

Minutes of APUC Board Meeting held at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday 21 August 2019 at the City of Glasgow College.

Present

Jim McGeorge (Chair)	University of Dundee
Sheena Stewart (SS)	Abertay University
Janet Thomson (JT)	Glasgow Clyde College
Pete Smith (PS)	North East Scotland College
Douglas MacKellar (DM)	Independent
Fiona Gavine (FG)	Independent
Maureen McCreath (MM)	Independent
Angus Warren (AW)	APUC Ltd (Chief Executive)

In attendance

Michael Caithness (MC)	APUC Ltd
Elizabeth McFarlane (EM)	APUC Ltd. (by phone for agenda item 7 only)
Julia Edgar (JE)	APUC Ltd. (for agenda item 2 only)

Apologies

David Beattie (DB)	University of Aberdeen
Martin Fairbairn (MF)	Scottish Funding Council

Welcome

1. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and noted that there were apologies for absence from David Beattie and Martin Fairbairn.
2. The Chair welcomed Maureen McCreath to her first Board meeting as a non-sector director and MM gave a brief overview of her background and experience.
3. Chair also noted that JE was attending to present the HR@APUC workstream update and that EM would be presenting the Finance Paper by phone.

Workstream Update – HR@APUC

4. JE distributed copies of her presentation and gave the Board a brief overview of her background and experience in HR.
5. The presentation consisted of a variety of slides on various aspects of HR activity at APUC. The Board discussed the presentation. One aspect noted was a plan for a staff satisfaction survey. FG asked how staff satisfaction was handed currently and AW advised that at the annual away day there is normally workshop time for staff to discuss various aspects of working at APUC and staff are invited to provide feedback and suggest ideas for change to enhance their experience

of the company as employees. The Board felt this approach was a good one and supported the idea of undertaking a formal survey in due course.

6. Chair thanked JE for a very informative presentation and for all her work supporting the HR agenda in the Company.

Minutes of Previous Board Meeting

7. The minutes of the 23 May 2019 Board meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising: APUC/08/2019

8. All Matters Arising from the previous Board meeting had been actioned or scheduled as outlined in paper APUC/08/2019.
9. AW noted that he was in dialogue to fill the vacant position on the Board for an FE Principal and hoped to have the matter concluded by the next meeting. **(ACTION: AW)**
10. A contingency that had been held in relation to the CSG situation was discussed, including how to handle it going forward. It was agreed that this should be deferred into the 2019/20 AY primarily to fund continuation of the successful conversion / development programme going forward with the remainder being used as a corporate contingency. **(ACTION: AW)**

Summary Report: APUC/09/2019

General Update

AW gave the following updates on the Summary Report (APUC/09/2019):

11. Full and Medium institution PCIP assessments are complete and results are showing good improvements. 'Lite' assessments are commencing soon and will be completed by the end of December 2019. The cross-sector PCIP Board will meet in October to determine the future approach to capability assessment after this current programme is complete.
12. APUC has submitted an updated Operational Procurement Strategy in line with the Procurement Reform Act (PRA) to Scottish Ministers and updated APUC's website accordingly.
13. The Cyber Resilience grant from the Scottish Government has been fully utilised now and the project was completed as planned at the end of July 2019. Training materials and a variety of tools have been developed and are now available online.
14. As planned, AW no longer has any governance or management role within HEFESTIS.

15. AW advised that the APUC Procurement Network Conference took place along with the AGM on 24 May at the University of Stirling and that very positive feedback had been received across all the content of the event. A new interactive tool was used for one of the sessions, which had proven particularly popular, and it is intended to use this again at future events.

Staffing

16. AW advised that APUC is currently in the process of filling a number of vacancies.
17. He added that APUC has started a 'job swapping' scheme to provide more flexibility as well as role enrichment/enhancement and that the first job-swap has successfully been implemented. AW noted that a Modern Apprentice is to be recruited to work in eSolutions in a data specialist role.
18. He also explained that APUC's internal Responsible Business Action Group (RBAG) has been working on a variety of initiatives over recent months and has introduced low methane /carbon food policies and a low carbon travel policy.

Health and Safety

19. AW confirmed that there were no Health and Safety issues in the reporting period.

Operational Procurement

20. AW advised that there are currently 173 collaborative agreements available to stakeholders.
21. AW informed the Board that work has started to look at relevant suppliers on Framework Agreements to understand what they are doing around the climate change emergency. APUC has submitted a paper to the Scottish Government detailing what both it and the sector is doing in response to a request from them for the information.

eSolutions

22. AW advised that PECOS v16 was released to production sites at the end of June.
23. He added that the PCS advertising portal may need to move from the current OJEU solution to the new UK e-notification portal if there is a no-deal Brexit.
24. AW advised that there are currently three institutions live with the Scottish Government eInvoicing solution. A further three institutions are currently implementing and demand for implementations is now increasing, with another 23 institutions indicating interest.

Development and Sustainability Update

25. The Full and Medium PCIP assessments were completed in line with planned timings (except for one which had been deferred to October due to exceptional reasons) and all reports will be issued by the end of August.

UCSS Collaboration Catalyst

26. High level discussion documents on potential shared services for Project Management, Business Improvement and Web/SharePoint Development have been issued to the sector. Interest from the sector has been received for all three areas and interested parties will be invited to a workshop in September to discuss how the services could operate.
27. Marketing Materials have been updated and are being used to promote existing shared services.

Final Cost Sharing Group Update and Moving Forward

28. AW advised the Board that HMRC has agreed APUC's CSG position.
29. Chair noted that the result was an impressive achievement by those involved and asked if embedding risk management processes around any future changes to APUC's model might be necessary to ensure corporate memory and avoid the possibility of accidentally negating the agreement – especially in the event of future changes in personnel.
30. AW advised that the agreement defines the process very well and there should not be any problems.
31. The Board noted that it was good that it was well documented, and AW suggested that a section could be included in the Governance Manual to cover ongoing compliance and provide a basis for the corporate memory. **(ACTION: AW/MC)**

At this point, Finance was moved to later in the Agenda due to difficulty with telecoms.

Gender Statistics Update: APUC/11/2019

32. AW commented on the Gender Statistics Review (APUC/10/2019) as follows:
 - The average male salary is higher than that for females because 3 out of the 4 Heads of Category (HoC) are male. If HoC salaries and outliers are removed from the calculation the male/female salary balance swings to be slightly higher on average for female staff.
 - Following discussion, the Board concluded that there are currently no gender imbalances or equal pay issues and was satisfied that Male/Female salaries are comparable.
 - APUC will keep monitoring on an annual basis and will possibly enhance reporting with HR input.

APUC Modern Slavery Statement 2019: APUC/12/2019

33. AW presented the updated Modern Slavery Statement (APUC/12/2019) for Board approval and noted that, although not strictly required to publish a statement under law, APUC reviews this annually as a matter of good practice.
34. AW highlighted the Supply Chain Management portal that will shortly launch with all suppliers required to complete the section that covers compliance with the Modern Slavery Act.
35. AW advised that a Responsible Procurement Action Plan has been developed for the 4 main collaborative category areas (Information Services, Professional Services, Laboratories ad Estates).
36. Following due consideration, the Board approved the document.

Brexit Impacts and Activity

37. AW advised the Board that the review of suppliers' readiness for Brexit was completed in March but was now being reviewed again with the supplier community in view of the 31 October deadline.
38. AW advised that there was a UK wide meeting planned for 2 September with all other UKUPC consortia and thereafter a revised report on supplier status would be published to the sector.
39. Chair suggested that any serious matters identified in relation to this work should be circulated to the Board (**ACTION: AW**)

Tools in Use and in Development: APUC/13/2019

40. AW introduced the Tools in Use and in Development paper (APUC/13/2019) and Chair noted that it was a useful summary and impressive list of tools.
41. AW explained that most of the tools have been developed over time and that Supply Chain Management and Sustain tools were in the process of being combined.
42. He noted that the Sustain question set was also in the process of being combined with LUPC's Equiano questions and that this would be available for testing later in 2019.
43. AW advised that the Spend Analysis tool had been developed in order to achieve full spend data coverage for our sectors. The big advantage is the integration of spend data with local contracts registers and collaborative framework spend to provide a single easily accessible report of spend data.
44. AW advised that the current tools are developed by the eSolution team.

45. FG asked if Blockchain was being used yet and AW advised that some Blockchain pilots in other sectors had not been as successful as hoped.
46. AW added that while the concept is good, the implementation is too clunky with significant issues related to data bandwidth, storage capacity, energy use and server problems when transferring huge amounts of data. AW noted that APUC intends to keep a watching brief over development of this technology as the next generation of it may resolve the main issues identified.
47. JT noted helpdesk request numbers appeared quite high. AW confirmed he would review the statistics and provide more granularity of call data to the Board for information. (**ACTION: AW/eSolutions**)
48. DM stressed that APUC IP was a huge asset and needed to be protected, a sentiment which the Board wholeheartedly endorsed. AW added that when Hunter is web enabled it could be widely licenced.

Financial Management Report: APUC/10/2019

49. EM joined the meeting by telephone to present the Finance Report (APUC/10/2019) and highlighted the following details in the report:
 - Income in the reporting period was £140k more than budget due mainly to income from shared services, overhead recharge to HEFESTIS and the Cyber Resilience grant.
 - Expenditure was £54k above budget.
 - Forecast surplus was £50k.
 - Forecast year-end cash balance is £601k
 - Debtors at year-end is expected to be £319k.
 - Creditors at year-end is expected to be £657k.
50. The Board discussed various aspects of the report and EM answered queries in relation to the papers.
51. EM advised the Board that the accounts may need to show a debit of £399k due to the recently applied FRS102 reporting rules on pension deficits and that this would be discussed with the auditors. This is an accounting matter rather than an operational debt but is the sum that over the coming circa 15 years needs to be added to USS income through employer contributions to bring the scheme into a positive position.
52. Chair noted that all universities with staff in the USS scheme will also have this problem and AW advised that they were exploring whether it could be offset against the pension guarantee fund. If not, an operational / underlying bottom line would be published along with the FRS102 based bottom line figures.
53. Chair thanked EM for her report, and she left the meeting.

Any Other Business

54. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14:45.

Date of Next Meeting

55. The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 November 2019 at a venue in Edinburgh tbc.