

Approved Minutes

Present

Prof Patricia Hind	Independent Governor, Chair of Committee	PH
Graham Raikes, MBE	Independent Governor, Chair of the Board of Governors (BoG), Deputy Chair of Committee	GR
Prof Claire Taylor	Vice-Chancellor	CT
Kate Doodson	Independent Governor	KD
Duncan Swift	Independent Governor	DS
Prof Mark Llewellyn	Co-opted Board Member (F&R Chair designate)	ML
Dr Laura Wallis	Academic Staff Governor (Senate Elected)	LW
Liam Williams	Student Governor; President, Marjon Student Union	LWi

In attendance

Prof Michelle Jones	Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost	MJ
David Soutter	Interim Chief Finance Officer	DSO
Katy Willis	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Success	KW
Ann Holman	Chief Operating Officer	AH
Stephen Plant	University Secretary & Registrar	SP
Lynne Hyland	Financial Controller (observer)	LH
Partner (Items 1-2)	Partner, Mills and Reeve	MR
Jessamie Thomas	Governance Officer (note taker)	JT

1. Welcome, Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

- 1.1 Chair of the Committee, Prof Patricia Hind, welcomed colleagues to the meeting. A particular welcome was extended to Interim Chief Finance Officer, David Soutter, Financial Controller, Lynne Hyland and a Partner from Mills and Reeve.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Co-opted Board Member Reena Bajaj.
- 1.3 PH read out a confidentiality statement, based on wording contained in the Governor Affirmation and Governors' Handbook, to remind colleagues of their duties in this regard.
- 1.4 PH invited members to provide any updates to the Register of Interests, included in Part C.
- 1.5 **Text redacted on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.**
- 1.6 PH invited governors to 'unstar' items from Part B for discussion. No items were identified and the reports were taken as read.

2. To Receive the Vice-Chancellor's Update

- 2.1 The confidential report was received. PH invited Vice-Chancellor, Prof Claire Taylor, to present an overview.
- 2.2 CT introduced the Partner from Mills and Reeve who had been invited to speak to the Committee in an advisory capacity, as part of a contextual update.
- 2.3- **Text redacted on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.**
- 2.8

MR was thanked for their contributions and they left the meeting.

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2.9- *Text redacted on the grounds of confidentiality.*

2.17

2.18 There being no further questions, CT was thanked for the report and update.

3. To Receive the Q1 Financial Report

3.1 The report was received. PH invited DSo to present an overview.

3.2 DSo presented the headline position, summarising the work undertaken by himself and LH since both commenced in post in September 2024. This related to closing out the financial year 2023/24, preparing information for the bank submission and running the University finances during these three months.

3.3 DSo confirmed the work which had been done to progress creditor payments and anticipated these being up to date by the end of Period 4 (the end of this month).

3.4 DS noted some lag on expenditure, with the first three months running at a better rate than in the draft budget.

3.5 DS noted that there had been monthly improvements and the financial year had started ahead of the management accounts' anticipated position at the end of July.

3.6 DS provided a cash update, noting significant positive variance, which was being analysed to assess whether this was due to savings or profiling. DS praised the discipline being applied to the control of spend across the University and gave examples of areas seeing a positive impact across staff costs and non-staff expenditure.

3.7 DSo confirmed his focus on safeguarding against slippage in other areas. DSo confirmed the measures to be taken to set costs appropriately to progress 'Operation: Excellence'. DSo confirmed to the Committee the uplift in tuition fees from 2025/26 and the increased employer's National Insurance contribution costs from April 2025 onwards were being taken into consideration.

3.8- *Text redacted on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.*

3.13

3.14 DSo was thanked for the report and update.

4. To Receive an Update on the Draft Audited Financial Statements (Statutory Accounts) 2023-24

4.1 The report was received. PH invited DSo to present an overview.

4.2 DSo confirmed the work underway to finalise the financial statements and the current position, with some final adjustments to be made post trial balance sheet. DSo commented on work to pursue debts and the proposed approach to debt write-offs. The deferred income figures were being confirmed. The intention was to present final figures within the next two weeks.

4.3 A timeline with External Auditors Bishop Fleming would be agreed for their work on going concern. DSo anticipated this being conducted in December 2024 or early January 2025. DSo confirmed that a paper had been received by the Audit Committee and auditors on providing assurance to BoG around going concern; this would be brought to BoG. The Committee accepted that the narrative was not yet complete.

4.4 An update on the financial returns due to be submitted to the OfS, including the Annual Financial Return (AFR), would also be presented to BoG.

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- 4.5 In response to a question, DSo, advised the Committee of his approach to managing bad debt and write-offs, including a review of billing and debt management. CT confirmed and commended the discipline and rigour which was being applied to this area.
- 4.6 DSo was thanked for the report and update.
- 5. To Consider the Student Population Data Report**
- 5.1 The report was received. PH invited Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success), Katy Willis, to present an overview.
- 5.2 With regard to current population, the Committee considered the overall population which is running ahead of budgeted numbers and student recruitment and conversion activities. Analysis of potential withdrawals was presented at Appendix 1. KW summarised the position to the Committee's satisfaction, noting that while too early in the cycle to draw conclusions on recruitment for 2025, multiple activities to improve recruitment were underway.
- 5.3 The Committee commended KW on the quality of data shared via the Microsoft Power BI link.
- 5.4 In response to a question around non-completion, KW provided detailed information on student populations where there may be an enhanced risk, how this could impact the University and how this could be mitigated. Enhanced data reporting had been identified as a priority.
- 5.5 The Committee noted the position and KW was thanked for the report.
- 6. To Receive an Estates and Digital Update**
- 6.1 The report was received. PH invited Chief Operating Officer, Ann Holman, to present an overview.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the remit of the paper, to provide the Committee with a brief update on Estates, Digital and Campus Development and areas of activity of strategic importance. AH commenced her update by focusing on Digital, notably the high-level design of the transformation programme 'Operation: Excellence' to meet the annual priority of Operational Excellence. AH summarised the purpose, objectives, stages and five workstreams.
- 6.3 AH provided an Estates Update. This encompassed detailed updates on the 3G sports pitch, swimming pool filters and RAAC remediation. The Committee thanked AH for the report; AH responded to detailed questions about each of these areas. AH confirmed that partner arrangements, student experience, compliance and safety were central to all considerations, within the budgetary context. AH confirmed that the time frames were recognised and the team was exploring options appropriately.
- 6.4 The report contained an update on the Health and Wellbeing Hub (PAHC building) and Office for Students (OfS) Grant Funding, specifically conditions of the grant, project set-up, governance and monitoring, design, construction, equipment and completion.
- 6.5 With regard to the Campus Development Plan, AH summarised the work being done to revitalise and reimagine a masterplan to provide a clear, considered framework for development. AH noted that proposals would incorporate those that met the requirements

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of Marjon's students, both in terms of demand and profile, whilst at the same time protecting the University's historic foundation.

- 6.6 The Committee commended AH on the report and the work taking place. GR suggested that further consideration of space utilisation may be beneficial. **ACTION: AH/GR**
- 6.7 In response to a question on the impact of resource constraints on moving the work streams forward, AH provided assurance on the workstream lead, the collaborative work underway, the commitment of colleagues, a significant amount of motivation to support transformation in terms of the process improvement. AH confirmed there was a budget allocation for some expertise in specific areas to bring about efficiencies.
- 6.8 In response to a question around potential asset disposals, AH summarised opportunities that had been discussed at DPIG under consideration and confirmed that updates would be brought to the Committee.
- 6.9 The Committee noted the position and AH was thanked for the report.

7. To receive the Health, Safety and Security Annual Report

- 7.1 The report was received. PH invited University Secretary & Registrar, Stephen Plant, to present an overview.
- 7.2 SP, the University's H&S executive lead, confirmed that there were no material issues to report from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) perspective. SP confirmed that the amended Health and Safety Policy and Statement of Intent, approved by BoG in July 2024, had been published as required. SP provided an update on the work of the H&S Committee, including its terms of reference and oversight of compliance including with Protect legislation. Noting that a review of H&S had been the focus of a scheduled Internal Audit assurance review, SP confirmed that reasonable assurance had been noted and actions were being addressed.
- 7.3 The Committee noted the position and SP was thanked for the report.

Part B

The following reports was received and approved:

- 8. Minutes of Previous Meeting (M4 26.06.2024) were received as an accurate record and **APPROVED** with no amendments.

The following reports were received for information:

- 9. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting
- 10. Office for Students (OfS) Returns
- 11. Finance Update, including Key Financial Risks
- 12. MSU Summary of Accounts
- 13. Marjon Tenancies

Part C

The following reports were received for information:

- C Notes and Reports from Digital & Physical Infrastructure Group (DPIG) M1 and Workshop 11.10.2024
- C Register of Interests

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

14. Reserved Business – See RB minutes

15. 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.