

## UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

**MINUTE OF A MEETING** of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee held in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House on Thursday 24 October 2019.

- Present:** Sandy Tudhope (Convenor), University Lead on Climate Responsibility and Sustainability  
 Lesley McAra (Vice Convenor), Assistant Principal Community Relations  
 Michelle Brown, Deputy Director and Head of SRS Programmes  
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability  
 Claire Graf, Joint Unions Liaison Committee representative  
 Pete Higgins, Director, Global Environment & Society Academy  
 Gary Jebb, Director of Estates  
 Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications & Marketing  
 Rachael Robertson, Deputy Director of Finance  
 Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning  
 Rosheen Wallace, Students' Association VP Community
- In attendance:** Bria Mason, Gaelic Officer, for item 4  
 Matthew Lawson, Student Engagement, Events & Reporting Programme Manager, for item 7
- Apologies:** Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation  
 Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience  
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services  
 Craig Hennessy, Functional Lead, Service Excellence Programme  
 George Sked, Director of Procurement  
 James Smith, Vice Principal International

- 1** The Committee welcomed its new Convenor, Sandy Tudhope, and new member Claire Graf, representing the Joint Unions Liaison Committee (JULC). **A**

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

**2 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

**3 Responding to the Climate Emergency – Next Steps** **B**

The Committee noted this version of a paper submitted to University Executive on 29 August, outlining proposed actions to follow up and consolidate discussion of the climate emergency at the University Executive Away Day on 13 June. This was a closed paper as the direction of travel had not yet been fully agreed.

The Director of SRS briefed members on developments since the paper was drafted, including establishment of a short-life working group on aviation looking at how to tackle emissions from flights while respecting University priorities around research and the student experience. Following wide-ranging discussions and a consultation period, the group would aim to report back in the spring.

The Principal had agreed that UoE would initiate a staged approach to progress carbon off-setting through forestry. Consideration of possible locations and funding sources was ongoing, and recommendations would be made to University Executive by spring 2020. There was recognition that a 'mixed economy' approach would be needed, including offsetting in some form, as well as managing down demand in terms of energy and heat. Discussions would also cover how best to integrate these developments into the

curriculum. The latest Programme for Scotland, released by the Scottish Government in September, included a new zero carbon standard for public buildings. On 20<sup>th</sup> September to coincide with the Global Climate Strike the University hosted a series of events across campus which had seen over 300 people engage and had led to some very positive discussions.

Members echoed the importance of taking action on heat, which accounted for 40% of UoE's footprint. Power emissions were expected to fall close to zero over time through decarbonisation of the grid, but there would be a long-term issue of how to heat the residential and non-residential estate. The Director of Estates was meeting with the SFC to discuss using University buildings as exemplars, as well as looking into collaborative working with other institutions. The Directors of Estates and SRS would be bringing recommendations on next steps for heat to Estates Committee in March. Buro Happold had been consulting on the issue and their final report should be available to share soon.

Members discussed local control of heat and the difficulty of addressing everyday ebb and flow in the absence of centralised thermostatic control for the majority of buildings. The Committee recognised the need for culture change alongside infrastructure changes, noting the case of radiator limiters being manually bypassed at the Law School. Setting up a local Sustainability Awards team was one way to foster behaviour change. Addressing heat supply was a core part of University business, offering opportunities to link in to teaching and research.

SRS Committee recognised heat supply as a major challenge, noting the importance of understanding the cost of not tackling the issue, and emphasised the need to address it in the wider context, taking into account biodiversity and the wider SDGs.

Action – GJ to follow up with CG on faulty window mechanisms at DHT.

#### **4 Gaelic Language Plan**

**C**

The University's first Gaelic Language Plan (2013-2018) had been updated to include new actions, following consultation over the summer. Gaelic language content would not be sectioned off into a special interest area on the University website, but would be integrated, with some areas available bilingually, based on traffic. There was no intention to move to bilingual signage across campus, given the cost implications.

The Committee discussed the Plan in the context of UoE's commitment to widening participation, aiming to draw in students from across Scotland. The proposed residential scheme was highlighted, given the success of the University of Glasgow's Taigh na Gàidhlig initiative. Given the scale of the University's residential accommodation, the scheme may have to be housed in a flat or part of a larger block. The Director of Communications and Marketing and the Gaelic Officer confirmed that there was demand within the student body for a residential scheme, offering rent reduction in exchange for organising and attending Gaelic events and speaking Gaelic within the property. Estates would need to know the prospective number of bed spaces, as current provision was based around creating integrated student communities, as part of the wider student experience. Estates would also need to see a business case if rent was to be discounted.

SRS Committee endorsed progression of the draft Plan which would now go to University Executive for approval. Members felt that the residential scheme needed more reflection (in terms of scale, and to clarify articulation with other University ambitions) and advised expanding on the resourcing strategy and giving a stronger sense of the order for priority for implementation.

Action – TM to clarify resourcing and issues around the proposed residential scheme.

#### **5 Refreshing the Community Engagement Strategy**

**D**

The Assistant Principal Community Relations updated the Committee on progress implementing the [Community Engagement Strategy \(2016\)](#), including recommendations for a refresh in the context of the new Strategic Plan. Following the refresh and wider

consultation, an updated draft Strategy would come back to SRSC in February for discussion and endorsement following further discussion.

As the recently published University strategic plan [Strategy 2030](#) put civic and social responsibility at its heart, it was proposed that the CE strategy could now transition from a stand-alone strategy into a delivery plan, one pillar of the broader Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan, outlining how to exhibit UoE's core values to the wider public.

In terms of progress, one highlight had been getting [Edinburgh Local](#) onto the front page of the University website. UoE had been active in the Scottish Government Social Impact Pledge. CE flagship projects (Homeless and Inclusion Health; Digital Ambassadors; Read, Write, Count; Design for Well Being) continued to develop and build on initial success, integrating research, learning and teaching with community engagement. In the wider context, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (iTRADE) was highlighted as a gamechanger.

SRS Committee endorsed: the transition to a delivery plan; the intention to take a whole institution integrated approach, turning University resources, people and skills to address these challenges; focusing on a small number of larger themes and impactful actions linked to the Social Impact Pledge; and utilising EFI as a physical front door.

Members recommended: taking the paper to Research Policy Group; reflecting 'civic' in the name; incorporating issues of biodiversity in considerations of space; and sharpening the Plan by thinking in terms of deliverables for 2030 and the right milestones and key indicators to assess progress, as measuring impact would be key to the City Region Deal. The Committee endorsed the moral responsibility on the University to take action on homelessness.

## **6 Social Responsibility and Sustainability Plan & Operationalising the SDGs**

**E**

The Deputy Director and Head of SRS Programmes presented this paper proposing the next steps for an updated Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) Plan for the University, aiming to provide an institution wide operational plan on how to deliver the strategic commitment to social and civic responsibility. The paper was marked 'closed' as framing discussions were still ongoing. Next steps would include GaSP and SRS convening a small working group using the lens of the SDGs to review the Plan, bringing recommendations back to this Committee in spring 2020. The Deputy Director of Finance agreed to join the working group.

SRS Committee welcomed the paper, agreeing that the operationalising approach was key. Consideration should be given to how UoE could best support its students to influence these major agendas. Members expressed support for this core activity, emphasising the importance of relating it to UoE research and the work colleagues were doing to shape the SDGs. A carefully considered Communications Plan would be needed to direct engagement with different audiences.

The Head of SRS Programmes reiterated that the SRS Department had an open door for colleagues to share their ideas.

Action – MB to follow up with CG on recycling and the Colgate initiative.

Action – MB to add timeline material to the paper.

## **7 Sustainability and Festivals**

**F**

The Sustainability & Festivals project launched at the start of the year. As the largest arts festival in the world, with the University its largest landlord (and home to Assembly and Underbelly, the two biggest operators involved), there was scope for major change and significant reputational benefit. The scheme began with an internship supported by EFI to develop and support sustainability ideas in UoE venues. A coordinator has been recruited, with monitoring and guidance provided by a project steering group. Significant progress had been made including updating tenancy documents, initiating new sustainability protocols, and strengthening the existing waste protocol. The Festivals Coordinator had

worked with tenants to establish baseline sustainable practice and helped some tenants develop their own sustainability policies. A sustainability hub had been set up over the summer with both a physical and online presence.

Intended objectives for the coming year included introducing a reusable cup scheme, gaining a better understanding of the full environmental impact of the University's role in the Fringe and other festivals throughout the year, looking for potential living lab projects and opportunities linked to the student experience, and seeking to secure funding to continue the project. It was noted that securing resource to continue the work was a high priority.

Action – ML to include mention of the project's relationship with Janet Archer and the Festivals Office.

Action – ML to make clear that the project was a partnership between Waste and SRS.

Action – ML to take on board for phase 2 suggestions for food stands to adopt reusable containers, and lanyard signals to indicate not to offer leaflets to the wearer.

Members noted the progress made and expressed willingness to help raise awareness of the project. They recommended benchmarking project activities against initiatives elsewhere and keeping abreast of developments to head off potential criticism. EFI would want to be involved, and may have resource to contribute. SRS Committee expressed strong backing for the project and would support it becoming more embedded in University business.

## **8 Modern Slavery Statement 2018/19**

**G**

The Committee noted a draft of this year's Modern Slavery Statement, UoE's fourth since the Act came into force. While some institutions focused solely on procurement, UoE took a whole institution approach across its learning and teaching, research, and operations. Next year's draft would include a long term approach designed to maximise impact.

SRS Committee endorsed the draft for onward transmission to University Executive on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

Action – MB to check the wording to ensure it was clear that the University would disclose any modern slavery cases in its direct area of influence.

Action – MB to expand on measures already being taken within UoE supply chains, in terms of cleaning products, uniforms, and other centrally procured items.

## **ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

## **9 Times Higher Education Sustainable Development Goals Impact Ranking**

**H**

SRS Committee noted this update on the THE SDGs Impact Ranking for universities (following on from June's paper). Recognising the flaws in methodology, members felt it was vital that UoE participate, learn from the process, and contribute to future iterations. The choice of which SDGs to report against should be aligned with overall University strategy. This selection could be changed each year. A preliminary review of which SDGs to submit against was included on p71. Members may be approached later in the process to feed in to data collection.

Action – MB to include how this relates to the Scottish Government National Performance Framework.

## **10 SRS Survey 2019 Results**

**I**

The Committee noted this summary of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Survey distributed to all staff and a representative sample of students during Semester 2, 2019. SRS thanked Communications and Marketing for their help in delivering the survey and analysing the results.

For point 10 on p76 the first bullet should read 'staff' and the second 'students'. Highlights from the survey included increasing interest in where the University's energy came from. Estates' monitoring and metering project should help bring that to life. Action taken to provide additional drinking water points appeared to have been successful, as no further comments had been received on this issue. Members noted a disparity between awareness of the SRS Department and awareness of the issues, which the team should bear in mind in their communications, though the department's main focus was on promoting its programmes and embedded them in business as usual. The Committee acknowledged a response bias as those already interested in the issues were most likely to respond to the questionnaire. Responses showed a lack of clarity on the action UoE wanted staff and students to take to address the climate challenge, indicating a need for a shorter, punchier refresh of the Climate Strategy. Members welcomed references to the SDGs and wider sustainability context, which were not even part of the conversation in 2016.

As the wider landscape and the University's articulation of its priorities changed, it was clear that initiatives needed to be joined up, to avoid silo thinking, as this impacted on the sense of community as a University and on the student experience. An engaging vision and strong values would help UoE attract the best staff and students.

## **11 Widening Participation**

The Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning updated members on progress. MD20 applicants had increased to 11.4% of Scottish entrants (12% in CAHSS, 8% in CMVM, and 4% in CSE). The number of care experienced entrants had increased to 18, from 4 to 5 a few years ago. The YourEd project was working with 12 schools across five local authorities, arranging visits, running information sessions, and providing curriculum support. WP were working with IAD and the Colleges on an academic skills development pre-entry programme. The IntoUniversity project was progressing, developing into a partnership with the University of Glasgow to be launched in spring 2021, and connecting with the City Deal.

Action – TS to share background information on IntoUniversity.

Acknowledging the importance of the issue, the Convenor requested a written update in future.