

# Sustainability Board

3 June 2024

Via TEAMS

Attendees:

Tracey Russell (TR) – Chair

Michelle Chodyniewski (MC)

Chris Powis (CP)

Emma Stone (ES)

Matthew Waite (MW)

Alex Coyle (AC)

Miriam Lakin (ML)

Evelyne Mulinge (EM)

David Cousens (DC) Matthew Haines (MH)

Emma Heron (EH)

Ian Mathews (IM)

Gemma Robinson (GR)

Roger Weston (RW)

John Sinclair (JS)

Minutes: Jason Burrige (JB)

## 1. Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest

**Apologies:** Hollie Darby, James Seymour, Janet Baines

TR welcomed everyone to this new board meeting (previously chaired by the COO) and explained that it is now a sub-group of Estates Strategy Group, the first meeting of which will be held on 20 June.

This group, along with Capital & Space Management Group and the Student Accommodation Strategy Group form the three sub-groups of the Estates Strategy Group.

The meeting's purpose is to agree Terms of Reference and agree priorities.

TR stated current attendees could nominate other colleagues to attend on their behalf if appropriate.

No Declarations of Interest were raised.

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting

N/A

## 3. Actions from the previous meeting

N/A.

## 4. Review and agree draft Terms of Reference

The draft TORS were reviewed and the following comments made;

The membership of the group and meeting frequency was thought to be suitable.

The group asked that dates for future meetings be booked in advance.

**Action: JB to book in future dates**

New student engagement representatives will need to be recruited.

**Action: GW and RW to recruit new student engagement representatives.**

The formation of a new Sustainability Strategy is paramount. A draft is in progress and will be shared with the group for comment

UON need to comply with all statutory and legal requirements, of which there are many.

**Action: TR to share Environmental Legal Register at next meeting**

- There are regular changes to legislation and government planning regulations that we must always take account of. UON occasionally submit planning applications and have recently provided feedback on the West Northants Council Local Plan. Future representations regarding sustainability and environmental matters will come to this group first for comment.
- This group will need to monitor and review the Net Zero Carbon commitment included in the University Strategy. A carbon management plan has been developed by Gleeds.

**Action: TR to share Carbon Management Plan.**

- Being aware of relevant league tables and improve rankings within them e.g. People and Planet - ES has spent time identifying how we can improve our ranking. TR added that a new approach will be necessary to achieve this
- Engagement with community: receive and discuss recommendations from stakeholders and external agencies, and recommend any items for escalation to the Estates Strategy Board and ULT. TR confirmed this group will report into the Estates Strategy Board with any recommendations.

MH asked whether we need to specifically include air travel. e.g. strategies for reducing or not increasing it. TR agreed it should be more explicitly included in the Sustainable Travel Policy. HD recently reviewed the policy but air travel is not included. This needs to be reviewed with procurement and UON's travel provider.

Action: Sustainable Travel Policy to be reviewed and shared at the next meeting for sign off, and eventual uploading to website

EH asked queried what “education” meant more specifically in point 5 of the TORs. TR clarified that it means to embed sustainability into all students’ curriculum.

Action: TR to clarify the definition of “education” within the wording of the TORs

IM observed that UON uses a lot of resources because its size. He asked if the TORs contained any reference to resource efficiency and reduction of consumption policies. e.g. general waste and food waste.

TR agreed this was important to include policies around consumption and waste, and stated that Procurement will play a major role going forward in ensuring UON procure efficiently, effectively and for longer periods of time and engage with companies that have a good sustainability record and business practices.

Action: TR to make changes and redistribute.

## 5. Sustainability Strategy

Draft strategy to be shared with this group

Action: TR to share draft strategy with group

## 6. People and Planet – accreditation discussion

All universities are measured on sustainability and environment by People and Planet. We are measured on a number of criteria, one of them being an accredited estate Environment Management System (EMS). We are currently affiliated with IIE (Investors In Environment) However they are not recognised by People and Planet as an accredited EMS, meaning we lose points every year which prevent UON from potentially improving in these rankings.

TR explained there are a number of accreditations that are recognised by People & Planet:

- ISO14001
- Green Dragon
- Eco Campus

All will require much effort and work to get established. IM shared that he’d implemented the Health & Safety standard ISO18001, now 45001) and remotely involved in ISO14001 in a previous company. He warned that they involve a lot of work and preparation and involve a 2-3 year timescale, if properly resourced.

TR added that she had been involved with ISO14001 and Eco Campus, and agreed the establishment of any such accreditation is challenging but, then subsequent years are much easier.

**7. Sustainable development goals update**

The next results are due in June. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

**8. Carbon Net Zero update**

The Gleeds Decarbonisation report will be shared with the group. The report states that most of our carbon issues are due to Scholars Green. Generally, our footprint is low due to UON's modern campus and plant solutions.

Projects already implemented are as follows;

- An air source heat pump has been installed in the Podiatry building, replacing the old gas boiler
- Condition D or E plant is replaced as and when required, with carbon-friendly alternatives e.g. the water heaters at Scholars Green. MW added we now have less gas fired water heaters, and increasing system resilience. TR commented that it should result in energy cost reductions
- CPW have made adjustments to the district heating system to ensure operating efficiency.

**9. Cost of Living update**

Cost of Living forms part of our Sustainability objectives. A paper will go to ULT in the next month proposing further initiatives. The Pop up pantry was overwhelmed with demand and in future will be used on a case by case basis, via referral from personal tutors or Student Services/Student Hardship. All systems are in place for this. It is run by donations and money from Student Services. ES confirmed it is well stocked and that between December and March, 196 students used the Pop Up Pantry. Between March and May, seven students have been given access to it for emergency reasons. There has been discussion of situating the Pantry to a more appropriate location (nearer SIDS Desk and Student Services). TR added that we've worked closely with the SU. Res Life have keys for emergency access to supplies.

**10. Sustainable Travel Update**

To be updated with a report at the next meeting, when HD is in attendance.

10.1 TR explained that HD regularly works with cyclists on various initiatives as well as liaising with WNC regarding scooters, to ensure students aren't causing major issues in the town centre. Scooters are speed restricted on campus via a geo-fence.

- 10.2 Stagecoach are now providing UON bus services at a more competitive price and better customer service is being experienced.
- 10.3 Various parking barriers are currently out of action. There is a plan to get them fixed over the summer. Bollards must be reinstated at Park Avenue due to the expected implementation of Protect/Martyn's Law. Single car use sits at 62%, which TR commented is very normal for most university campuses on the outskirts of towns but strategies need to be put in place to reduce this.
- 10.4 ES added that we are falling short in terms of People and Planet because air travel has not been factored into our plans. She felt there is a lot of work to do with Procurement to address this. TR added that statistics should be available from our travel provider. MH agreed that any university travel provider should provide this and was unsure if our current provider does. He questioned whether UON is taking a baseline measurement, certainly in terms of staff travel, but felt it difficult to comment further without any Procurement representation at this meeting.

#### **11. Engagement Update**

GR told the group of various initiatives: Action Week (several have occurred over the year), Halls Hero campaigns, competitions between different units e.g. to reduce most consumption (kw hours). There has been good engagement thus far. We ranked number 4 out of 100 universities last year. Waste, recycling, travel, energy and wellbeing Awareness weeks have taken place, with good engagement. TR added that the team have taken on a lot of extra work due to the long term vacancies and she is very grateful.

#### **12. Legal Register and policy update**

ES has recently worked with IM to update this, and will be monitoring and maintaining the register going forward, including becoming familiar with the processes that should be followed for auditing and compliance. ES will provide future updates to the group when there are changes to H & S legislation.

#### **13. HESA**

Every year the University has to gather and compile sustainability and environmental statistics to submit to HESA. This was recently completed by the E & S Team – TR commented on the great effort they made. HESA accepted it and signed it off, but the submission will need improvement in the future. TR will arrange meetings to discuss.

**Action:TR to arrange meetings on HESA return data**

**14. Environmental & Sustainability Annual Report**

TR commented that last year's report was distributed with the papers for this meeting and is now in an improved format ready for the preparation of the next report in July/August.

**15. Green Gown Award**

The submission was prepared by ES last week and submitted by the closing date.

**16. Key Performance Indicators**

KPIs will form part of Sustainability Strategy and the Environmental Strategy Annual Report and will include targets on reducing waste, sole occupancy car use, air travel emissions, carbon footprint etc.

TR stressed that we need to be measuring and monitoring going forward.

**17. Waste Management Policy plus EIA**

TR offered the group additional time to review, given the policy was shared only the day before. ES explained it was a review of the existing process and the waste hierarchy, making changes to include elements such as avoidance of waste and reducing consumption. IM commented that the policy needed further detail and explanation the actions and direction required. ES to collaborate with IM on revisions. ML queried whether the policy is outlining what we actually do or what we aspire to do. ES highlighted the example of items 'going spare' across the University: a "war pit" initiative i.e. a store of items the whole university can use, instead of departments buying new items which we already have. ES stressed that communications will need to be very effective in order to get all the faculties and departments on board.

TR clarified that the Sustainability Strategy will be set by this group, and will need to review policies to ensure they align with the strategy, and stressed that it will involve a significant work commitment. After comments are received, the Strategy will be agreed and signed off at a future meeting.

**Action: All to submit any comments to ES over the coming week**

**19. Items to be referred to the Estates Strategy Board**

None

**20. AOB**

None

**Next meeting: 4 Sep 2024 14:30 – 16.30**