

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

Date of last meeting: 11 March 2024

Quoracy: Met

Report by: Mark Henwood, Sub-Committee Chair/Leighton Phillips, Sub Committee Vice Chair

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS AND MATTERS TO BE ESCALATED FROM THE DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING:

Alert¹ (may require discussion)

Research and Innovation Sub-Committee (R&ISC) have no issues they wish to alert to members of the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC).

Advise² (to monitor)

The Research and Innovation Sub-Committee (R&ISC) wish to advise members of the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC) that:

- The financial reports to the R&ISC demonstrated that the Research and Development (R&D) Division were on target to break even at the end of the financial year, and the end of year forecast for TriTech & Innovation (T&I) Division was on target and in line with the Board approved Business Plan. However, the R&ISC could not take assurance from the reports as they were presented in draft form. Also, the Senior Finance Business Partner was unable to attend the R&ISC meeting on 11 March 2024. Since the R&ISC meeting, additional business partnering support has been put in place to avoid this happening in the future.
- The Research Delivery Funding (RDF) received from Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) to support the Division's activities in 2024/25 had yet to be confirmed. Since the R&ISC meeting, HCRW have confirmed the RDF for Hywel Dda University Health Board during 2024/25 will be reduced. However, due to good financial management within the Division, this would not result in staffing affordability challenges for the 2024/25 financial year but could result in Organisational Change Process to ensure a sustainable function in subsequent years.
- An update was provided on the national interest in Hywel Dda UHB's TriTech and Innovation model and six options for expanding the research and evaluative services offered by the Division to other NHS organisations were presented. Members agreed with the option of offering evaluation services to other NHS organisations on a case-by-case basis through a contracting process but asked for further legal and governance advice. A further update will be brought to the next R&ISC on 12 July 2024.

¹ There is a lack of confidence that any action in place is sufficient to address the issue satisfactorily and/or within the scope of the operational team or executive to resolve. Engagement, action or intervention required.

² There are areas of concern where assurance has been taken on actions in place but requires close monitoring. An early warning of an emerging and potentially serious concern.

- An outline plan to relocate the R&D quality assurance and researcher development functions and the T&I Division to relocate to Pentre Awel (PA) was provided. The attention of the R&ISC was drawn to the dependency of the plan on an agreement with the wider Health Board and Carmarthenshire Council in respect of ongoing lease negotiations. The R&ISC members were advised of the ongoing negotiations concerning the Heads of Terms for the scheme that are yet to be resolved; it was agreed that PODCC should be advised of this dependency.

Assure³ (to note)

R&ISC wish to assure members of the PODCC that:

- Representatives of all three university partners (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Aberystwyth University and Swansea University) gave a verbal update at the meeting. Details of existing or upcoming projects and events were shared, and no issues were raised. The R&ISC noted and accepted the updates.
- A TriTech and Innovation Divisional update was received, providing assurance that all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were on target and, although some have been redesigned, they remain in line with the business plan. The R&ISC took assurance from the report.
- A report on debt recovery action against a commercial company (company name omitted for confidentiality reasons) had ended and the process for writing-off the debt had begun. As part of this process, the Head of TriTech and Innovation subsequently attended the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 16 April 2024, which was the final stage in writing off the debt. The project to which the recovery action related has been completed and following advice from NWSSP Legal and Risk Services a redacted version will be published to ensure public value is secured from the work. The R&ISC took assurance from this report.
- A report on R&D study performance was provided, as part of a wider site activity report detailing progress against the R&I Strategy (2021-2024) work plan. The R&ISC took assurance from this report.

Review of Risks

The R&ISC were notified of, and accepted, the position of the three risks aligned to the R&D Division, and no emerging risks were considered. No change was recorded to risk 1160 (risk of a decreasing research portfolio due to a lack of research leadership) but scores for risks 1036 (risk of a lack of research facilities in Withybush Hospital) and 1492 (RDF) had increased. The latter two risks are being monitored and, since the R&ISC met in March, the estimated timescale for completion of the allocated space in Withybush Hospital (WH) is December 2024. Further, the RDF for 2024/25 has now been received. Both risk 1036 and 1492 will be reviewed at the next R&ISC in view of these developments.

³ There is confidence that actions are robust and will be sufficient to address the issue or generally operating effectively. Routine monitoring.

In addition, R&ISC were advised that no changes had been made to the existing five risks within T&I, and no emerging risks were raised. However, consideration will be given to re-considering risk 1508 (clinical leadership to support TriTech projects) to incorporate potential risk of opportunities for collaboration, given the capacity constraints experienced by the wider organisation. R&ISC members noted and accepted the report.

Sharing of learning

Following the non-payment and contract dispute with regards to the TriTech collaborative project with a company, leading to a subsequent debt write off, the TriTech and Innovation Division has created a financial risk stratification procedure, which has subsequently been accepted as University Health Board financial policy. This procedure focuses on ensuring that the overall TriTech portfolio does not expose Hywel Dda University Health Board to an unacceptable level of financial risk.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report, as there are no actions that are not referenced above, that the Committee need to consider or undertake.

Agenda, papers and minutes are available on request.