

Approved Minutes

Present

Prof Patricia Hind (From Item 2)	Independent Governor, Deputy Chair of Committee	PH
Graham Raikes, MBE	Independent Governor, Chair of the Board	GR
Prof Michelle Jones	Vice-Chancellor (Interim)	MJ
Kate Doodson	Independent Governor	KD

In attendance

John Searson (Item 5)	Independent Governor, Chair of Estates Project Group	JS
Will Mintram	Student Governor; President, Marjon Student Union (MSU)	WM
Prof Ian Luke (Item 4)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	IL
Simon Arthurs	Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director	SA
Stephen Plant	University Secretary & Registrar	SP
Jessamie Thomas	Governance Officer (note taker)	JT

1. Welcome, Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

- 1.1 Chair of the Board, Graham Raikes MBE, took the chair and welcomed colleagues.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Alex Hawtin, Chair of Finance & Resources (F&R) Committee and Katherine George, Co-optee.
- 1.3 GR invited members to provide any updates to the Register of Interests, included in Part C. No new declarations were made. Senior Management Team (SMT) members confirmed their declarations.

2. To Receive an Update from the Vice-Chancellor

- 2.1 GR invited Vice-Chancellor (Interim), Prof Michelle Jones, to provide an update.
- 2.2 MJ confirmed that, under her leadership, the University was moving forwards with a 'business as usual' values-based approach. Marjon's next Vice-Chancellor, Prof Claire Taylor (CT) would join in May. Her appointment had generated much local interest and engagements were being scheduled.
- 2.3 MJ discussed with the Committee the forward-looking student recruitment headlines and how these compared with the previous year and also against sector and benchmarked group data. A University-wide task and finish group around conversion would be set up. A return on the investment in marketing would, it was hoped, be evident from the 2024 entry onwards. An investment budget had been set to launch the healthcare education programmes. MJ informed the Committee that the first cohort of students studying the Higher Level Apprenticeship Assistant Practitioner programme had been welcomed to Marjon in January 2023. National Midwifery Council accreditation of Marjon as a fully approved educational institute had been secured.
- 2.4 MJ noted that the Senior Management Team (SMT) routinely reviewed levels of recruitment, enrolment and continuation. Any decisions regarding potentially unviable courses would be carefully taken, at the earliest opportunity, to minimise any impact on students. A holistic approach would be taken, taking into account the value of the wide range of subject areas offered by the University.
- 2.5 It was confirmed that the mid-year financial review was scheduled for the March F&R Committee meeting. MJ highlighted three significant cost pressures: energy, loss of rental income and pay awards. MJ summarised steps being taken to address these. The 'FocusNow

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Project' would generate the business planning and budget setting processes to bring about the required savings and capital prioritisation. In response to a request, Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director, Simon Arthurs, confirmed that a capital update would come to F&R Committee in March.

- 2.6 The University and College Union (UCU) had announced 18 days of national strike action. MJ commended the work of Director of People & Organisational Development, Lucy Pengelly, in brokering a local joint working agreement, aligned with the University's People Strategy, the outcome of which was that the local branch would not be encouraging Marjon staff to strike.
- 2.7 The Committee discussed the potential outcome of the national pay bargaining process and implications for Marjon. The awards under discussion were considerable and affordability could be an issue for a university of Marjon's size. MJ commented on the options available in principle to the University: accept and make payment; accept and defer payment for up to 18 months; exit from the pay bargaining process. Notwithstanding the University having signed up to the pay bargaining process, the Committee suggested that it would be helpful if the Director of People & Organisational Development could provide sector benchmarking for the Board of Governors' (BoG) benefit, to compare the approach being taken by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of a similar size. **ACTION: LP**
- 2.8 MJ explained the priorities underpinning work around the assessment of space and digital planning, with a view to establishing a ten year capital plan.
- 2.9 MJ was pleased to confirm that the Plymouth Studio School purchase had completed. Due diligence on the bank loan was however still in progress and was taking longer than expected. The Committee asked SA to continue to focus on finalising this. To mitigate the risk of this not progressing as anticipated, capital spend was being phased.
- 2.10 MJ provided information on the current areas of focus of the academic delivery team.
- 2.11 MJ flagged the student residential accommodation update, contained in the Estates Update, to be discussed further under item 5.
- 2.12 The Committee noted that the success of the Office for Students (OfS) capital funding bid had generated positive media coverage and feedback.
- 2.13 The Committee noted that Marjon Stores looked to be recording increased levels of revenue compared with the previous campus shop.
- 2.14 The Committee noted that the University had been announced as a green mobility hub, and work was in progress to develop this.
- 2.15 The Committee noted that the University's Arts Centre continued to run a range of events and attract a strong customer base.
- 2.16 The Committee noted that the University's partnership with Plymouth Patriots had been extended.
- 2.17 The Committee noted that there had been a positive reception to the announcement that the new venue for Graduation ceremonies would be St Andrew's Church, in central Plymouth.
- 2.18 MJ provided information on British Council funding which had been secured for an international sustainability project.
- 2.19 The Committee noted that a large statue would be received on loan from The Box, Plymouth and sited in The Quad.

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- 2.20 MJ flagged an important milestone: through 2023, the University would celebrate 50 years of being based in Plymouth.
Deputy Chair of F&R Committee, Prof Patricia Hind, joined the meeting.
- 2.21 The Committee discussed with MJ the potential implications of HEIs in the region not having been successful in their teacher training accreditation status bids.
- 2.22 The Committee thanked MJ for the update.
- 3. To Receive a Financial Update**
- 3.1 PH invited Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director, Simon Arthurs, to provide an overview.
- 3.2 SA confirmed that, following BoG approval, the Annual Financial Return (AFR) had been submitted to the OfS in line with the required timescales.
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Prof Ian Luke joined the meeting.
- 3.3 SA confirmed that a risk-based approach was being taken to budget monitoring and provided details of current areas of focus.
- 3.4 SA reminded the Committee that the capital envelope had been approved by BoG and confirmed that planned spend was being carefully monitored. Project Board, the forum which approved and monitored capital projects, would convene the following week. An update would be brought to F&R Committee and, in the case of estates-related projects, Estates Project Group.
- 3.5 The Committee noted that cloud-based data storage was being considered as a more cost-effective option than servers.
- 3.6 The Committee noted that expenditure had been incurred due to remedial work in a car park.
- 3.7 The estimated cost of mains waterwork leaks was discussed, the need to remedy these as a priority but also the inherent challenges in accurately identifying the location of the leaks.
- 3.8 The optimum approach to meeting the cost of the resurfacing of the 3G pitch was discussed, noting that it would most likely be phased over two financial years. In order to maintain Football Association (FA) accreditation, the project would need to be completed by March 2025.
- 3.9 SA flagged recruitment priorities within the Finance Team along with the challenge of recruiting to certain other positions across the University. In due course, the Committee noted that it may be helpful to review the pay/grading structure but this would be a significant piece of work. The Committee discussed further with SA the plans in place to address workforce recruitment priorities.
- 3.10 The end date of the Peninsula Allied Health Centre (PAHC) lease would be known by the end of March 2023. This would inform the design and refurbishment work necessary to return the building to Marjon's use, financed by OfS capital funding. Following discussion, the Committee was satisfied that this was being appropriately planned and monitored.
- 3.11 SA provided an update on a sport leisurewear contract which the Director of Sport and Physical Activity was leading, liaising with himself and President of the Marjon Student Union (MSU), Will Mintram, so as to secure improved outcomes for students.
- 3.12 SA reminded the Committee that a finance system upgrade would be rolled out ahead of the new financial year.

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- 3.13 Arrangements in place between the University and dBs were discussed.
3.14 The Committee thanked SA for the update.

Chair of Estates Project Group, John Searson, was welcomed to the meeting.

4. To Consider Student Population, Outcomes and Experience

- 4.1 The report was received. PH invited Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Prof Ian Luke and University Secretary & Registrar, Stephen Plant, to present an overview.
- 4.2
- HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) Student Return 2021-22
- SP reminded the Committee that high level analysis of this return had been presented within the annual KPIs report to BoG in November 2022. The return had been approved by the OfS in December. SP provided further detailed analysis of the position. The Committee felt confident that the report demonstrated that statutory data assurance requirements were being met, and thanked SP for his detailed analysis and report.
- 4.3
- Office for Students B3 Condition Update
- SP reminded the Committee that the OfS set a series of conditions for registration as an HEI, including quality of provision. SP's Briefing Note served to inform the Committee of developments in this regard, around the governance and assessment of quality and baseline thresholds within the context of continuation, completion and progression. The Briefing Note highlighted key outcomes of discussions between the OfS and Universities UK (UUK) as well as the B3 condition being inextricably linked with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). SP confirmed that Marjon had broadly met its conditions at an institutional level. SP was thanked for his reports and analysis.
- 4.4 MJ noted that a proposal would come to BoG regarding a review of KPIs to ensure alignment with the B3 Condition and TEF metrics, to better reflect how the University was regulated.
- 4.5
- Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission
- IL provided a summary of the report, which constituted the University's submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. The submission would lead to a rating for student outcomes and experience which would last for four years. The report provided an overview of Marjon's position against OfS requirements, with regard to student continuation and completion rates, progression outcomes and student experience. There would be a requirement for the University to offer a 'Model for Educational Gain' which would be central to a cross-University implementation project.
- IL provided further analysis of the TEF submission, and the areas where Marjon would have renewed focus going forward. IL gave examples of progress made in response to targeted actions. IL concluded by celebrating the achievements of Marjon's students, particularly given the regional context relatively low social mobility, a view endorsed by the Committee.
- 4.6 The Committee suggested that any realignment of KPIs should take into account the University's values and social mobility to be sure that Marjon retained its core values alongside TEF data analysis.
- The Committee suggested it could be beneficial for the University to focus further on social impact modelling, and how to promote Marjon as a beacon in this field.
- 4.7 The Committee noted the discussion which this agenda item had generated and requested that SMT consider how best to structure a BoG session for further engagement on this theme. **ACTION: MJ**

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- 4.8 The Committee congratulated IL and colleagues on the detailed, evidence-based submission. It was suggested that a view of CPD from staff members could be helpful.
- 4.9 IL was thanked for his report, the TEF submission and for his further explanations and analysis.
IL left the meeting.

5. To Receive an Update on Estates

- 5.1 The report was received. PH invited Chair of Estates Project Group (EPG), John Searson, to present an overview.
- 5.2 JS reminded colleagues that EPG had convened recently and had discussed the Estates Update in detail; the notes of that meeting were contained in Part C. JS highlighted key elements, notably that the Plymouth Studio School was in the University's ownership and presented a usable space mainly in good condition, although some works would be required to address water ingress. A review of health and safety and compliance matters was being undertaken. Space planning was in progress. An assessment of how to integrate its solar array into the University's wider system would be needed.
- 5.3 JS commended the work being done across campus around compliance.
- 5.4 Remedial work to address the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was moving forward and the monitoring of this would align with existing monitoring schedules. An assessment of the condition of the older halls was progressing.
- 5.5 JS noted that the University's position regarding student residential accommodation would require a BoG review, the loan due diligence having shed light on covenants, assets, resources, locations, charges and the campus valuation. While the length of time taken to secure the loan was not ideal, the rigour of the approach was resulting in greater clarity in a number of areas. There were also sector-wide discussions on student accommodation. These factors had contributed to an acknowledgement that pursuing a new-build project as initially envisaged would not be feasible; it would require partnership or repurposing. A workshop would be organised for Friday 21 April, to provide a forum for discussion. GR noted the importance of explaining the rationale behind this fresh options appraisal to BoG.
- ACTION: MJ/SA**
- 5.6 As discussed earlier in the meeting, JS emphasized the need to resolve water leaks.
- 5.7 JS noted the importance of the 3G pitch being replaced, recognising the importance of sports facilities to the University's reputation. Issues around the project cost and phasing would require careful consideration by this Committee and would ultimately be a BoG decision.
- 5.8 JS was pleased to note progress with regard to the monitoring of capital projects, their management and outcomes.
- 5.9 The Committee noted work which was underway to address fire risks and to remedy certain works already undertaken which now needed further attention.
- 5.10 The Committee thanked JS, MJ and SA for the report and update.
- 5.11 *JS left the meeting.*
Kate Doodson left the meeting at 16:00 (the scheduled end time).

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6. To Consider the 'FocusNow' Project Plan

- 6.1 The report was received. PH invited MJ to present an overview.
- 6.2 MJ provided contextual information around the FocusNow Project Plan, which represented a targeted approach to identifying savings for transformation and growth, with a focus on a three year plan and the active involvement of a large number of staff. There would be a progressive, sequential focus on collaboration and on promoting staff development and voice via this process. SMT felt this was important groundwork ahead of the arrival of Prof Taylor. MJ expressed confidence in the way the project was being approached and managed.
- 6.3 GR updated colleagues on a meeting he had held with all Deans, Directors and Assistant Directors of Schools. There had been positive discussion, including around how promote further engagement between BoG and the University's leadership team. MJ noted that the upcoming Chairs' Discussion Group meeting would be a useful forum ahead of wider discussions at BoG level. Via this project, transformational change across the University would be carefully considered and implications assessed. The Committee felt this approach was positive and commended MJ on the work being done to map priorities and clarify the options going forward.
- 6.4 MJ was thanked for the report and update.

7. Reserved Business – See RB (2) minutes

Part B

PH invited governors to 'unstar' items from Part B for discussion. None were identified and they were taken as read.

The following report was received and approved:

8. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (14 November 2022)** were received as an accurate record and **APPROVED** with no amendments.

The following were received for information with no queries:

9. **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting (14 November 2022)**

Part C

The following reports were received for information:

- C5 **Notes from Estates Project Group (EPG) M1 (5 October 2022)**

- C **Register of Interests** – SMT members confirmed that their entries on the Register were accurate.

In closing the main part of the meeting, PH thanked attendees for their attendance and contributions.

10. **Reserved Business** – See RB minutes

11. **Reserved Business** – See RB minutes

Close

In closing the meeting, PH invited colleagues to reflect upon whether discussions impacted on the current risk register or if changes were proposed. None were highlighted.