

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee
held in the Raeburn Room, Old College on Wednesday 17 June 2015.

- Present:** Charlie Jeffery (in chair), Senior Vice Principal
 Pete Higgins (Vice Convener), Dean of Students, CHSS
 Karen Bowman, Director of Procurement
 Mayank Dutia, School of Biomedical Sciences, CMVM
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
 Moira Gibson, External Relations Manager, CAM
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
 Urte Macikene, EUSA Vice President Services
 Phil McNaul, Director of Finance
 Janet Philp, Joint Unions Liaison Committee
 Jonny Ross-Tatam, EUSA President
- In attendance:** Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy, for item 4
 Liz Cooper, Research & Policy Manager, for items 9 & 10
 Matthew Lawson, SRS Programme Manager, for item 11
- Apologies:** Michelle Brown, Head of SRS Programmes
 Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience, USG
 Sarah Gormley, Business Manager & Deputy Head of IS Planning
 Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
 Hamish MacAndrew, Head of Research Office, ERI
 Hugh McCann, School of Engineering, SCE
 Michael Northcott, School of Divinity, CHSS
 Ian Pirie, Assistant Principal Learning and Development
 James Smith, Vice Principal International

- 1** SRS Committee welcomed incoming EUSA sabbaticals Jonny Ross-Tatam and Urte Macikene. **A**

The minute of the meeting held on 2 March 2015 was approved as a correct record.

2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not covered on the agenda or in post-meeting notes.

STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3 Remit of Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee **B**

The Convener outlined the background to this paper which followed discussions on scope at previous meetings and was driven by the evolution of the Committee from SEAG.

Earlier papers had been theoretical, focusing on issues of definition and benchmarking against other Universities. While SEAG's remit was clear, the addition of social responsibility needed to be properly understood and managed. The impetus came from the SRS Annual Report which had included community engagement, widening participation, and equality and diversity alongside more traditional aspects of

operational sustainability and sustainable procurement. A process of reflection began on whether to formally integrate these aspects of UoE engagement with society, and make them prominent themes for this Committee. Responsible investment had also been prominent and would remain on the agenda. Public engagement work promoting dialogue around the University's research overlapped with but was distinct from community engagement.

Members welcomed the expanded remit and co-ordinating role of the Committee, but noted, given the broad range of activity across the University, the need to maintain continuity, avoid duplication and ensure external relations were properly co-ordinated. New EUSA sabbatical members expressed support for the widened remit, particularly in terms of engagement with the local community and social enterprise.

Members recognised that there would be resource implications associated with the expanded remit, though savings were achievable in terms of the support provided to various University functions. As the Committee had no delegated budget, it would need to engage with and influence other groups. A follow up paper to CMG in August would provide the basis for a plan of action for interfacing with other University committees. It was not currently well understood that SRSC was a sub-committee of CMG. Reconsideration of the Committee's remit and discussion at CMG level would reinforce that the Committee was an important part of the overall governance structure and not outside it as SEAG had been.

A distinction still needed to be made between the Committee and the SRS Department, which led on a number of issues, but would not take on management responsibility for issues such as equality and diversity and widening participation, though it may provide support to the External Relations Manager on community engagement. Clarity on this would develop as the scope was finalised.

SRS Committee approved in principle the proposed extension to its remit.

Action – CJ to present a paper for consideration at August's meeting of CMG formalising the extended remit, outlining revised membership to reflect that wider remit, and addressing consequential governance and delivery issues, including the sub-group structure.

4 SRS Input into the New University Strategic Plan 2016-2021

C

The Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy updated the Committee on development of the next Strategic Plan and invited early views on the process, structure and content in advance of formal consultation in the autumn.

The Strategic Plan was a reflection of how the University viewed itself and where it was going, and SRS issues had a key role. Several themes in the current Plan touched on these issues, though only one specifically referred to social responsibility. The associated metric was based around carbon though elements from other themes were relevant. There was an opportunity for UoE to reflect further on how it wanted to measure its performance in this territory. Conversations on the values of the University were ongoing, having come up as part of the Fossil Fuels Review. SRS Committee noted work done by Communications and Marketing on brand values as a potential starting point.

The process would be considered by Court on 22 June. Formal engagement would begin in September with conversations on values, themes and structure with the committees of Senate, and the Plan would go back to Court in December. There

would be a further round of comments before the new Plan was finally signed off in June 2016.

The Committee cautioned against writing targets into the Strategic Plan that UoE did not have the resources to deliver. Concerns were raised about driving the new Plan through values, given the diversity of the University community and the different understandings of 'values' that were held.

Members expressed a preference for an iterative and evolving approach to redesign. If the Plan changed dramatically ongoing improvements built around it would be disrupted. The focus on people, infrastructure and finance as the key enablers was still valid. While five of the six current strategic themes were not internally focused, engagement with partners could be moved up the agenda. The Committee hoped that social responsibility would be retained as a strategic theme.

Workshops were recommended as a way to engage staff groups and ensure they had a sense of ownership. The Chaplaincy 'What is the University For?' series was noted as an example of engagement that could be built upon.

The Convener proposed an away afternoon in the autumn for the Committee to consider its new remit in the context of the next five years of University planning.

Action – SRS Department to organise in liaison with GaSP.

5 Progress on Climate Action Plan 2010-2020

D

In the absence of the Climate Policy Manager the Director of SRS introduced this draft project plan for a review of the University's Climate Change Strategy over the next 12 months.

At the previous meeting the Committee decided against a stand-alone group and agreed to provide oversight for the project. The main work stream would focus on utilities, discussed again under item 8. Phase 1 focused on review of the current Climate Action Plan, lessons learnt, and work stream development. Phase 2 would look at best practice from other institutions and development of a carbon modelling tool. Phase 3 would involve target setting, practical planning and final strategy recommendations. Once SRS Committee had endorsed the plan it would be submitted to PSG and Court.

Members felt the approach was broadly correct and the governance sufficient. Through review of the University's climate strategy CSG had the opportunity to make a significant impact, crystallising investment, resources and commitment. The targets set should be challenging but achievable and grounded in reality. As the estate and student numbers would continue to grow, future targets would need to be clearly set based on evidence and modelling.

Another possible pathway to significant cuts was increasing investment in alternative energy. It was important where the University did invest in improvements to clearly message this to demonstrate its commitment. It was noted there may be a policy response from the Scottish Government or output from the Climate Change Conference in Paris that would impact on UoE planning.

SRS Committee endorsed the draft project plan.

6 Our Changing World Update

E

Professor Mayank Dutia updated members on the Our Changing World undergraduate course and public lecture series to stimulate discussion of next steps.

The public lectures, held in semester one, were delivered by leading academics across the Colleges on global challenges and what was being done to address them. Over five years 44 lectures had been given and were available on the University's [YouTube channel](#), downloaded around the world, and used in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching at UoE and elsewhere. Once the sixth series was complete a decision would be made on how to proceed in future.

The aim of the 20 credit undergraduate course running in parallel was to use open-ended global challenges as examples to get students to develop valuable skills in critical thinking, gathering and assessing evidence, presenting their viewpoint and listening to others to reach consensus.

There was an issue around financial support, particularly for the lecture series. These costs were currently borne by Biomedical Sciences as there was no associated budget at University level. There had been some contribution from the Global Academies as well as organisational support from the SRS Department.

Members acknowledged the success of the initiative. In order to secure dedicated funding a compelling case would need to be made for public engagement as a priority corporate activity. The current paper could offer a solid starting point, with the addition of discussion of future activity and benefits. There was also a wider debate to be had about public engagement activity at the University. The Committee, with its extended remit, could present a case for budget holders to set aside funds for public engagement.

Action – MD & SRS Department to work up a case.

Ad hoc support for Our Changing World would continue in the short term and members would try to find ways of supporting the series this autumn, then look to developing a more systematic strategic approach in future.

7 Reflections on Fair Trade Steering Group

F

The Director of Procurement presented this paper reflecting on the future role of FTSG.

The University's relationship to sustainable procurement, workers' rights, the living wage and other aspects of fairness in trade would change as they became part of its legal duties. FTSG was set up when the University first applied for fair trade status, currently retained until September 2016. The Research & Policy Manager and student researchers had highlighted a lack of clarity about fair trade at UoE. The paper proposed a review of FTSG over the summer, including a change of name, remit and membership to reflect its more advisory role, with resulting proposals to be presented back to the Group in September.

Action – KB to reflect further, lead the review over the summer and report back to the Committee in October.

Action – JP to raise concerns regarding UoE and the living wage through the appropriate channels.

8 Utilities Savings Practical Planning

G

The Director of SRS presented this proposal paper designed to prompt discussion and action in order to deliver a 10% energy saving to 2017 and align with the climate strategy review outlined under item 5.

The paper highlighted the intent to make the case for a spend-to-save fund to sit between SRS engagement on behaviour change and Estates' technical solutions. Next steps were to turn the paper into a more fully worked up practical action plan.

SRS Committee endorsed the proposals.

Action – DG & GJ to take this work forward.

9 Circular Economy

H

The Research & Policy Manager introduced this paper giving an overview of the Circular Economy project at UoE funded by Zero Waste Scotland. Full report available at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability/news/circular-economy-report-published>.

The Scottish Government had invited UoE to be a lead university on circular economy in Scotland. This theme was becoming more prominent since Scotland became the first nation to sign up to the Circular Economy 100. The aim was to go beyond waste and recycling, not to view anything as waste but to reuse or return it to the biosphere. The University was potentially well placed in terms of its operations, procurement, teaching and research to contribute in this area and there may be further funding opportunities available.

Members welcomed these initiatives but stressed the need to understand the expectations, resource demands and commitments associated with them. However good the ideas, there was a risk in becoming swamped and losing focus. The key would be choosing selectively to support mature initiatives that were most closely aligned with the Strategic Plan.

It was proposed that before the committee papers were assembled the Director of SRS, working with academic colleagues, could filter initiatives like this coming to the Committee and decide which to bring forward, promote and prioritise in the planning round. In terms of circular economy, it was for the Business School to decide whether this was a priority, and resource and incorporate it into their planning.

10 Encouraging and Promoting SRS Links in Research, Learning & Teaching

I

The Research & Policy Manager presented this paper on current initiatives to encourage research on SRS themes. The Living Lab concept, linking research to University practice, had already been raised at SRS Committee and was aligned with the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching's vision. The EUSA President welcomed this initiative which connected education with contribution to wider society and recommended that these opportunities be made available to all students.

The Research & Policy Manager had consulted with the SRS academic network on the proposed dissertation prizes. Members supported the prizes, provided they were credible and the Schools were involved in judging.

Action – LC to connect directly with the Senate sub-committee taking forward the Learning and Teaching vision.

Action – DG & SRS Department to reflect on finding the optimum ways to bring these ideas to the Committee for approval as a package.

11 SRS Annual Reporting & Implementation Plan 2014/15 and 15/16 Planning

J

Given changes to the Committee's remit discussed under item 3, with further discussions to come over the summer, this paper would need to be revised and resubmitted at October's meeting when the Committee would be reporting more systematically on widening participation, community engagement, the University as a

good employer, and public engagement. The SRS Department would meantime proceed with pre-agreed work as per proposed deadlines.

REPORTS AND MINUTES FROM SUB-GROUPS

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| 12 | SOAG Report to SRS Committee
SRS Committee noted the minute of 27 May 2015. | K |
| 13 | Fair Trade Steering Group Update
SRS Committee noted the minute of 20 April 2015. | L |

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

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| 14 | Fossil Fuels Review Group Report to CMG & Court
SRS Committee noted the report of the Fossil Fuels Review Group. Follow on actions were now beginning to happen, notably divestment from coal and tar sands companies. Investment Committee would think further on how to enact the Report's other recommendations. Lessons learnt would inform how subsequent processes were managed. Proposals on how the armaments process would be conducted would go to CMG in September. | M |
| 15 | Climate Change Reporting under Public Bodies Duties
SRS Committee noted the UoE response to the Scottish Government consultation on climate change reporting requirements. Alignment of reporting was the main point, which University representatives would continue to make at every opportunity. | N |
| 16 | Any Other Business
<u>Social Work Centenary Project</u>
Members noted the upcoming centenary in 2018. Once proposals were fully considered they would be presented to the Committee to support.

<u>Food Policy</u>
Following on from an outstanding action from June 2014, the Director of SRS flagged that a finalised draft Food Policy would be submitted to October's meeting for approval and outlined plans for consultation and further discussion in the interim.

<u>SRS in Learning & Teaching</u>
The Vice Convener reported on progress with the online courses. Two developers had been appointed and would start work on the courses from 1 st August.

<u>Action – PH</u> to update members at a future meeting. | |

Date of next meeting: 09.30-11.30, Wed 21 Oct 2015, Main Library Meeting Rm 1.07