

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 22 October 2024.

PRESENT: David Sproul (Chair)

Lionel Wallace
Dr Jon Walmsley
David Williams
Dr Joel Carlton

Tamia Crowl
Helen Goddard
Claire Sanders
Dr Nermeen Varawalla

Dr Justin Daniels
Professor Quintin McKellar

IN ATTENDANCE:

Professor Mairi Watson
Alistair Moffat
Helen Davidson

Professor Wendy Wills
Sharon Harrison-Barker
Nick Harper

Dr Charmagne Barnes
Jo Stuart
Elizabeth Heath

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Professor Paul Layzell, Lesley Titcomb and Karen Trew.

2 **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS (IF ANY)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that he looked forward to this new Academic Year. The University had started it in an excellent place, but the Board and the Executive had ambitions for an even better future.

He reminded the Board that several 'Deep Dive' sessions were planned based on Members' feedback. These sessions, whilst not mandatory, would give Members an opportunity to gain a greater understanding, to shape the University's plans and to challenge and be challenged by the Executive. The first session on Student Experience, led by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes, was scheduled for 3pm on 26 November, just before the full Board Meeting.

On procedural matters, the Chair advised the Board that meetings were now scheduled for two and half hours rather than two hours to allow sufficient time for Agenda items. From now on, the Report from the Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar, would be taken straight after the initial Governance Items, to set the wider context for the Board's discussions. A 'forward look,' setting out business for future meetings, would also be circulated shortly and he invited Members to flag up any additional items to the Clerk.

He asked Members to complete a Governors' Skills Audit Questionnaire so that the Board could identify its collective strengths and any gaps that should be considered when recruiting new Governors next year. The Questionnaire would be circulated in the next two weeks.

Finally, the Chair updated the Board on the process to recruit a new Vice Chancellor. A long list of candidates had been prepared by the recruitment consultants and the Committee had met to review this. It considered the cadre of candidates to be diverse and of good quality. The Committee would meet again on 4 November 2024 to draw up a short list. A stakeholder day was to be held on 27 November with formal interviews the following day.

ACTIONS

Members to consider whether to attend the 'Deep Dive' on Student Experience on 26 November.

Members to consider the 'forward look' of business for future meetings and notify the Clerk of any additional items.

Members to complete the Governors' Skills Audit Questionnaire once received and return to the Clerk.

3 NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

No new Declarations of Interest were made.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

The Board noted the changes Membership.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership of the Board.

(Confidential Agenda paper 4, refers)

5 MINUTES - EGM 1 JULY 2024

The Members raised no comments or question on the minutes.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 1 July 2024 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda paper 5 sent by file exchange, refers)

6 MINUTES - 9 JULY 2024

The Members raised no comments or question on the minutes.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda paper 6, refers)

7 SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Board received the Schedule of Actions and noted that all but three actions were complete. Of these, two were scheduled for the November 2024 meeting, and one was an item on this meeting's Agenda. The Secretary and Registrar, Sharon Harrison-Barker advised the Board that the action on Expansion of the Curriculum had now been completed.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Schedule of Actions.

(Confidential Agenda paper 7, refers)

8 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

The Board received a verbal report from the Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin Mckellar on recent developments in the wider operating environment of the University.

The Prime Minister had appointed Bridget Phillipson as Education Secretary and Baroness (Jacqui) Smith as Minister for Skills. He had also appointed Peter Kyle as Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary and Lord (Patrick) Vallance as Minister for Science.

Higher Education did not feature in the King's Speech to any significant degree. However, areas that could impact the University included the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, the Renters' Rights Bill (although it was understood that purpose-built university accommodation would be exempt), the Employment Rights Bill

(with a potential impact on visiting lecturers), the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill and the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

There had been a suggestion that the Government might repeal the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, but this had resulted in a backlash from some former Government Ministers and from several leading academics.

The Vice Chancellor suggested that Government rhetoric around international students had changed in a positive way. In a speech at the Education Embassy Conference in London on 23 July 2024, the Education Secretary had said “Be in no doubt: international students are welcome in the UK. This new government values their contribution – to our universities, to our communities, to our country. I want Britain to welcome those who want to come to these shores to study and meet the requirements to do so.” She also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the graduate route. He noted that, in contrast, the Australian Government intended to introduce a cap on the number of new international students it accepts for 2025 and that this could have a significant negative impact on Australian universities.

At the Labour Party Annual Conference, the Minister for Skills said that she wanted to focus on Universities, widening access, economic growth, and civic mission. All of which were good news for UH. It was understood that there was some discussion about increasing tuition fees, primarily in line with inflation, with an indication that the level might rise to £10,500 over the next five years. The Minister also talked about the potential growth in skills levy to replace the apprenticeship levy and to increase flexibility, but she did suggest a reduction in Level 7 apprenticeships which could have a negative impact on UH.

The Government had also indicated that it would create Skills England as an arm's length body to replace the Institute for Apprenticeships and will have responsibility for post-16 skills and the Industrial Strategy.

On the Industrial Strategy, a Green paper had just been published which was suggesting significant investments by 2035 focusing on eight growth areas, driving sectors and on place and partnerships:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean Energy
- Creative Industries
- Defence
- Life sciences
- Professional and business Services
- Financial Services
- Digital and Technology

Sir David Behan had produced a report ‘Fit for the Future: Independent Review of the Office for Students.’ The report was quite critical and made almost 30 recommendations and suggested that:

- OfS should focus on monitoring and financial sustainability of Universities.
- The Government should revisit the non-interventionist policy on market exits by universities, reflecting how catastrophic the failure of universities might be.
- OfS should have consumer enforcing powers so that it could seek compensation for students and impose penalties without going through the Courts.
- OfS should be designated formally as the quality body for universities.

Universities UK had just published “Opportunity, growth and partnership: a blueprint for change” which aimed to demonstrate to Government what the asks of Higher Education were. These included financial sustainability, the indexation of tuition fees, increased GDP spend on research to be in line with other innovation economies, flexibility on the teachers’ pension scheme, contextualisation for access and 70% of 25-year-olds to target for tertiary education.

The Vice Chancellor then drew the Board's attention to the recruitment landscape. There had been an increase in UK undergraduates recruited by the Russell Group Universities, a decline in international applications and a significant decline in nursing and teaching applications (around 5%-7% across the sector). From January, international students had to demonstrate the facility to fund higher maintenance costs, rising from £1023 to £1136 per month putting more pressure on their recruitment.

The Vice Chancellor made the Board aware that the University had been asked to join the Oxford Cambridge Arc and proposed to do so unless the Board objected. It included Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Oxford Brookes, Anglia Ruskin, Bedfordshire, and Cranfield Universities. The cost would be less than £10,000 per year. The Executive considered an association with Oxford and Cambridge was a good thing and that the

group would benefit from greater engagement with enterprises and businesses across the arc. Members raised no objections to this.

To put UH's performance into context, the Vice Chancellor said that some 80 Universities were making cost savings and redundancies which could result in a reduction of 10-15% of staff in the sector. There were indications that Sheffield University had a £50m gap in its finances, Cardiff a £30M gap and Sussex University a £40M gap demonstrating the serious challenges facing the sector.

Finally, the Vice Chancellor made the Board aware that Budget changes might impact university finances. For example, a 1% increase in National Insurance contributions would cost the sector c£130M. A 1% increase in pension contributions would cost the sector over £37M and if raised to 13.8%, it would cost the sector £515M. The Chair asked the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffatt what the potential impact of a 1% NI increase would be for UH. He replied that it would cost c£1M, a material amount given the budgeted surplus of £13M.

A Member asked when a decision might be made on the indexation of student fees. The Vice Chancellor replied that there was no indication of any timing, but it was unlikely to be included in the Chancellor's Budget this year. Another Member suggested that more sensitivity analysis be completed given the levels of uncertainty. The Group Finance Director assured the Board that frequent sensitivity analysis was underway, and the results discussed by the Executive each week.

The Chair thanked the Vice Chancellor for his insightful report and noted that, although the political rhetoric was more positive, the University was still operating in a challenging environment.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Vice Chancellor's verbal report.

9

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-30

The Board received a presentation from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Mairi Watson giving an update on the Strategic Plan 2025-2030. She reminded the Board that they had previously received presentations on the Purpose, Vision, 5 Year Ambition, Goals and Values. Today's update would focus on the six strands of activity that had been developed more recently:

- Strand 1 – Education and Student experience – led by Dr Charmagne Barnes
- Strand 2 – Research and Enterprise – led by Professor Wendy Wills
- Strand 3 – Global Reach and Reputation – led by Jo Stuart

Together with Transformational Initiatives

- 4 – People and Culture – led by Chizoma Okaro
- 5 – Digital Transformation – led by Dave Gillard
- 6 – Estates and Sustainability – led by Ian Grimes

The Deputy Vice Chancellor went on to say that these six strands of activity were designed to deliver on our goals of growth in impact, global reputation, and in revenue and student numbers. She advised the Board that Key performance Indicators (KPIs) would be developed against the objectives of each strand of activity which, in turn, would feed into Board KPIs. She then presented the proposed Ambition, Strategic Objectives and Sub Objectives for each strand, emphasising that the broadest possible staff base had been involved in their development.

Finally, the Board were advised that the Executive intended to table the publication materials and proposed Board level KPIs at the November 2024 meeting and hold a staff launch event in January 2025. In parallel the Operational Planning process would be in progress, ensuring affordability and sustainability as well as monitoring progress. In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Vice Chancellor agreed there was a need to rank the cost/benefit of activities given affordability constraints.

A Member enquired whether TEF Gold status was a realistic goal for the University. The Vice Chancellor considered it was very achievable. The University Alliance was seeking to attract additional Universities and had developed a Balanced Scorecard against which UH scored highly. The last assessment was pre-2023 and, since then, UH had been ahead of its competitors. The Deputy Vice Chancellor agreed and said that the University was now at Gold standard in over 50% of the measures used. The next opportunity to secure a Gold Award was in 2027.

The Chair asked if there was a hierarchy in the Strategic Objectives presented to the Board. The Deputy Vice Chancellor said there was not, however the Executive would work with the Board to establish which areas should form the basis of the Board Level KPIs.

A Member recognised that the current environment was challenging but wondered whether it afforded any opportunities. The Vice Chancellor pointed out that several Universities were contracting because of falling international student numbers and some of their staff were being made redundant. Given the excellent work of the Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Communications), Jo Stuart and her team, UH was still able to recruit high quality international students and the University still had ambition for growth. There was an opportunity to recruit high quality staff from other Institutions.

A Member welcomed the Digital Transformation initiative but recognised that the University had encountered challenges with such activity in the past. He enquired whether this was intending to make incremental or transformational change. The Deputy Vice Chancellor stressed that the Executive did not want this to be business as usual. Rapid change and acceleration were needed. Some of these changes were to better meet regulatory requirements but others were to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of core processes and provide better experiences for students and staff.

A Member welcomed the presentation and the fact that the Strategic Plan had been co-produced with staff. He enquired whether the Executive was content with the process. The Deputy Vice Chancellor said that the launch of the Strategic Plan development process had been fantastic with broad engagement. Staff had posed particularly challenging questions which had certainly helped to shape the Plan. In ongoing interactions with staff, it was clear that there was a wide awareness of the work.

Another Member welcomed the presentation and affirmed the direction of travel. He enquired whether Education and Student Experience would be quite different in five years' time and if the Plan allowed for changes in the use of Artificial Intelligence, in the type of employment skills needed and the potential impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Deputy Vice Chancellor assured him that, at the first 'Deep Dive' session in November, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes would challenge Members on these very topics. She also said that UH already applied many different approaches to Teaching and Learning as many of its students were worker and/or carers.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Vice Chancellor and her team for their work on the Strategic Plan. He stressed the need for both the Board and the Executive to remain agile. The Strategic Plan needed to evolve in an agile way as events unfolded.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the update on the Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

(Post Meeting Note: Confidential slide pack circulated on 23 October 2024, refers)

10 **KPI PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2023-24 -PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGET**

The Board received an update on Performance against 2023/24 Board Level KPIs presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Mairi Watson. She summarised the University's performance against each of the nine KPIs:

- **KPI1 – Reducing BAME Awarding Gap** – The KPI had not been met, but the University had made a significant improvement, reducing the gap from 20% to 14% which was close to the sector average. The University was not complacent and continued to manage and monitor the situation to reduce the gap still further.
- **KPI2 – Student Experience** - The University had met the Undergraduate target and exceeded the Postgraduate target.
- **KPI3 – Student Outcomes** – The aspirational KPI targets had not been met as the University achieved a Silver overall rating, but it was in a better position as it approached the next TEF (2027).
- **KPI4 – Increased Research income** – The University had met the target.
- **KPI5 – Increase international student numbers to 25% of UH total** - The University had exceeded the target.
- **KPI6 – Increase income from Commercial activity** - The University had met the target.
- **KPI7 – Increase staff engagement score in staff survey to 70%** - The University had missed the target by only 1%.

- **KPI8 – Sustainability (Financial)** – The University had missed the EBITDA target by 8% but remained in a robust financial position.
- **KPI9 – Sustainability (Environmental)** - The University had met the target.

The Chair noted that the University had missed four out of the nine KPIs which, on the face of it, was a poor result. However, the University finished the year in a strong position, particularly when compared to the sector. He questioned whether the targets were too ambitious. A Member said that he was comfortable with the position that the University had landed in and that the KPIs needed Institutional calibration.

A Member supported the use of aspirational targets. He said he was most troubled by KPI1 – the BAME Awarding Gap, suggesting the target should be 0%. The Deputy Vice Chancellor agreed but wondered whether this was achievable, or if University should aim to meet the sector mean. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes said that the University should be setting a 0% target with an aim to achieve that in 4-5 years through implementation of the Access and Participation Plan, amongst other initiatives.

The Chair agreed that KPIs should be aspirational but recommended use of a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating based on performance with agreed tolerances. The current scoring was too binary.

ACTION

To consider the use of a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) KPI rating based on performance and agreed tolerances.

RESOLUTION

That the Board received and noted the University's performance against 2023/24 Board Level KPIs.

(Confidential Agenda paper 10, refers)

11 **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2024 - OUTCOME ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD**

The Board received the National Student Survey Outcome Analysis report presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes. She advised the Board that the University had achieved an overall positivity score of 82.91% which placed UH eighth in its competitor set and well above the sector mean. The student response rate was particularly good at c79%, an encouraging sign that our students were engaging. She drew the Board's attention to four themes where the University scored highly: mental wellbeing; student voice; assessment and feedback; and organisation and management. Results on both teaching and on learning opportunities were slightly down on the previous year which was disappointing.

The process of continuing to improve results involved Schools and has resulted in the development of Institutional Plans covering three elements – Teaching, Academic Support outside of teaching hours and Assessment in terms of the perceived fairness of marking and moderation. These three areas were selected following both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

A Member commented that the Assessment and Feedback scores were remarkably high, but she was surprised that the Students Union (SU) scores were lower. The Pro Vice Chancellor said that discussions were ongoing with the SU. Its focus had been more on Postgraduate rather than Undergraduate students and the University was encouraging them to do more to support Undergraduates with their journey. The Member nominated by the Student Union agreed that Undergraduates saw the SU as a social organisation rather than a place to seek support with their academic journey and discussions were under way with the help of the Pro Vice Chancellor to address this.

A Member asked the Pro Vice Chancellor to comment on the School results, in particular SPECS. Had they been given some slack given the major changes that had impacted the School recently? She advised the Board that robust discussions had been held with SPECS at School level and at Programme level as four out of the five Programmes that had not performed as well were in SPECS. Feedback suggested that changes in Programme Leadership and some missing (software) resources had contributed to this. The new working environment in the Spectra Building was helping to address this. No slack had been given to the School. The Programme leaders had undertaken detailed analysis, had drawn up robust action plans and were prepared to address issues. The Pro Vice Chancellor was quietly confident that that the School would improve these results in future.

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar echoed these points. He said that the School had grown very rapidly and had needed to recruit large numbers of staff quickly. There were some poor performers, and these were being addressed. No slack or allowance was being made for the School, rather it was being challenged to perform.

The Chair asked whether best practice was being shared between Schools. The Pro Vice Chancellor was able to reassure the Board on this point. Every School was sharing elements of good practice.

A Member pointed out that Creative Arts also had lower results but would not have a new building to move in to. He asked what the approach was for addressing this. The Pro Vice Chancellor said that the School had identified distinct reasons for their results. These included Academic Skills, and Mental Health and Wellbeing. The Pro Vice Chancellor was ensuring that the School got its fair share of Academic Skills training and Mental Health and Wellbeing support to address these issues.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the report on National Student Survey 2024.

(Confidential Agenda paper 11, refers)

12 **POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES) 2024 - OUTCOME ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD**

The Board received the report on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2024 presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Charmagne Barnes. She advised the Board the University had been ranked fifth out of 108 Universities with 37.1% of its Postgraduate students completing the survey. This completion rate was well above the sector average of 24.7%. She underlined the fact that UH had some 18,500 postgraduate students, so around 7,000 of them had engaged. This result meant that the University had exceeded its KPI target.

She drew the Board's attention to two themes – Community and Skills Development where the University had ranked second. UH was particularly pleased with the Community outcome as it had worked hard to build that sense of community. She also pointed out that there was some alignment of the qualitative comments with the NSS results. Teaching, access to support outside of teaching hours and assessment featured in both surveys and the University was working hard on all three areas.

A Member welcomed this fantastic result and was particularly pleased that, even though the University had struggled to provide space for postgraduate students and solve issues surrounding transport, the students felt a keen sense of community.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Postgraduate Taught Experience Service 2024 report.

(Confidential Agenda paper 12, refers)

13 **LEAGUE TABLE POSITIONS - UPDATE**

The Board received the League Table Positions Update paper presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Mairi Watson. She reminded the Board that, unfortunately, none of the league tables made use of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. The paper set out the University's position in the four main UK league tables for September 2024. She drew the Board's attention to Figure 1 in the paper (Page 53 in the Agenda pack) showing UH's journey over the past five years. She advised Members that the 2024 league tables, except for the Daily Mail, reused the 2023 NSS data so they did not reflect the improvements UH had made in the 2024 NSS. However, the Guardian outcome was gratifying, showing the University had moved from 103rd to 75th since 2021.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor made the Board aware that each League Table used a different blend of metrics to come to their ranking (Figure 2, Page 54 of the Agenda pack). This helped the Executive consider which metrics to target to improve the overall position. In terms of the UCAS Competitor Group View, the University consistently ranked in the top 5 (Appendix, Agenda Pack p56) and in terms of the University Alliance Grouping, UH was top in the Daily Mail league and mid-table in the others (Appendix, Agenda Pack p57).

The Deputy Vice Chancellor welcomed the additional detail that had been provided in the paper this year by the OVC Planning Team and recognised that it would help the Executive with the next Business Planning Round.

The Chair enquired whether the University used specific League Tables in its marketing to target recruitment. The Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Communications) Jo, Stuart said that every University made use of the most favourable data they could find. At UH the emphasis was more on Subject rankings, for example Animation where UH ranked first in the world.

A Member enquired whether the University was looking to improve its QS World University Ranking, recognising that some levers were available to influence that. The Pro Vice Chancellor said that UH had not done this yet but did intend to use those levers in the future and would also look at the QS Stars rating system.

A Member queried the link between League Table ranking and student survey outcome. The Deputy Vice Chancellor said that all League Tables took account of the NSS results. The other key aspect was graduate outcomes. There was a significant lag in that data, but it explained why the new Strategic Plan had a focus on enterprise and employability. When asked about the reverse i.e. the influence of League Table ranking on the type and quality of students recruited, the Deputy Vice Chancellor said that the Executive had considered this issue at length. It was apparent that the high score in PTES was self-perpetuating because students felt pride in the institution. It also had a positive impact on recruitment.

A Member suggested that the University had turned away students as it held tariff quite high for home student recruitment. The Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Communications) said that the volume of students turned away was not that high despite an increase in advertised tariff. Through this the University had sought to build its brand and position itself in the right place in its competitor group. In Clearing the tariff had been dropped slightly but not down to the level it was five years ago. A low tariff brought other challenges with non-continuation and the amount of support needed.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the update on League Table Position.

(Confidential Agenda paper 13, refers)

14 HOME AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT - UPDATE 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Board received two reports on Home and International Student recruitment respectively, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Communications), Jo Stuart.

Home Students

The Pro Vice Chancellor advised the Board that it had been a challenging cycle for the recruitment of Home Students. During the first half of the cycle UH had been in a reasonable position but political and economic uncertainties then had a substantial impact. Against that landscape, Russell Group Universities had pivoted to increase their number of UK Undergraduate students and doubled their number of courses and places in Clearing.

In the event, Russell Group increased home students by 9% whilst the rest of the sector saw a 4% reduction. UH saw a 2% reduction but did increase its market share. In Clearing the recruitment target was 950 and 750 were recruited. However, the University increased the quality of the students - the mean A-Level points achieved was above the sector.

In summary, the Pro Vice Chancellor advised the Board that UH would end up around 150-200 students below target. The Business School, Law, HSK and, Nursing had particularly challenging cycles. However Postgraduate recruitment was much better, and the University expected to register just over the target.

The Pro Vice Chancellor then made the Board aware that the next recruitment cycle had already started. The first open day had been held and 1,200 students attended, up 20% on last year. Overall, over 3,000 students had visited campus so far.

A Member enquired about whether the University would achieve its Degree Apprenticeship target. The Pro Vice Chancellor assured the Board that it would.

A Member raised a concern about the fall in Business School recruitment and asked whether this was a sector wide issue or specific to the UH offering. The Pro Vice Chancellor said that the market was saturated with provision, increasing the need for HBS to get its provision right. The overhauled programmes would be launched in 2026, although some changes would be implemented earlier. As far as she was aware, the only competitor that was doing well in UH's peer group was City University, but it recruited at a higher tariff and had a higher League Table ranking. However, in due course, UCAS data would be available that could be analysed to provide better information on recruitment by Business Schools.

International Students

The Pro Vice Chancellor advised the Board that this too had been a very challenging cycle. The University had recognised the political and economic obstacles to recruitment and set a target 8% lower than the previous year. Other Universities had set targets 25% lower. To try and achieve the target, the team had worked extremely hard, and the period for recruitment had been extended.

The University had registered 1,562 International Undergraduates which was significantly above target. This had longer term benefits as they would be registered for three years and there was an opportunity to extend into postgraduate study.

However, only 5,500 Postgraduate students had been registered against a target of 6242. The registration deadline had been extended to 31 October 2024 due to delays with visas and the return of passports. Some 750 students were waiting which was extremely frustrating for all concerned. The Pro Vice Chancellor believed that the University would end up close to target, but the mix of Undergraduate and Postgraduate students would be different.

The Pro Vice Chancellor then provided a quick update on Semester B recruitment. The target was 2,912 and 1,500 deposits had been secured so far. She remained quietly confident of hitting the target given the decision to offer the virtual internships programme.

A Member asked if there was a general trend for people to move away from business programmes towards STEM subjects. The Pro Vice Chancellor said that this had happened as potential students believed this would increase their employability.

A Member described the Team's work as fantastic, and another described it as spectacular. A third asked what the reason for the success was. The Pro Vice Chancellor cited the relationships with people in countries, the speed of issuing offers, the touch points the team had with prospective students and the two-year Masters' Programme. The Chair and Vice Chancellor agreed that much of the success was down to the Pro Vice Chancellor herself.

A Member who had attended the ceremony where the King's Award for Enterprise was presented to the University said it was excellent to see so many overseas agents present. The Pro Vice Chancellor agreed and said that they had really appreciated the event. She thanked those Governors who were able to attend.

ACTION

Analyse UCAS end of cycle data, when available, on Business School recruitment and provide comparisons with UH peer groups to the Board.

RESOLUTION

That the Board received and noted the reports on Home and International Recruitment.

(Confidential Agenda papers 14, refer)

15 STUDENT RECORDS SYSTEM - UPDATE

The Board received a verbal update on the Student Records System from the Secretary and Register, Sharon Harrison-Barker. She advised the Board that the programme had progressed in accordance with the plan. Shortlisting for the Programme Director had been completed and interviews were scheduled for 7 November. The new Academic Director would start on 6 December and procurement of the new system was on track for the end of the Academic Year.

A Member asked who the Programme Director's reporting manager was. The Secretary and Registrar said it was the Academic Registrar, but she would retain ownership as Senior Sponsor for the programme. The Member was reassured to hear that the programme would report into the business leaders responsible for the outcomes.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the verbal update on the Student Records System.

16 **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

The Board received the updated Corporate Risk Register presented by the Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson. She advised the Board that there were only a few updates to the risks at this time. She drew the Board's attention to the fact that the risk associated with the new HR System had reduced and that Data Futures remained a considerable risk. The Board noted the team's intention to review and amalgamate the Corporate Risk Register, the outcome of which would be taken to the Audit and Risk Committee.

There were no comments or questions from Members.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Corporate Risk Register.

(Confidential Agenda paper 16, refers)

17 **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Board received the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2023/24, and the Annual Internal Audit Annual Opinion Report 2023/24 presented by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), Bob Macnaughton. He was able to reassure the Board that the Committee's opinion, based upon its work and the evidence presented to it during the year, was that the University had adequate and effective arrangements in place for risk management, control, and governance; and economy, efficiency, and effectiveness (VFM). The only caveat concerned data quality given the issues with Data Futures and the fact that the audit provided only Limited Assurance. This opinion was fully aligned with that of the Head of Internal Audit, Bridget Bishop.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee commended UH Managers who had responded vigorously to Internal Audit recommendations and expedited actions timeously. He also advised that the Committee's interactions with the new External Auditor, Buzzacott LLP had been positive. Finally, he advised the Board that, following a request from the Chair of the Finance Committee, ARC would commission an internal audit of the processes relating to the use of International Agents.

The Secretary and Registrar responded on the Data Futures issue. She advised the Board that she had met with the Office for Students and HESA earlier in the day and requested a two-week extension on the submission of UH's data. She understood that around 85 Universities had also asked for extensions. The meeting had been positive, and the extension had been granted. She hoped that the additional time would not be needed as the number of errors was now below 30,000. Whilst not ideal, the University was in a much better place that it had been in previous year.

Members raised no further comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2023/24 and the Annual Internal Audit Annual Opinion Report 2023/24.

(Confidential Agenda paper 17, refers)

18 FINANCE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board received the Annual Report of the Finance Committee 2023/24 presented by the Chair of the Committee, David Williams. He advised Members that the Estates team had set out timings for approvals of the implementation of the Estates Vision and that the Committee was scrutinising that programme closely.

Members raised no comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Annual Report of the Finance Committee 2023/24.

(Confidential Agenda paper 18, refers)

19 PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board received the Annual Report of the People and Culture Committee. The Members raised no comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Annual Report of the People and Culture Committee.

(Confidential Agenda paper 19, refers)

20 DRAFT NARRATIVE FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS -2023-24

The Board received the Draft narrative for the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2023/24 presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffatt. He advised the Board that the External Auditor, Buzzacott LLP had reviewed the document and recommended a few adjustments to align with latest numbers and to remove some duplication. He asked Members to send any final amendments they would like included to the Clerk by 25 October, to allow for incorporation in the final version.

ACTION

Members to forward any proposed amendments to the Clerk by 25 October 2024.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Draft narrative for the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2023/24.

(Confidential Agenda paper 20, refers)

21 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT - JULY 2024

The Board received the Pre-Audit Financial Management Report – July 2024 presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffatt. He drew the Committee's attention to the following points:

- The end of year surplus was c£17M. (The fourteenth surplus in fifteen years). The surplus would have been c£21M but for a revaluation of an investment property (Titan Court).
- Staff numbers had increased by c300 which was a big investment to support growth.
- Capital Expenditure investment was c£57M, predominantly on the SPECS Building.
- Liquidity:
 - The University had paid debt down by £2M.
 - The Debtors position had improved, and two long outstanding payments had been received.
 - Cash was at £132M which, whilst lower than last year given spend on Capital Works remained a strong position.

The Board were delighted with the strong financial performance last year and passed congratulations on to the Group Finance Director and his team.

The Chair enquired about the position so far in 2024/25. The Group Finance Director advised the Board that the numbers were a bit behind where he had hoped. There were fewer students than planned and that income from University accommodation was also lower than budget. The Executive would maintain close scrutiny of the position throughout the year and respond in an agile, flexible way when necessary. A Member stressed the need to be cost conscious.

Another Member enquired whether the University's investments were at risk. The Group Finance Director reassured the board that very few investments in the portfolio were high risk but that, given the likely reduction in interest rates, returns on investments overall were likely to fall.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Pre-Audit Financial Management Report – July 2024.

(Confidential Agenda paper 21, refers)

22 **MEDIA SERVICES - RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Board received the paper on Financial Approval for Media Services presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffatt. He advised the Members that this item had been reviewed by Finance Committee and was recommend for approval to the Board.

Members noted the contents of the paper and raised no comments or queries.

RESOLVED

That the Board approved the expenditure of £6.8M (including VAT) on Media Services over a period of four years.

(Confidential Agenda paper 22, refers)

23 **TODD BUILDING - DECARBONISATION OF MAIN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND ANIMATION EXPANSION - RECOMMENDATION FOR CAPITAL WORKS APPROVAL FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Board received a paper on Todd Building Decarbonisation of Main Building Infrastructure and Animation Expansion presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffatt. He advised the Members that this item had been reviewed by Finance Committee and was recommend for approval to the Board. The Chair of the Finance Committee pointed out that this project would not only address decarbonisation issues but also provide additional space and improved student experience in Animation. The expansion of Animation space was important as the University could attract more students in this area which would assist the School in making a positive contribution to the University's finances.

Members noted the contents of the paper and raised no comments or queries.

RESOLVED

That the Board approved the expenditure of £5.68M (including VAT) for the Todd Building Decarbonisation of Main Building Infrastructure and Animation Expansion project.

(Confidential Agenda paper 23, refers)

24 **PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE - 30 APRIL 2024 - UNRESTRICTED MINUTES**

The Board received the Restricted and Unrestricted Minutes of the People and Culture Committee meeting held on 30 April 2024.

Members raised no comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Restricted and Unrestricted Minutes of the People and Culture Committee meeting held on 30 April 2024.

(Confidential Agenda paper 24 and associated file sent by File Transfer, refer)

25 **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE -11 JUNE 2024**

The Board received the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 11 June 2024.

Members raised no comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 11 June 2024.

(Confidential Agenda paper 25, refers)

26 **FINANCE COMMITTEE - 25 JUNE 2024**

The Board received the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25 June 2024.

Members raised no comments or questions.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25 June 2024.

(Confidential Agenda paper 26, refers)

27 **REPORTABLE EVENTS**

The Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson advised the Board that had been no reportable events since the last meeting. She did, however, make the Board aware of an instance where a student had intended to take legal action against the University, but the dispute had been settled out of Court. UH did not consider the circumstances met the criteria for a Reportable Event as there was no systemic weakness.

28 **CLERK'S REPORT**

The Board received the Clerk's Report presented by the Head of Governance Services, Elizabeth Heath. She reminded the Members that the next meeting of the Board was on 26 November 2024 at 5pm, preceded by a 'Deep Dive' on Student Experience at 3pm. The Chair pointed out that the 'Deep Dive;' was optional, not obligatory for Governors to attend.

The Clerk also advised the Board that, in future, the Clerk's report would include a progress update on the Medical School Project.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Clerk's Report.

(Confidential Agenda paper 28, refers)

29 **RISK AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

There were no further risks inherent in the matters dealt with during the meeting not discussed when the items concerned were considered.

(Confidential Agenda item 29, refers)

30 **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

There was no emergency business.

Meeting ended at 19:11 Hours.

Chair

Date