

## **Minute of APUC Board Meeting held at 9:15 on Thursday 13 February 2025 online via MS Teams.**

### **Present**

Veronica Strachan (Chair)	Robert Gordon University
Andy Goor (AG)	University of St Andrews
Pete Smith (PS)	Borders College
Margaret Cook (MC)	UHI Perth
Nicky Anderson (NA)	Dundee and Angus College
Angus Warren (AW)	APUC Ltd (Chief Executive)
Phil McNaul (PM)	Independent
Gemma Lines (GL)	Independent
Harpreet Paul (HP)	Independent

### **Apologies**

Apologies received from Jim McGeorge and Dawn Mitchell.

### **Also, in attendance**

Michael Caithness (Sec)	APUC Ltd
Claire McCallum (CM)	APUC Ltd – up to agenda item 2

### **Welcome**

1. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and noted that she was standing in as Chair in JM's absence. She noted that CM was joining to present the Strategic Sourcing update. Chair also welcomed new board member NA to her first meeting and a round of introductions was conducted.

### **Workstream Update – Strategic Sourcing – One Year On**

2. CM gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the following:
  - Slide 2 COLLABORATIVE CONTRACTING TEAM - DEC 2023
    - The original workstream org chart
  - Slide 3 Background to structure change
    - The need for change
  - Slide 4 STRATEGIC SOURCING TEAM - MAR 2024
    - Org chart in March 2024
  - Slide 5 STRATEGIC SOURCING TEAM NOW
    - Current org chart
  - Slide 6 The Thought Process
    - The rationale for the changes
  - Slide 7 Head of Strategic Sourcing
    - The role of the Head of Strategic Sourcing
  - Slide 8, 9 Category Directors
    - The role of Category Directors

#### Slide 10 Head of Sourcing

- The role of Head of Sourcing

#### Slide 11 Impacts of the new Structure

- How the new structure works

#### Slide 12, 13, 14 RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT

- Details about the role and activities of Responsible Procurement

3. CM asked if there were any questions.
4. Chair welcomed AG, also to his first meeting, who joined the meeting at 9:32.
5. Chair commented it was a good presentation and that it was helpful for the new Board members. She also noted the number of acronyms in common use and AW advised that there was a list of acronyms on the website and that it would be shared with new members. **(ACTION: Sec)**
6. PS thanked CM for the comprehensive guide to the changes and asked if there were any implications on working policies and CM advised that the teams are well balanced and working smoothly together.
7. HP noted that the Responsible Procurement information was really helpful and queried the approach for prioritisation. CM mentioned the factors involved and noted for example that furniture was a key focus area at present.
8. Chair thanked CM for her informative presentation and CM left the meeting at 9:48.

#### **Minute of Previous Board Meeting**

9. The minute of the 26 November 2024 Board meeting was approved as an accurate record of the meeting and for uploading to the website. **(ACTION: Sec)**

#### **Matters Arising (APUC/01/2025)**

10. All Matters Arising from the previous Board meeting had been actioned as outlined in paper APUC/01/2025.

#### **Financial Management Report (APUC/2/2025)**

11. AW gave a summary on the Financial Management position as follows:
  - Funding and financial management is under close control and some deferred funds have been used to support core services as planned for this year.
  - The funding position is not clear as yet for 2025/26, but the SFC have indicated that flat cash will be the best that can be expected.
  - Some savings have been achieved from deferred activities and unfilled vacancies which will be utilised to assist in service continuation in 2025/26.
12. MC asked when the next pay round is due, and AW advised that it was 1 August.
  - Chair noted that funding will be tight.

- Chair thanked AW for the report.

## **Summary Report (APUC/03/2025)**

13. AW highlighted some aspects of the summary report as follows:

### *Summary highlights*

- Responsible Supply Chain deep-dive assessment programme exceeding objective with over 273 deep-dive reports now received from EcoVadis.
- For 2023/24, the final collaborative spend value for the HE/FE sectors was £430m.
- Also for 2023/24, percentage levels of collaborative spend as a proportion of total recurrent spend are 36.7% for the University sector and 54.1% for the College sector, with the total percentage of HE/FE combined collaborative spend being 38.5%

### *Risk updates*

- There are increasing procurement staffing shortages across the sector (some caused by recruitment freezes and some from recruitment challenges) which could limit the value procurement can bring at a time when the sector needs to maximise the value from procurement activity.

### *General updates*

- The Procurement Leaders Workshop took place on 28 November in Glasgow. The attendance was excellent with dialogue focussing on topical areas of concern for the sector.
- The 2025 Contracting Priorities Workshop is due to take place online (to enable a wider range of stakeholders to take part for the relevant sections of the day) on 26 February.
- Andrew Helmn (University of Edinburgh) has recently joined the Member Services Development Forum (MSDF) that is currently chaired by Angus Warren (APUC).
- The first Steering Group for the planned bespoke extensive construction procurement training programme (that will be available to all APUC members to send their staff) took place on 12 February.
- As previously noted, the next planned Conference on University Procurement which was due to take place on the 2 to 4 September 2025 at the University of Stirling has been postponed. Soundings will be taken from now until the end of March 2025 when a decision will be taken on whether we should reschedule to 2026 or 2027.

### *Health and Safety*

- There were no issues in the reporting period.

### *PRA Annual Report*

- APUC completed its PRA Annual Report, and it was approved by the APUC Board at the end of November 2024. It was then released to Ministers and published on the website.

### *Responsible Procurement*

- There is an established focus from APUC and stakeholders from member institutions on addressing the issues associated with climate change. The Responsible Procurement Team continues to support stakeholders to discuss the best actions to take to move towards net zero at institutional level and support the work of Institutional Sector Climate Groups such as the Universities Scotland Efficiency and Climate Emergency Committee (USECEC) and

the CDN Climate Emergency Expert Group (CEEG). Prof Liz Bacon, Abertay University, has agreed to take on the Chair of USECEC. A date for the USECECs cross-disciplinary workshop that will include considerations around Climate and wider Sustainability aspects, has been fixed for 18 March 2025. Three representatives from procurement across the sector will attend.

#### *Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP)*

- The 2023/24 PCIP and Pulse Check Programme has been completed along with Operational Procurement Reviews for small organisations. The next round is not expected until 2027 with re-assessments on request being available in the intervening period.

#### *Institutional Procurement Services (IPS)*

- Fife College and Borders College are now being supported by IPS.
- APUC has recently, following a review of operations within the Tayside region, moved the TRPT to a revised collaborative arrangement. From February 2025 Dundee and Angus College will be managed by Hayley Clarke, College Services- East. An exercise to appoint a Head of Procurement here is currently underway. Once this is complete, APUC will look to add to the team with a second colleague.

#### *Development*

- The Procurement Skills Development programme for 2024/25 has been further developed with more dates available for popular courses.

14. Chair noted the detailed report was very helpful.
15. PM stated that there was a need for more transparency on where collaborative procurement was being optimised by institutions.
16. AW advised that there is a report on collaborative contract usage that highlights to institutions where further opportunities exist. He noted that some institutions have areas of spend, with the specialist institutions (GSA, RCoS etc) having in particular, significant levels, where requirements are not generally suitable for collaborative contracting.
17. PM added that the list of contracts (annex to the Summary Report) presented to the Board is not necessary and a more focussed meaningful method of highlighting how collaboration is being optimised would be useful.
18. MC suggested that it would be good for institutions to be reminded where benefits could be derived from collaborative spend savings.
19. GL commented that APUC contracts spreadsheets etc are 'quite dry' and suggested that a graphic presentation would be most helpful to highlight areas where institutions could make savings.
20. AW noted that the material is targeted to be data focussed for procurement people but agreed that the suggestion was a good idea and committed to have 'comms and marketing' have a look at what could be done. **(ACTION: AW)**
21. Chair agreed that this approach would be beneficial for non-procurement people.

22. AG advised that the upcoming Finance Directors event at the end of March could benefit from being made aware of where further opportunities for savings exist. AW advised that he would be attending the event.
23. NA added that she would be keen to take this information to the Colleges Finance Directors meeting.
24. AW agreed to prepare a report that summarised current levels of collaboration and what the potential opportunity levels were by institution (but anonymised) to enable the Board and other stakeholders to see the difference between where we are and what could be possible. **(ACTION: AW)**
25. Chair thanked the Board for this discussion.

### **Supply Chain Volatility Update**

26. AW reported that the situation at present was fairly stable but noted that any tariff wars were likely to cause instability.
27. He added that the Ukraine war had no discernible impact at the moment.

### **May Board Meeting and PNC**

28. AW advised that we usually hold the AGM/Board in May followed by the Procurement Network Conference. He added that he had considered if it would be possible to combine the PNC with the SUFDG event but noted that the booked venue could not cope with the combined number of delegates. Currently, the AGM/Board are scheduled for 15 May in Glasgow and the PNC is on 21 May.
29. He asked if the Board were happy to keep the AGM/Board as scheduled on 15 May or re-aligned with the PNC on 21 May to allow Board member to attend both events. The Board discussed the pros and cons of the two options.
30. Chair suggested keeping the 14/15 May dates to maximise Board attendance and AW noted that the Board could also be invited to the PNC if they wished to attend both. **(ACTION: Sec)**

### **Any Other Business**

31. AW advised that there were four early adopters for the Complaints and Investigations Shared Service and that the group was looking to appoint a leader to run the new service in the coming months and would provide the Board with an update when details were confirmed. **(ACTION: AW)**
32. AW informed the Board that we would like to compile an attendees list for the 14/15 May dinner, overnight stay and Board meeting in Glasgow to allow bookings to be made. **(ACTION: Sec)**
33. There being no further business, Chair closed the meeting at 10:40.

### **Date of Next Meeting**



34. The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday 15 May 2025 in Glasgow, venue tbc.