



**EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**20 April 2020 - via Microsoft Teams (including videolink)**

**CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES**

**Contact Susan O'Donnell, [susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk), Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.**

**Present:** C Apsey, H Fairfoul, Dr S Fancey [absent EF19/75 - Staff Term and Conditions and National Pay and Pensions Disputes], Dr G Hillier (Chair), S Pelham, N Pope, C Sayers, Professor A Wathey  
**Observers:** R Blackman-Woods, L Brown, E Kabengele  
**Apologies:** A Dunlop, A Serfontein  
**Secretary:** S F O'Donnell, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary)  
**In attendance:** J Embley, Professor P Francis, Professor G McHale [EF19/76], D Monnery, S Newitt, T Urwin [EF19/81 – EF19/82]

**MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING**

1. **Covid-19** [Oral Report]  
 The Committee considered an update from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive on the latest national and sector developments in the Covid-19 crisis. **The Committee noted that the impact of Covid-19 on the University Strategy and financial position would be considered in depth later on the agenda.**
2. **People**  
**Government's Coronavirus Retention Scheme. Our approach to furloughing workers** [EF19/74]  
 The Committee considered the plan to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for some groups and individuals in Professional Support roles in order to protect jobs and mitigate some of the financial impact of Covid-19. Staff "furloughed" would be paid at 100% of their normal salary, consistent with the approach being taken across the sector. **The Committee endorsed the planned approach.**  
  
**Working Together to Evolve our Culture during Covid-19** [EF19/75]  
 The Committee considered the development of the organisational culture in the context of Covid-19, including the clear commitment from Senior Management Group, the Board, trade unions and colleagues to work on this agenda together and the positive reception for the University's informative and empathetic response and communications. There had been a rapid and successful transition to working from home for the majority of staff with support to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. **The Committee commended in particular the approach to communications and the support being provided to staff as they adapted to remote working.**  
  
**Organisational Change Update** [Oral Report]  
**The Committee noted that all organisational reviews had been paused with effect from 23 March 2020 because of the Covid-19 situation.**  
  
**Updates on changes to Staff Term and Conditions and National Pay and Pensions Disputes** [Oral Report]  
 The Committee considered an update on the above matters. At the national level, intended re-balloting for further industrial action on pay and pensions, and work on the pay settlement for 2020/21 had been delayed. Locally, Unison branch meetings had rejected the proposed "bundle" of changes to terms and conditions; UCU had not voted on the proposals before the transition to working from home. **The Committee confirmed that the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development should take this forward with Trade Unions.**

	<p><b><u>REF 2021 Staffing Update</u></b> [EF19/76]  The Committee considered REF staffing issues. The increased uncertainty reported in previous forecasts for Category A staff numbers with significant responsibility for research had reduced, with the forecast range by headcount only slightly reduced. The REF submission date had been postponed from 27 November 2020 to an unspecified date (and for which eight months' notice would be provided), but the staff census date of 31 July 2020 was currently unchanged. <b>The Committee noted the update and that preparations for REF were continuing where this could be achieved without impacting on student support.</b></p>
3.	<p><b><u>Core Financial Performance and Planning</u></b>  <b><u>Monthly Finance Report P7 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20 Reforecast</u></b> [EF19/77]  The Committee considered the University's financial position and performance at Period 7 and received an oral update from the Finance Director on the position at Period 8, including an updated reforecast. Because of the fast-moving Covid-19 situation, the forecast was changing frequently but the 2019/20 outturn was expected to remain ahead of budget and the cash position remained strong. <b>The Committee noted the update and confirmed its view that robust financial management and planning had placed the University in as sound a position as was possible.</b></p> <p><b><u>Covid-19 Scenarios - Impact and Mitigation</u></b> [EF19/78 and presentation]  The Committee considered a range of scenarios of the impact of Covid-19 on the University's income, with estimates of the cashflow effect, and potential options for mitigating these. The University's Vision, Strategy and financial principles were still intact and setting the direction of travel. Focus was on mitigating the shorter term impacts and taking advantage of any opportunities in the medium-to-long term, where flexibility would be key. <b>The Committee commended the presentation and detailed scenarios paper, noting that acceleration of relevant elements of supporting Strategies (e.g. IT) would be key, and that related impacts on the Estates Master Plan would need to be taken into account. The differing requirements for the physical estate for the next two to three years should be mapped out and balanced with IT investment, acknowledging that Northumbria remained primarily a campus university offering innovative blended learning. It concluded that the work to date was an excellent starting point for navigating the next two to three years.</b></p> <p><b><u>Mercer Master Trust Annual Report 2018/19</u></b> [EF19/79]  The Committee considered the Mercer Master Trust – Annual Review 2019, and the associated Governance Report for Northumbria University. <b>The Committee noted that the reports provided assurance that the University had given due care and attention to appointing and managing the provider of the Master Trust.</b></p> <p><b><u>Student Recruitment Update</u></b> [EF19/80 and presentation]  The Committee considered an update as at 17 April 2020. Focus was on conversion activity and the emerging new approach to grading A-Levels, and monitoring the application pipeline. A digital platform to drive enquiries and engagement across all markets was being developed and planning was underway to use this to host virtual Open Days for 2021 entry. <b>The Committee noted that recruitment could be constrained by the physical requirements of teaching under social distancing, and that more blended models of delivery were being developed, building on thinking that was already in progress before the Covid-19 outbreak.</b></p> <p><b><u>Tuition Fees 2021/22</u></b> [EF19/81]  The Committee approved the proposed tuition fees for 2021/22 for UK, EU and International students following a review of the external environment and competitor benchmarking.</p> <p><b><u>Scholarships, Bursaries and Discounts 2020/21</u></b> [EF19/82]  The Committee approved the proposed Scholarships, Bursaries and Discounts 2021/22 for UK, EU and International students following a review of the external environment and competitor benchmarking.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>Policy/Regulation/Projects</u></b>  <b><u>NatWest Mandate</u></b> [EF19/84]  The Committee approved that that the NatWest Commercial Banking – Single Mandate be used to open a deposit account for the purpose of investing excess cash funds.</p>

**Action to Dissolve Northern IT Research Limited** [EF19/85]

The Committee approved that Northern IT Research Ltd be dissolved and the remaining funds be donated to the selected Charity, Northumbria University Students Union, to be applied to the Hardship Fund.

**Students' Union Financial Performance – February 2020** [EF19/87]

The Committee noted the report.

Richard Elliott  
Assistant Secretary to Employment and Finance Committee  
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