

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee held in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House on Thursday 2 June 2016.

Present: Charlie Jeffery (in chair), Senior Vice Principal
 Michelle Brown, Head of SRS Programmes
 Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation
 Moira Gibson, External Affairs Manager, Communications & Marketing
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
 Pete Higgins, Dean of Students, CHSS
 Phil McNaul, Director of Finance
 Jane Norman, Vice-Principal People and Culture
 Janet Philp, Joint Unions Liaison Committee
 George Sked, Acting Director of Procurement

In attendance: Joe Farthing, SRS Communication Manager, for item 4
 Liz Vander Meer, Climate Policy Manager, for item 7

Apologies: Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience, USG
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
 Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
 Zoe Lewandowski, Director of Human Resources
 Urte Macikene, EUSA Vice President Services
 Lesley McAra, Assistant Principal Community Relations
 Heather Rea, Project Lead, Beltane Public Engagement Network
 James Smith, Vice Principal International

- 1 SRS Committee welcomed new member Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation, replacing Kathleen Hood. A

The minute of the meeting on 26 February 2016 was approved as a correct record with one amendment: under item 5a the Community Relations Draft Strategy should be updated to read 'Community Engagement Strategy', having been approved by CMG on 17 May. The Convenor thanked all who had supported and fed in to the process.

- 2 **Matters Arising**

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

STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

- 3 **Good Food Policy** B

The Head of SRS Programmes presented the proposed University Good Food Policy, developed by ACE, Procurement and SRS. The Policy aimed to clarify and frame UoE ambitions, publicly express its activities and how they contributed to this commitment, and connect to research.

'Good' was felt to better communicate the focus of the policy than 'Sustainable' which raised other questions. Given where the Policy originated, the sustainability aspect was stressed, but the intention was to convey an even balance with health, which was covered in section 2. Members commended the absence of contentious terms such as 'organic' and 'local'.

The Committee discussed relative spend with ACE, through which the vast majority of food was ordered, compared with EUSA or external suppliers. Given it is a separate organisation, EUSA had not been included in the scope of the policy, but had fed in to an

earlier draft. Off-contract expenditure was the main area of weakness, and Procurement were working with the Director and Assistant Director (Catering) to address this issue.

Awareness raising and greater appreciation of ACE's achievements and activities should follow as part of promotion of the new Policy. In terms of benchmarking, UoE was ahead of the sector. Any members wishing to review the supporting evidence could request a detailed Implementation Plan from the Secretary.

SRS Committee endorsed the policy for onward transmission to CMG, and recommended it be sent to EUSA as a guideline to potentially develop an equivalent, aligned with their evolving plans to introduce the living wage.

4 SRS Communications – Next Steps & Lessons Learnt

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The Head of SRS Programmes presented a summary overview of SRS Department communications comprising highlights, lessons learned and next steps. Priorities over the last year included improving systems, reaching more staff and students, expanding social media presence and supporting colleagues across the University. Current priorities were the energy savings campaign, sustainable business travel, Action for the Climate and launch of the Climate Strategy.

A close working relationship with Communications and Marketing was leading to positive reputational outcomes for the University. The Convenor noted that the paper could have made greater mention of SRS involvement in cross-department work, such as support for the Race Equality Charter Mark, and this should be integrated into strategic planning going forward- and greater focus was needed on Widening Participation, Community Relations and UoE as a Good Employer.

SRS Committee welcomed Communication Manager Joseph Farthing who presented a summary of results from the SRS staff and student surveys. Almost two thousand students responded. A representative and engaged audience, almost two thirds considered SRS issues in daily life most or all of the time. Key programmes generally available to students, such as recycling or fair trade options in cafés, were highly visible and used. Awareness of the energy campaign was high, despite not explicitly targeting students. Half of respondents were also aware of targeted activities such as the cycle roadshow or video conferencing facilities, even though only a small percentage had used them. Awareness of the sustainable laboratories programme tallied with the number of students working in labs. In terms of how students received information about SRS, posters were surprisingly popular, though the SRS Department produced very few.

Action - JF to follow up with the Energy Office, to ensure coordination re poster campaigns.

The survey yielded useful output on priorities. Respondents' highest priority was students employed by the University, followed by free drinking water. Responsible investment came significantly lower down the list, though was the main issue raised in the free text section, with a lot of respondents repeating the same message. Members recognised that the free text format was amenable to campaigning. Some student responses included very detailed plans on what the University should do next. From a trade union point of view, it was good to see how UoE students see treatment of staff as the third highest student priority.

As the staff survey had closed three days previously only very early results were available. 1901 staff responded. Staff awareness of SRS issues tended to come more from the web than posters, with social media much less important.

The Committee questioned how ambitious the target of reaching 25% of staff by 2018 was, and suggested SRS aim to reach 100% of new intake, given the range of channels available. The Director of SRS accepted the point, noting that 'reach' needed further definitional clarity, as it was currently defined as taking a positive step, and that

awareness could be separated further from active participation. Having reflected on the outcomes and identified key areas to focus on, SRS would report back before taking action.

Action – JR to circulate a summary of the report once available.

5 Procurement Update

The Acting Director of Procurement presented an update on legal obligations and related activities. Since the last meeting the sustainable procurement statutory duty had been enacted for all regulated procurements over £50K. SRS and Procurement had been working to embed SRS issues into procurement practices, using the Scottish Government's Sustainable Procurement Prioritisation Tools. Workshops piloting the SPPT focused on travel, ICT, Labs and Estates. Outputs would be used to formulate what could be included in tender award criteria. On the whole, UoE was well placed to meet the requirements, though ensuring compliance across the institution would be key. Procurement were working with communications colleagues to facilitate this.

From November 2015, how suppliers treat their workforce could be included as an award criterion. Awards could also be split into smaller lots or subcontracted, to increase partnerships with SMEs. There were new exclusion clauses, including a mandatory exclusion from engaging with suppliers who had broken the law. A Procurement Risk Management Executive had been set up, with representation from the Colleges and support groups, to engage on the implications of the law for specific areas. A Procurement Strategy would be in place by December, going through the committees for discussion.

The Committee noted considerable press interest in the Conflict Minerals Policy endorsed at the previous meeting. The reference in Section 7 to 'support animal wellbeing' was limited to the food procurement process and was distinct from policies on animal research.

6 A Pathway to Support Student Social Enterprise

In the absence of the Assistant Principal Community Relations, the Director of SRS introduced a paper setting out a rationale and pathways model for the University to support student social entrepreneurship. Creating an environment where social entrepreneurship can flourish and integrating it within the curriculum reinforces UoE's commitment to social responsibility and sustainability. The proposed model would help build stronger links to existing social enterprises with further opportunities for mentoring, placements and shadowing.

There had been a good deal of discussion around student social enterprise, without deciding the best way to move forward. The paper was written following a meeting with ERI and student representatives. The proposed model aligned with modernisation of the curriculum and increasing emphasis on experiential learning and offered a third way between traditional business and traditional grant support. Ideally, an investment fund would be put in place securing more than just a cash return, including nonfinancial experiential and social impacts. The fund should be business focussed in terms of expecting a clear business case and a return, setting out criteria and examples of what good student social enterprise looked like (e.g. in terms of the social benefit created). The Head of SRS Programmes confirmed that colleagues running courses in the Business School and Health in Social Sciences mentioned in the paper had been made aware of the proposal.

SRS Committee greeted the proposal with enthusiasm and approved the model.

7 University Climate Strategy

SRS Committee welcomed Climate Policy Manager Liz Vander Meer, in attendance for discussion of the new Climate Strategy. Targets were as stretching as possible, with all

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known growth factored in. The previous Climate Action Plan had been located in an operational Estates context and included very ambitious targets not necessarily well-grounded in evidence. The revision should not be seen as a lack of commitment as the expectation was more action at every level across the University. The paper had been well supported at PSG in April and a fleshed out strategy would go to CMG in August, along with an outline three year implementation plan which would be subsequently refined. Subject to approvals, the finalised strategy would be launched in the autumn.

The next issue to address would be the business case for renewables, with a proposed task group to be set up looking into options on and off site to reduce energy consumption, carbon and cost. Robin Wallace, Head of the Institute for Energy Systems, had agreed to join, along with representatives from Estates, Finance, SRS and other experts from the Colleges and ECCI. The Convenor noted the example of the University of Cyprus which had built a solar farm with €200M from the European Investment Bank, the consequent reduction in energy bills covering the interest, and advised the task group to be bold in testing assumptions on renewables and the viability of UoE generating its own energy. With renewables factored in, UoE could reach near zero carbon emissions. Another key issue would be transport, particularly the signal value of aviation. Other opportunities existed around space, design and data centres. The vice-Convenor noted for example that Napier were currently offsetting a large proportion of their travel and energy related carbon cost protecting mangrove swamps in Kenya and Brazil.

Members reflected on wider trends and the need to adapt the estate, including what climate disruption might mean for UoE as an international university. A rigorous carbon methodology was needed, including assessing the carbon implications of the Estates capital projects programme. SRS Committee recognised the work done establishing an evidence base and business case for the proposed Strategy and looked forward to next steps.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

8 The Commission on Widening Access Report

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The Head of Widening Participation introduced a factual briefing summarising recommendations in the [final report](#) of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) and delivered a companion presentation outlining challenges and opportunities to inform future Widening Participation (WP) strategy for the University.

The collaborative approach in Scotland gave the sector an advantage over England, where competition led institutions to work in isolation. As part of its mission, UoE had a strategic aim to widen access and needed to assess the impact of the stretching targets around SIMD 20 set in the CoWA report. The school attainment gap in Scotland was a major concern, with high-achieving school leavers from deprived areas not existing in the volume needed to form 20% of university entrants. UoE needed to reflect on action it could take to address this, including long-term outreach to develop a cohort of learners.

The current approach had three strands: raising aspiration through outreach programmes, equality of access, and supporting current students. Its strengths included the contextual admissions policy; the evidence base; the proportion of entrants from LEAPS (400 in 2014-15); credit-bearing modules such as SLICCS; reciprocal international opportunities for WP students connecting with the global access agenda; and the commitment of UoE staff. Opportunities existed in the interplay between WP and Equality & Diversity; digital learning (using MOOCS as a tool for upskilling); reconfiguration of LEAPS to achieve targets and connect with other collaborative projects such as Aspire Law and Focus West; WP and postgraduate study; and strategic relationships with schools including co-designing curricula.

Members discussed opportunities to expand outreach at primary and nursery level. The Committee was strongly supportive of early intervention to open up routes to wider participation. The School of Education could be a key ally, including offering pre- and post qualification training for school and community educators. While the University was very involved with local schools and colleges, relationships were not as strategic as they could be. In addition to financial support, there needed to be work to develop a postgraduate cohort of WP students, emphasising PG study as a tool for social mobility. Development of the Community Engagement Strategy included very clear work on schools.

Action – MG to put LC in touch with the project lead.

Action – MG & LC to follow up on barriers to implementation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants mentoring scheme in Edinburgh.

Action – JN & LC to discuss further aligning the WP and E&D agendas.

The Head of Widening Participation was encouraged to be bold and develop radical new thinking on how we can widen access which the Committee was keen to assist with. The Director of SRS noted the plan for workshops on themes including one later in the year.

9 SRS Reporting

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SRS Committee noted an update from the Head of SRS Programmes on 2015/16 Reporting. UoE reported annually on its SRS performance. This was not a standalone activity and work was ongoing to identify and highlight the issues stakeholders wished to hear about. For 2015/16, content would be incorporated throughout the Annual Report and Accounts, with a shorter standalone summary and more detailed website. The longer term aim was to move towards more quantitative reporting. Suggested narrative priorities included circular economy, climate change, responsible investment and widening participation. SRS would take guidance from the new Strategic Plan when finalised.

Action – DG to ensure reporting narratives aligned with priorities outlined in the new Strategic Plan.

10 Responsible Investment

The Committee noted a verbal update from the Director of SRS on recent developments, including a new policy statement agreed at the start of the year and currently being implemented with Investment Committee and Finance. The second PRI Report was submitted in March. Direct investment in fossil fuels was between 2 and 3%, or 1% of the total endowment. In May Cary Krosinsky from Yale delivered a keynote on positive investment and opportunities to build links to the curriculum.