

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee held in the Raeburn Room, Old College on Thursday 31 August 2017.

- Present:** Lesley McAra (in chair), Assistant Principal Community Relations
 Michelle Brown, Head of SRS Programmes
 Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
 Moira Gibson, Head of External Affairs, Communications & Marketing
 Ollie Glick, Students' Association VP Community
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
 Pete Higgins, Dean of Students, CAHSS
 Zoe Lewandowski, Director of Human Resources
 Phil McNaul, Director of Finance
 Jane Norman, Vice-Principal People and Culture
 Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
- In attendance:** Sarah Anderson, Project Officer (Beltane), for Heather Rea
 Grant Ferguson, Assistant Director of Estates, for Gary Jebb
 Craig Hennessy, Senior HR Partner – Resourcing, for item 5
 Sarah Ford-Hutchinson, Communications Coordinator, for item 9
 Elizabeth Vander Meer, Climate Policy Manager, for item 10
 Matthew Lawson, SRS Programme Manager, for item 12
- Apologies:** Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
 Charlie Jeffery (Convenor), Senior Vice Principal
 Janet Philp, Joint Unions Liaison Committee
 Heather Rea, Project Lead, Beltane Public Engagement Network
 George Sked, Acting Director of Procurement
 James Smith, Vice Principal International

- 1 In the absence of the Senior Vice-Principal, the Vice Convenor chaired the meeting. A
 The Committee welcomed new members Ollie Glick, incoming Students' Association VP Community, and Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning.
 The minute of 16 March 2017 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 Community Engagement Strategy Progress Report** B

The Assistant Principal Community Relations updated members on implementation of the CE strategy. The paper outlined outputs, targets and how progress would be measured.

The Head of External Affairs updated the Committee on CE programme communications and progress mapping activity across the University. This would be showcased on the 'local' area of the University website currently under development, to include news of local interest, community projects, outreach to schools, internships and opportunities for online learning and short courses. 'Events' would link to existing calendars. SRS Committee recognised the need for a single global events calendar, for which previous bids had been made to IS. The Director of Corporate Services agreed to help with funding to move this forward.

Action - CE programme board to progress with MG/DG.

Ideally there would be three to four flagship projects, integrating research, learning and teaching, with a transformative impact on the community and the student experience, with

potential for spin off research grant applications. The Hunter Square project was mobilised to deal with a problem brought to the University by the police and City Council. A three-day design workshop was held, open to all students, to discuss antisocial behaviour in the Square. Students carried out interviews and desk-based research, and presented their ideas at an exhibition for stakeholders. This had already given rise to a spin-off research project. The Homeless Health and Inclusion Centre was an access practice and research and teaching centre with links to MVM and the SHSS. There would be volunteering opportunities for students and staff. The Read, Write, Count project, with UoE working with the Council and the Scottish Book Trust to improve literacy and numeracy, had not yet finished, and would be upscaled next year.

Action – LM to send presentation to HE to feed in to strategy work with the Council around City Deal.

Procurement regulations had built a community benefit clause into contracts, and the scale of University spend should enable UoE to influence its suppliers to deliver social benefit. Procurement would need a clear brief on what to include in tenders, aligned to College priorities.

The Committee were enthusiastic about the flagship projects, though members advised caution with regard to the tone of the new webpages. These could also be used to make the local community aware of upcoming building development or upgrading work.

4 Strategy for Engaging the Public with Research

C

Last year a working group on Public Engagement strategy was set up by Mary Bownes, and the resultant strategy was now with the Assistant Principal Community Relations to take forward, aligned to work around the future of the Beltane network. A PE strategy was important to research, with the Research Excellence Framework increasingly requiring case studies and pathways to impact. Compliance to the RCUK Concordat required a central PE strategy, with senior support. UoE also aimed to sign up to the Engage Watermark for excellence in public engagement, which would require building a cadre of academics skilled in engagement. A paper would go on to CMG in the autumn.

Members felt the paper was right to focus on what was meant by public engagement, as this was something REF would also look at.

Action – All to email comments to LM within the next month.

Action – LM to also submit the paper to Research Policy Group.

5 Youth and Student Employment Strategy

D

The Senior HR Partner – Resourcing outlined the background to the paper. In the past UoE had recruited apprentices in an ad hoc manner, with some pockets of excellence (such as Roslin which was Investors in Young People accredited). The strategy aimed to align existing ad hoc arrangements, create a succession pipeline, and set an institutional vision for the next five years. Governance for the strategy was through People Committee.

There had been a number of successes to date, including 15 staff signed up as mentors through the Career Ready programme, with a further 17 next year. A cohort approach to modern apprenticeships should see an increase in numbers to 150 by 2021. Working with Inclusion Scotland, UoE had taken on two interns within the Business School and the School of Health in Social Science.

SRSC expressed strong support for the strategy and was happy to assist with promotion. The strategy chimed with the inclusive growth message of City Deal. Members recommended considering with all vacancies whether the opportunity could be opened up more widely.

Action – CH to consider taking the paper on to CMG, and to contact Evelyn Dunton to have the strategy added to Court Services register of policies, processes, and strategies.

- 6 Revising SOAG – Proposed New Membership & Remit** **E**
- Following reorganisation of social responsibility and sustainability committees in 2014/15, it was now timely to look at SOAG, refining it into a streamlined and more strategic group capable of enhanced performance review.
- SRSC endorsed the proposed changes to its sub-group, now the Sustainability Strategy Advisory Group (SSAG).
- Action – DG to update to include a further sub-group on biodiversity.
- 7 Draft Widening Participation Strategy** **F**
- The Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning updated the Committee on WP developments, including a Widening Participation Strategy in development since April. WP had become a higher profile aspect of HE policy in Scotland, reflected in Outcome Agreements and supplemented by additional requirements in the Commission on Widening Access report.
- There would be four strands to the strategy: aspiration and earlier engagement; support to recruitment; support to succeed; and support to progress. It would span pre-application to transition into postgraduate study and beyond. The challenge would be recruiting sufficient students (210 needed to reach 10%), though the targets were attainable provided new approaches were taken. The clearing process had gone well, with 24 offers made and 12 accepted, including MD20 students. UoE had updated its contextual admissions policy, with care-experienced applicants guaranteed entry provided they met the minimum criteria.
- SRSC noted the serious issues in this area which required University-wide action, and endorsed the paper, welcoming new radical approaches, and highlighting the need to address the high dropout rate from the FE pipeline. The committee acknowledged a significant curriculum issue, the structure of UoE degree programmes making advanced entry difficult. Discussions about transformation of the first year curriculum were ongoing, and a fundamental look at the structure of the four-year programme was needed to facilitate year 2 entry.
- Action – TS to bring a first draft of the strategy to the next meeting on 12 October.
- 8 Annual Programmes Update – Progress & Next Steps** **G**
- The Head of SRS Programmes presented this report on collaborative work and activities to catalyse action, in line with ambitions articulated in the Climate and Community Engagement Strategies. The aim was to make all of this business as usual. Efforts were ongoing to make links between research, learning and teaching and the practical challenges facing the organisation. SRSC welcomed this compact, metric-driven report.
- 9 SRS Staff and Student Survey** **H**
- The Communications Coordinator presented key findings of the 2017 survey, in comparison to a 2016 baseline, used to inform future programming and reporting. 93% of staff and 87% of students reported that they took action to improve sustainability. Awareness of the SRS Department and participation in SRS programmes has risen. Next steps would include responding to issues, sharing findings, and integrating outcomes into the SRS Strategy review. Communications would go out in November outlining the results as well as planned improvements. The survey would run again in 2019.
- Members welcomed the report, noting that the surveys provided a helpful bank of information, and acknowledged the need for strategic focus on staff wellbeing, though there was no dedicated resource at present. It was noted that the response rate was good for a specialist survey.
- Action – All members wanting more information to contact SFH.
- 10 University Climate Change Strategy 2016-2026 – Progress and Next Steps** **I**
- The Climate Policy Manager updated members on progress on awareness, actions and project planning since launch in November 2016. The communications plan had delivered 50% awareness of the Strategy. UoE was a finalist in the Green Gown Awards 2017 for the Strategy and shortlisted for the 2017 ISCN Awards. An implementation plan had been

developed and interim targets refined and fed in to GaSP planning. An information hub was being developed to showcase climate research at UoE. Development of an adaptation strategy had attracted significant student interest. Internal and external partnerships were being extended and strengthened. Future actions would include delivery of updated sustainable travel advice, completion of adaptation risk mapping by autumn 2018, and proposals for the development of an aligned Biodiversity Strategy by summer 2018.

SRSC noted progress, welcoming the whole institution approach.

Action – All members wanting more information to contact EVM.

11 Integrating SRS into the Mainstream- Next Steps

J

Due to time pressure, this paper was carried forward to the next meeting on 12 October.

12 SRS Strategy Review Update

K

The SRS Programme Manager shared key points emerging from stakeholder engagement, initial thinking on priority themes, and next steps. Stakeholders had highlighted: support for the student experience, widening access including distance learning opportunities at scale, engagement with the city, sustainable estates and procurement including adopting circular economy principles, and multi-disciplinary research and learning including integrating living lab opportunities into the curriculum. Suggested priority themes were: socially responsible students and graduates, offering all students the opportunity to engage critically with SRS issues, sustainable operations (and their impact on wellbeing), research with impact (including SRS fellowships and scholarships), engaging our staff, and supporting local and global communities.

The Committee noted how integral SRS was becoming, and that a decision was needed on what was distinct SRS strategy and what was business as usual. Members liked the clarity of framing work so far, given uncertainty around SRS governance, roles and responsibilities, and welcomed the idea of dedicated fellowships, greater collaboration with the Global Academies, and better links with local and global communities, including alumni engagement. Concerns were raised about the number of strategies on the agenda, and some simplification was required to avoid proliferation.

There would be further opportunities for consultation, including two workshops with the committee in the autumn. An update would go to Court on 25 September, with a further update to SRS Committee in October. A draft strategy would be available for comment by November, to be published in 2018.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

13 Sustainable Campus Fund Performance Update

L

The Fund, governed by Estates Committee, was on target at the end of its first year, with 27 projects approved, £821K approved for spend, and estimated annual savings of £250,000 and 1,250tCO₂e, with an average ROI of 374% and a combined payback of 3.4 years. The SCF had proved a useful initiative to increase engagement with staff and students.

14 Modern Slavery Statement

M

Under the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015, UoE was required to report action to mitigate the risk of modern slavery in its operations and supply chains. The 2017 statement would be finalised for CMG in October and signed off by Court by the end of the year.

Action – All members to send their comments to MB.

15 Responsible Investment

Court agreement had been secured for a commitment to spend £1M on social finance. The University's investment in Big Issue Invest's Social Enterprise Investment Fund II would be announced in the next ten days - the largest financial investment in social enterprise made by a UK university.

Action – All members to contact DG for further information.