

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

27 March 2024 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

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

Present: H Fairfoul (Chair), Dr R Blackman-Woods, H Colclough, M Larsen, Prof A Long
 Apologies: H Kajee, N Shah, L Orme, D Pearson, P Thomas, Dr S Corbett
 Secretary: G Bailes, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary)
 In attendance: J Embley, Prof T Lawson, D Monnery, P MacDonald, S Newitt, C Stogden

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1	<p><u>Introduction</u> The Chair welcomed Phil MacDonald, Interim Chief Financial Officer, to his first meeting of the Committee.</p> <p><u>Vice-Chancellor’s Horizon Scanning</u> [Oral Report] The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive presented on sector wide matters and the implications of these for the University. The University had been able to confirm that there would be no compulsory academic redundancies as part of the cost management exercise and that transparent communications relating to the challenges and the University’s response were continuing. Further changes to visa rules were possible following an announcement that the Government had commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to review the graduate visa scheme. The University had taken part in a pilot project aimed at supported professional services departments to apply to the Athena Swan scheme and as part of this, Research and Innovation Services had secured a Bronze award. The Committee noted the update and that the majority of the sector was implementing or planning some level of cost management.</p>
2	<p><u>Core Financial Performance and Planning</u> <u>Student Recruitment</u> [Presentation] The Committee noted an update on Student Recruitment for 2024/25.</p> <p><u>Period 7 Financial Position</u> [EF23/68] The Committee noted the University’s financial position and performance at Period 7.</p> <p><u>Cost Management Update</u> [Presentation] The Committee noted the update on cost management, commended the progress made and significant savings delivered to date, and noted that the focus was now shifting to income generation.</p> <p><u>Estates Strategy</u> [Presentation] The Committee noted an update on the Estates Strategy and that a Campus 2030 vision including plans for the future of each building was being developed to align with the Strategy; it would be completed in April, followed by the Estates Masterplan and the Estates Delivery Plan which would include details of the investment required. More efficient use of space, such as through changes to the timetabling approach was also being pursued.</p>
3	<p><u>People</u> <u>Pay Gap Report</u> [EF23/69] The Committee considered the Pay Gap Report for 2023 which included ethnicity and disability pay gap information in addition to the legally required gender element. The mean gender pay gap had increased slightly while those for ethnicity and disability had decreased; the information would be reviewed more frequently going forward with more investigation of cause and effect to understand the changes to the data. The Committee approved the publication of the pay gap data.</p>

Engagement Survey 2023 Outcomes [EF23/70]

The Committee considered the outcomes of the Engagement Survey 2023, which had asked colleagues 65 questions about their experiences of working at the University, six of which comprised the University's Engagement Index. The Engagement Index for 2024 had increased to 71.4% from 63.4% in 2021 and the overall response rate was 50% which was the same as the previous survey in 2021. The survey outcomes had been mostly positive though areas for improvement had been identified and on five questions professional colleagues were significantly more positive in their response than academics. **The Committee noted the report and that sector benchmarking of staff surveys was not feasible due to the absence of standardisation across the sector. The six engagement index questions were considered to be broadly appropriate; the qualitative responses would be reviewed to provide greater understanding of the results. While there was no specific survey action plan, the survey responses were addressed in specific communications when relevant and built into all associated action plans.**

People Scorecard [EF23/71]

The Committee considered proposals and initial data for the People Scorecard which provided information centred on five key themes targeted at making Northumbria an employer of choice. Data would be benchmarked against the sector, comparator institutions and other external standards whenever possible. The scorecard showed that the turnover rate had decreased in 2022/23 compared to previous years and that overall the University staff base had increased over the past 5 year period. The change of approach to academic promotion had successfully delivered increased opportunities and applications. **The Committee noted the report, that it would be provided six monthly to the March and September meetings of the Committee using the same dataset, and would likely be refined in an iterative way with the Committee in the coming year.**

Pensions Update [Oral Report]

The Committee noted an update on the TPS pension scheme and that discussions with the other five largest TPS contributors in the sector in relation to a joint approach were on-going.

4 **Policy/Regulation/Projects**

General Expenses Policy [EF23/72]

The Committee approved revisions to the General Expenses Policy which provided clarity of approach aiming to reduce variations in interpretation.

High Performance Compute (HPC) and Data Storage [EF23/74]

The Committee approved the contract award to Logicalis as the University's High Performance Compute and Data Storage Provider for a period of 5 years.

Hard Facilities Management Contract [EF23/85]

The Committee endorsed, subject to later endorsement of the final contractual terms, the commercial proposition in respect of the proposed ten-year contract with CBRE.

Student Accommodation Services Contract [EF23/86]

The Committee endorsed, subject to later endorsement of the final contractual terms, the commercial proposition in respect of the proposed five-year contract with Sodexo.

Contract and Legal Claims Update [EF23/75]

The Committee approved the extension of the current Degree Apprenticeship contract with QA Ltd until 30 June 2024 with an update on the finalisation of the current negotiations to be provided to the 10 June Committee meeting.

Students' Union Financial Performance P6 2023/24* [EF22/76]

The Committee noted the report.