

MINUTES

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE, SR-12

Date:	19 May 2020	Time:	1300
Location:	Microsoft Teams online meeting		

Notes:

1. This Agenda is divided into three headings: Estates; Financials; and Human Resources / Employment. Each of these headings has a section 2 (For Discussion and/or Approval) and a section 3 (For Information).
2. Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) are for information only or regarded as noncontentious. Starred items will not be discussed and will be assumed to have been noted or approved unless a request to unstar a named item is received from a Board member in advance, or at the commencement, of the meeting.
3. Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes, will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
John Henderson (Deputy Chair)	External Member	A
Mike Herbert	External Member	P
Colin Hughes	External Member	P
Scott William-Smith	Vice President, Students' Union	P
Hannah Gibbard	Professional Support Staff Representative	P
Jonathan Vardon (Chair)	External Member	P
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA
Dr Adrian Rowlands	Director of Estates and Commercial Services (items 291-292 only)	IA

P = Present (via Teams); A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance (via Teams)

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
286	Apologies for absence were received from John Henderson.
287	There were no new Declarations of interest .
288	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee , 17 Mar 2020 SR/12/01, were signed as a true and accurate record.

289 **Matters arising:**

- **Minute 261 – Digital Institute London implementation report** – it was noted that this report had been circulated to governors for noting directly after the last committee meeting on 17 March 2020.

290 The committee received for information the ***Schedule of business for the academic year 2019/20*** SR/12/02.

ESTATES AND INFRASTRUCTURE (E)

E2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)

291 The committee received and discussed the following papers relating to the **Catalyst building:**

i. **Project update** SR/12/03, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who noted the following principle points:

- Key achievements since March 2019 were as follows:
 - The design, procurement and construction processes had been continuing under the required Covid-19 restrictions - despite their best endeavours VINCI were presently 4.2 weeks in delay (a further paper within this agenda item was dedicated to Covid-19).
 - The Head of Digital Transformation had updated the Project Board in April with the scope, programme and interfaces surrounding the integrated digital project. The Board had been reassured by the progress made and the direction of travel, although the budget still needed to be fixed. Work continued to map out the full scope of additional workstreams, e.g. catering, library, timetabling.
 - The Project Team continued the engagement with Digital Services and Estates (and other selected services) to work through any 'campus wide / business wide' requirements for Catalyst, which may have implications/benefits beyond the immediate building.
 - VINCI Construction had taken possession of the site on the 4th February 2020 and were reporting a changed anticipated completion date of 19th July 2021 (which could change again soon).
 - The University, via their project manager MACE, has appointed a H&S Advisor, a Building Clerk of Works and a M&E Clerk of Works. Reports were being received from the H&S Advisor and the Building Clerk of Works; the M&E Clerk of Works would join the team late May.
 - The Project Team and Legal Advisor (SHMA) were tracking the production/progress of all contract documentation. SHMA was working closely with MACE and the Project Director in dealing with the contractual matters arising from Covid-19.

○ [Redacted]

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ii. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Members commented as follows:

- Mike Herbert highlighted a restriction on working hours in the building's planning conditions.
- Jonathan Vardon asked about key points on the critical path, and how the committee could be kept informed and decisions could best be made. Martin Jones proposed that a call be scheduled with committee members following each monthly meeting of the Catalyst Board.

292

The committee received and discussed the **Estates projects update** SR/12/05, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital, who noted the following main points:

- **Impact of Covid-19**

The potential impact of Covid-19 on project costs was difficult to quantify at this stage with very mixed views from within the construction industry. It should be underlined that the University would continue to review the option to suspend each project in accordance with the emerging impact of Covid-19 on our financial sustainability and subsequent requirement to reduce capital expenditure.

- **New Nursery and Forest School**

The scheme had been submitted for planning approval early March with determination expected mid-June. The project is due to go out to tender mid-May with a return date of early July.

- Subject to Board of Governors approval and lifting of current restrictions, a completion date of Autumn 2021 was still expected, but this would continue to be closely monitored. (Delays due to Covid-19 would cause limited impact as the works were not linked to the academic year and as a contingency the existing nursery would continue to operate.)

- **Additional Teaching Space at Blackheath Lane, Stafford**

Determination of the planning application was expected mid-May 2020 and the project was currently out to tender with a return date also mid-May. Subject to Board of Governors approval and lifting of current restrictions, completion ready for the academic year 2021 was still expected, but this would continue to be closely monitored. (Delays due to Covid-19 would potentially mean a missed start date but the School had advised that contingency arrangements could be put in place for course delivery for up to 3 months.)

- **Blackstone Recladding and Cadman roof improvement works**

It was understood that City Council planners had now relaxed their position and consequently the team were progressing a planning application based on the original scheme aspiration, scheduled for submission at the end of May. Subject to Board of Governors approval the project was now scheduled to commence on site in November 2020. (Delays due to Covid-19 would cause limited impact as the works were not linked to the academic year.)

- **Squires View**

[Redacted]

- **Ex-Sports Field off Newcastle Road, Cotes Heath, Stafford**

A 'planning in principle' application for housing development had been submitted by Leith Planning in April with a determination expected late May.

- **Lichfield Coach Park** (*verbal update from Deputy Vice Chancellor*)

[Redacted]

Members commented as follows:

- Hannah Gibbard enquired about the lease position of the current nursery site. It was explained that this was on an open lease and thus at this time, any delay with the completion of the new nursery would not be an issue with regard to its current location.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan Vardon highlighted the issue of maintaining flexibility within the University's Estates plan. Members discussed the importance of building in both flexibility in terms of the option to change plans and switch off projects where necessary, and in terms of delivering adaptable, future-proof buildings that allowed for the evolving demands of the student experience. Liz Barnes noted that the current pandemic was dramatically impacting ways of working and could potentially do so for some time. Complex discussions would need to take place, in time, around how the Estates masterplan would continue to evolve.
E3 FOR INFORMATION	
293	The committee received for information the *Compliance/maintenance update* SR/12/06, which outlined the University's position in meeting the legislative requirements of statutory compliance throughout its estate.
294	The committee received for information the *RSM internal audit report 2019-20 – Estates compliance: asbestos* SR-12-07, referred from Audit and Risk Committee.
FINANCIALS (F)	
F2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
295	<p>The committee received and discussed a paper on recruitment and potential intakes for academic year 2020-21 SR/12/08, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer, who noted the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] <p>Members commented as follows: NONE</p>
296	<p>The committee received and discussed an update on impact of Covid-19 on Budget 2020-21 and medium-term financial sustainability SR/12/09, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer. The following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using current applicant data, it had been possible to create a projection of what the Full-time Undergraduate and Postgraduate student intakes (Home, EU and International) would have been, if the recruitment cycle had run as normal and Covid-19 had never transpired. That projection had been used as the 'base data' to create a number of scenarios, which have been compared against the draft budget for 2020-21 (referred to in the paper as Scenario [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] <p>[REDACTED]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
F3 FOR INFORMATION	
297	The committee received for information the *Management accounts to 31 March 2020* SR/12/10.
298	The committee received for information the *Treasury management report (March to May 2020)* SR/12/11
299	The committee received for information an update on the OfS grant letter 2020-21 SR/12/12, noting that this had confirmed the anticipated reduction in grant.
300	<p>The committee received for information the KMPG HE Financial Benchmarking Review SR/12/13, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer.</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colin Hughes noted the University's relatively stable position in the sector, with Sally McGill highlighting that our lack of reliance on large borrowing, relatively small cohort of international students and relatively large cash balance all contributed to this. Jonathan Vardon commended the performance of the Executive team over past few years, which had enabled this position.
HUMAN RESOURCES/EMPLOYMENT (H)	
H2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
301	Staffordshire University Pension Scheme SR/12/14, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer, who noted the following main points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p>
302	<p>The committee received and discussed the Staffing Update – Covid-19 Implications (DISCUSSION) SR/12/15, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer, who noted the following principle points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government’s Job Retention Scheme (JRS) allowed the University to identify staff that could not work as a result of Covid-19 and changed working practices, furlough them and claim back 80% of their salaries up to a maximum of £2,500 per month (a cap on the higher-paid). During this time the individual would not be able to undertake any work but continued to accrue annual leave. • We had identified a first tranche of 115 staff who could be furloughed and backdated and Executive had agreed an approach on the matter of furloughing, wishing to pay staff who were furloughed (who fell under the cap) 100% of pay – as these staff were the lower-paid staff. The University would pay 20% in effect for those staff furloughed. However, Executive also wanted to address the issue of annual leave, as this would have a significant impact upon the operations of the University once restrictions were lifted. • The government had stated that <i>statutory</i> annual leave (built into law) continued to accrue and could be taken if the individual chose. The University paid <i>contractual</i> annual leave, which for its lowest-paid staff was 29 days, plus bank holidays, plus three discretionary days between Christmas and New Year. It had been determined that in return for 100% of pay we would ask staff to rescind their right to contractual annual leave and replace this with the lesser statutory annual leave, remaining legally compliant whilst protecting the University from the accrual and stockpiling of a more generous leave entitlement whilst these staff were receiving full pay for not working. • Following a week of detailed discussions with UNISON locally and regionally a collective agreement for this had been signed on 20 April 2020. Our thanks should be placed on record to the local UNISON branch who had been keen to implement this, and for their assistance with the University’s dealings with the regional office and UNISON’s national guidance on such matters. • UCU continued to consider the collective agreement, however there was no great urgency on them as it was highly unlikely that staff represented by UCU would be furloughed. • On 21 April the Vice Chancellor had sent out a general staff communication referring to our detailed work on furloughing and clarifying that we have been working with UNISON to agree a way forward (attached as an appendix). Later the same week, furlough letters had been sent to the affected staff (managers having pre-empted this with a call to these people against a pre-defined briefing sheet). • We were very pleased with what we had been achieved with UNISON for the benefit of our staff, which had balanced the need to support our staff at a time of worry for them with a pragmatic approach to protecting the future needs of the business. • [REDACTED] <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p>
303	<p>The committee received and discussed the Automated services design – business case (DISCUSSION) SR/12/16, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital, who noted the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper provided details on a new project initiated within the University during May to improve staff efficiency and engagement by making use of modern service design and implementing automation technology. • Automation should enable the university to free up capacity to tackle organisational priorities and make efficiency savings by automating a range of time consuming, repetitive, transactional, rule-based processes. For staff, these capabilities had the potential to free-up time, enhance productivity and improve our responsiveness to students. Additionally, a strong theme emerging from the recent Employee Engagement Survey was frustration around the

	<p>high volume of administrative burden and 'bureaucracy', particularly within academic staff - this project represented a clear opportunity to address this challenge and improve staff engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-project work had been undertaken to identify a number of candidate processes for redesign using automation, and it was estimated that 210 hours of staff time per week could be saved by automating the initial ten. • The combination of modern business process design techniques such as Service Design and Design Thinking alongside Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Automation technology represented a significant opportunity for our university to become more agile, effective, and outcome-driven; creating leaner professional services and freeing up academic time to focus on increased student interaction. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Gibbard asked about the consultation process. Andrew Proctor clarified that a member of each team had signed off on the relevant team's submitted data, and that the aim of the project was to get the technology in place so that it could evolve once there if required. • Colin Hughes asked about the University's current technical capacity and Andrew Proctor clarified that a small internal team was in place (that could liaise with external partners as needed), including a development team and a platform team. • Colin Hughes asked about the possibility of collaborating with other HEIs in order to maximise returns and create the most adaptable solutions, ensuring wider applicability. Andrew noted that the University had already been in discussion with the NHS, who were starting to make use of the same kind of technology. The University would be able to make use of other work done in this field done across the public sector but within the Higher Education sector, we were likely to be leading the way. • Jonathan Vardon commended the work being done in this area and noted his belief that the further along the University progressed with this kind of technology, the more use cases would be identified.
H3 FOR INFORMATION	
304	The committee received for information the *Review of organisational structures and staff capability* SR/12/17, with Liz Barnes highlighting that a very-experienced Director of Marketing had recently been appointed, following a unanimous decision from the interview panel and staff panel.
305	The committee received for information the *Cost of living pay award* SR/12/18, with the Chief Operating Officer noting that UCEA had now written to HEIs asking for responses regarding resuming pay negotiations.
306	<p>The committee received for information the Wellbeing Strategy SR/12/19, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer, who noted that this document had been originally written prior to lockdown, redrafted slightly following the restrictions, and would be refreshed in the future. The following further points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the committee was aware, one area of concern from the Employee Engagement Survey was that the theme of wellbeing remained the weakest for the University and that this theme had reduced further in this latest survey. • In order to address the concerns arising from both the quantitative and the qualitative comments from the Employee Engagement Survey, a wellbeing document had been created. This document reflected the unique challenges of the sector and the feedback from a range of sources of internal evidence and identified five themes which would aim to address the root causes of wellbeing issues, rather than the symptoms. • There had been a significant level of consultation with this document during development and it had received wide approval for the themes identified. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Vardon asked about measures in place to mitigate mental health issues and pressures on staff during these challenging times. Ian Blachford confirmed that a range of measures were in place including regular communication and engagement via WorkVivo (the staff app), access to the Big White Wall online community, phone counselling for any staff member wishing to access this, and various materials available on Iris signposting further assistance. A pulse survey (via WorkVivo) was scheduled to be released soon regarding remote working. Ian further noted that deans were reporting that staff felt more closely connected due to frequent whole team meetings. Hannah Gibbard noted that the University was also ensuring contact with staff furloughed at home.
4 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
307	<p>How have we made a positive impact on our students today?</p> <p>It was agreed that careful monitoring of the Covid-19 situation would enable student expectations to be met and managed as best they could be. It was also noted that the progression of key technologies such as those within the automated services design business case would have a significant positive impact on staff and students alike.</p>
308	There were no additional matters .

309	<p>Items to be referred to Audit and Risk Committee:</p> <p>NONE</p>
310	<p>Items to be referred to Board of Governors:</p> <p>For information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Minute 291 - Catalyst Building b) Minute 295 - Recruitment and Potential Intakes for 2020-2021 c) Minute 306 - Wellbeing Strategy
311	<p>Next meeting: 03 November 2020 (Boardroom, University House)</p>