

# University of the Highlands and Islands

Regional Strategy Committee (RSC)

Mon 07 March 2022, 14:00 - 16:00

MS Teams

## Present

Alastair MacColl (Chair of Court), Angus Campbell (FE Regional Lead - Vice Chair), Todd Walker (Principal & Vice Chancellor), Stuart Smith (Chair Highland Theological College UHI), Diana Murray (Chair SAMS UHI), Robbie Rowantree (Chair North Highland College UHI), Rosemary McCormack (Staff Governor), Rosemary Allford (Chair Argyll College UHI), Kyle Gee (HISA Representative), Donna Heddle (Vice Principal Research & Impact), Vicki Nairn (Vice Principal (Operations)), Lorna Walker (Chief People officer), Jen Vanderhoven (Vice Principal Engagement), Roger Sendall (Acting University Secretary & Director of Corporate Governance), Niall McArthur (Director of Corporate Resources)

## Meeting minutes

### 1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting.

 RSC Agenda 7 March 2022.pdf

#### 1.1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Brian Crichton and Beverley Clubley.

#### 1.2. Declarations of Interest

None.

#### 1.3. Notification of Any Other Competent Business

None.

## 2. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

### 2.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2021 as a true and accurate record subject to clarification within item 3.1.1 to acknowledge the potential of some Further Education provision and programmes to attract learners from outside the region. **Action: Governance and Policy Manager**

 RSC21-22-014 Minutes\_Regional Strategy Committee\_041121.pdf

### 2.2. Matters Arising

The Committee reviewed matters arising from previous meeting as set out within paper RSC21-22-08 and noted that all matters were complete or addressed by substantive agenda items due for discussion.

 RSC21-22-015 matters arising (220222).pdf

### 2.3. Review of Delegated Decisions

None.

## 3. STARRED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Branding Update

The Vice Principal Engagement reported that the University partnership was progressing towards a launch date for the new brand identity of 28th March 2022. This would include a new look website, a promotional video and social media campaign, merchandise and rebranding of corporate communications and public facing communications. The new brand would also be used as a tool to try to increase interest in courses and to stimulate improved recruitment within the next academic cycle.

It was noted that executives and non-executives would receive a style guide and information to underpin key messages and social media profiles in due course. **Action: Vice Principal Operations.**

 RSC21-22-016 Regional Committee Branding Paper (002).pdf

### 3.2. Appointment of Deputy Principal (Tertiary)

The Principal and Vice Chancellor reported that following a period of internal consultation and reflection on required roles that a decision had been taken to combine two vacant senior executive roles (Vice Principal Further Education and Deputy Principal) into a single enhanced role of Deputy Principal Tertiary. It was felt that this would provide a better reflection of the University's commitment to progressing a genuinely tertiary institution in the context of the Daring to be Different Strategic Plan.

Members were advised that the position would be recruited in due course and that external recruitment specialists would be utilised to ensure a broad search for the best candidates. It was noted that the role description would be designed to ensure that FE and HE duties were promoted with equal importance and that the FE Regional Lead would be granted opportunity to participate and contribute to the recruitment process.

### 3.3. FE/HE Recruitment

The Committee received a report from the Vice Principal Operations in connection with paper RSC21/22-016 providing an update on FE and HE recruitment for AY2021/22 and continuing dialogue between the University and representatives of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in connection with the possible clawback of funding as a result of under delivery against regional targets. The following key points were noted:

- The Vice Principal Operations had met with SFC representatives the previous week to discuss the current situation and to provide context and explanations pertaining to the particular challenges and issues affecting the region and the actions and initiatives that are being addressed by the partnership in an effort to address such challenges.
- Colleagues from across the partnership had come together at short notice to develop and provide a substantive response to SFC in relation to the specific challenges and issues that were being experienced by UHI's assigned colleges and it was noted that SFC were grateful and appreciative of this submission. It was noted that a copy of the letter dated 1th February 2022 would be circulated to members of the RSC following the meeting.  
**Action:AS/DOCG.**
- The Vice Principal Operations explained that the SFC was operating within a context of financial challenges themselves and that the 2022/23 funding settlement was anticipated at best to amount to an uplift of between 0.4 and 1.4% and this would equate to a real terms decrease in FE credit funding across the sector that would likely result in significant challenges for institutions.
- SFC are understood to be modelling a variety of funding scenarios currently with the SFC Board meeting on 11th March and an indicative FE funding settlement announcement expected around 24th March 2022.
- Scottish Government have identified the following priorities for targeted investment and development funding; Climate Change, Social Care, Health and Poverty. It was noted that colleges and universities play a critical role across all three identified priority areas and that our future submissions for funding and engagement with SFC and SG will seek to highlight and demonstrate the significant impact that education funding has on facilitating progress and delivering positive impacts within and for our region and how the UHI working in partnership with SFC, HIE and other stakeholders can help to deliver against key priorities.
- It is intended to pursue regular positive engagement with SFC colleagues in an effort to develop a spirit of partnership and to seek a new approach to achieving targeted and appropriate funding that maximises benefits for learners within our remote and fragile communities as opposed to a purely numbers based funding model.
- The situation regarding the potential clawback of FE funding for 2021/2022 and earlier years remains uncertain but could exceed £4M.
- It was noted that several Scottish regions have over delivered on their regional FE credit allocations and are seeking allocations of additional credit funding and that SFC is therefore seeking to develop a fair funding model that balances competing interests at a time of financial challenge.
- The University Finance and General Purposes Committee and Partnership Council have discussed the issues at length and have directed management to develop appropriate recovery plans and mitigating strategies in accordance with worst case planning assumptions for the forthcoming academic year and for subsequent years. A substantive update would be provided to Court on 16th March.

 RSC21-22-017 - FE HE recruitment 21- 22.pdf

Verbal  
Todd Walker

## 4. UNSTARRED ITEMS

### 4.1. Academic Partner Agreements Update

Roger Sendall

The Committee received an update from the Acting University Secretary & Director of Corporate Governance in connection with paper RSC21-22-018 and were pleased to note the good progress made with regard to developing new fit for purposes academic partner agreements. It was noted that the process remained on track to finalise and agree new agreements before the end of May 2022.

 RSC21-22-018 Academic Partner Agreement update.pdf

### 4.2. Change Management Plan

Max Brown

The Committee received a report from the Change Management Programme Director providing an update on progress with each of the strategic workstreams. It was noted that whilst the new Branding project, Rural Colleges Merger, HE Curriculum Review and Evaluation of Executive Office were broadly progressing well and on track that there was some slippage with the Finance System Project and some major challenges with the UHI Blueprint. It was noted that a full and updated report would be presented to Court on 16th March.

 RSC21-22-019 Change Management Plan update, March 22.pdf

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## 5. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

None

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## 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 3 May 2022

