

**Minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Planning and Resources Committee  
Held at 4.00pm on Tuesday, 2 March 2021  
via MS Teams**

**Present**

Michael Cutbill (Chair)  
Jerry Cope  
Peter Fidler (until minute 6)  
Nicki Martin (until minute 6)  
Mee Ling Ng  
David Phoenix  
Deepa Shah  
Maxwell Smith

**In attendance**

Richard Duke (item 8 only)  
Amy Eden (LSBSU CEO, item 9 only)  
Richard Flatman  
Kerry Johnson  
Nicole Louis  
Matt Myles-Brown (LSBSU Deputy CEO, item 9 only)  
Ralph Sanders  
James Stevenson  
Hattie Tollerson (item 9 only)

**Observers**

Duncan Brown  
Maureen Dalziel  
Rashda Rana

**1. Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. No apologies were received.

The Chair welcomed Maureen Dalziel to her first meeting of FPR as a new independent governor.

The Chair noted that this would be Mee Ling Ng's final meeting. The committee thanked Mee Ling for her valuable contributions over the years, and wished her well for the future.

**2. Declarations of interest**

No member declared an interest in any item on the agenda.

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 3 November 2020, and their publication as redacted.

#### 4. **Matters arising**

##### NSS/Graduate outcomes update

The committee noted the update from the Provost on the projects underway to improve student satisfaction and employability. These included a stronger postgraduate offer and extended support to graduates lasting for at least two years past the point of graduation.

The committee noted that students had been impacted by both coronavirus and the IT outage. The Executive had been working closely with the Students' Union to issue regular targeted communications to students.

The committee noted that the NSS had been open since late January, and would close on 30 April 2021.

The committee noted that a further update would be brought to the July meeting of FPR.

All other actions were noted as complete or in progress.

#### 5. **Student experience update**

The committee received a verbal update from the LSBSU Council Chair on the student experience during the 2020/21 academic year.

The committee noted that students perceived both challenges and benefits from the move to remote teaching and learning. There was frustration among students relating to the IT outage, though students generally appreciated the efforts made by teaching staff to minimise disruption.

The committee noted that students were generally appreciative of the measures put in place by the Executive (such as rent reductions) to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

#### 6. **Finance update**

The committee noted the LSBU finance update. The CFO presented a high-level summary of the current financial position. The committee noted that the IT outage had temporarily affected the Executive's ability to produce management accounts, but that some Agresso system access had now been restored. Recovery continued to be a priority.

The committee noted that the university was broadly on-target to deliver a £2m surplus with a contingency of £3-3.5m.

The committee noted that staff costs were substantially higher than budgeted, at approximately 60.5%, due in part to a lower vacancy rate caused by the pandemic, and to a £4m increase in pension costs. The Vice Chancellor confirmed the importance of maintaining appropriate staff-student ratios in an environment where student numbers had increased by 14%.

The committee noted that tuition fee refunds remained a key risk but that there had been a very low level of claims up to this point. A process was in place to mitigate this risk by carefully reviewing student complaints and continued engagement with the student body.

## 7. **Student recruitment and retention update**

The committee discussed the update on LSBU recruitment and retention.

The committee noted the high number of semester two enrolments, among both UK and international students. 660 students had so far enrolled for semester two, with an associated income forecast of £5.7m (against the budget scenario 2b target of £4.6m).

The committee noted that approximately 19.5k UCAS applications had been submitted for semester one 2021/22, which was up 5.5% on the previous year. The committee noted that the IT outage had affected the time taken to process the conversion of applicants. Work was underway to mitigate these delays.

The committee noted that it was not currently possible to report on direct applications, including postgraduate applications, due to the IT issues.

The committee noted that student withdrawals and interruptions were down by two percentage points compared to the previous year, with zero university-instigated withdrawals.

The committee noted the significant increase in front desk student issues linked to the pandemic and the continuing IT issues. The Executive would continue to monitor the level of complaints.

## 8. **Key performance indicators**

*With Richard Duke*

The committee discussed the update on the 2025 KPI framework.

The committee noted that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to develop the definitions, accountabilities and reporting mechanisms associated with the 2020-25 corporate strategy.

The Executive confirmed that there was capacity within the Strategy, Planning and Performance Team to continue the work on KPI development once the Director of Strategy & Planning left the organisation in Spring 2021.

The committee thanked Richard Duke for his significant contributions, and wished him well for the future.

## 9. **Students' Union update**

*With Amy Eden, Matt Myles-Brown and Hattie Tollerson*

### Code of Practice return and 2019/20 accounts

The committee discussed the Students' Union 2019/20 audited accounts and Code of Practice return. It was noted that the balance sheet position was strong, with an overall surplus of £78,665 reported.

The committee noted that the Code of Practice return provided assurance that the LSBSU had complied with its obligations under the 1994 Education Act, including appropriate use of funds.

### Proposed incorporation

The committee discussed the LSBSU's plan to change its legal status to become an incorporated charitable company limited by guarantee, and the associated timeline.

The committee noted that the key driver for the change was the need to mitigate the personal liability of the trustees, particularly in relation to the SUSS pension deficit.

The committee noted that the Executive would consider the draft articles of association at its meeting of 3 March 2021. Approval for the new articles would then be sought from the Board of Governors at its meeting of 25 March 2021. The committee noted the deadline of 14 June 2021 to notify SUSS of the intention to transfer pension liabilities to the new company.

The committee noted that the Governance Team would review the draft articles. The articles, alongside commentary from the Governance Team, would be circulated to the committee ahead of the Board meeting on 25 March 2021.

## 10. **SBUEL performance and value report**

The committee discussed the update from the Chief Business Officer on the performance and value of South Bank University Enterprise Ltd to the LSBU Group.

The committee noted that work was underway to strengthen the oversight of the totality of enterprise activity, including the establishment of the new Enterprise Advisory Board (EAB), which was scheduled to meet four times in 2021. The committee noted that the EAB would consider the Group's enterprise activities and provide assurance to the Board of Governors through its two independent governor members.

## 11. **Treasury management report**

The committee noted the treasury management report, showing total bank balances at 31 January 2021 of **£48.5m** and outstanding loans of **£33.7m**.

12. **Cyber incident update**

The committee noted the update on the cyber security incident, as discussed in detail by the Group Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting of 11 February 2021.

**Date of next meeting  
4:00, Tuesday 27 April 2021**

**Confirmed as a true record**

*Michael Cutbill*  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)