

# THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2020 VIA SKYPE

Present: Ms Vanda Murray (Chair)  
Mr Sean Anstee  
Ms Evelyn Asante-Mensah  
Dr David Birch  
Ms Rowena Burns  
Mr Darren Dancey  
Mrs Janet Dawson  
Mr Simon Duffy  
Ms Lucy Follon  
Mr Carlo Frondaroli  
Mr Mohammad Habeebullah  
Mr Norman Harrison  
Professor Donna Lee  
Ms Penny Macbeth  
Mr Mike Perls  
Professor Malcolm Press  
Mr Mark St John Qualter  
Ms Karen Varty  
Mx Anna Welsh

In attendance: Professor Steve Decent (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor)  
Mr Andrew Hewett (Director of Finance)  
Professor Karen Moore (Chief Operating Officer)  
Mrs Marie Morrissey (Head of Governance and Secretariat)  
Ms Helen Barton (Director of Strategic Planning) for minute 1868  
Dr David Lambrick (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Science and Engineering) for minute 1869  
Mr Mike Sheppard (Director of Estates, Facilities and Capital Development) for minute 1869  
Ms Caroline Hilton (Director of Legal Services) for minute 1870

#### **1865 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Miles Rothbury and Mr Neil Thompson.

#### **1866 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Board members were invited to declare any possible conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed at today's meeting. A declaration was received from Mr Sean Anstee in relation to the item on Ryebank Fields.

## 1867 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BRIEFING: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Vice-Chancellor presented an update on action taken by the University in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The main points included:

### 1867.1 **Guiding Principles underpinning Decision-Making**

The following principles had been used to guide the University's decision-making:

- A commitment to putting people first and caring for students, staff, partners and the local community.
- Adherence to Government and Public Health England advice.
- Planning ahead and ensuring that as much activity as possible continued remotely.
- The safety of the campus.

### 1867.2 **Covid-19 Project Board and Steering Group**

A Project Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, had been established to oversee the University's response to the pandemic and to minimise the medium and long-term impacts of the virus on the University's operations. This Board was supported by a Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer.

### 1867.3 **Actions**

An overview was given on work taking place in relation to the following:

- Teaching and assessment
- Student support
- International students
- Postponement of graduation ceremonies
- The small number of students remaining in University accommodation
- The postponement of the Research Excellence Framework
- The closure of the estate
- Staff, who were now mostly working from home, with just a small number remaining on campus for essential maintenance
- Student recruitment and admissions
- Capital projects
- Communications
- Finance
- Supporting the local community
- Regulatory requirements
- Planning for the future including possible different start dates for the next academic year
- Working with key stakeholders.

### 1867.4 **Risks**

Work was taking place to ensure that all risks relating to the pandemic were identified and mitigating actions put in place. It

was noted that, although the University was in a strong financial position, additional costs would be incurred due to the pandemic, e.g. due to releasing students from residence agreements, possible impact on student recruitment and delay of the next go-live of the Student Journey transformation Programme. An updated Risk Register would be submitted to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

**1867.5 Conclusion**

The Board acknowledged that these were unprecedented times and that the University had responded well. The Board thanked the Vice-Chancellor and staff across the University for their hard work.

**1867.6 University Seal and Official Signatories**

A document (BG/20/10) was submitted on the use of the University Seal and official signatories. In light of the current pandemic, it was suggested that it would be helpful to put into place temporary contingency arrangements in case the Chair of the Board or the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board became unavailable.

RESOLVED

that in relation to the use of the University Seal for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic, should the Chair of the Board or the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board become unavailable:

- (i) all Independent Governors to be authorised to sign on behalf of the Chair of the Board.
- (ii) all members of the University Executive Group to be authorised to sign on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board.

**1868 UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: THE ROAD TO 2031**

The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Strategic Planning presented a report (BG/20/12) outlining a proposed approach to the development of the next stage of the University's Strategic Framework. It was proposed that, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the proposed approach should be deferred by one year; the University's current Strategic Framework would be extended to 2021 and the new Strategic Framework would focus on the road to 2031.

It was noted that the new Strategic Framework would be flexible to ensure that the University was able to respond quickly to changing circumstances. It was also agreed that it would be useful to ensure that the Framework was informed by student views on universities of the future.

RESOLVED

that the proposed development of the next stage of the University's Strategic Framework be deferred until 2021.

**1869 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE**

*Not for publication in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.*

**1870 RYEBANK FIELDS**

The Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Legal Services presented a confidential and commercially sensitive designated report (BG/20/14) on the proposed sale of the University's Ryebank Fields site in South Manchester. The history of the site was outlined and attention was drawn to the Development Framework, which designated the site for housing development for planning purposes. The Development Framework, which had been revised following consultation to take into account the views of the local community, confirmed the University's commitment to an environmentally sustainable development. Attention was also drawn to the opposition statements that had been received from:

- The Rye Bank Trafford Residents Association
- The Friends of Ryebank Fields
- The Student Society: People and Planet.

It was noted that there was also currently opposition from Trafford Council. An update was given on the preliminary results of recent ground surveys, which, whilst noting further survey work needed to be undertaken, had identified that the site was contaminated and therefore would require greater investment in order to actively manage and keep safe. This was not considered to be a good use of student fee income which could be better utilised to fund other University priorities designed to enhance the student experience.

Careful consideration was given to the proposal and to the opposition statements and it was agreed that the University should continue with community engagement activities and its plans to market the site to potential developers.

RESOLVED

that the proposal to proceed to market the Ryebank Fields site to developers with a view to selling the site be approved.

## 1871 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The Director of Finance and the Chair of the Audit Committee presented a report (BG/20/15) summarising the outcome of the recent procurement process for a new external auditor for the University and recommending an appointment.

RESOLVED

that the proposed appointment of BDO LLP as the University's next external auditor for a period of three years commencing with the audit of the 2019/20 financial year, with an option for the University to extend the appointment for a further year, be approved.

## 1872 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Director of Finance presented for approval revised Financial Regulations (BG/20/16). The Regulations had been refreshed to reflect changes to job titles and University structures. The only significant change related to capital investment approval, which authorised the Estate Strategy Group and Information Systems Strategy and Prioritisation Board to authorise expenditure of up to £1m.

RESOLVED

that the revised Financial Regulations be approved.

## 1873 BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Chief Operating Officer presented a report (BG/20/17) outlining proposals relating to Board membership.

It was noted that this was the final meeting to be attended by Ms Penny Macbeth before she left the University. Ms Macbeth was thanked for her contribution to the work of the Board and the University.

RESOLVED

that the following be approved:

- (i) the reappointment of the following as Independent Governors for a further three-year term of office:

| Name                 | New Term of Office  |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Evelyn Asante-Mensah | 01.04.20 – 31.03.23 |
| Mohammad Habeebullah | 01.07.20 – 30.06.23 |

|                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Miles Rothbury | 26.09.20 – 25.09.23 |
| Neil Thompson  | 26.09.20 – 25.09.23 |

- (ii) The reappointment of Richard Paver as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee for a further three years to 28 February 2023.
- (iii) The appointment of Mx Evelyn Sweeney, new Students' Union President, and Ms Bran Catron, new Students' Union Education Officer, as the new student members of the Board from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

#### **1874 ACADEMIC BOARD REPORT**

A report (BG/20/18) was submitted providing an update on business conducted by the Academic Board at its meeting on 11 March 2020.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

#### **1875 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2020**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 31 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **1876 ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

A report (BG/20/19) was submitted setting out actions to be taken following the meeting of the Board held on 31 January 2020 and progress made with regard to those actions.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

#### **1877 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY UPDATE**

A report (BG/20/11) was submitted providing an update on progress made with the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

#### **1878 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR**

A report (BG/20/20) was submitted outlining actions that the Chair had taken on behalf of the Board in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Articles of Government.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

#### **1879 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

A report (BG/20/21) was submitted by the Chief Operating Officer providing an update on risk management.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

#### **1880 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The following reports were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee – 30 January 2020 (BG/20/22).
- Finance and Resources Committee – 4 March 2020 (BG/20/23).
- Nominations and Governance Committee – 14 February 2020 (BG/20/24).

RESOLVED

that the reports be received.

#### **1881 SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Schedule of Agenda Items for 2019/20 (BG/20/25) was submitted for information. It was noted that there would be an update on the latest developments in relation to the University's response to the pandemic at the next meeting in June, which was expected to be another virtual meeting. The agendas for next term's Committee meeting would be reviewed to ensure that they focused on business critical items.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

Signature of Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_