

Approved



## **UNIVERSITY COURT**

### **MINUTES**

of the meeting of the University Court held on 13 November 2019 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom of the University.

Chair: Mr M Shaw  
Vice-Chair: Mrs S Scott

Mr A Bailey	Mrs M Guild	Mr J Macgregor
Mr J Barnett	Dr A Ingram	Mr T Marks
Mr M Batho	Mr F Keir	Dr A Samuel
Mr J Burt	Mr I Lowe	Professor N Seaton
Ms S Devautour	Mr I McDonald	Dr K Smith
Ms G Ghafoor	Mr G MacDougall	Mr O Wright

Secretary: Mrs S Stewart  
Clerk to Court: Dr A Ramsay  
In attendance: Mr K Feeney  
Ms J McKenzie  
Dr K Meyer  
Ms G Scanlin (Items 12-18)  
Mrs C Summers  
Mr S Uphill

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Professor L Bacon, Professor T Inns, Ms V Lynch, Ms C MacEachen, Dr J Rees and Ms F Robertson.

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

#### **12 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. In particular, Mr Shaw welcomed Dr A Samuel back to membership of Court. Mr Shaw further welcomed Mr K Feeney from the Governance Team, Ms J McKenzie from External & Corporate Relations, Ms G Scanlin of EY (external auditors) and Mrs C Summers as observers.

#### **13 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. Dr Ingram intimated a potential conflict of interest under agenda item 12.

Thereafter, no other conflict of interest was disclosed.

14 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2019 – UNRESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

Court noted the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 8, as an accurate record. Under paragraph 9.1, the Students' Association (SA) Vice-President requested that the proposal to give the SA President a regular item on the agenda of the Committee be expedited. It was agreed that a meeting would be organised between the Chair of Court, the University Secretary and the Students' Association officers in due course.

15 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2019 – UNRESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

Court received and considered the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 9. The Students' Association Vice-President expressed concern that the minute did not reflect her opposition to the National Student Survey on different philosophical grounds to those of the SA President; and was advised that the University Secretary would be amenable to discussing a different form of words. The Chair reminded Ms Devautour that the minutes were intended to reflect the summary of Court's discussions and not the verbatim account of individual contributions.

Thereafter, Court approved the above minutes as an accurate record

16 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

The University Secretary advised members that there were no matters arising that were not already on the agenda.

17 DRAFT ABERTAY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

CT/1119/10

The Principal introduced the above final draft version of the University's Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, which had been updated following discussions since the previous meeting of Court in September. Professor Seaton advised members that the allocation of resources to support implementation of the Plan would be determined through the University's operational planning processes.

In the course of a lengthy discussion, one member questioned whether the Plan was sufficiently ambitious and was advised that the University wanted to be both realistic but also flexible and agile enough to act when opportunities or threats emerged. The Director of Strategic Planning noted that the strategies required to support the Plan would include transformational proposals necessitating changes in culture and practice in the University. One member questioned whether the emphasis on the digital strategy remained compatible with the University's commitment to widening access and whether those Schools whose teaching methodologies were not based in technology would be disadvantaged in terms of resource. Court noted the concern and advised that FCPC would be seeking assurances going forward that upgrades to the teaching estate were being rolled out equitably.

Overall, Court commended the Director of Strategic Planning on a readable and realistic statement of intent and requested information on the dissemination of the document, if approved. Members were advised that the Plan would be launched at the next stakeholder engagement event in February 2020.

Thereafter, Court approved the University's Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 and noted the supporting framework and next steps in the implementation of the Plan.

18 ABERTAY UNIVERSITY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2019

CT/1119/11

The Interim Director of Finance and Research Funding introduced the above report, intended to provide Court with audited financial statements in order that it could discharge its responsibilities under the Financial Memorandum with the SFC. Court was advised that the report had already been considered by the Finance & Corporate Performance Committee, the Audit & Risk Committee; and that the external auditors, EY, had issued an unqualified opinion on the University's accounts.

In discussion, members considered the importance of cash generation to the sustainability of the institution, particularly in uncertain times when government funding was in decline. Staffing costs were noted as the most significant strain on resource, with employer pension contributions increasing year on year.

Thereafter, Court approved the report and financial statements and commended the University on having again achieved an unqualified opinion from the external auditors.

19 LETTER FROM ABERTAY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REGARDING CLIMATE CHANGE

CT/1119/12

The President of the Abertay Students' Association (SA) introduced a letter sent by the SA on behalf of the Student Leadership Team and the student body. Mr Wright noted that the University was to be commended for not investing in fossil fuels or armaments, but wanted to urge the institution to invest further in green industries.

Court was advised that the University was committed to establishing a sustainable development policy and that this work could now gain momentum following approval of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Mrs Stewart advised that she was the executive lead in this area and that a steering group was being convened to take this important issue forward.

In discussion, members welcomed both the letter and the SA's intent in asking the University to declare a climate emergency but noted that it could be counterproductive to issue such an announcement without having defined accompanying or remedial actions. Court agreed to demit responsibility to Mrs Stewart to work with the SA and report back in April 2020.

Thereafter, Court commended the Students' Association and endorsed the sentiments expressed in the letter.

20 SENATE: DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

CT/1119/13

The University Secretary introduced the proposed new terms of reference for Senate. Mrs Stewart advised members that, as the new membership of Senate had been put in place, it had been considered necessary and useful to establish some high-level terms of reference for this body within the context of the matters delegated to Senate by Court.

Members were advised that Senate had discussed the draft terms of reference at its meeting in October 2019 and that the version presented to Court had been revised in line with these discussions.

Thereafter, Court approved the proposed terms of reference.

21 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2019

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 14, were received.

The following matter was approved:

21.1 Draft Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee for 2018/2019  
(paragraph 17 refers)

Court approved the annual report of the Audit & Risk Committee for session 2018/2019. The report, which had been considered by the Committee, was appended to the minute as Enclosure 15.

The following matters were noted:

21.2 Risk Management and Policy Framework: Update  
(paragraph 8 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the updated Risk Management and Policy Framework.

21.3 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Report on review of Curriculum & Portfolio Planning  
(paragraph 9 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a report on the above review of curriculum and portfolio planning.

21.4 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Report on review of Health & Safety  
(paragraph 10 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the above review of Health & Safety.

21.5 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Report on review of Income Diversification  
(paragraph 11 refers)

Court noted the Committee's discussion of the above report on income diversification with three medium and two low rated recommendations and was apprised that management had declined to accept two recommendations made in the report, preferring to give them further consideration in due course.

21.6 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Report on review of Procurement  
(paragraph 12 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the above review of Procurement.

21.7 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Report on review of Research Governance & Management  
(paragraph 13 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a report on the review of research governance and management.

- 21.8 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Follow-up Report (paragraph 14 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a follow-up report on previous recommendations made.
- 21.9 Internal Audit 2018/2019: Annual Report (paragraph 15 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the above annual report from BDO.
- 21.10 External Audit 2018/2019: Annual Report (paragraph 18 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the above annual report from EY
- 21.11 Draft Abertay Integrated Report & Financial Statements (paragraph 19 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the above integrated report and annual financial statements, which had already received Court's attention as a separate agenda item.

In discussion, one member of PHEC advised Court that the Committee had discussed the Health & Safety Annual Report in some detail and had expressed concerns around the authority delegated to the Committee and responsibility for health and safety matters. A member requested that management should make explicit the responsibilities of Court members as employers and that training/briefing for Court members be provided.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes.

22 FINANCE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2019

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 16, were approved.

The following matter was approved:

- 22.1 SFC Outcome Agreement 2018/2019: Self-Evaluation CT/1119/17  
Court approved the above SFC outcome agreement self-evaluation, subject to two minor corrections identified. The report, which had been considered by the Committee, was appended to the minute as Enclosure 17.

The following matters were noted:

- 22.2 Draft Abertay Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2019 (paragraph 9 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's discussion of the above, previously considered as a separate agenda item.

22.3 Capital Projects: update

(paragraph 10 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a report on two recently-completed capital projects: the White Space/SDI staff accommodation refurbishment and the programme of classroom upgrades.

Mr McDonald advised Court that he had attended the recent meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee as Chair of FCPC and drew attention to the Committee's discussions around capital projects. Members were advised that the Committee expected to see improvements in the University's capital investment strategy and that post-occupancy and post-project evaluations would be required in future. Members were also apprised that discussions around major Estates developments had been established which would have oversight and scrutiny of projects where the majority of activity took place over the summer.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes.

23 GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 18, were approved. The following matters were approved:

23.1 Revised Remit & Membership of the Committee

CT/1119/19

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee to approve the above revised remit and membership of the Committee.

23.2 Draft Revised Standing Orders of Court

CT/1119/20

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee to approve the above draft revised standing orders of Court to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

23.3 Draft Revised Scheme of Delegation

CT/1119/21

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee to approve the above draft revised scheme of delegation to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

23.4 Draft Rules for Election of Staff Members to Court

CT/1119/22

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee to approve the above draft rules for the election of staff members to Court.

***[Secretary's note: Dr Ingram declared a conflict of interest in relation to the next matter of business and withdrew.]***

23.5 Nominee for the next Vice-Chair of Court

(paragraph 9 refers)

Court endorsed the unanimous recommendation of the Committee that Dr Ingram be appointed as the next Vice-Chair of Court.

***[Secretary's note: Dr Ingram re-joined the meeting at this time]***

24 PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2019

The following matters were noted:

24.1 Developing Our Strategic Plan 2020-2025

(paragraph 7 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the measures relating to supporting staff and to broader equality issues for inclusion in the University's Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

24.2 Staff Engagement Survey

(paragraph 8 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the staff engagement survey questions. Ms Fraser advised members of the proposed dates for the survey, noting that the results would not likely be available until early 2020.

Thereafter, Court noted the minutes.

25 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT: UNRESERVED

CT/1119/24

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee introduced the above report and advised members that he would provide more detailed information regarding the review of Executive officers' salaries under the reserved item of business at the end of the meeting.

Thereafter, Court accepted the report.

26 ACADEMIC MATTERS: INCLUDING REPORT OF SENATE MEETING

CT/1119/25

Court received and noted the above report, intended to apprise members of developments and activities in the academic work of the University and of discussions held at Senate's meeting in October 2019.

27 GRADUATION INFORMATION

The Chair noted that the University's Winter graduation ceremony would take place on Friday 22 November in the Caird Hall and encouraged members to attend. Court was advised that the installation of Professor Alice Brown as the third Chancellor of the University would also take place at the ceremony, to which a number of guests had been invited.

28 DEPARTURE OF MEMBERS

The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting of Court to be attended by Mrs Shirley Scott. On behalf of Court, Mr Shaw thanked Mrs Scott for her nine years of service and her dedication to the University, in particular in her role as Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee for the past seven years. Court warmly and enthusiastically endorsed Mr Shaw's sentiments.

29 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was declared.

30 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Court noted that the next meeting would take place on 5 February 2020.

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**CHAIR**