

Approved



## **UNIVERSITY COURT**

### **MINUTES**

of the meeting of the University Court held on 16 February 2022 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Chair: Mr M Shaw  
Vice-Chair: Dr A Ingram

Mr A Bailey	Mr F Keir	Dr H Mehrpouya
Professor L Bacon	Mr F Jakimow	Ms F Robertson
Mrs A Duffy	Mr J Macgregor	Professor N Seaton
Mrs H Dunk	Ms V Lynch	Professor E Sim
Ms G Ghafoor	Mr A Marks	Dr K Smith
Mrs L Hamilton	Mr I McDonald	Ms C Summers
	Ms C MacEachen	Ms R Thiel

Secretary: Mrs S Stewart  
In attendance: Mr P Henry  
Ms A Kildare  
Ms J McKenzie  
Ms E Fraser  
Mr G Weir  
Mr C Warnock

### **NON-RESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS**

#### **34 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed the Interim Secretary to Court, Mr Philip Henry, who was joining the meeting as an observer. Those in attendance were Ms A Kildare, Ms J McKenzie, Ms E Fraser, and Mr G Weir. It was noted that the Head of Estates, Mr C Warnock would join for Item 9 on the agenda (the Estate Vision Presentation).

Apologies were received from Ms N Ahmed, Mr J Barnett and Professor T Inns.

Court commended the University Archivist, Mr R Wishart, on an interesting pre-Court presentation.

#### **35 DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the non-reserved items for discussion. No declarations were made.

36 MINUTES OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2022

CT/0222/28

Court noted the above minutes for information. The Chair advised members that the new pension scheme had been discussed at the meeting, and that it had been decided that Legal and General would be the new pension provider following a procurement process.

37 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COURT HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021: UNRESERVED, AND 27 JANUARY 2022

CT/0222/29

Court approved the above minutes as an accurate record.

38 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

Oral report

The Chair noted that this would be the first Court meeting without a Coronavirus item on the agenda, intimating that, while the virus continued to pose health and safety challenges, he hoped that next year would resemble the 'new normal'.

The Chair also noted that a recruitment exercise was being undertaken for a new Deputy Principal to replace Professor Bacon when she took up position as Principal from 1 May 2022. Professor Bacon advised that a paper would be brought to the next Court meeting in April to explain the appointment process.

Thereafter, the University Secretary advised Court that there were no matters arising that were not already on the agenda.

39 ABERTAY UNIVERSITY INTEGRATED REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

CT/0222/30

The Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services, Mr G Weir, introduced the above document noting that, following the audit undertaken for the 2020/21 period, the external auditors found no outstanding issues or matters requiring to be brought to the Court's attention. He gave a brief overview of finances, in particular noting that total income in 2021 was £37.2m, a 5.3% increase from the previous year. Mr G Weir finally mentioned that the accounts were recommended for approval by Court, and thereafter would be signed and published.

The members commended Mr G Weir and his team for their work and for the excellent set of accounts which were produced.

One member raised the issue of the University's Reserves, noting that while there has been a surplus, there was still more work to be done, and that this would be a continuing challenge. Mr Weir agreed that there was a need to focus on Reserves, explaining that while the 2020-21 financial performance exceeded the budgeted levels, this was partially attributable to a lesser overall spend due to reduced activity on campus owing to Coronavirus.

Thereafter, Court approved the report and financial statements and noted that they would be signed and submitted to the Scottish Funding Council.

40 2020 – 2025 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: UPDATE

CT/0222/31

The Vice-Principal (Strategy and Planning), Ms C Summers, provided an overview of the KPIs, going through the RAG status of each. She advised Court that four of the KPIs were 'green', including research and knowledge exchanged income. Four KPIs were outlined as red; notably, the staff gender pay-gap, as well as graduate outcomes and employability of graduating students.

Questions followed regarding the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS) and student employability rates, to which Ms C Summers responded that the GOS was considered experimental, and that other factors including student domicile played a part in the 'red' KPI. Disappointment was expressed regarding the gender pay gap by some members, who noted that actions need to be taken for it to progress to 'green'. Ms C Summers reminded members that the pay gap did not relate to the same roles but to the overall profile of staff stated that this and other areas were high on the agenda.

Thereafter, Court noted the report, and that it would receive further updates at future meetings.

41 USS PENSION SCHEME REQUIREMENTS: UPDATE

CT/0222/32

Mr G Weir briefly provided an update on the USS Pension Scheme requirements, noting that he was still corresponding with the USS about the covenant, and that the trustees were introducing a monitoring framework to maintain a picture of the scheme's high level debt position.

Thereafter, Court noted the update.

42 ESTATE VISION: UPDATE (PRESENTATION)

Mr G Weir introduced Mr C Warnock, Head of Estates, noting that the presentation had also been given at the FCPC meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022. The Vision reflected a significant piece of work undertaken with external consultants and consultation with students and staff to envision how the campus might develop over the next twenty years; and, if accepted, would inform the development of the detailed Estates Strategy.

Mr Warnock gave his presentation, emphasising that the focus of the Vision was to provide a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive experience for all students, as well as forming a heart and identity with which students and staff could identify. He presented the various 'opportunity areas' identified around the campus; and noted that the Vision sought to

form a link between the academic offer of the University, and the built environment.

Members welcomed the Vision, particularly the links to mental health and wellbeing and to environmental sustainability and provided thoughts and suggestions such as opportunities for partnership with the Mental Health and Counselling Division and with Dundee City Council on nearby off-campus parking.

Court welcomed the update, supported the ongoing development of the strategy and thanked Mr Warnock for his presentation.

43 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2022

CT/0222/33

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 33, were received., introduced by the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

There was only one item for which Court's approval was sought, which was the Integrated Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, and this has already been approved by Court earlier in the meeting.

The following matters were noted:

43.1 Risk Management update (paragraph 26 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received and considered a regular update on risk management which represented the latest update on the strategic risk register as discussed by the Senior Management Team on 12 January 2022.

43.2 External Audit Annual Report (paragraph 28 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received the annual report of the external auditors relating to the annual accounts already considered by Court and for which there was a positive audit.

43.3 Follow-Up Review of Cyber Security (paragraph 30 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received a report on action taken in relation to a follow-up review of Cyber Security which had been conducted in July 2021. The Committee had agreed that a monthly report to the Chair was no longer required, with progress towards final items being monitored by the Committee through the usual tracker.

43.3 Internal Audit Recommendations (paragraph 31 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received the update on the implementation of the internal audit recommendations from 2020/21.

#### 43.5 Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee (CT/0222/34)

Appearing separately as agenda item 10.1, Court noted the Committee's annual report to Court on the work of the Committee and of the internal and external auditors during 2020/21, which will be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council along with the Integrated report.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes of the meeting.

#### 44 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCIAL & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2022

CT/0222/35

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 35, were received.

There was only one item for which Court's approval was sought, which was the Integrated Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, and this has already been approved by Court earlier in the meeting.

The following matters were noted:

##### 44.1 Development of Estates Strategy (paragraph 23 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received an update on the development of the Estates Strategy, which Court has heard about earlier in the meeting from the Head of Estates.

##### 44.2 Digital Strategy (paragraph 24 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received an update on the University's Digital Strategy.

##### 44.3 Draft revised Financial Strategy (paragraph 25 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had considered a draft revised Financial Strategy for the University and provided a range of comments that the Director of FICS would consider before bringing a further revised version back to the Committee.

##### 44.4 Operational Planning update (paragraph 26 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received an update on operational planning including a review of Quarter 1.

##### 44.5 Capital and Infrastructure Projects (paragraph 27 refers)

Court noted that the Committee received a report on Capital and Infrastructure Projects, including the progress of the Kydd Building Cladding Project.

44.6 KPIs report (paragraph 28 refers)

Court noted that the Committee considered the latest KPIs report as discussed earlier at the Court meeting.

44.7 Authorised Signatories (paragraph 31.1 refers)

Court noted and approved the proposed change to the University's authorised signatories with the investment bank UBS given the imminent departure of Professor Seaton and Mrs Stewart. The new signatories would be Professor L Bacon, Ms C Summers, and Ms S Binnie.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes of the meeting.

45 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2022

CT/0222/36

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 36, were received.

Court was invited to approve the Committee's annual report on the effectiveness of Court, which was included as enclosure 37 for the attention of Court. Court approved the report, noting that it would be published on the University website.

Court noted the following matters:

45.1 Court effectiveness quinquennial review (paragraph 17 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received a progress report on the plans for the quinquennial, externally facilitated review of Court's effectiveness. The procurement exercise has been completed as a result AdvanceHE had been appointed to assist the Governance & Nominations Committee with the review.

45.2 Court Membership (paragraph 22 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received an update on Court's membership. The Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee noted that, since the meeting of the Committee, one lay member of Court had intimated their intention to step down from Court. While there had been a recent exercise with head-hunters that led successfully to three new lay members being appointed, the Chair of the Committee in discussion with the Chair of Court had felt that it would be an expensive and lengthy process to initiate another search with head-hunters so soon.

Members had discussed the age diversity issue and there was a consensus that attracting younger people to the Court would be

beneficial along with other aspects of diversity; and the Chair of the Committee asked Court if they would be prepared to delegate consideration of an appointment to the Committee, as the University Secretary had identified someone from Dundee (who was a former student of the University) who would be interested this. In this connection, the Chair of the Committee, Chair of Court, and the Secretary had met the individual and were very supportive of their appointment.

In discussing the new lay member, it was stressed that transparency would be essential. It was decided that the Governance & Nominations Committee would circulate the individual's CV to all Court members, requesting that any objections be raised within two weeks. Provided that there were no issues within the two-week period, the individual would be appointed as a lay member. Court agreed that this method would not become routine in future and should be considered an exception.

The Secretary undertook to circulate the CV.

*[Secretary's note: the CV of the individual was circulated following the meeting of Court with a deadline of 9 March 2022 for any objections to be raised.]*

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes of the meeting.

46 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2022

CT/0222/38

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 38, were received. There were no matters for Court's approval.

Court noted the following matters:

46.1 Remit and Membership (paragraph 29 refers)

Court noted that the Committee has been giving deep consideration to some future developments including of its remit and membership and of the new People Strategy.

46.2 Report on Exit Interview (paragraph 30 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had considered a report on exit interviews with staff leavers.

46.3 Report on casework (paragraph 31 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received a report on cases of employee grievance, capability and disciplinary in the year to July 2021.

46.4 New Pension Scheme (paragraph 32 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had been apprised of progress in the development of the University's new pension scheme which has already been noted by Court earlier in the meeting through the minutes of the Chair's Committee.

46.5 Kydd Building Project (paragraph 35 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received an update on health and safety aspects of the Kydd Building Cladding project.

46.6 Equality and Diversity (paragraph 37 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had been pleased to receive a report on equality and diversity matters including the fact that the University had received a commendation from the Quality Assurance Agency on its approach to equality and diversity and to staff development following the recent Enhancement Led Institutional Review.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes.

47 STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT TO COURT

CT/0222/39

Ms R Thiel introduced the above report, which provided an account of latest activities within the Students' Association.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

48 ACADEMIC MATTERS REPORT

CT/0222/40

Professor L Bacon introduced the above report, noting progress made in working with a partner to provide online business and computing Programmes.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

49 REPORT ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS IN 2021

CT/0222/41

Mrs S Stewart introduced the above report, which provided an overview of FOI Requests made in calendar year 2021, seeing an increase following a lower rate in 2020. She briefly noted average response rates before explaining that no responses made in 2021 were late.

The Court noted the report.

50 DEPARTURE OF MEMBER AND SECRETARY



The Chair intimated that Ms F Robertson had decided to step down from Court, having been appointed in February 2018 and having joined the FCPC Committee as Vice-Chair. The members thanked Ms F Robertson for her contributions during her time on the Court.

The Chair then also noted that it was Mrs S Stewart's last Court meeting ahead of leaving the University in March 2022. Members thanked Mrs Stewart for her contribution during her time since 2009 supporting Court. Mrs Stewart thanked members, noting the pleasure of working with so many Court members over these years, and particularly given the voluntary nature of the work and the contribution they made to the University.

54 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Court noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place on Wednesday 27 April 2022

**Mr M Shaw  
CHAIR**