

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee held in the Ochil Room, Charles Stewart House on Thursday 6 June 2019.

- Present:** Charlie Jeffery (Convenor), Senior Vice Principal
 Lesley McAra (Vice Convenor), Assistant Principal Community Relations
 Michelle Brown, Head of SRS Programmes
 Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
 Georgie Harris, Students' Association VP Community
 Pete Higgins, Director, Global Environment & Society Academy
 Ken Hutchison, Joint Unions Liaison Committee
 Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
 Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications & Marketing
 Rachael Robertson, Deputy Director of Finance
 Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
- In attendance:** Mark Graham, Corporate Services Group, for item 3
 Jarmo Eskelinen, Director of the DDI Initiative, for item 7
- Apologies:** Katrina Castle, Head of Strategic Partnerships & Transitions, Student Recruitment & Admissions
 Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
 Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
 Craig Hennessy, Functional Lead, Service Excellence Programme
 George Sked, Director of Procurement
 James Smith, Vice Principal International

- 1** The Committee welcomed new member Ken Hutchison, incoming Convenor of the Joint Unions Liaison Committee (JULC). Members thanked outgoing Students' Association VP Community Georgie Harris for her contribution. The Committee gave a formal vote of thanks to its outgoing Convenor Charlie Jeffrey, and wished him well in the future. **A**

The minute of 6 March 2019 was approved as a correct record.

- 2 Matters Arising**
 The Palm Oil Policy (item 3) was subsequently approved by University Executive on 14 May 2019. The Widening Participation update (item 6) was positively received at a pre-Senate discussion.
 RELCO (item 11) would be included in a general discussion around climate change and carbon targets at the University Executive Strategic Away Day on 13th June, and further discussions were expected.

STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

- 3 City Regional Deal Community Benefits Overview** **B**
 Mark Graham from the DDI Programme Management Office shared this overview of the implications, risks and opportunities associated with delivering the procurement community benefits (CB) and associated Data Driven Innovation (DDI) objectives that UoE had committed to as part of receiving Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (CRD) Programme funding.

In the context of the CRD, there was no agreed approach with the Government as to what CB should focus on, occasioning potential risks for UoE and its CRD partners, but also giving the University an opportunity to inform that process, demonstrate leadership, deliver

a clear vision, and maximise benefits. Currently a piecemeal, project-by-project approach was being taken, with no consistent and coordinated approach to monitoring and evaluation. UoE needed to first agree its approach and definition of CB before this could be formally taken to CRD partners.

Members noted that a significant proportion of community benefits would not come directly through Procurement. Procurement would act to unlock benefits through competitive dialogue as to what companies could potentially offer, and what UoE's priorities were in that area. SRS would create capacity to monitor projects and link them in to wider activities. A monitoring and evaluation plan would be critical to draw-down of funding.

Members were broadly supportive of decoupling CB contributions from individual projects so these could be aggregated into an overarching fund and directed to support critical community needs, allowing the University to take a much wider view of CB. However, it would also be important, particularly in construction, to realise benefits locally so contractors could see the benefit to them. A balance would need to be struck between the University's local area in the city and the Lothians, and its wider area of impact in terms of procurement, taking in the whole of Scotland and beyond.

SRS Committee noted the paper and supported the proposed actions to maximise the potential benefits of adopting a strategic University and CRD partnership approach to meeting CB and DDI objectives, provided this did not add a premium or additional cost on to construction contracts.

4 Climate Change: Update on External Developments & UoE Response

C

The Director of SRS provided an update on recent developments in science, policy and external civil society, government action in response to climate change, and the University's response.

Reports from the IPCC and IPBES demonstrated that the impact of climate change was not far off, with people already being affected all around the world. The number of school strikes and global protests were increasing, part of a whole series of external drivers demonstrating the salience of the issue and the pressure it brings, and leading to policy change.

The University Executive Strategic Away Day on 13th June would examine what action UoE might take and bold developments should follow. UoE would avoid any political declarations that were not backed up with a clear plan for delivery, and would stick to its 'Zero by 2040' goal, continuing to take a strategic and sustained approach. There would be a communications challenge for the University in conveying to a constantly changing student population everything it was doing in this area. There would be an initial push during Welcome Week, followed up by themed campaigns highlighting UoE work in this area across research and teaching and into operations. There would also be pathways for students to be actively involved (e.g. through the Sustainability Champions network).

It was important reputationally for the University to be seen to be taking substantive action, with large-scale initiatives happening elsewhere. UoE was revisiting proposals arising from the RELCO process, looking at approaches to implementation that were not distanced from the everyday life of the University. RELCO was aspirational and large-scale, and first steps would be to look at affordable, deliverable pilot schemes as a test bed. It would not be possible to get to zero carbon without doing something offsite, but the nature, scale, timeframe and funding source were all still to be agreed.

Members welcomed inclusion of the SDGs in the Strategic Plan, and recognised that substantial change to core processes was still needed in order to get to carbon zero. On business travel, the Committee recommended making School by School graphs available on the SRS website, as a communications tool and to set a benchmark. Members felt that more could be done to leverage the University's scientific research, and to promote systematic collaboration between researchers working in related areas. Instead of buying

land, it was proposed that UoE could work in collaboration with landowners on reforestation and peatland restoration.

Action – CJ to share thoughts in this area with DG before 13th June.

5 THE SDG Ranking

D

The Head of SRS Programmes provided a brief overview of the Times Higher Education (THE) Sustainable Development Goals Ranking for universities. The University and the Students' Association committed to the SDG Accord in 2017. With the SDGs now included in the Strategic Plan, it was felt to be timely for UoE to participate in the THE SDG ranking, on those goals most closely aligned to the strategic objectives the University had committed to. Initial investigation suggested that UoE would have performed extremely well, had it participated in this year's process.

Members noted the value in participating of being able to shape the process, and stressed the importance of focusing on what the University wanted to highlight, rather than being driven by another ranking exercise.

SRS Committee endorsed the recommendation for participation by the University in the 2019 process reporting against 4 goals: SDG 4 Quality Education; SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities; SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; & SDG 13 Climate Action.

Action – TS to follow up with Pauline Jones to carry out further assessment of the methodology.

Action – MB to follow up with PH who had a useful contact working on SDG reporting for business.

Action – TS & MB to take UoE's participation forward.

6 New Building Sustainability Standards

E

The Committee noted a paper from the Director of SRS on the adoption by Estates of new standards for sustainability in UoE buildings via the new Edinburgh Sustainability Model Evaluator (ESME) tool, replacing BREEAM. (BREEAM would be retained where it was a requirement for funding). ESME would help the University avoid duplication (e.g. multiple biodiversity audits of the same campus), reduce the energy demand from its buildings, enhance user wellbeing, and help deliver real change. It would go to Estates Committee on 10 September.

Members commended Estates on their work on the tool, comprising review of best practice globally, selection of the most relevant aspects for UoE, and now work to pilot and embed it in practice. Once the tool have been trialled, the intention was to get other universities involved. It had already been shared with a number of institutions including QUB.

7 City Deal/Data Driven Innovation Update

F

The Director of the DDI Initiative presented this update on the DDI Programme since its inception in August 2018, including finalisation of investment business cases, first projects in the Innovation hubs, and future plans.

Part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, the DDI initiative aimed to help people and organisations benefit from the data revolution. Three of its five themes directly supported social responsibility and sustainability: 1 - Accelerating inclusive growth, 2 - Targeted employability and skills interventions, and 5 - Social benefit through innovation. Current projects addressing SR issues included the DDI Skills Gateway, Community Benefits (as discussed under item 3), the Edinburgh Futures Institute, the UNICEF Data for Children hub, and Students as Change Agents (SACChA). The Initiative was on track in fulfilling its responsibilities to CRD.

Members found the briefing helpful, providing useful insight into the complexities of the City Deal. Community benefits was an obvious area for collaboration. There could also be opportunities for partnership working around social investments, circular economy, and collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council and other Councils in the region.

Action – JR to invite JE to come back regularly to report to the group.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

8 Widening Participation: Regional College Partnerships

G

The Head of Widening Participation outlined the direction of travel of partnership discussions between the University and regional colleges, focusing on widening participation, including broader community engagement and skills development.

Colleges played a vital role in facilitating access for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. UoE had already been working with colleges, but not in a strategic, overarching way. This work had provided the necessary articulation to ensure an efficient learner journey (including advanced entry points for students), as well as an opportunity for UoE to rethink its own curriculum and reconsider what transition support all students need. Colleges could offer excellent examples of community engagement, as they tended to know their communities very well.

Members welcomed the update, recognising this as an important area. Based on strong relationships with colleges, UoE could work with them to design bespoke access pathways. Further developments would be reported on as they emerged.

9 Social Investments

H

The Director of SRS presented a summary of the University's journey on social investments to date, including arrangements for governance and activities since 2017, thanking members for their contribution. Over £3.5M of the allocated £8M had already been invested in schemes offering real social good. The reputational benefits were considerable, having attracted significant interest from Scottish Ministers. A request had been received to carry out action research in the area, and the Committee were keen to see work to date being academically assessed. The Director of SRS was currently in talks with Unilever who were keen to collaborate.

10 Sustainable Campus Fund: 3-year Performance Update

I

The Head of SRS Programmes provided an update on the Sustainable Campus Fund since its establishment as an internal investment vehicle in 2016. SRS worked closely with Estates to identify a suitable pipeline of projects. 74% of projects received had been approved, at a cost of £2,194,574. These were estimated to generate annual savings of £460K and 1,650tCO₂e (equivalent to 10% of UoE business travel). The SCF offered a good vehicle for encouraging buy-in and aligned with operational plans. Supplementary funding from the Scottish Funding Council had been secured following a recommendation from the Vice-Principal Planning, Resources and Research Policy.