STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

14 September 2026 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Lawson, georgina.lawson@northumbria.ac.uk. Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present:	Dr S Fancey (Chair), R Blackman-Woods, G Burdis, K Fawcett, Prof A Long, A Parker [absent SPC26/02], J Thompson
Apologies:	None
Secretary:	G Lawson and B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)
In attendance:	Prof L Bracken [SPC26/01], Dr G Brown [SPC26/03], M Charlton [SPC26/04 and SPC26/11], Prof A Dougill, J Embley [SPC26/01], Prof G Finn, M Foalle [SPC26/01], D Monnery, G Russell [SPC26/01 and SPC26/02], Dr P Steadman [SPC26/04 and SPC26/11], T Urwin [SPC26/01], Prof J Woodward [SPC26/01]

	MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING
1.	**Chair's Introduction** The Chair welcomed Georgia Burdis, Student Governor, Prof Andy Dougill, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Prof Gabrielle Finn, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) to their first meeting of the Committee. **Declarations of Interest** [Oral Report] There were no declarations of interest. **Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning** [Oral Report] The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local developments and their potential implications for Northumbria. The University remained on track to reduce its cost base by year end, achieved largely through voluntary severance rather than compulsory redundancy. A recent UCU ballot regarding cost savings would not result in industrial action at the start of term. Investment plans would be a focus for the year, the North East Space Skills and Technology Centre would open in March and Durant Hall was in use from the start of term, with a formal opening taking place on 30 November 2026 with an inaugural speech from Chancellor George Clarke. The first programme with Doing What Really Matters, a social enterprise working with prisons, would launch that year. Home Office data showed a year-on-year fall in student visa applications, with sector-wide CAS issuance down 27%. Following Andy Burnham's appointment as Prime Minister, the government had announced what was billed as the biggest education overhaul in 15 years, enabling Year 10 pupils to combine core academic subjects with technical education. Lucy Powell had been appointed Education Secretary. The Vice-Chancellor had attended the recent Universities UK conference, where the Minister for Skills referred to a target for two-thirds of young people to be in higher-level learning, and the Minister for Science, Innovation and Investment referred to UKRI moving away from grant competitions towards subject-based investment decisions. The Daily Mail University Guide 2027 placed the University 52nd, down one place from 2026. The Complete University Guide placed the University 37th, the same position as the previous year. The Guardian University Guide 2027 placed the University 63rd, The Daily Mail and Guardian results had both been influenced by recent NSS results. Three academic colleagues had been named National Teaching Fellows by Advance HE. The University had been shortlisted for Outstanding

	Contribution to EDI at the THE Awards, and the NUSTEM outreach team had won the Royal Society Athena Prize 2026. **The Committee noted the report.**
2.	**Strategic Discussion Items** **University Strategy 2024-30 Annual Performance Summary 2025/26** [SPC26/01] The Committee considered the University Strategy 2024-30 Annual Performance Summary 2025/26. The University remained in quartile 2 for Graduate Outcomes, with Graduate Prospects falling from 76.7% to 73.7% and the predicted rank moving from 51st to 57th. The proportion of undergraduate programmes with agreed credit-bearing experiential learning opportunities had increased from 59% to 91%, covering 97% of undergraduate students. The value of in-year RGCI applications had grown. The staff engagement index fell from 70.4% to 63.6% with a 54% response rate, and the reduction had been reflected on the University Risk Register. Year-on-year carbon emissions fell for a third consecutive year, although the University was still projected to miss the 2030 target as it then stood. **The Committee noted the report and noted that the impact of embedding credit-bearing experiential learning since 2025 entry would not be reflected in Graduate Outcomes Survey and Career Readiness Survey data until those students had graduated.**
3.	**Performance Monitoring** **Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – Q4 (and National Student Survey 2026)** [SPC26/02] The Committee considered the Student Experience and Learning Outcomes report for August 2026, including the results of the National Student Survey 2026. The University maintained a second quartile position for Graduate Outcomes among Times Good University Guide providers, with positive outcomes falling from 76.7% to 73.7%. The proportion of graduates entering skilled employment was 58.9%, the 23rd highest among Times providers, an improvement on 26th in 2022/23. 68% of first degree graduates entering employment in England did so in the North East, and 24% of first degree graduates in highly skilled employment in the North East were graduates of the University. Subject level analysis identified subject areas with both negative and positive performance flags, which would be addressed through the Continuous Programme Performance Review process. The final NSS response rate was 63.4%, representing 3,204 respondents, compared with 66% the previous year. The University had improved in absolute terms in four of the seven NSS themes and in 19 of the 27 questions, although improved scores across the sector produced a decline in relative position in six of the seven themes. A more detailed NSS paper was being prepared, including analysis of the qualitative feedback and University and faculty level actions. **The Committee noted the report and requested that the approach to securing improvement in the NSS, particularly in relation to Assessment and Feedback, be included in the report prior to its consideration by the Board of Governors on 12 October 2026, and noted that a number of changes implemented in the previous year may help to improve the following year's results.** **Strategic Partnership Review and Periodic Review QAHE** [SPC26/03] The Committee considered the outcomes of the annual Strategic Partnership Review and the subject Periodic Review of the University's QA Higher Education partnership provision, undertaken in July 2026. The Strategic Partnership Review found continued strategic alignment, strong executive leadership from both partners, adequate oversight, governance and partner resource, and assurance in relation to Office for Students Condition B3, with no red flags identified. Areas identified for ongoing monitoring included progress towards OfS registration and postgraduate taught progression. The Periodic Review identified strengths including embedded experiential learning, strong academic leadership, a growing research culture, comprehensive student support and clear alignment to the University Strategy, alongside development areas including AI skills sessions for students, data literacy sessions, and improving career readiness and graduate outcomes. International student recruitment remained the most significant continuing risk. Action plans were being scoped and would be monitored by Educational Partnerships Committee, with subsequent reporting to the Committee, and the recently developed Condition E10 review process had worked well and would be rolled out for wider partnership provision across 2026/27. **The Committee noted the report, requested that an update on student visas be provided at the Board of Governors meeting on 12 October 2026, along with clarification of how the objectives of the partnership related to the University's wider Strategic Ambitions.** **Sustainability Report 2025/26 and Policy 2026/27** [SPC26/04] The Committee considered the Annual Sustainability Report 2025/26 and the Environmental Sustainability Policy 2026/27. The University ranked 31st out of 1,646 universities from 116 countries and 4th in the UK in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, its highest position to date, and held 16th position and First Class status in the People and Planet University League, remaining the highest ranked

	institution in the North East. The University had also received a Highly Commended award in the Research with Impact category at the Green Gown Awards. Scope 1 and 2 emissions had reduced by 11.9% against 2024/25, exceeding the 5% year-on-year target, through boiler controls optimisation projects and decarbonisation of the electricity grid, and air source heat pumps had been commissioned at the North East Space Skills and Technology Centre and at Durant Hall. 39.6% of total waste was sent for reuse, composting, anaerobic digestion or recycling against a 2030 target of 65%, and total waste produced increased by 11% against 2024/25, including the disposal of 55 tonnes of library books, which were recycled. Total mains water consumption increased by 7.14% against 2024/25, mainly within student accommodation, against a target of a 2% year-on-year reduction. The Report identified recycling rates, business travel, sustainable procurement practices and biodiversity enhancement as areas requiring increased focus, and ISO 14001 certification was renewed following an external audit, which included a best practice commendation for the IT recycling programme. The Environmental Sustainability Policy set priorities for 2026/27 including energy and carbon reduction, business travel, recycling rates, biodiversity, procurement, and certification of all laboratories to LEAF Bronze by the end of the academic year. **The Committee welcomed the report, commending it as a comprehensive and uplifting account of the University's sustainability activity, suggested that consideration be given to a wider communications strategy to make the report accessible to external stakeholders and policy makers, and endorsed the Environmental Sustainability Policy 2026/27 for consideration by Board of Governors on 12 October 2026.** **Interim Carbon Reduction Targets and Scope** [SPC26/11] The Committee considered a proposed revision to the interim carbon reduction targets and scope set out in the 2020-2030 Carbon Management Strategy, prior to consideration by Board of Governors on 12 October 2026. Total greenhouse gas emissions in 2024/25 were 9,555 tCO2e, representing a 63.9% reduction against the 2014/15 baseline year, and the combined 15.8% reduction in Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions against the previous year was the highest annual reduction achieved since the start of the Strategy. Total emissions nevertheless remained 16% above the trajectory required to meet the 2030 interim target of 5,000 tCO2e. The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which had provided funding towards projects at City Campus East, Coach Lane East and Durant Hall, had been discontinued without replacement, and the city-wide low carbon heat network appeared unlikely to be deliverable before 2030. Revised projections indicated that the 80% reduction target for Scope 1 and 2 emissions could be achieved by 2032, two years later than the original interim target year. Travel emissions accounted for approximately 80% of the Scope 3 footprint included in the Strategy, and there was significant doubt that the activities giving rise to these emissions could be influenced to the extent required to meet the 2030 target without limiting research and academic aims. The 25% year-on-year reduction in Scope 3 emissions in 2024/25 was attributable to revised national carbon intensity estimates for the aviation sector, with distances travelled by staff remaining virtually unchanged. Wider Scope 3 impact areas would be targeted within the forthcoming Sustainability Strategy rather than through expanded Carbon Management Strategy targets. **The Committee noted the report, noting that the detail and requirements of Scope 3 would be revisited to ensure that all related activity was captured, and endorsed the revision of the target date for the interim 80% carbon reduction trajectory from 2030 to 2032 and the removal of the selected Scope 3 emissions sources from the interim target in the 2020-2030 Carbon Management Strategy, while retaining the Net Zero by 2040 commitment, for consideration by Board of Governors on 12 October 2026.** **Draft Annual Report of Strategic Performance Committee** [SPC26/05] **The Committee noted its draft annual report and that a final version of the report would be presented to the Committee for approval on 2 November 2026, prior to submission to Board of Governors on 14 December 2026.**
4.	**Constitutional and Administrative Items** **8 June 2026 Meeting: Summary Minutes and Confidential Minutes** [SPC26/06 and SPC26/07] **The Committee confirmed the Summary Minutes and the Confidential Minutes of its meeting on 8 June 2026 as an accurate record.** **Matters Arising/Summary Action List** [SPC26/08] **The Committee noted the Summary Action List.** **Committee Agenda Plan** [SPC26/09] **The Committee noted its agenda plan.**

	Strategic Risk Dashboard [SPC26/10] **The Committee noted the Strategic Risk Dashboard.** **Chair's Closing Remarks** [Oral Report] The Chair welcomed the new practice of flagging within papers where generative AI had been used in their preparation. **The Committee agreed that this was helpful and looked forward to seeing how that practice developed across the University.**

Georgina Lawson
Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee
September 2026