

University Board Meeting

Minutes of a meeting held on 22 September 2023

Meeting minutes

Members Present

David Furniss (Chair)	Chair of the University Board
Jim Andrews	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Paula Alliston	Professional Services Staff Board Member
Dr David Crosby	Independent Board Member
Chike Dike	President, Students' Union Bournemouth University
Karima Fahmy (Deputy Chair)	Independent Board Member
Dr Lois Farquharson	Academic Staff Board Member
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
Anthony Murphy	Independent Board Member
Jo Pretty	Independent Board Member
Susie Reynell	Finance Director (FD)
David Smith	Independent Board Member
Prof John Vinney	Vice-Chancellor (VC)
Deborah Warman	Independent Board Member
Robert Williams	Independent Board Member

In attendance

Prof Keith Phalp (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Quality); Dr Shelley Thompson (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience) (Items 3.1 onwards); Karen Parker (Director of HR) (Items 3.1 onwards); Deborah Wakely (Clerk to the Board); Jane Meredith (Senior Governance Manager); Geoff Rayment (Senior Governance Manager).

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

23/001 Apologies were noted from Nastassia Asselin and Karl Hoods and the Chair welcomed new independent members Dr David Crosby and Jo Pretty and the new SUBU President Chike Dike who was attending his first meeting as a member. The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no new or relevant declarations of interests from members. The new Board Members provided details of their current interests on appointment.

2. Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 7th July 2023 (Chair)

23/002 The minutes of the previous meeting were **approved**.

2.1. Matters Arising and Actions Register (Chair)

23/003 The Actions Register was **noted** with actions being completed, not yet due or covered under the main agenda items below. The VC provided an update on Action 220 regarding apprenticeship provision compliance for current and former students and the systems for new starters. New controls and checks were now in place and legacy issues were being addressed. The University was also engaging with the employers and Faculties had improved their record keeping systems. In terms of numbers, there were around [Redacted] on site with a further [Redacted] at Bournemouth & Poole College. A detailed paper providing assurances was due to be presented to the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee (ARG).

2.2. VC Recruitment Process (verbal) (Chair)

23/004 The Chair provided an update on preparations to identify a successor for Prof Vinney who would be stepping down from the VC role in August 2024. The Nominations Committee had approved the appointment of executive recruitment agency [Redacted] who had a track record of successful VC appointments. Work was progressing on finalising the timetable and process, including stakeholder engagement. Internal candidates would also be able to apply if they met the requirements of the person/role specification. The aim was to make an appointment in January 2024, but there would be time available to run the process again if a successful candidate was not identified in the initial round. Nominations Committee had delegated authority to approve the person specification and role profile. The Board **noted** the update.

2.3. Report back on written resolutions, deeds and contracts signed and Chair's actions (Chair)

23/005 The report was **noted** and the Chair advised that one additional contract had been omitted from the report – The Chapel Gate Football Foundation Bid construction contract relating to the changing facilities, which was sealed and witnessed by the VC and the Finance Director on 14 July 2023.

3. Strategic Matters

3.1. a Vice-Chancellor's Update and BU 2025 Update (VC)

3.1 b Next Strategic Plan - Principles and approach for the review (VC/Board Chair)

23/006 The Chair opened this discussion by proposing dates for the Board to meet to discuss the next strategic plan ('BU 2032'). It was agreed that the Board meetings on 24th November 2023 and 9th February 2024 would be extended to add an additional strategic discussion after lunch (approximately 2 hours) followed by a full strategic awayday on Thursday 23rd May 2024 (the day before the Board meeting). These would be interactive discussion sessions outside of the formal Boardroom setting. The Governance Team would issue meeting invitations to members for these sessions.

Action: Issue meeting invites to members for the 2023/24 Strategic Planning sessions.

Action by: Senior Governance Manager

23/007 The Chair invited the VC to present his update on progress with BU 2025 and the initial principles and approach for planning the next cycle. On the high level progress report on BU2025, the following key points were made:

- The VC recapped the principle of Fusion, the vision and purpose agreed for BU2025.
- There was a focus on articulating the benefits of the Fusion approach and outcomes.
- Actions were being taken forward to further improve continuation rates.
- Student experience had been a challenge historically, and work was being progressed via the Student Voice work, with a focus on collaborative approaches.

- Research & Knowledge Exchange continued to focus on quality, with positive REF2021 results and work now progressing towards REF 2028.
- Sustainability also remained a key theme.
- On the theme of people and community, leadership changes had been implemented and work continued on inclusivity initiatives (although the gender pay gap continued to be a challenge and the zero gap target would not be met). Industrial action also continued to present challenges.
- On the physical and digital learning environment, campus improvements were continuing and digital security remained a focus.
- In terms of financial resilience, growth would be essential to ensure liquidity and solvency in the long term. The latest student recruitment figures showed that UK undergraduate was below target, as was postgraduate, particularly home students.

23/008 Members asked if the FD was confident in the deficit reduction and she confirmed that she was and that overall the financial position was playing out as expected with a predicted operating surplus of around [Redacted]. In respect of the need for growth, members noted that this would require further investment in the estate. Lead times were lengthy for new buildings and some subjects had more costly space requirements than others, so it would be important to decide exactly which subject areas would be targeted for growth. Members also advised that it would be important to consider student accommodation requirements in the context of the local authority's own strategies for local development.

23/009 Members discussed REF 2028 and the opportunities that this could present. Prof Phalp explained that the University already performed well on inclusion and research power scores. Moving forward a focus on tackling the historic challenges around income generation would be required.

23/010 Turning to the second part of his presentation on potential future scenarios, the VC highlighted the current Government's position and themes, including a focus on Value for Money in terms of well-paid employment, degree apprenticeships and lifelong learning. On the possibility of a future Labour government, there was still a lack of detail around their higher education policies, although it was thought that they supported the current Welsh model.

23/011 Work was ongoing to refresh the University's comparator set, with the previous model of separate 'stretch' and 'aspirational' sets being replaced with a new approach to better reflect the current position. The two new comparator sets focused on RKE and Education performance respectively.

23/012 On the proposed overall direction for BU2032, it was expected to focus on the following:

- A focus on developing quality in RKE and the student experience, with sustainable financial performance.
- A list of aspects to be considered in the strategic planning sessions was suggested: including branding/proposition, level of ambition and risk appetite, academic growth (shape and size), and diversifying income sustainably.
- The need for growth and identifying opportunities e.g. Undergraduate, online delivery, spin outs and foundation degrees.

23/013 The Chair noted the importance of capacity and growth and invited members to raise questions or suggest other points to consider. Members raised the following points to be incorporated into the strategic planning conversations:

- Affordability for students and the cost of living impact should be considered.
- The quality of the student experience and the need to address continuation rates.
- The possible impact/opportunities from artificial intelligence (both in terms of its academic use and also its possible use in contributing to operating cost efficiencies).

- Opportunities through partnership working, for example to utilise market opportunities for lifelong learning or formalised partnerships like the GW4 model.
- Focus was needed on addressing academic staff vacancies and succession planning.

23/014 The Chair invited the FD to give an overview of the financial position. [Redacted].

23/015 Members discussed the University's vision of being 'world-leading' and how to attract international students. This was an area which could be vulnerable to changes in government policies, so it was important to have diverse international markets. To date, the University had chosen not to invest in overseas campuses but had contracted with international agents to support student recruitment.

23/016 Turning to the comparator sets, members asked if there was a smaller sub-group that the University would aspire to and the VC highlighted some examples. These would be drawn out further in the strategic discussions. Members also asked if scenario planning was being undertaken in respect of possible changes to entry qualifications. Prof Phalp thought that the greatest possible change so far would be around BTEC and T-levels, but it was not expected to have a major impact, although it had not yet been mapped for individual courses. Members suggested it would be worth doing a demographic analysis on any possible impact on access, for example whether future BTEC students might find that their access to higher education was impacted. The VC said that scenario planning, including issues such as these, would inform the strategic discussions.

23/017 In summing-up the Chair noted the need for further discussion on the academic profile of the University and ongoing financial challenges. Strategic planning sessions would take place after the November and February Board meetings to consider these matters further.

3.2. Reportable Event - Impact of Industrial Action (VC)

23/018 The VC provided an update report on the Impact of Industrial action and the reportable event notified to the Office for Students (OfS). The marking and assessment boycott had impacted on 57 level 6 students from one Unit in the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences. Prof Phalp outlined the process and actions taken to address the issue. The OfS had acknowledged receipt of the notification but had not yet followed up with any further requests for information.

4. Other Matters

4.1. Business case: Salix Decarbonisation Project (COO)

23/019 The Chair explained that this business case was being re-presented to the Board due to significant changes having emerged in the scope and cost. The Finance & Resources Committee (FRC) had held an extraordinary meeting to consider the project change request and recommended it to the Board. Salix had approved the change request, subject to Board approval. The COO outlined the changes to the project and reduced scope which would now only apply to one building (Dorset House). This was affordable through reallocating money within the overall Estates Development Framework (EDF) budget. The Chair of the FRC confirmed that the Committee had reviewed the options and agreed that the proposal to pursue Option 4 with a reduced scope was the correct one. The business case did highlight the need to consider the decarbonisation plan and aspirations and time-frame for achieving net zero. Work was in train to review the cost of achieving net zero by 2030. In response to questions the COO also gave assurance that the design and technology proposed for Dorset House were proven and would achieve the desired outcomes. The FD added that additional contingency had been included in the project budget to mitigate risks.

23/020 The Board gave **approval** for overall project funding of [Redacted] to deliver the construction stage for the Talbot Campus Decarbonisation project. The funding was inclusive [Redacted] (including VAT) previously approved at the Business Case stage and circa [Redacted] is expected to be received from Salix. This would increase the BU element of the project funding to circa [Redacted] including VAT (which included a 10% contingency) to deliver the construction stage for the Talbot Campus Decarbonisation project.

23/021 The Board gave **approval** for the project scope to be adjusted to just one building, Dorset House (Option 4). The Board gave **delegated** authority for the execution of the contract and any other related

documentation by:

- any one of the COO and any other member of UET to execute any necessary documentation underhand; and,
- where such documentation is to be executed as a deed, any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

4.2. Business Case: Sale of part of Studland House car park (COO)

Mr Jones declared an interest as an employee of Savills and confirmed that he had not been involved in this project.

Confidential – commercial information

23/022 The COO introduced this business case which sought approval to sell part of the Studland House car park to a property developer. The proposed sale price was at the top end of the red book valuation and the work would improve access to the car park. The works were not expected to impact on operations. Members noted that no overage had been offered by the buyer. The COO explained that the University had taken expert advice on the deal from Savills. The offer was unconditional and the University would benefit from the improved access to the car park. It was felt that the proposed deal was the best option, and that the red book valuation provided assurance. The 12 month period between exchange and completion was questioned but was considered manageable.

23/023 The Board **approved** the sale of 0.078 acres of Studland House car park to Stonehaven Homes Ltd (but the precise contracting entity is to be confirmed), [Redacted]

23/024 The Board **delegated** authority by way of a written resolution specially authorising the execution of the sale agreement, transfer deed and any other related documentation by:

- any one of the COO and any other member of UET to execute any necessary property documentation underhand; and,
- where such property documentation is to be executed as a deed, any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

4.3. Contract Variation: Hybrid Media Agency to support UK Student Recruitment (COO)

23/025 The COO introduced this business case which sought approval to amend the previously approved contract with a media agency for [Redacted]. The contract was now close to exceeding that value and a new contract value was sought of [Redacted] to cover increased marketing activity. The expenditure had been approved within the annual budget and both the procurement and legal teams were content with the proposals.

23/026 The Board **approved** the new contract value of [Redacted]. This included expansion of the service provision to include international marketing activity as well as contingency for potential budget increases due to the recruitment position. No additional funding was requested beyond that which was already approved through the annual budgeting process.

23/027 The Board also **delegated** authority to the Chief Operating Officer (or another member of UET in his absence) to sign the contract.

5. Committee Reports (To note)

5.1. Audit, Risk & Governance Committee (23 June 2023) (ARG Chair)

23/028 The minutes were **noted**.

5.2. Student Experience, Quality & Standards Committee (8th June 2023) (Chair)

23/029 The minutes were **noted**.

5.3. Senate (7 June 2023) (VC)

23/030 The minutes were **noted**.

6. Any Other Business

23/031 The Chair thanked all members for agreeing to attend graduation ceremonies in November. He also reminded members that all were welcome to contact the VC direct if they wished to raise any further points for discussion as part of the forthcoming strategic planning sessions.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 24th November 2023, 9.30am to 12.30pm followed by lunch and strategic planning session from 1.30pm to 3.30pm (approx.).