

As part of our executive and wider succession planning, the Committee also continued its focus on our diversity and inclusion.



**Nomination Committee Chair’s overview**

Succession planning for the Chairman through a dedicated sub-committee of the Nomination Committee, led by Elizabeth McMeikan our Senior Independent Director, has been a key focus during 2020. This led to the successful appointment of Richard Huntingford as Non-Executive Director and Chairman Designate on 1 December 2020. Richard will take over as Chair when I step down on 31 March 2021.

The Committee has also continued its focus on executive succession planning and our talent development. This year this has especially focused on building a resilient and agile leadership team as we manage the competing priorities of Covid-19 and future growth.

As part of this executive and wider succession planning, the Committee also continued its focus on our diversity, and inclusivity, conscious a diverse leadership team needs to reflect our wider stakeholders and is key to the Group’s long-term sustainable success.

## NOMINATION COMMITTEE CONTINUED

### Nomination Committee Members

**Phil White**

Chair of the Nomination Committee

**Richard Huntingford**

Non-Executive Director and Chairman Designate

**Elizabeth McMeikan**

Senior Independent Director

**Ross Paterson**

Non-Executive Director

**Richard Akers**

Non-Executive Director

**Ilaria del Beato**

Non-Executive Director

**Dame Shirley Pearce**

Non-Executive Director

**Thomas Jackson**

Non-Executive Director

**Professor Sir Steve Smith**

Non-Executive Director

### Number of Meetings

3

### Attendance

100%

### Composition

The Committee consists entirely of Non-Executive Directors. At the invitation of the Committee, any other Director or other person may be invited to attend meetings of the Committee if considered desirable in assisting the Committee in fulfilling its role.

### Role

The role of the Committee is to:

- Ensure that appropriate procedures are adopted and followed in the nomination, selection, training, evaluation and re-election of Directors and for succession planning, with due regard in all cases to the benefits of diversity on the Board, including gender
- Regularly review the structure, size, composition, skills and experience of the Board and to make recommendations with regard to any adjustments considered necessary
- When it is agreed that an appointment to the Board should be made, lead a selection process that is formal, rigorous and transparent
- Be responsible for identifying, reviewing and recommending candidates for appointment to the Board

### Nomination Committee meetings

The Nomination Committee met three times during the year with 100% attendance at these meetings.

### Activities in 2020

#### Review of Board composition and succession planning

Succession planning for the Chairman through a dedicated sub-committee of the Nomination Committee, led by Elizabeth McMeikan our Senior Independent Director, was a key focus during 2020. This led to the successful appointment of Richard Huntingford as Non-Executive Director and Chairman Designate on 1 December 2020. Richard will take over as Chair when Phil White steps down on 31 March 2021.

Heidrick & Struggles, an external search consultancy, led the search for the new Chairman. Heidrick & Struggles has no other connection with the Company or individual Directors.

The Committee also reviewed the Board's composition to ensure it has the correct balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge. The Committee noted the Board had recently been strengthened by the appointment of two Non-Executive Directors with strong HE experience (Dame Shirley Pearce and Professor Sir Steve Smith), which has proved especially helpful for HE insight as the Board navigated the wider impact of the pandemic on the sector. The Committee believes the Board has the correct balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge but continues to monitor this.

As per prior years, the Committee also reviewed the Board's succession planning for executive roles, to ensure we have a deep, diverse and inclusive talent pipeline for future Board appointments. As an integral part of our executive succession planning, the Committee oversees the talent mapping to ensure we are growing and nurturing our talent and developing our high-performers' potential. Our diversity and inclusivity initiatives (outlined below) are aligned with this succession planning.

### Diversity and inclusion

The Board recognises that diversity and inclusion is fundamental to the culture of the Group, our purpose of Home for Success and ultimately our long term sustainability. Following the Black Lives Matter movement, we formed an employee Culture Matters Network in 2020 giving employees a platform to share their experiences and explore how we can develop our diversity and inclusivity initiatives with a renewed vigour. The Board's focus has been on creating a workplace where people feel they belong and can bring their whole and true selves into the workplace. Our refreshed value, Creating Room for Everyone, launched following the completion of the Liberty Living acquisition, gives focus to this. To help our teams and particularly our leadership understand their role in making Unite a more diverse and inclusive employer, during 2020 we started working with an external culture specialist, René Carayol. As part of our evolving diversity and inclusivity strategy, the Board has set new Diversity Targets (see further below).

To support the embedding of our new value, Creating Room for Everyone, and our ongoing focus on diversity and inclusion, the Board led the following key initiatives:

- signed the Business in the Community Race at Work Charter, with a commitment to capture ethnicity data and publicise progress; a zero-tolerance approach on harassment and bullying and action to support ethnic minority career progression. The Board believes signing this Charter is a significant moment for our business
- established a Culture Matters Network in response to Black Lives Matter
- new D&I training sessions commenced
- engagement with a leadership and diversity and inclusions specialist, who is providing fresh thinking and stimulus to our leadership team
- committed to new diversity targets as part of our renewed Talent Development Programme, which is focused on promotion, recruitment and talent and reaching beyond our existing gender targets. Our new Talent Development Programme for 2021 will include creating opportunities for minority groups

### Diversity targets

Through this process, the Board set the following diversity and inclusivity targets for the business:

- A 50/50 gender split in the Unite Students leadership team by the end of 2023
- Fill 60% of managerial roles internally by the end of 2023
- Minority groups fairly represented in employees and management by the end of 2024

These targets underline the Board's belief that as a service-based business, our people are as important as our customers. We are driven by our values and culture and a passion and commitment to develop a diverse and inclusive organisation, providing interesting career pathways within our organisation to ensure opportunities for progression are available for all and – critically – with greater representation of women and ethnicity in senior positions and a diverse workforce across our organisation, where everybody feels valued, engaged and they belong.

### Board Diversity Policy

The Board and Nomination Committee drive the agenda for diversity across the business. We are making progress, but recognise we need to do more. As a result, the Board set the diversity targets and launched the key initiatives listed above.

The Board's diversity policy is that Board appointments (a) are made on merit and relevant experience, while taking into account the broadest definition of diversity and (b) ensure Unite has, on an ongoing basis, the most effective Board and leadership team to operate the business for the benefit of all its stakeholders. The Committee ensures that when making Board appointments the retained search firm places an emphasis on putting forward candidates who would enhance the overall diversity of the Board. On an ongoing basis, the Committee keeps under review the tenure and experience of the Executive and Non-Executive Directors to ensure the Board has an appropriate and diverse mix of skills, experience, knowledge and diversity.

## NOMINATION COMMITTEE CONTINUED

### Board and senior leadership diversity

The Board embraces the Code's underlying principles with regard to Board balance and diversity, including in respect of ethnicity, gender and age. The Board is also mindful of the aims of the Hampton-Alexander Review, an independent review body which aims to improve women's representation at board level and in leadership roles.

For the major part of the year, the Board comprised three women and seven men representing female gender diversity of 30%. As a consequence of the orderly Chair succession handover process, following Richard Huntingford's appointment to the Board on 1 December 2020 the gender diversity temporarily reduced to 27.3% until Phil White's retirement on 31 March 2021 when it returns to 30%. The Nomination Committee continues to consider Board balance and diversity and intends to align the composition of the Board with the recommendations of the Hampton-Alexander Review, as it was in 2019 and at the start of 2020, with our Board comprising one-third women by our 2022 Annual General Meeting.

As of 31 December 2020, the number of women in the Executive Committee and their direct reports (including the Company Secretary as required by the Code) is 15 (out of a total of 44) representing 34% of this Group. Our diversity targets listed above will help us grow this percentage of women in leadership positions.

Our diversity targets focus on the wider business, but the Nomination Committee is also conscious of the Parker Review and in particular one of its key recommendations that each FTSE 250 Board should have at least one director of colour by 2024. Building on our diversity targets and initiatives and having regard to this recommendation, the Nomination Committee will build a pipeline of candidates working towards the goal of making a Board appointment no later than 2024.

In addition to this Board target, the Committee will continue to focus on setting and achieving diversity targets for the wider business to help the Company develop a deep and diverse succession plan at more senior levels within the organisation.

### Phil White

Chair – Nomination Committee

16 March 2021