

Approved



UNIVERSITY COURT

MINUTES

of the meeting of the University Court held on 17 February 2016 at 2pm in the Boardroom of the University.

Chair: Mr E Frizzell
Vice-Chair: Professor E Wilson

Mr M Batho	Ms G Ghafoor	Mr C Rae
Ms A Boyle	Dr M Hinfelaar	Dr J Rees
Ms A Cameron	Mr G MacDougall	Mrs S Scott
Dr A Cornish	Mr I McDonald	Professor N Seaton
Mr R Fletcher	Professor S Olivier	Dr S Waiton
	Right Rev Dr N Peyton	

Secretary: Mrs S Stewart
Clerk to Court: Dr A Ramsay

In attendance: Ms S Campbell
Mr D Reeves
Mr I Simpson (item 63)
Mr B Yuksel

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs L Baxter, Mr J Burt, Mr D Dorward, Mr C Macdonald, Mr C Marshall and Mr M Shaw.

NON-RESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

55 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to this, the first Court meeting of 2016 and, in particular, welcomed Ms Gameelah Ghafoor and Mr Colin Rae to their first meeting of Court. Mr Frizzell advised members of Ms Ghafoor's long association with the University prior to becoming an independent member of Court and noted that Mr Rae, elected from the support staff of the University, had been with Abertay since 2001 and had worked in a variety of roles. The Chair, on behalf of Court, congratulated Ms Amanda Boyle on having been made an OBE and Dr Maria Hinfelaar on having been appointed Vice-Chancellor of Glyndŵr University.

56 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 items for discussion. None was declared.

57 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2016

Court noted the above minutes, submitted for information as Enclosure 32.

58 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2015 – UNRESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

Court approved the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 33, as an accurate record.

59 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

Court noted that there were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

60 SFC FUNDING FOR 2016/17

The Principal provided Court with an update on Scottish Government funding for higher education for 2016/2017, noting that the Scottish Funding Council had, as yet, not released the main grant allocation information. Court noted that in December 2015 the Deputy First Minister had announced a reduction of 3.3% in funding for HE with protection of funding for research. Professor Seaton advised members that, although the Scottish Government had announced that it would borrow for capital spending, it seemed likely that the overall cut could be 5-6%.

Court noted an increase of £50,000 for research arising from the Abertay's improved performance in the REF but was advised that a change in teaching funding methodology would result in a reduction of £300,000 in teaching income. Professor Seaton further noted a liaison meeting between Universities Scotland and the SFC, which had raised concerns that a significant reduction in funding for the modern universities would have a substantial impact on teaching and outreach and therefore, by extension, on the social mission of those universities.

The Vice-Principal (University Services) reminded members that the allocation, once received, would cover only the fiscal year to 31 March 2017 and not the university financial year to 31 July 2017. Furthermore, it was likely that a spending review would take place following the Scottish Government elections in May 2016.

Thereafter, Court noted that the funding allocation would be transmitted to members once received and analysed by the institution.

61 STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2015

CT/0216/35

The Principal introduced the above report on responses to the Staff Engagement survey, which had taken place between 28 September and 30 October 2015 in conjunction with Capita. The paper, which had been considered by the People, Health & Equality Committee, provided a brief summary of the report findings and the proposed management response, as well as the full survey report which had already been made available to staff on the intranet.

Members noted that the response rate to the survey had been high at 77%, an increase of 4% over the staff survey held in 2013 and that the results had revealed both indications of greater satisfaction than in 2013 and a number of areas for improvement. In particular, the percentage of staff who considered the University 'a good place to work' had dropped by 6% and the number of staff who believed that communication within the institution was effective had also declined. Court was advised that academic staff were less happy than support staff but that this was also the case across the sector as a whole.

Professor Seaton apprised Court that the report had been discussed by the Executive Group and the Senior Management Group in December 2015, prior to publication on the intranet, and an action plan agreed. This had commenced with an open meeting attended by approximately 150 staff members who had shared thoughts on the findings of the survey with the Principal and the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. A series of focus groups was planned to identify ways in which the University might improve, including discussing the report with the trade unions through the Joint Liaison Group. These would be led by the Vice-Principal (Academic).

Members expressed concern regarding levels of staff dissatisfaction and sought assurances that management intended to respond timeously. Professor Olivier advised Court that a proposed action plan would be discussed by the Executive Group prior to commencing a programme of wide and open participation and consultation with as many staff as possible.

In discussion, members noted that the survey had been conducted at a time of significant change within the University and following a number of redundancies, which would have undoubtedly contributed to staff concerns but that, overall, the significant downward trend in staff morale was a matter of concern for Court, who would continue to monitor this closely.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

62 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2016

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

The following matters were noted:

62.1 Internal Audit Status Report (paragraph 40 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the internal auditors' summary of progress against the 2015/2016 internal audit plan.

62.2 Internal Audit Review of Selected IT Risks: Report (paragraph 40.2 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on selected IT risks, which had identified 2 high, 5 moderate and 3 low-risk recommendations.

62.3 External Audit: Letter of Representation and Report (paragraph 41 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on progress made by management in implementing previously agreed internal audit recommendations and noted good progress in the number of recommendations already implemented.

63 FINANCE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2016

[Secretary's note: the Director of Operations joined the meeting at this point]

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 37, were approved.

The following matters were approved:

63.1 Estates Development 2016 proposal (paragraph 30 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and discussed in detail a proposal for development works to the estate for summer 2016 including science laboratory and food technology refurbishments for the Kydd building with associated external cladding works. In discussion, Court noted that the tour of the areas in question had been extremely helpful in demonstrating the need for investment in these areas of the estate and were reminded that this proposal followed the approval by the Committee of a 5-year investment plan.

Thereafter, Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the £3.5m expenditure on the estate be approved.

63.2 Alloway Halls Divestment (paragraph 31 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a proposal for the disposal of Alloway Halls of residence, which had been operating significantly below capacity since the 2013/2014 academic session.

Thereafter, Court approved the recommendation of the Committee to begin disposal of Alloway Halls.

The following matters were noted:

63.3 SFC 2016/2017 Outcome Agreement (paragraph 32 refers)

Court noted that the Committee's discussion of the current position of the 2016/2017 Outcome Agreement in the absence of any indication of funding from the Scottish Funding Council.

63.4 Finance Report (paragraph 33 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a Finance Report which provided the Committee with an integrated view of the University's current financial position, including the 2016 outturn, an examination of future outlook, debt management and treasury management.

63.5 Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) (paragraph 34 refers)
Court noted that the Committee had confirmed compliance with the TRAC requirements of the 2014/2015 submission.

63.6 Procurement Annual Report (paragraph 35 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the annual report on the procurement function, noting that this had been undertaken on an interim basis by Estates & Campus Services since the retirement of the University's Procurement Officer in October 2014.

[Secretary's note: the Director of Operations left the meeting at this point]

64 GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2016

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 38, were approved.

The following matters were noted:

64.1 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill (paragraph 25 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of an update on the progress of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill. Members were advised that sections 8 and 13, which had implied the possibility of ministerial control, had been removed.

64.2 Enhancing Court Attendance at University Events (paragraph 26 refers)
Court noted that the Committee had received a paper on enhancing Court attendance at University events which asked members to consider ways of raising the visibility of Court within the wider University community.

65 PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2016

Court received and approved the minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 39.

The following matters were approved:

65.1 Bullying and Harassment policy (paragraph 43 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the revised Bullying and Harassment policy.
Thereafter, Court approved the policy.

65.2 Capability Policy (paragraph 44 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the Capability policy, which had been revised following consultation with trade union representatives.

Thereafter, Court approved the policy.

The following matter was noted:

65.3 Staff Engagement Survey update (paragraph 42 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on the results of the staff engagement survey, which had already been discussed as a separate agenda item. In discussion, members expressed concerns regarding high levels of sickness absence and requested that management addressed this issue.

66 DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR COURT & COURT COMMITTEES IN 2016/2017 CT/0216/40

Court received and considered the above draft calendar for meetings of Court and its committees during session 2016/2017. Members, and in particular Committee Chairs, were requested to indicate any problems with the dates proposed to the University Secretary.

Court noted that the calendar would be circulated once finalised.

67 ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW 2016: UPDATE CT/0216/41

The Vice-Principal (Academic) introduced the above update on preparations for the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR), which would take place during 2016. Professor Olivier drew members' attention to the first panel visit, which would take place in March and in which Mr J Burt and Dr J Rees had kindly agreed to participate as lay members of Court.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

68 SCHEME OF DELEGATION REPORT CT/0216/42

Court received and noted the above report on the implementation of the Scheme of Delegation for the period 1 January to 31 December 2015.

69 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REPORT CT/0216/43

Court received and noted a report detailing requests made under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act between 1 January and 31 December 2015. Members were advised that requests had decreased slightly in volume, counter to the overall trend for UK universities. 4 requests had received late responses at 21, 22, 26 and 28 days respectively, reflecting the complex and lengthy nature of the requests.

Court commended the work of the Corporate Governance team in discharging the University's responsibilities in this area.

70 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT CT/0216/44

Court received and considered the above report on the wide range of activities undertaken by the Executive Group during the first half of the session which might be defined as 'stakeholder engagement'. In discussion, members requested that further information be included in future reports on the nature and impact of such activities.

71 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

The Chair noted that the non-reserved business of Court was concluded and thanked members for their contribution.

72 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Court noted that the next meeting would take place on Saturday 23 April 2016 at the Hilton Dunkeld Hotel.

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CHAIR

The meeting concluded at 15.55