

NWH Board of Management Meeting

Wed 01 May 2024, 17:15

Hybrid: NWH UHI Stornoway Campus /MS Teams(T)

Chair – Derek Lewis

Present:

Board members:

Alex Macdonald (T) – Independent
Anne Frater – EIS-FILA nominee
Carl Haberl (T) – Support Staff nominee
Cassandra Greenford – UNISON nominee
Chris Alliston (T) - Independent
Derek Lewis – Chair
Diana Macleod – Academic Staff nominee
Ian MacEachern – Independent
Lydia Rohmer - Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Michael Foxley – Independent
Neil Hope – Vice Chair
Rupert Marshall – Independent
Sarah Fraser – Independent
Shannon MacCallum - West Highland HISA nominee
Shona MacDougall – Independent
Sophie Ann Bain (T) – HISA nominee
William Macdonald - Vice Chair

In Attendance:

Helen Aird – Head of Marketing & Communications
Derek Bond – Director of Finance
Kate Hannay – Merger ICT Manager
Giles Huby (T) - Programme Director, Merger
Debbie Miller –Vice Principal Operations & SRO North Highland
[Withheld] – Interim Project Support Officer
Ellen Maclean – Secretary to the Board of Management
Vicki Nairn – Principal and Vice Chancellor, UHI
Hannah Ritchie-Muir – Vice Principal (Academic) and SRO Outer Hebrides
Sheena Stewart (T) - University Secretary, UHI

Apologies:

Vicky Ferguson – Director of HR & Organisational Development

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM, WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed Cassandra Greenford to her first meeting as the UNISON nominee and Ellen Maclean as the new Board Secretary.

It was noted that William Macdonald's appointment to Vice Chair of the Board had been formally approved by UHI.

The board expressed its thanks to [Withheld] for her diligence in keeping Board running smoothly while Secretary post was vacant.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & CONNECTION

There were no declarations of interest other than those recorded in the board's register.

3. Starring

There were no requests to star additional agenda items.

4. Matters Arising

No issues were raised.

5. Minutes of Meetings

Minutes were approved.

6. Action Tracker

The status of outstanding actions was noted.

7. * Appointments/Updated Committee Members

Confirmation of William MacDonald's appointment as Vice-Chair by UHI was noted.

8. *Cyber Essentials Audit

Kate Hannay, ICT Manager, summarised the key points in the paper.

The board discussed and noted the current position, recognised the critical importance of cyber security and the risks involved, and congratulated Kate on achieving Cyber Essentials.

It was agreed that the non-executive members of the board would require cyber training and that preparedness for a cyber-attack (as well as other crises) needed to be tested by realistic rehearsals supported by an effective crisis management plan.

9. * Strategic Reports

9.1. Chair's Update

Derek Lewis ran through and highlighted the key points in a presentation that had been given to the UHI Court concerning the development of a new operating model for UHI.

It was emphasised that the goal was to achieve a more responsive organisation that would better serve the needs of students, business, the economy and communities, as well as achieving financial sustainability.

Further reports would be provided at subsequent board meetings.

9.2. Principal and Chief Executive update

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer, Lydia Rohmer, gave an oral update.

A primary area of focus was the organisational design and restructuring programme. The consultation on the new structure was well advanced, but there were concerns about the length of time it was taking which had led to significant uncertainty and exacerbated anxiety among staff. There had been extensive discussions with the trade unions, but these had not yet resulted in agreement or a firm response from the unions. Lydia emphasised the importance of listening to and responding to the feedback from the consultation.

Indicative funding for the college sector in 2024-25 had been received from the SFC, involving flat cash for learning and teaching.

The Deputy First Minister had visited the college in Stornoway and Harland and Wolf, which is a major employer of apprentices. There was also significant activity in relation to opportunities in environmental projects (peatland), energy and sustainability.

Anne Frater noted that a letter had been received from EIS-FILA concerning the well-being of staff and asked that a response be provided. The Principal gave assurance that the comments regarding wellbeing and stress were being addressed and that the letter had been seen by Board members prior to the meeting.

The Board recognised the merger has been very stressful for many and that vigilance was necessary.

9.3. Student's Report

Shannon MacCallum reported on the HISA election results and the desire to recruit new students in the upcoming year.

In relation to current strike action, she said that students understood why teachers were striking but were concerned about the resulting delay in exam results. Lecturers had been good in helping to mitigate stress.

Shannon asked that consideration be given to alternatives to relatively expensive vending machines, including possible use of kitchen facilities and honesty boxes.

10. Financial Update

10.1. * MYR return and FE/HE allocations for 24/25.

Derek Bond summarised his paper and made a number of other points.

There were significant concerns about cost, funding and risks, which were being considered further.

A more detailed update both on current year and future year financial position would be given at the June board.

Derek noted that the funding provided for the merger, including the VSS, was in the form of a loan and was due to be repaid, although there was no repayment programme currently. The need for further funding for NWH has been fully reported to EO. It was agreed that a formal funding request should be filed with EO as soon as possible.

11. *NWH Organisational Design Update

Giles Huby summarised the key points in his paper, which were noted.

12. NWH Risk Register

The paper was noted by the board.

13. *Board and Committee Dates 24/25

Derek Lewis noted that proposed meeting dates for 2024-25 were set out in the paper and asked that any member for whom a significant number of the dates represented a serious problem should notify Ellen as soon as possible.

14. Minutes from Committee Meetings

The committee meeting minutes were noted.

15. Next Board Meeting Date 26th June 2024 - MS Teams

A.O.B.

Cnoc Soilleir phase 2 is out to tender and an update is expected by end of May.

The meeting closed at 19.53.