

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-128

Date: Wednesday 19 April 2023

Time: 1500

Location: CA105/6, Catalyst, Leek Rd

Notes:

1. *Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) are for information only or regarded as noncontentious. Starred items will not be discussed and will be assumed to have been noted or approved unless a request to unstar a named item is received from a Board member in advance, or at the commencement, of the meeting.*
2. *Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes, will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.*

Know Your Business session, 14:30 – 15:00:

A session on the University's Digital Transformation Strategy and Masterplan was delivered by the Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof Raheel Nawaz.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Kevin Gould asked how the University will ensure that the proposed digital solution will be up-to-date given the pace of change within technology. Raheel Nawaz responded that the University will opt for a tried and tested solution that allows for the best possible student experience, rather than the very latest technology.
- Juliet Oosthuysen enquired about the University's place within the academic landscape and Raheel Nawaz explained that complexities of governance and processes lead to HE being slightly behind industry in terms of technological change, however all stakeholders at the University are engaged and ready for this cultural change. Within the sector, the University was leading the way in such applications as Beacon.
- Mohit Dhingra emphasised the importance of the Digital Services team working closely with the owners of the business to ensure that solutions with value were delivered and that there was a clarity of the benefits realisation.
- Jonathan Chapman asked which of highlighted projects are being prioritised. Raheel Nawaz explained that the focus is being placed on the thirteen projects, and within these, there are certain imperatives to address, either through business need or regulatory requirements.
- Jonathan Chapman stressed the importance of delivering projects that provide solutions to improve efficiency as highlighted by the stakeholder engagement process. It was agreed that value needed to be delivered early in the projects.

Members		
Hannah Blackburn	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	P
Jonathan Chapman	External Member	P
Mohit Dhingra	External Member	P
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
Saima Hussain	Staff Governor (professional services staff)	A
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	P
Professor Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	P
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	P
Kim Newell Chebator	External Member	P
Juliet Oosthuysen	External Member	P
Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	P
Martin Pugh	External Member	P

Ruth Smeeth	External Member	A
Vikki Sylvester	External Member	A
Dr Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	P
Hayden Tsang	Student Governor (Vice-President, Students' Union)	P
Sara Williams	External Member	A
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Dr Annabel Kiernan	Pro Vice Chancellor - Education	IA
Professor Kevin Hetherington	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Professor Raheel Nawaz	Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital Transformation	IA

P = Present; A = Apologies; Ab = Absent; L = Late; IA = In Attendance; T = via Teams

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2800	Apologies for Absence were received from Saima Hussain and Sara Williams, Vikki Sylvester and Ruth Anderson.
2801	There were no new Declarations of Interest .
2802	Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors , 16 November 2022 BG/128/01 and Extraordinary Meeting , 24 November 2022 (online) BG/127a/02 and Extraordinary Meeting , BG/127b/03 and Notes from Strategic Event , 30 March 2023 BG/128/04 were confirmed as true and accurate records subject to the inclusion of Martin Pugh on the attendance list of BG2127a.
2803	<p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 2784 – The Chair of the Board of Governors had been written to on 17 November 2022 regarding the arrangements for the remuneration of the Chair role from 1st August 2022. • Minute 2784 – The communications on the search for the next Chancellor had been distributed to stakeholders identified on 31 January 2023 with a closing date of 31 March 2023. • Minute 2793 – OFS wrote to the University on 30 March 2023 and confirmed no further action is necessary in response to the submission of the Prevent statutory return. • Minute 2795 – to note that University branding had been discussed at the Board of Governors/UEB Strategic Event on 30 March 2023. • Minute 2801 – The Annual Financial Statements and associated matters had been approved at the extraordinary meeting held on 24 November 2022 and all necessary paperwork had been submitted as part of the Annual Financial Return requirements to the OfS. • Minute 2805 - an Extraordinary Board meeting was held on 7 March 2023 where the national pay award for Feb and Aug was agreed.
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2804	<p>Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance BG/128/05</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vice Chancellor provided an update on recent changes to the external environment and the potential challenges and opportunities they pose, together with an update on some of the broader activities and the recent changes in senior staffing. • The Vice Chancellor highlighted the recent changes to the methodology for the TPS pension scheme. It is estimated that the pension remodel is estimated at £1.5m, and because the University has decided to remove entry to TPS, the impact has been contained. Currently there are 460 full time staff in the scheme. The Vice Chancellor is lobbying MPs about the disparity between the rules for schools/colleges and Universities. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board asked if the £1.5m highlighted it had been included in the budget. The Vice Chancellor confirmed that it has been included in the budget and he thanked Chief Operating Officer, Ian Blachford and Chief Financial Officer, Sally McGill for their work to reduce the impact of the decision to only £1.5m. Kevin Gould asked if there was a

	<p>possibility of accelerating the pension reform. Sally McGill explained that new starters are not eligible for the TPS and therefore the exposure risk as reducing with turnover.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Blackburn highlighted that the NUS were continuing their quest for scrutiny of the OfS and their priorities and impact and it may well therefore be the case that the current review by the House of Lords, may not be the only review. • Martin Pugh commented that a number of important elements regarding financial planning were currently in play, for example the pay award, pension costs increases, and apprenticeship uncertainty. It was confirmed that the University was undertaking detailed planning for the impact of these in year and next year. <p>The report was noted.</p>
2805	<p>The Police Apprenticeships Contract update BG/128/06 was introduced by Deputy Vice Chancellor, Kevin Hetherington.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Governors are aware, contract renegotiations are continuing with 3 existing police forces. • West Midlands Police have decided not to renew their contract and they are not looking at other providers. This is a challenging situation as police forces are considering alternatives to graduate entry recruitment and the University continues to monitor the situation closely. • The loss of the apprentices for West Midlands Police is not linked to the quality of the University's training provision. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <div data-bbox="209 801 1489 1489" style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 300px; margin: 10px 0;"></div> <p>The report was noted.</p>
3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS (SB pls note all 3 are Committee Chair)	
2806	<p>BRIEFING SHEET - Strategy and Performance Committee, 15 Feb 2023 BG/128/07</p> <p>The content of the Briefing Sheet from the Strategy and Performance Committee was noted and the following matters were considered:</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a) Minute 324 – Lichfield Future Direction BG/128/08</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Hetherington briefed the Board regarding the future direction of Lichfield paper and the various options that had been considered by the Strategy and Performance Committee and the decision to endorse Option B. It was noted that South Staffordshire College were keen to re-establish the joint committee and progression opportunities between courses. <p>Members commented as follows:</p>

- Kevin Gould asked if the separate and more remote location of the partnership could lead to leadership challenges. Kevin Hetherington explained that this opportunity would not present the same challenges as London had, due to the nature of the activity planned.
- Mohit Dhingra asked about the financial outlay and whether this aligns with the University's strategy. Kevin Hetherington explained that developing this centre of excellence is in line with the University's strategy, particularly growing and sustaining the undergraduate market share, and would require minimal investment.

The Lichfield future Direction paper was approved by the Board and it was agreed that a full business case will be developed relating to facility improvements.

Information

- b) **Minute 322** – KPI Scorecard BG/128/09

The report was noted.

- c) **Minute 332** - Apprenticeship Performance Report BG/128/10

The report was noted.

- d) **Minute 336** - Update on Staffordshire University: London Portfolio BG/128/11

The report was noted.

BRIEFING SHEET - Sustainability and Resources Committee, 7 Mar 2023 BG/128/12

The content of the Briefing Sheet from the Sustainability and Resources Committee was noted and the following matters were considered:

Approval

- a) **Minute 519** - Digital Transformation Masterplan BG/128/13

The Digital Transformation Masterplan was approved, following the earlier presentation.

- b) **Minute 520** - Ashley 2 simulation suite BG/128/14

The Board of Governors approved the investment in the Ashley 2 refurbishment at a value of £2.3m. Furthermore, the Board approved the additional provisional sum of £1.1m for the further IT upgrade, if required. This would be subject to a separate business case and approval. The total value of the approval was therefore £3.4m in total. £5m has been identified for this project in the current five-year strategic financial plan.

- c) **Minute 522** - Bad Debt Write Off BG/128/15

The Board noted and approved the bad debt write offs, which had been approved by the Sustainability and Resources Committee. It was noted that the University compared well on this against benchmark data from the sector.

- d) **Minute 527** - Pension Update BG/128/16

The Board noted the update on pension matters.

Information

- e) **Minute 525** - HROD Annual Report BG/128/17

The report was noted.

- f) **Minute 526** - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion annual report 2021-22 BG/128/18

The report was noted.

BRIEFING SHEET - Audit and Risk Committee, 9 Mar 2023 BG/128/19

The content of the Briefing Sheet from the Audit and Risk Committee was noted.

	<p>Approval</p> <p>None</p> <p>Information</p> <p>a) Minute 1925 – Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report BG/128/20</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
2807	<p>OfS Sexual Misconduct Report (DISCUSSION) BG/128/21</p> <p>Pro Vice Chancellor Annabel Kiernan updated the Board on the University’s response to OfS’ framework requirements for universities on sexual misconduct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April 2021, the Office for Students (OfS) published guidance on preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education. This included a voluntary Statement of Expectations for providers and a commitment from OfS to examine how universities have responded to their recommendations. This forms part of a longer-term commitment to tackle violence against women and, more broadly, sexual violence and misconduct in Universities by UUK, NUS and, more recently, the OfS. • We have been advancing this work, ensuring that it is understood across our community, to develop supportive, yet robust mechanisms to manage reports of misconduct and to have open, safe conversations with our staff and students in order that they understand the importance of informed consent as well as what to do and where to go if they or somebody else experiences sexual misconduct and/or violence. • In February 2023, the OfS launched a consultation proposing new duties relating to the management of harassment and sexual misconduct. The proposals included a new condition of registration, a requirement for providers to define harassment and sexual misconduct, explaining how universities would work to prevent it and manage incidents, and resource their own compliance against the new requirements. There is also the proposed requirement to hold a central register of relationships between staff and students or an alternative proposal of making it dismissible for staff to enter such relationships. Staffordshire University will be responding to the consultation with the deadline for responses 4 May 2023. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim Newell Chebator asked if there are any historical concerns. Ian Blachford said that concerns are occasionally raised from both staff and students but nothing that suggests there are any cultural issues. Martin Jones confirmed that where issues had arisen, these had been dealt with in accordance with the existing policies. • Kim Newell Chebator asked if the culture exists for students to raise concerns. Hannah Blackburn confirmed that there is a platform to raise concerns and reporting can be carried out via the SVLO’s. Further work on reporting mechanisms was being undertaken as part of this agenda. • Juliet Oosthuysen asked if there is ongoing support available for students who raise concerns and Hannah Blackburn confirmed that wellbeing initiatives include counselling and support services and links with charities were all in place and actively promoted. <p>The report was noted.</p>
5 FOR INFORMATION	
2808	<p>The President of the Students’ Union, Hannah Blackburn presented the Students’ Union Report BG/128/22 and gave an overview of the key focus areas of the student experience including academic matters, advocacy, representation, inclusion, support and community building. Recent focus has been on supporting students with student experience issues, collating student wins, developing an appropriate action plan for activities taking place in Stafford in preparation for the Leadership race. The officers have driven union priorities and manifesto aims around consent, period poverty, harm reduction and we are Staffs.</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members enquired about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and Hannah Blackburn said that food hub parcels were in demand, with an 80% increase on last year’s figures. A total number of 800 students had received support.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hannah Blackburn informed the Board that applications are open for a Full Time Officer – and a shortlist is being drawn up, with voting taking place w/c 24th April. Results to be announced on Friday 28th April. Jonathan Chapman asked about issues arising following the Speak Up initiative and Hannah Blackburn explained that of those students who responded, they were focused on their own learning rather than on any wider issues relating to the University. <p>The report was noted.</p>
2809	<p>*Academic Board minutes (unconfirmed): 01 Feb 2022* BG/128/23</p> <p>The unconfirmed minutes were noted.</p>
6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
2810	<p>Members discussed the following additional matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kim Newell Chebator enquired about the metrics employed to capture the culture within the University for both staff and students. Ian Blachford responded that for staff, the Dennison survey was deployed 2 years ago and formed the basis for the Staff Make Staffs cultural development programme, where the results were translated into school and service action plans. A re survey was due to take place in May 2023. The Pro Vice Chancellor Academic, Dr Annabel Kiernan briefed the Board on the mechanisms in place to engage students. This included the student TEF submission, joint working with the student union and the new Student Experience Forum. There were also course representatives from each course who engaged with academic staff. The Vice Chancellor briefed the Committee that Stoke on Trent Council had been successful with a grant for SSE to provide a new District Heat Network to support the local Stoke area. This geothermal heating and water system provides cost free heating that is 97% carbon free in the locality. Potentially the system can be deployed across the University's estate subject to funding approval. This was being further explored.
2811	<p>Next meeting: Wednesday 28 June 2023 (Catalyst building, Leek Road)</p>