we maintain KPI's

Lengthy confidential discussions took place.

*Kelly MacKenzie joined the meeting at this point.*

The Board of Management commended the Principal and the SMT on the achievement of the FRP and welcomed the budget processes and systems which have been put in place. However the Board of Management also

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expressed concern about whether it would be considered premature to close the FRP off with the VSS and ELCC still to be resolved. A discussion ensued whereby it was reiterated to the Board of Management that actions have been put in place to ensure our long term financial sustainability and that legal advice has been sought from 3 different organisations along with Unison.

The Board of Management noted that they would wish to have financial reports continue within agendas and requested a proposal be drawn up which specifies what they will see going forward.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **APPROVED** the conclusion of the FRP and the move into a period of consolidation and pro-active planning.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **APPROVED** the continuation of the VSS as per the authority granted by the SFC and the Alternatives to Redundancy Policy until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### **Actions:**

- Financial reporting to remain on all appropriate agendas to ensure continued discussion.
- Proposal for what the Board will see going forward to be drawn up and discussed at the next Board Meeting.

## 5. FINANCIAL POSITION 2021

The Director of Finance took the Board of Management through his report highlighting that he had included the budgets for both October and November as it was felt useful to see movement and variances for both months. The Board of Management noted that cost drivers had reduced whilst staff costs had increased with reasons behind this increase explained to the Board of Management.

The Director of Finance highlighted to the Board of Management that we expect to receive an additional fee in respect of the External Audit due to Covid-19.

## 6. COVID-19 AND PLANNING FOR 21/22 REPORT

The Depute Principal – Academic Development took the Board of Management through the first half of the report noting the following:

- That we remain vigilant within a changing environment and that no cases of Covid-19 have been transmitted within the College.
- That there remains capacity challenges due to the 2m distancing and that this is especially noticeable amongst the construction and engineering workshops however some changes to workshop layouts have assisted with this.
- That we expect Semester 2 to continue with the same restrictions as Semester 1 with risk assessments in place for learning activities out with the building.

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- That we are continuing to assess options available to us such as extending opening hours, additional changes to layout to try and get maximum capacity from the building.

The Board of Management was advised that we are negotiating access to Covid-19 testing within the carpark and with the walk in centre in Glenurquhart Road with regards students leaving the residencies to spend Christmas at home. This will be available for students to book online. Information is awaited from the Scottish Government with regards testing upon return to residencies in January 2021.

The Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience took the Board of Management through the second half of the report noting the following:

- Reduced credit activity
- Reduced student satisfaction by 9%. However it was noted that this reduction in satisfaction was seen regionally.
- Online enrolments.
- Increased early withdrawal rates for students on FT FE programmes. It was noted that again this appeared to be a pattern within the sector.
- Increase in HE recruitment this year.

### 7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal took the Board of Management through his report and highlighted:

- That the UHI New Vice Chancellor will begin his role on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.
- Biggar Economics Report
- Brexit

**Action:** The Board of Management noted that the results of the staff survey would be available for discussion at the next meeting and that the HR Department are currently collating comments received from staff.

### 8. RAM CONSULTATION

The Principal advised that our views on the RAM consultation are sought by 18 December 2020. The SMT have discussed this and a Board response is now sought. The Board of Management noted that change is required due to the complexities of the RAM and that the SFC have indicated that they may change the funding to a tertiary RAM.

A lengthy discussion ensued which highlighted:

- Rurality funding and allowance
- A tertiary funding model
- Curriculum review
- Regional and Local Core.
- Non SFC funded activities
- Potential levies.
- Partnership Planning Forum

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- Estates strategy and the impact of curriculum development on this strategy.

Model 3 was discussed with the Board of Management noting that whilst this model may advantage the smaller partners it was felt that it would be an easier transition, that it is the least turbulent of all the proposed models and offers greater flexibility and opportunity to develop and evolve.

**Decision:** Following discussion it was agreed that we would cautiously support model 3.

**Action:** The Principal and Chair will prepare our response to the proposals and will share this with the Board of Management via email.

### 9. SFC ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The Chair advised the Board of Management that this paper was for their information only.

### 10. DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF BOARD COMMITTEES (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Board of Management noted the following draft minutes of meetings:

- a. Longman Disposal Project Board – 03 September 2020
- b. Search and Nomination Committee – 10 September 2020
- c. Audit Committee – 15 September 2020
- d. HR Committee – 17 September 2020
- e. LT&R Committee – 22 September 2020
- f. F&GP Committee – 01 October 2020
- g. Chairs Committee – 08 October 2020
- h. Estates Legacy Project Board – 03 November 2020
- i. Chairs Committee – 05 November 2020
- j. Audit Committee – 10 November 2020

### 11. UHI COURT – QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM UHI SMT & ACADEMIC

The Board of Management noted the contents of this update.

### 12. NOTES FROM REGIONAL STRATEGIC COUNCIL MEETING

The Board of Management noted the minutes of the Regional Strategic Council Meeting held on 05 May 2020.

### 13. HARDSHIP REPORT

The Board of Management noted the contents of this report.

### 14. AOCB

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The Chair advised that we have recommended four candidates for appointment to the Board of Management. Thanks were given to the Board Members who formed the shortlisting panel and to those on the interview panel.

The Board of Management noted that a strategy session will be held on 10 December 2020.

Thanks were given to John Wilson for his 15 years of service on the Board of Management during which time he has chaired committees and undertaken the roles of Senior Independent Member and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Management.

### 15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Date of Next Meeting: 18 February 2021 at 4.30 p.m.

*Sarah Burton*

Signed by Chair:

Date: 18.02.21