

FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

12 June 2025 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West.

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Bailes georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present: H Fairfoul (Chair), Dr R Blackman-Woods, Prof A Long, Prof J McLaughlin, A Sinha
 Apologies: Dr B Bartoli, A Fellows, M Larsen, D Monnery
 Secretary: G Bailes, B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)
 In attendance: Prof T Lawson, L Mayfield

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING	
1	<u>Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning [Oral Report]</u> The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. The Government's White Paper on immigration had been published on 12 May and the University continued to monitor the impact of the changes on the sector. The recent report from the UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce emphasised that UK universities were facing acute financial pressure and ultimately called for a new collaborative model - a combined effort across the sector, government, and funders - to enable sustainable transformation that aligned university capacity with national priorities. The latest OfS report on the financial sustainability of the sector predicted that c 43% of universities were projected to be in deficit for 2024/25 and without mitigating actions this could rise to 72%, Northumbria remained in a good financial position but must continue to plan prudently to ensure long term stability. Annual pay award negotiations were underway and a final offer of a 1.4% increase on all points on the pay spine from 1 August had been made to Trade Unions who would now take the offer through their decision-making structures. The University had been awarded Higher Education Institution of the Year at the NEON Awards, Professor Glyn Howatson had been appointed as Deputy Chair of UoA 24 for REF 2029, and Professor Matt Keirnan had been shortlisted for 'Inspiration of the Year' in the British Forces in Business Awards 2025. The Committee noted the update and that public funding for Level 7 Degree Apprenticeships would be significantly reduced for those aged 22 and older from January 2026, and congratulated the University on its achievement of Higher Education Institution of the Year at the NEON Awards.
2	<u>Financial Planning and Improvement</u> <u>Student Recruitment 2025/26</u> [Presentation] The Committee noted an update on Student Recruitment for 2025/26. <u>Planning and Budget Proposals 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan</u> [FR24/58] The Committee noted and endorsed the Planning and Budget Proposals 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for submission to Board of Governors on 30 June 2025. <u>Finance Monthly Report: P9 2024/25</u> [FR24/59] The Committee noted the financial performance for Period 9 (April) which was favourable to budget. <u>Treasury Management and Ethical Investment Policy</u> [FR24/60] The Committee considered the Treasury Management and Ethical Investment Policy. The Ethical

	investment section of the Policy had been updated to benefit the University's ethical sustainability governance credentials and to improve its potential league table position and a new section on the University's ethical banking credentials had been included. The Committee noted the changes to the Policy, requested that the annual Treasury Management report included information on how the University was fulfilling the commitments outlined in the Policy, and approved the changes to the Treasury Management and Ethical Investment Policy. <u>Quarterly Student Experience and Learning Outcomes (Analysis of Withdrawals)</u> [FR24/61] The Committee considered the Quarterly Student Experience and Learning Outcomes report which included an analysis of student withdrawals. The number of student withdrawals showed a year-on-year improvement for the third successive year, with the total number of withdrawals to April at 619 for 2024/25 which was down from 670 at the same point in 2023/24, and retention had improved primarily at levels 3 and 4 following the introduction of new processes. A telecentre had opened which contacted students in Semester one to enable early intervention on any potential areas of concern, financial support had increased in line with the cost-of-living crisis and additional resources had been made available to support students with managing their finances when living independently. The Committee noted the report and noted that additional data regarding the 44% of student withdrawals who had cited 'other' as the reason for withdrawal was not yet available but would be included in future reporting. <u>Income Diversification Plan Update</u> [Presentation] The Committee noted an update on the University's Income Diversification Plan. <u>Interim OfS Financial Return*</u> [FR24/62] The Committee noted the Interim OfS Financial return. <u>Students' Union Financial Performance P9 2024/25*</u> [FR24/63] The Committee noted the financial performance of the Students' Union for Period 9 (April).
3	<u>Capital/Estates/Contracts</u> <u>GEDU Business Case</u> [FR24/64] The Committee noted the GEDU Business Case, requested further detail on the due diligence activities and the governance that would be in place for the partnership, particularly in the context of the OfS reporting into franchises, and noted that if approved Strategic Performance Committee would have oversight of the partnership through regular partnerships reporting. The Committee endorsed in principle the establishment of an educational partnership with GBS/GEDU for submission to Board of Governors on 30 June 2025, noting that a full commercial model and draft contract would be considered by University Executive at a later date prior to seeking formal endorsement by the Committee and approval from the Board of Governors by circulation. <u>Estates Delivery Plan Update</u> [FR24/65] The Committee considered an update on the Estates Delivery Plan (EDP): Campus for the Future. Progress had been made on several key programmes of work as well as across the EDP as a whole including continued positive progress in the development of the North East Space Skills and Technology (NESST) centre, the appointment of contractors to complete the internal fit-out of Durant Hall, and the re-commencement of the invitation to tender for the construction of the Centre for Health and Social Equity (CHASE). Engagement continued with relevant internal and external stakeholders on the content of the EDP, the delivery routes, priorities, and financing. The Committee noted the update. <u>Media Buying and Planning Framework – New Supplier Contract</u> [FR24/66] The Committee noted the recommendation to appoint a media buying and planning services agency which had been through a comprehensive tendering exercise, noted that the existing supplier had not progressed to the second stage of the process, and endorsed a four-year contract with SMRS for submission to Board of Governors on 30 June 2025. <u>Contracts Summary</u> [FR24/67] The Committee noted the contract summary and future items for consideration.

	<u>Establishing the University Commercialisation and Spinout Investment Fund</u> [FR24/68] The Committee noted the proposal to Establishing the University Commercialisation and Spinout Investment Fund which would create a Limited Partnership (LP) to oversee the fund as part of the Northern Accelerator Partnership. The Committee approved the agreement to form an LP comprising of Northumbria, Durham, Sunderland, Newcastle and Teesside Universities and the North East Fund Ltd.
4	<u>IT and Digital</u> <u>DTT Update and Digital Masterplan</u> [FR24/69] The Committee considered Digital, Technology and Transformation Services (DTT) Update and Digital Masterplan. DTT comprised of five core areas - Technical Operations, Customer Services, Delivery, Cyber Security and Norman Managed Services, the Garter sector average of one IT staff member per 300-350 users had been used to benchmark the Service's size which was currently at one IT staff per 368 users, the sector also had less centralised IT services than the University. The sector continued to be a prime target for cyber threats due to its open networks, valuable research data and diverse user base, particularly for Ransomware threats, with groups specifically targeting HE. The Digital Masterplan 2023 outlined how DTT would support the delivery of the University Strategy and delivery of the Strategic Delivery Plans (SDPs), with a shift in focus from legacy technical data to focussing on supporting the wider University to benefit from digital technologies, there were currently 30 projects in progress that were delivering against the scope of the Digital Initiatives. The Committee noted the plan, noting that discussions regarding the resource implications of High Performance Computing were on-going, assurance around Cyber Security would be considered at a future meeting of Audit Committee, and suggested that it would be useful for Strategic Performance Committee to receive information on the Masterplan and how Digital underpinned the delivery and implementation of the University Strategy.

Beth Lenney
Assistant Secretary to Finance and Resources Committee
June 2025