

MINUTES

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE, SP-11

Date: Tuesday 23 February 2021 **Time:** 1500

Location: Online Microsoft Teams meeting

Notes:

1. Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) were 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 (highlighted here in blue), will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Connor Bayliss	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	P
Glenn Earlam (Deputy Chair)	External Member	P
Joanne Hannaford	External Member	A
Colin Hughes	External Member	P
Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	P
Sara Williams (Chair)	External Member	P
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Matt Brindley-Sadler	Interim Director, Staffordshire University: London (<i>item 197</i>)	IA
Andrea Caulfield-Smith	Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment & Comms (<i>items 194-196</i>)	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Paul Marshall	Executive Director of Strategic & Academic Planning	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA

P = Present (via Teams); A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance (via Teams)

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
188	Apologies for absence were received from Joanne Hannaford.
189	There were no new Declarations of interest .
190	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee , 22 October 2020 SP/11/01, were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
191	Matters arising:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 167 – Committee membership – i) it was noted that in relation to the current vacancy, Joanne Hannaford would join the Committee for the remainder of the 2020-21 year; and ii) that the new Executive Director of Academic & Strategic Planning (who would be in attendance at the Committee) had joined on 1 January 2021. • Minute 171 – Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 – it was noted that these had been amended to include a specific reference to determining KPIs, as agreed (and subsequently approved by the Board of Governors). • Minute 172 – IoT wave two – a verbal update from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who clarified that the outcome of the second round of bids was likely to be known within the next 4 weeks or so, was noted. • Minute 169 (Matters arising) - Academic Quality and Standards Assurance Eco-System – it was noted that this would be considered at Academic Board on 10 March 2021 and presented to the Board of Governors once approved.
192	The Committee received for information the *Overview of annual Committee business 2020-21* SP/11/02.
2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
193	<p>The Committee considered for discussion the Briefing on 21 January 2020 DfE announcements SP/11/03, presented by the Executive Director of Strategic and Academic Planning. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 21 January 2020, five significant policy announcements relating to the government’s post-16 education and skills strategy were made by the Department for Education (DfE) and Office for Students (OfS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding (the Augar Review) ○ DfE Skills for Jobs White Paper ○ The Secretary of State’s guidance to the OfS on reform of the recurrent and capital grants for 2021/22 ○ Consultation on adopting Post-Qualifications Admissions (PQA) ○ The Pearce Review of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and government response • A final response to the Augar review was due to be published alongside the next Comprehensive Spending Review, which was likely to be in the Autumn at the earliest. This should outline proposals to respond to the three major outstanding issues of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student finance levels, terms and conditions ○ Minimum entry requirements to access student finance for HE courses ○ Funding and classification of foundation years. • The presentation outlined the key points from each of the above and offered reflections on the implications for the University, which Governors were invited to consider. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colin Hughes asked whether the University planned to respond to the PQA consultation and Paul Marshall confirmed that this was the case, and that this would be shared with the Committee at that time. It was further noted that in the period since November 2020, the University had worked on 12 consultation responses, despite the government’s apparent preference for a reduced bureaucratic burden on HEIs. Liz Barnes proposed that the Committee be kept up to date regarding the various consultations underway via executive summaries. • Colin Hughes asked about potential plans for ways of working with local institutions, and it was agreed that the University should remain open to various possibilities and different ways of working/partnerships.
194	<p>As a precursor to a strategic discussion, the Committee received a presentation on International Recruitment SP/11/04 from the Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University was currently underrepresented in the International student domicile, with 172 students enrolled to study on campus in 2019/2020. • The presentation gave a summary of the current situation, including comparator data, information on core markets, most attractive subjects for international students and conversion rates, as well as data on international partnerships and income. • The presentation also gave an overview of potential opportunities, including the London campus, an International Alumni Charter and the elevation of the SU brand. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenn Earlam noted his preference for narrowing the area of focus for international recruitment, affirming the importance of both niche courses and niche markets. Liz Barnes echoed this, highlighting the importance of nurturing current links/areas of focused growth, e.g. Caribbean law students already studying on our LPC. • Simon Smith noted that it was also important to consider focusing the University’s attentions on niche courses for which it was already known. • Sara Williams noted that the Department of International Trade had specialists that in this area that could be of potential use. Colin Hughes noted the need to strike the right balance between overreliance on one market/course and a “scattergun” approach, highlighting the importance of being able to measure how important international recruitment was on the current scale of priorities. Members discussed various factors, including the post-pandemic

	<p>world of transnational education (TNE) and partnerships, the potential monetary and reputational value of a strong international profile, UKVI restrictions/changes, and potential exposure.</p>
195	<p>The Committee received for discussion the Student Recruitment Report: End-of-Cycle Report (Sept 2020 enrolment) SP/11/05, presented by the Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report provided key headlines and lessons learnt from the full End-of-Cycle Report for 2020 for entry onto undergraduate and postgraduate courses. (The more detailed End-of-Cycle report had been provided to Executive and the Senior Leadership team.) It included analysis of our current student intake for 2020/21 with year-on-year comparisons, against available UCAS data End-of-Cycle 2020 releases for national and aggregated competitor sets. The report was based on data from UCAS End-of-Cycle 2020 and internal Recruitment and Enrolment dashboards. The key purpose of the 2020 report was to review and analyse student recruitment performance in the context of national and aggregated competitor sets and to focus upon the 'lessons learnt' from the last recruitment cycle and actions for the current cycle. Headlines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] o [Redacted] <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenn Earlam asked about actual versus projected recruitment numbers. Andrea Caulfield-Smith noted that nationally, Clearing had happened on an even larger (and more aggressive) scale than usual this year, giving applicants far more choice than in previous years. Several high-tariff HEIs had come into Clearing to close gaps resulting from lack of international applicants, and this had impacted other institutions. Liz Barnes noted that the University's biggest recruitment challenge this year had been the local demographic (i.e. the "bottom of the dip" for numbers of 18-year-olds, ca. 2 years behind London).
196	<p>The Committee received for discussion the Student Recruitment – Update on the Current Recruitment Cycle SP/11/06, presented by the Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recruitment cycle for the 2021-2022 academic year had been impacted severely by COVID19 and Government policy, impacting on both applicants and the recruitment cycle infrastructure. Key changes within this cycle included the extension of UCAS deadlines, the impact of Brexit (and the increase in EU student fees) and the UK's slow recovery from the current pandemic. Detailed conversion performance indicators and enrolment projections were not included at this early stage of the cycle, but the report gave an overview of the University's overall position for undergraduate recruitment as of 1 February 2021 including year-on-year comparisons of on-campus applications and outstanding decisions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing our applicant pool remained a key priority. Working with Schools and building on our analysis of market share by subject and region would allow us to focus our marketing and recruitment efforts on those areas where we had the best possibility of improving current share. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Barnes highlighted that successful international partnerships could often provide a reliable pipeline of applicants to the University itself.
197	<p>The Committee received for approval a paper entitled Staffordshire University: London – Phase Two Business Case SP/11/07, presented by the Interim Director of Staffordshire University: London (SU:L). The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business case outlined the capital and operational investment needed to achieve the headline objectives. The proposals included physical expansion into two additional units on the Here East campus coupled with enhancement of existing resources. The paper set out the rationale for the proposed expansion, giving an overview of the strategic rationale around strengthening the SU:L brand and enhancing existing provision; developing the next generation of courses; creating opportunities for collaboration, research and innovation; and reinforcing a course portfolio that was aligned with sector growth and the digital agenda. The paper also gave an overview of headline alignment with strategic ambitions, including culture evolution and the four pillars (Digital, Incubation, Collaboration and Enterprise); academic portfolio proposals; and student recruitment and market analysis. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sara Williams asked about potential crowding in the current market. Matt Brindley-Sadler confirmed that whilst the SU:L portfolio included popular courses, current modelling showed that market demand would continue over the next few years. Opting for an inter-disciplinary approach that enabled graduates to work flexibly and apply their skills to different industries and academic areas was what differentiated Staffordshire's offer. Glenn Earlam asked about the return on investment for the phase two expansion. Matt Brindley-Sadler clarified that the existing business case for SU:L (phase one) was still in operation, and that document SP/11/07 and its projections related solely to the proposed phase two expansion. Whilst affirming his support for the strategic principle behind the expansion, Glenn asked for clarification on the financial analysis on page 24 of the document. Sally McGill confirmed that this would be provided in the updated version of the phase two business plan that was circulated to Sustainability and Resources Committee, and then presented to Board of Governors on 5 March 2021. <p>The Committee approved the strategic principle behind the SU:L phase two business case, and agreed to refer the updated and expanded version to Sustainability and Resources Committee, before it proceeded to Board of Governors for formal approval.</p>
198	<p>The Committee received for discussion a paper on Evaluating delivery of the University's Strategic Plan – Connecting Communities SP/11/08, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was the third annual progress report on the delivery of the Strategic Pillar—Connecting Communities. It followed the same format as the first and second annual reports, relating the key aims and objectives of the Connecting Communities theme, pointing to examples of key activities and their success and impact. In addition to specific projects and initiatives highlighted in this report, a key focus during the last year had been on gaining a deeper understanding of the full range of work undertaken with our local and regional communities. Feedback from the Board of Governors at the January 2020 Strategic Event indicated a need to prioritise our civic impact in relation to the promotion of access and participation in higher education (the percentage of young people progressing into HE), graduate employability and retention in our county region. The paper developed a narrative of our Connecting Communities engagement and our civic impact, drawing on qualitative data such as case studies, alongside the links to our KPI metrics. The Committee was asked to receive this paper for information and to discuss the value of this current format of reporting against the strategic pillar of Connecting Communities. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was acknowledged that significant progress was being made on this pillar of the strategic plan and that communicating it effectively to colleagues, students, partners and the wider community was key. Martin Jones noted that the University was currently working with Sheffield Hallam on a project to produce a framework for social and civic value.
199	<p>The Committee received for discussion the KPI report SP/11/09, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University's top 5 KPIs comprised the top three monitored throughout the period of this Strategic Plan, relating to UK League Tables, TEF and Financial Sustainability, along with two recently added KPIs of Timely Completion and REF. Since the last report, we had received updated data on Timely Completion, Financial Sustainability and Research outputs. There was no change for the UK League Tables (which were reported on in October 2020) TEF or REF KPIs (the revised deadline for REF was now 31 March 2021). In January, the Government announced its response to the TEF Review. Whilst the new criteria were not known, it was expected that non-continuation (of which retention was a leading indicator) would remain within in the calculation (due to it being used within several new measures by the OfS). There was no change for the UK League Tables, which were reported on in October 2020, TEF or REF KPIs. The revised deadline for REF was 31st March 2021. In January, the Government had announced its response to the TEF Review. Whilst we did not know the new criteria for TEF, it was expected that non-continuation (which retention is a leading indicator of) would remain within in the calculation (due to it being used within several new measures by the OfS). Following feedback at the last S&PC, a review of our KPI framework had commenced in light of the work undertaken on the Towards 2030 strategy and new Academic Strategy. This would both improve the alignment of our KPIs with our strategic ambitions and ensure that we had clear milestones and regular review points tied to our new, more integrated business review process. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colin Hughes commended the report, noting that it was preferable to the previous dashboard format, and proposed including concise sections of narrative, to aid readability.
200	<p>The Committee received for discussion the Student Retention In-Year Report SP/11/10, presented by the deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 had increased the risk of student withdrawals. As an institution, a priority this academic year was to ensure that retention figures did not decline by reviewing our usual retention systems and practices and reflecting on what more could be done. Student retention was a key strategic area, which directly affected the successful delivery of the three top-level University KPIs. The relevant underlying KPI was 'Every course will achieve 85% of timely completion by 2021'. Performance in relation to this metric was dependent on both good student retention (the focus of this paper) and academic progression through the course. In order to achieve completion rates of 85% we needed to achieve an average retention rate across all three levels of study (for three-year first degrees) of 95% each year, i.e. an average withdrawal rate no higher than 5% per annum. During Semester one the University performed better than the threshold of 5% withdrawals in all Schools. However, withdrawal rates were expected to rise during Semester two. The paper detailed the key actions being taken to promote student retention and engagement generally and the targeted actions being taken to support vulnerable student groups. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenn Earlam commended the progress made in this area, which had been of significant concern over recent years.
201	<p>The Committee received for discussion a REF Overview Report SP/11/11, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The submission deadline for the current exercise, REF2021, was March 2021. UK HEIs could submit research in up to 36 academic disciplines, or 'units of assessment (UOAs)', to be assessed by academic experts. Submissions comprised research outputs (e.g. journal articles, books); research environment (e.g. PhD completions, research income won and spent); and research 'impact', the non-academic benefit of research for policy and practice. An HEI's research reputation was heavily influenced by REF results, and this reputation affected several matters including recruitment, league table position and guaranteed quality-related (QR) income. We would submit approximately 20% more staff (109) than in REF2014, and expected that approximately twice as many of our research outputs (journal articles, publications) would be rated as internationally excellent or world leading (3* or 4*), ca. 70% this time vs 35% last time – a significant improvement. We would produce several good examples of the external impact of our research, but through 2021 and beyond there was much to be done to ensure that our research/academic culture fully embraced impact, something particularly important to us as a Civic University. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee commended the progress made.
202	<p>The Committee received for discussion the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) annual report 2019-20 SP/11/12, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following principle points were noted:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academies programme, introduced in 2002, represented one of the most significant reforms to the English education system in recent decades. Over two-thirds of all academies operated within a MAT. The vast majority of these had only a handful of schools, with a minority operating with fifteen or more academies within its trust, though the direction of policy travel by the Department for Education (DfE) was to encourage 'super-MATs'. • For Staffordshire University, MATs represented the wellbeing of our future generations: the 'connected university' in practice, pipelining and promoting higher education within schools and communicating the benefits of joining Staffordshire University as a student. • Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) continued to grow and develop its structures and processes, with twenty academies. It was now one of ca. 40 'National Trusts' (MATs with 16 – 30 academies) in England. The report updated the Committee on the following areas and noted that SUAT's academies were increasingly collaborating with each other in terms of teaching, learning and leadership issues to realise economies of scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Core objectives ○ Growth of the MAT ○ Links to the University as sponsor of SUAT ○ School Performance ○ Recovery Curriculum • Professor Martin Jones would be working with Keith Hollins during 2021 to promote more widely the achievements of SUAT. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Jones highlighted that the University would be working with the University of Lincoln on bringing together other university-led MATs.
203	<p>The Committee received for discussion the Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 update SP/11/13. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The update focused on the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan (APP). The monitoring return was due for submission to OfS in April 2021 and featured a narrative update with financial tracking. The OfS data dashboard was not due to be released until March 2021 and would, as such, form the basis for data reporting against the challenging 2020/25 APP targets. This update focused on 3 elements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our 2019/20 APP was focused on continuously enhancing the infrastructure to support access, student success and progress of all students, whilst taking decisive action to support specific groups. The attached report describes the actions taken and their positive impacts and demonstrates the solid foundation on which our 2020/25 APP is built. 2. A key element of the academic year 2019/20 had also been our response to supporting students during the pandemic - repurposing funds to provide for student need and ensuring all students could fulfil their potential in unprecedented circumstances. 3. To ensure governors were confident that work still progressed, a brief update on the work plans for the 2020/25 APP and associated progress had been included. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Barnes highlighted the current dichotomy between government policy, and targets around access to higher education.
204	<p>The Committee received an update on Apprenticeship Performance and Monitoring SP/11/14, presented by the Chief Financial Officer & Deputy Chief Executive. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in apprenticeship income was part of the strategic plan to diversify the University's income in a financially sustainable manner. The £8m of HEFCE Catalyst capital funding had committed our University to achieve over 6,500 degree-apprenticeship starts by 2026. By the end of 19/20, 1,165 had been enrolled with a further 529 starts anticipated in the first quarter of 20/21. In January 2021, the monthly remittance paid by the EFSA (drawing down the levy to fund apprenticeship tuition fees) exceeded £750,000 for the first time, equating to annual income of £9 million. • The forecasted income for 20/21 reflected the up-to-date intake & progression data and showed a shortfall of £0.8m, resulting in a forecast of £8.7m against a budgeted £9.5m for the year. (There was a £1.6m provision in the budget for 20/21 against the income from the policing contracts and a further £0.5m provision against income from other apprenticeships.) • The University expected to meet its overall target for enrolments in 20/21 but not all courses would meet their individual targets. Retention and overall progression on apprenticeships in 20/21 (including those who would complete later than 20/21) was high with both numbers significantly higher than the KPI of 85% (94% in year retention and 92% yearly progression). • The impact of Covid-19 on the provision of external end-point assessment (EPA) had prevented apprentices on some standards from completing their apprenticeships. Consequently, there would be no formal reporting of achievement data to the ESFA, but Ofsted inspections would instead review both retention and qualification achievement. Because

	<p>of a cohort completing prior to the Covid-19 lockdown in early 2020, the University had had some actual reportable completions across several programmes for 19/20. At 56%, this was lower than the 74% predicted achievement, but the remaining cohorts could bring this back to 74% when they were finally able to complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University was aware of nine COVID-related redundancies amongst the 19/20 and 20/21 cohorts, and potentially more could emerge once furloughing finished. All were in the Operations/Departmental Manager (ODMA) standard - the 'general management' standard favoured by hospitality and leisure employers. Apart from withdrawals on this course, the national lockdown accompanying the second wave of coronavirus had, to date, had limited impact on apprenticeship delivery and we continued to see apprentices, previously furloughed, return to their courses. • There was some impact on recruitment - some employers in the leisure and commercial sectors were delaying enrolment of apprentices until the economic climate improved. • As Ofsted had announced that no graded inspections would take place before April 2021, all the University's provision would be in scope for the next visit, including levels 6 and 7 which previously sat outside of Ofsted's remit. Activities and training would be rolled out to all areas with responsibility for apprenticeships and evidence was being gathered to demonstrate good practice for all areas of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF). • The rapid growth in apprenticeship numbers and income over the last few years (as well as other factors including subcontracting levels and out status as both an employer and a provider) suggested that the University would be an early candidate for ESFA audit. From January 2021, the apprenticeship team was undertaking a check of all documentation and activities subject to audit. In 2019, RSM undertook an ESFA-type mock audit and actions arising from that had been followed up, therefore reducing the risk in this area. An independent audit into funding on subcontracted provision conducted by KPMG in 2020 (a requirement of funding), had not raised any significant issues. • New apprenticeship standards were being developed for delivery across the University and much of the existing offer was being refreshed. The sector was also facing the challenge of the Government's determination to reduce the funding cap on standards (i.e. drive down the fees that we can charge) and to remove embedded qualifications from new and revised standards (i.e. take out the degree award). The University intended to expand its apprenticeship delivery to the London Campus for 21/22. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Barnes gave a brief update on how recent government announcements/policy changes impacted on apprenticeships. • Colin Hughes asked about review of the University's apprenticeships portfolio. Liz Barnes noted that it was clear that Healthcare and Digital would likely emerge as the key areas for continued focus. • Sara Williams commended the University's overall offer, particularly in terms of how it supported local employers, noting that at least two members of her staff were either completing or about to start Staffordshire University apprenticeships.
3 FOR INFORMATION	
205	NONE
4 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
206	<p>How have we made a positive impact on our students today?</p> <p>It was agreed that conversations around student retention, the MAT (in terms of civic community/social value and future pipeline) and the APP update all contributed to a lasting positive impact on the student experience, as would a continued focus on representation via policy responses/consultations.</p>
207	There were no additional matters.
208	<p>Items to be referred to the Board of Governors:</p> <p>For information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Minute 193 - Briefing on 21 January 2020 DfE announcements b) Minute 198 – Evaluating delivery of the University's Strategic Plan – connected communities c) Minute 199 – KPI report d) Minute 204 – Apprenticeships performance and monitoring <p>For approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Minute 197 - Staffordshire University: London – Phase Two Business Case (<i>to 5 March 2021 meeting</i>)
209	Next meeting: Tuesday 15 June 2021 (Boardroom, University House)