

University Board Meeting

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting held on 16 April 2024, remotely via MS Teams

Members Present

David Furniss (Chair)	Chair of the University Board (Independent)
Nastassia Asselin	Student Member of the Board.
Chike Dike	President, Students' Union Bournemouth University
Maggie Frost	Independent Board Member
Nick Golding	Independent Board Member
Simon Jackson	Independent Board Member
Stuart Jones	Independent Board Member
Sara Luder	Independent Board Member
Joyce Napa	Professional & Support Staff Member
Jo Pretty	Independent Board Member
Susie Reynell	Finance Director
David Smith	Independent Board Member
Dr Carly Stewart	Senate Member of the Board
Prof John Vinney	Vice-Chancellor
Deborah Warman	Independent Board Member

In attendance

Karen Parker (Director of HR (DHR)); Prof Keith Phalp (PVC); Geoff Rayment (Senior Governance Manager); Prof Shelley Thompson (PVC Student Experience); Deborah Wakely (Clerk to the Board).

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests (Chair)

23/190 Apologies were noted from Jim Andrews, Dr David Crosby, Karima Fahmy, Prof Lois Farquharson, Karl Hoods, Anthony Murphy, Deborah Ward, and Robert Williams. Mr Murphy and Ms Fahmy and submitted written comments on the proposals under discussion which the Chair would feed into the conversation at the appropriate points. The meeting was confirmed as quorate. There were no new or relevant declarations of interest.

2. Voluntary Severance Scheme (Confidential) (DHR/FD)

23/191 The Chair thanked members for attending this extraordinary meeting of the Board, which had been convened to consider and approve the proposed budget envelope for the Voluntary Severance Scheme

(VSS). The paper had been considered and recommended to the Board by the Finance & Resources Committee (FRC) at its own extraordinary meeting on 27th March, and some additional information provided in the paper at their request.

23/192 The VC reminded members of the forecast budget gap which the VSS was intended to address alongside other measures, such as recruitment controls. The DHR provided an update on the current status of VSS applications. [Redacted]

23/193 The FD summarised the financial implications and re-stated the current position and extent of the budget gap (which had not changed materially since the FRC discussion). It was forecast that there would be an income gap of around £[Redacted] in the current year, and this was expected to be worse next year. Student numbers were down across the Sector. In terms of the proposed budget envelope, the paper put forward a range of £[Redacted], however the FD's view was that £[Redacted] would provide an adequate budget envelope, with some flexibility on implementation. Work was continuing on consulting with management at local level to review budgets and approximately [Redacted]% of the gap had been closed. Other cost saving measures remained on the table, such as deferring pay progression. It was important not to deplete the financial reserves and risk having insufficient funding for the new future strategy, but to achieve medium-term stability and flexibility to deal with future changes. The Chair clarified that only £[Redacted] was being sought as the budget envelope not up to £[Redacted], and the FD confirmed that this was correct. If more than £[Redacted] was required a decision would have to be brought back to the Board.

23/194 The Chair asked for further information on the £[Redacted] impairments referred to in the paper. The FD explained that this related to assets previously capitalised. It may prove necessary to make physical changes to the estate following the restructure. Arne House also remained on the balance sheet and there were further possible impacts if there were commitments which became classified as onerous contracts.

23/195 Members noted that the paper referred to [Redacted] posts being given up through the VSS and asked what this would be in terms of FTE. The FD said that she was unable to give specifics at this point, but confirmed that the figures included Part-time Hourly Paid staff and was a high level figure. Members also asked about the Sector position and how the proposed VSS compared. The VC said that there had been a range of responses across the Sector. Some were making more cuts up-front and had implemented redundancy programmes straight away. BU was taking a more measured, phased approach. The DHR added some examples of actions being taken elsewhere, including some announcements of compulsory redundancy schemes and cessation of pay progression.

23/196 The Chair asked about reputational risk and whether there had, or would be, any external / media interest. The DHR advised that there had not been any specific interest so far, but there were several points of disagreement with the Trade Unions and it was likely that there would be press interest at some point in the future. Work would be undertaken to prepare for this. The VC felt that the balance in approach was the right one, in order to maintain morale and engagement, whilst being transparent about the challenges being faced.

23/197 Members welcomed the information provided and noted the need to consider what the post- VSS structure would look like. Agility and flexibility would be needed and communications would be very important, particularly for those staff remaining. Assurance was also sought that staff taking VSS would not then be able to come back. The DHR confirmed the latter and explained that any return within 2 years was prohibited under the Scheme (via the settlement agreement). The point regarding communication was agreed, and a dedicated Team would support staff and managers.

23/198 Members asked how far ahead the University was planning its future curriculum and whether

possible future dis-investments were under consideration. Prof Phalp explained the approach being taken by UET, including the use of a 'heat map' to consider the portfolio and the need for possible changes alongside data on market share. Metrics were kept under continuous review and some foundation courses were being suspended now.

23/199 Members agreed on the importance of engaging with the incoming VC on the situation and the VC confirmed that these conversations would be taking place from the end of April onwards to ensure alignment between the short-term and long-term decisions. The DHR added that the incoming VC had been briefed and the VSS paper and FRC minutes shared with her for information.

23/200 The Chair noted the reference in the paper (2.8) to the fact that an Office for Students' (OfS) core objective was to ensure "that students receive value for money" and asked what assurance there was that the VSS would not adversely impact this. The VC confirmed that careful monitoring was being undertaken to assess the impact of changes to posts. The PVC (Student Experience) elaborated on the work being undertaken to ensure that students were being treated fairly. This included close monitoring of student / staff ratios and staff caseloads. Workforce planning for next year was being considered and remained within the national framework agreement. Prof Phalp added that monitoring teach-outs was taking place where necessary and resources were being marshalled to support any students affected. The FD added that VFM was also considered in respect of the costs of the restructuring and ensuring that it would deliver the objectives. The Chair added that it would be important to review the impact of the VSS following implementation and requested that an impact analysis was reported back by year end.

Action: Impact Analysis of VSS to be reported back to the Board by year end.

Action by: UET

23/201 Members asked whether there would be any other costs in addition to the £[Redacted] being requested, such as consultancy or wellbeing. The FD explained that some flexibility was being sought about the profile of the envelope to include impairments as well as direct severance costs, however, no specific consultancy was included within the £[Redacted]. The DHR added that staff and managers would be supported through the change support programme and other staff support which was funded from different budgets.

23/202 In summary, the members present unanimously agreed the proposals and the Board **approved** the budget envelope of up to £[Redacted] of expenditure for the purposes of restructuring, which would be primarily for severance.