

Regional Strategy Committee (RSC)

Thu 05 November 2020, 11:00 - Thu 05 November 2020, 14:30

Webex Teams: 143378345@uhi.webex.com

Attendees

In attendance

Board members

Garry Coutts (Chair), Beverly Clublely (Vice-Chair), Michael Foxley (Vice-Chair), Andrew Campbell (Chair Argyll College UHI), Blair Sandison (Chair North Highland College UHI), Brian Crichton (Chair Perth College UHI), Bruce Robertson (Independent), David Sandison (Chair NAFC UHI), Diana Murray (Chair SAMS UHI), Fiona McLean (Member - Court), Florence Jansen (HISA President), Sarah Burton (Chair Inverness College UHI), Willie Printie (Member - Court), Crichton Lang (Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor), Angus Campbell (Member - Highlands and Islands Enterprise)

In attendance

Fiona Larg (Chief Operating Officer & Secretary), Niall McArthur (Director of Corporate Resources), Lydia Rohmer (Vice Principal - Tertiary), Gary Campbell (Vice Principal - Strategic Development), John Kemp (Vice Principal Further Education), Max Brown (- in part), Ali Jarvis (Meeting coach), Nicholas Oakley (Clerk)

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome

 RSC Agenda - 5 Nov 2020 CWL.pdf

1.1. *Welcome & apologies

The Chair opened the meeting and noted the apologies from Gary Campbell.

1.2. *Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3. AOCB

An updates on technology developments was requested. [G Campbell to produce a briefing note for circulation to members after the meeting.](#)

2. Governance

2.1. *Minutes of the last meeting: held on 1 September 2020

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

 RSC20-21-014 Minutes_Regional Strategy Committee (RSC)_010920.pdf

Decision
Nicholas Oakley

2.2. *Matters Arising

The Committee **noted** the matters arising, and the following key updates:

Finance workstream work – progress was continuing on this workstream. Since the last meeting of the Committee, F&GP had considered and agreed a plan, with good discussion on the proposals, with partnership finance directors now more involved. It was agreed that an all-partnership meeting would be needed to discuss the workstream.

Action: Meeting on the finance workstream work to be scheduled to involve partnership executives and non-executive.

Action: Members requested that the membership of the Finance Director Practitioners' Group be circulated to the Committee.

EO evaluation. Members heard that the narrative was included in the report on the agenda, but the full reports would be included in the annex to Committee papers for future meetings. The I-PVC reported that the EO evaluation panel would be meeting on 17 November to sign off the work plan. It was agreed that the plan would then be circulated to the Committee members after that meeting.

Action: Circulate EO evaluation work plan after meeting on 17 November to RSC members.

Dashboard. Members heard that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs had and would continue to monitor and give feedback to the executive on the contents of the dashboard reporting.

 RSC20-21-015 Matters Arising 20201028 .pdf

2.3. *Review of Delegated Decisions

There were no delegated decisions reported.

2.4. Update on 'meeting coach'

The Committee received a presentation from Ali Jarvis, the meeting coach, on her progress to date, initial observations, and her proposed next steps.

A Jarvis reported that the key elements for measuring Committee impact included a shared strategic purpose in line with the Committee remit, the importance of balancing 'dual' roles, executive input and scrutiny of delivery, and behaviours, culture and relationships. A Jarvis also remarked upon the importance of setting a destination, as well as a direction, of travel in much of the change projects and programmes.

A Jarvis reported that the next steps would include one to one meetings with Committee members, ongoing feedback on meeting observations, and a committee governance 'temperature' check.

The Committee **welcomed** the approach and the articulated benefits and next steps proposed. In the subsequent discussion the following points were also raised by members:

1. Concerns about the working relationships between executives and non-executives and the importance of close, candid collaboration.
2. A reluctance perceived by some members to engage in 'frank and blunt' dialogue on serious issues facing the partnership. Contrariwise, some members felt the commitment to respectful dialogue was working well and was paramount, but should not impede robust and constructive challenge.
3. That the work and findings of the meeting coach should be applied to all university committees where possible.

Action: Chair and meetings coach to meet to explore lessons learned and alignment of RSC in wider governance arrangements.

Action: Meetings coach to produce a brief summary after each meeting identifying key observations.

3. Strategic Issues

Nicholas Oakley

Verbal
John Kemp

3.1. *SFC Review and RSB evaluation

The Committee received an update on the SFC review and the regional strategic body (RSB) evaluation. Members heard that the RSB evaluation had been widened to include structural issues facing the university partnership, and it was important to respond separately to these two pieces of work.

On the RSB evaluation response, members **agreed** to respond proactively and positively on the specific issues raised, note and show commitment to increased pace on the recommendations which were largely covered by existing partnership activities.

Action: J Kemp and F Larg to draft a response to the RSB evaluation and circulate to members, Chairs, and principals for comments.

On the SFC review, members **agreed** that a meeting was needed to provide the executive a steer on the response and fully articulate and respond to both external expectations and drivers (e.g. job creation, health, inequalities) as well as formulating a strong defence of particular areas (e.g. rurality funding, distributed model of delivery).

Action: Seminar on the SFC phase 2 review in early 2021.

 RSC20-21-017 SFC Review RSC paper 051120 - draft.pdf

3.2. Potential UHI/SRUC collaborations

Fiona Larg/Crichton Lang

The Committee discussed a proposal for closer collaboration with SRUC. The members heard that Partnership Council had discussed the benefits and areas of opportunity, for instance in service provision, research and knowledge exchange. The I-PVC reported that the Partnership Council were supportive of further work to explore a range of closer working opportunities, however there was not broad support for a full institutional merger. The PC had also requested that the exploratory work being proposed ensured a clear case for benefits to the university partnership.

Members **noted** the PC discussion, and **agreed** to explore the opportunities and synergies with SRUC once a meeting between SRUC and UHI executives to discuss and agree the scope and details of the proposal. They also noted the importance of understanding how this proposal would fit in with existing partnership alignment work, the latter of which should be prioritised.

Members noted that the terminology used in the paper, particularly reference to 'non-metropolitan' areas, failed to recognise or represent the diversity of the partners, and should be updated or better defined.

Action: SRUC/ UHI collaboration scoping meeting.

 RSC20-21-018 SRUC.pdf

3.3. Strategic Plan - feedback from workshop and next steps

Fiona Larg

The Committee **noted** the strategic plan feedback. Members **approved** the next steps, including another workshop involving AP chairs, Court members, SMT, and principals at the end of January 2021 to look at higher level framework of the plan. Members also **agreed** that it was important to keep University Court ownership of the plan at the forefront of discussions and ensure responsibility for the plan will ultimately remain with Court.

 RSC20-21 019 Strategic plan feedback from workshop and next steps.pdf

3.4. SIP/SDS and Regional Economic Recovery - feedback from workshop and next steps

The Committee **noted** the feedback and **approved** the next steps.

Verbal
John Kemp/Lydia Rohmer

4. Student numbers

4.1. *Future distribution of FE credit target

John Kemp

The Committee **noted** the proposal on the future distribution of FE credit targets. Members heard that concerns were raised by Partnership Council that they had not had an opportunity to discuss or consider it fully. The Committee members **agreed** that there was a need to approach this strategically, and **agreed** that Partnership Council evaluate it further before returning to the Committee for approval.

Action: Proposal on the distribution of FE credit targets to be considered further by Partnership Council before returning to RSC.

 RSC20-21-021 Future distribution of FE credits051120.pdf

 FERB010_FE_Credits V217-18.pdf

 FERB010_FE_Credits V218-19.pdf

 FERB010_FE_Credits V219-20.pdf

5. Finance

5.1. *AP Financial Information Update

Niall McArthur

The Committee received an update on the AP financial information from Niall McArthur. Although revised cash flows were still awaited for Perth and Moray, he reported that there will be an overall forecast cash deficit for 2020/1. The implications of this include a potential reduction in FE funding. Following questions from members, N McArthur reported that he was largely satisfied with the reported mitigations and plans in place to reduce the deficits, although he noted that their efficacy would not be fully known until receipt of the management accounts and final financial statements for 2019/20.

The Committee **noted** the update as well as the information provided by members on the deficit and liquidity issues facing the sector more widely.

 RSC20-21-022 AP Financial Monitoring - October 2020.pdf

6. Curriculum

6.1. Preparations for Semester 2 - update on any further adjustments/delivery adjustments

BB/SE For HE/JK For FE

The Committee received an update on preparation for semester 2. The I-PVC reported that the crisis management group continue to meet twice weekly and this issue is on their agenda. He reported that the partnership was continuing to respond to development and implement further adjustments and mitigations, particularly around placement management, for semester 2.

The Committee **noted** the update.

 RSC20-21-023 RSC Report on Readiness.pdf

7. Economic Recovery and Funding

7.1. *HIE/UHI Seminars

Crichton Lang

The Committee discussed the HIE/ UHI seminars, a joint programme of activities planned for 2021. The I-PVC reported that UHI was now leading on these events.

The Committee **noted** and recognised the value of these events, but there were concerns raised about the lack of appropriate fora that cover the entire partnership region, and a lack of focus on the economic recovery or a fully regional economic planning structure. Members recognised the need to involve Scottish Enterprise to cover all regions covered by the UHI partnership, including Perth, Argyll, and Moray. Members also discussed the potential opportunities for economic partnership regions and agreed that discussions with HIE take place to take this forward.

Action: Follow up meeting(s) with HIE to discuss potential solutions to a fully regional economic forum. J Kemp, M Foxley to report back to RSC on developments.

 RSC20-21-024 HIEUHI Strategic Forum .pdf

7.2. Potential new curriculum offer in semester 2

John Kemp

The Committee **noted** the paper without further discussion.

 RSC20-21-025 Semester 2 paper 051120.pdf

7.3. *Potential sources of funding for new activity

Niall McArthur

The Committee noted the paper on sources of funding for new activity, and requested regular updates particular on where applications had been made (or not made) and the rationale behind these decisions.

Action: Regular updates to RSC on funding applications and rationale (Niall McArthur).

 RSC20-21-026 College Funding Streams 2020-21v2.pdf

7.4. Update on regional economic structures

[Discussed under item 7.1]

7.5. *Update for MSP's paper

Alison Lochhead

The Committee noted and **agreed** the briefing letter for MPs/MSPs, and requested that the distribution list be widened to all candidates and chief executives of political parties, not just sitting members of parliament.

Action: Circulate briefing letter to MPs/ MSPs, candidates and chief executives. (I-PVC and Comms team)

8. Progress / Monitoring

8.1. *Update on Change Management Plan

Max Brown

[M Brown joined the meeting]

The Committee received an update from Max Brown on the change management plan. He reported that:

1. The curriculum review was underway and progressing well with all partners engaged. The principals steering group were also meeting regularly and the workstream involved a substantive overhaul of the curriculum, with a key deliverable expected in March 2021.
2. The RAM consultation was now active, with a view to providing feedback to Partnership Council; in February 2021.
3. The EO evaluation panel was meeting on 17 November.
4. Three income generation workstreams have now been consolidated and assigned an executive lead (Debbie Murray).
5. Financial planning and mitigation and aligned and common finance services is marked as 'red' and will be discussed at PC. M Brown reported that there were currently no substantive options for making the necessary financial savings required.

Members **noted** the update and the need to reflect upon lessons learned, successes, and challenges.

[M Brown left the meeting]

 RSC20-21-028 Change Management plan update 2, Nov 20.pdf

8.2. Dashboard

Fiona Larg

The Committee **noted** and welcomed the dashboard report.

 RSC20-21-029 Dashboard.pdf

9. *AOB

9.1. Options appraisal for alignment of colleges within the partnership

John Kemp

The Committee **noted** the update on the alignment of colleges within the partnership options appraisal.

Members heard that HISA were fully supportive and were seeking timely progress and change.

Clarity was sought on the background and interdependencies of the two strands of options appraisals being discussed; J Kemp agreed to provide additional background and context to members outwith the meeting.

 RSC20-21-030 paper on alignment 051120.pdf

9.2. I-PVC

The Chair reported that this would be the last Regional Strategy Committee meeting for the Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor, Professor Crichton Lang, who was retiring in December 2020. The Chair and the Committee members expressed their gratitude for Professor Lang's leadership throughout his tenure, and their appreciation for the skills and credibility he brought to the institution as an experienced academic. They also noted his instrumental role in the university achieving tDAP and rDAP powers. The Chair noted that Professor Lang had entered the role of I-PVC at an especially difficult time and his leadership, stewardship, and collegiate approach was highly appreciated across the university partnership community.

9.2.1. Close of meeting

There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting.

10. Post-Meeting Action Summary

[Post-meeting summary of the actions listed above]

1. G Campbell to produce a briefing note for circulation to members after the meeting.
2. Meeting on the finance workstream work to be scheduled to involve partnership executives and non-executive.
3. Members requested that the membership of the Finance Director Practitioners' Group be circulated to the Committee.
4. Circulate EO evaluation work plan after meeting on 17 November to RSC members.

5. Chair and meetings coach to meet to explore lessons learned and alignment of RSC in wider governance arrangements.
6. Meetings coach to produce a brief summary after each meeting identifying key observations.
7. J Kemp and F Larg to draft a response to the RSB evaluation and circulate to members, Chairs, and principals for comments.
8. Seminar on the SFC phase 2 review in early 2021.
9. SRUC/ UHI collaboration scoping meeting.
10. Proposal on the distribution of FE credit targets to be considered further by Partnership Council before returning to RSC.
11. Follow up meeting(s) with HIE to discuss potential solutions to a fully regional economic forum. J Kemp, M Foxley to report back to RSC on developments.
12. Regular updates to RSC on funding applications and rationale (Niall McArthur).
13. Circulate briefing letter to MPs/ MSPs, candidates and chief executives. (I-PVC and Comms team)

