

Approved



## MINUTES

of the meeting of the University Court held on 20 June 2018 at 2pm in the Boardroom of the University.

Chair: Mr E Frizzell

Mr A Bailey  
Mr J Barnett  
Mr M Batho  
Mrs L Baxter  
Mr J Burt  
Dr Y Deeni

Ms G Ghafoor  
Dr A Ingram  
Ms V Lynch  
Mr G MacDougall  
Mr I McDonald  
Mr C Rae

Dr J Rees  
Mr D Reeves  
Professor N Seaton  
Mr M Shaw  
Dr K Smith  
Mr T Wilson

Secretary: Mrs S Stewart  
Clerk to Court: Dr A Ramsay  
In attendance: Ms D Bandeva  
Mrs C Summers, Director of Strategic Planning  
Mr G Bletcher, observer  
Dr K McAlpine, observer  
Mr O Wright, observer

Court received apologies for absence from Mr H Aitken, Mr M Grossi, Dr M Hinfelaar, Ms F Robertson and Professor E Wilson.

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

#### 88 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Mr Frizzell welcomed new member Mr Andrew Bailey to his first meeting of Court and Mr Owen Wright, attending as the incoming Students' Association Vice-President. Finally, Mr Frizzell welcomed Mr Graeme Bletcher from External and Corporate Relations and Dr Kenny McAlpine from the School of Design and Informatics, who were attending as staff observers.

#### 89 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. None was declared.

#### 90 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 JUNE 2018

Court noted the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 53.

91 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 21 APRIL 2018

Court approved the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 54, as an accurate record.

92 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

The Chair, on behalf of Court, thanked those members of Information Services staff who had contributed to the Court visit and tour. Mr Frizzell sought members' views on continuing visits to Schools and Services in the future and noted that Court wished to continue with these most instructive sessions.

There were no matters arising that were not already on the agenda.

93 ABERTAY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION: ANNUAL REPORT AND PLAN

CT/0618/55

The President of the Students' Association (SA) introduced the paper, which provided an overview of the SA's activities in the current session and plans for academic year 2018/2019, together with the associated budget.

Mr Wilson advised Court that session 2017/18 had seen another year of change for the SA, with a change of officers, significant staff recruitment and the appointment of a new CEO. Members noted that, at times, communication between students, staff, trustees, elected officers and the University had created challenges and that this would be addressed going forward through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the SA and the University. Court was also advised that the SA would be working with the University's Teaching & Learning Enhancement service to develop a three-tiered student partnership agreement comprising Relationships, Expectations and Actions, which would be submitted to the Student Representative Council for approval.

Student turnout for elections, whilst apparently low at 16.51%, had risen to its highest ever level and compared very favourably with levels of participation in democracy at other universities. Freshers' week 2017 had been extremely successful and plans for 2018 were underway. Student-led activities had included the Teaching Awards, Society events and the annual Securi-Tay conference. The Executive Officers had participated in Institution-Led Review panels and student misconduct panels as well as contributing to the appointment of members of Court and, most recently, the new Vice-Principal (Academic).

The SA had been campaigning nationally as well as locally on issues such as the Living Wage, mental health, parents & carers and gender-based violence. Court was advised that the SA would be seconding a consent worker from the Dundee Women's Rape and Sexual Assault Centre for 2 days per week to deliver a programme of sexual consent workshops and advise on matters of student safety. Although the funding for EcoAbertay had ceased, its legacy was now embedded in SA activities.

In discussion, members noted activities targeted towards 1<sup>st</sup>-year students intended to enhance engagement in democracy. The creation of new societies was identified as a positive development, as was the strategy of investing in volunteers. One member sought assurance that the SA would

work with local men's groups and was advised that, whilst not denying that all genders are subject to sexual violence, the SA wanted to give priority to the majority of those affected.

Thereafter, Court commended the report and the Students' Association.

94 UNIVERSITY OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING 2018-2020

CT/0618/56

The Vice-Principal (University Services) introduced the above report, intended to provide Court with the University's updated operational and financial plans for 2018-2020. Mr Batho reminded members that, following Court's approval in 2017, the University had moved to a three-year planning cycle. The report therefore represented years two and three of the current planning cycle and an update to the plans approved by Court in June 2017. Court was advised that the operational plan was intended to ensure that all actions required to deliver the objectives of the Strategic Plan were in place and supported by financial, staffing and investment plans.

The Director of Finance and Research Funding provided new members with an overview of the University's financial strategy, intended to balance the level of surplus and reserves to provide resilience to external shocks whilst also making resources available for delivery of the Strategic Plan and, in particular, for investing in the University's infrastructure. Mr Reeves apprised Court that the previous year's financial outcome had been expected to fall short of the forecast but had in fact resulted in a surplus of slightly more than the target. Headline figures for 2018-2019, whilst broadly similar to the previous year, were based upon material changes in planning assumptions, such as the termination of the arrangement with SEGi and an increase in student FTE numbers. Court noted that the Dundee Academy of Sport would close on 31 July 2018 but that three members of staff had been redeployed. The University's success rate in obtaining research grant income had increased and, in a landmark for Abertay fundraising, the first instalments of the Sword bequest had been received with a final expected later in 2018. Mr Reeves advised members that the University now had £1m of debt in interest-free loans from the Scottish Funding Council, which would be repaid through the savings realised by the low carbon projects in solar Photovoltaics and LED lighting. Court welcomed the plans for investment in the campus and noted that the Estates plan did not include any asset disposal.

In discussion, members noted that, in moving to a three-year financial plan, the University had been able to correlate this with the five-year Strategic Plan and that management were looking beyond 2020. Staff costs were noted as the greatest source of expenditure and members advised that staff resource had been re-allocated within the Academic Schools to support delivery. Academic staff FTE numbers in three Schools were likely to increase in view of growing student numbers. One member expressed concern that the reduction of staff numbers in the School of Science, Engineering & Technology was incompatible with the University's commitment to STEM subjects and was advised that STEM subjects were delivered across three of the four Schools where applications had been increasing. The member further expressed the belief that the financial plan had not been developed in accordance with Scottish Government processes in terms of consultation with recognised trades unions and students. Court was advised that all Heads had been involved in the discussions regarding the future profile of their School and that the financial and operational plans were management issues.

Court sought assurances that increased competition for widening access students would not adversely affect Abertay. The Director of Strategic Planning advised Court that student projections were reviewed regularly but that SIMD20/40 figures remained relatively static in the city of Dundee and that the University would retain its commitment to widening access.

Court was apprised of significant discussions with potential overseas partners to establish taught postgraduate programmes across a range of disciplines, which would boost both provision and numbers.

Thereafter, Court noted the assumptions upon which the University's plans had been based, noted the update on the University's three-year operational plan and approved the financial plan 2018-2020.

## 95 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

CT/0618/57

The Director of Strategic Planning introduced the above annual update on risk from the Audit & Risk Committee, advising Court that the policy and framework had been reviewed and updated to reflect internal changes and the recommendations from the recent internal audit of risk management.

Mrs Summers drew members' attention to changes in reporting frequency, noting that this was being increased to highlight to staff the importance of risk management and to promote more regular review across all areas of the University. Court was advised that the Audit & Risk Committee would receive an update on the register at each meeting, which would include some "deep dives" into individual risks but would still report to Court on an annual basis in June.

Court was apprised of changes to the process of updating the register to take account of best practice and, where appropriate, recommendations arising from internal audit reviews. The formal process for escalation of risks from Schools and Services to the Executive Group had been clarified and the operational risk processes for Schools and Services updated.

Mrs Summers further advised members that the format of the register had been revised to incorporate additional detail to the scoring matrix, including how impact was quantified. Risk descriptions had been rewritten to improve clarity and were presented as a separate document to make the register easier to read.

Court noted that no significant changes had been required to the overall institutional risk profile but that the Audit & Risk Committee had held preliminary discussions around the presentation of political risk in the register. Court was advised that the Committee would consider this in greater depth and any further proposed amendments brought to the attention of Court.

In discussion, members sought clarification of the institutional risk appetite in relation to internationalisation and were advised that, whilst management was open to exploring new opportunities, it would not endorse any activity likely to endanger the University's Tier 4 student sponsor license.

Thereafter, Court approved the refreshed risk management policy and framework and noted the updated strategic risk register.

96 SENATE REPORT

CT/0618/58

The University Secretary introduced the above report, intended to provide Court with a summary of the matters considered by Senate at its meeting in June 2018, including minor amendments to the Academic Regulations and the Code of Student Discipline: Academic Misconduct. Senate had endorsed a proposal for a special meeting of Senate in September to consider the reviews arising from the recent Institution-Led Review and had approved the MSci in Biomedical Science.

The Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee who had been present at Senate commended the quality of the debate and urged other members of Court to attend a meeting of Senate and observe the academic business of the University.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

97 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT TO SFC ON QUALITY 2017/2018

CT/0618/59

The Principal introduced the above document, apprising Court that the Annual Report was a statutory return, required to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council by 30<sup>th</sup> September each year following endorsement by the governing body in line with SFC Guidance on Quality. Professor Seaton advised members that the report was still in draft form and that, because the report would require to be submitted to SFC before the next meeting of Court, authority to endorse the report should be delegated to the Chair.

Professor Seaton advised Court that the University had successfully completed an institution-led review (ILR) of its entire academic provision and that a special meeting of Senate would be held in September to consider the final reports and action plans. Additionally, the NSS results would need to be included in the report but would not be available before August.

In discussion, the Abertay SA President noted that each ILR had involved students, who had been invited to speak candidly about their experience and that all involved had found the process extremely interesting.

Thereafter, Court delegated to the Chair of Court the authority to endorse the final report for submission to SFC by 30 September 2018.

98 REFRESHING OUR STRATEGY AND DEVELOPING A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

CT/0618/60

The Director of Strategic Planning introduced the above report, intended to provide Court with an overview of the intended process for refreshing the University's strategy and developing a new strategic plan. Mrs Summers advised members that a meeting of Court would be held in September that would build upon the issues raised in the Court Conference discussions in April 2018.

Court was asked to consider whether any of its other committees should be given an opportunity to input into the development of the strategic framework in the period between the meetings of Court in September and June. In discussion, members welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the institution. Court noted the need to consider any new KPIs arising from the development of the next strategic plan and advised that the

Audit & Risk Committee would expect to take an overview of associated institutional risks. The Chair of the Finance & Corporate Performance Committee praised the Director of Finance & Research Funding and the Director of Strategic Planning for the rigorous debate already undertaken at committee level and commended the involvement of others in the discussions. Mrs Summers undertook to hold discussions with each committee Chair.

One member noted the opportunities for internal stakeholders to be involved and asked what engagement possibilities for external partners and bodies were envisaged. Mrs Summers agreed to work with External & Corporate Relations in reaching out to other stakeholders.

The elected support staff member sought clarification of the role to be played by the trades unions and was advised that the unions had been briefed on the process to be followed but that the opportunities for staff and students to contribute had yet to be finalised.

Thereafter, Court: noted the process for the development of the strategic plan; noted the role it would play in the process and agreed that committees other than FCPC should be included in the process; and noted the update on issues raised in the Court Conference discussions.

99 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2018

CT/0618/61

Court received and considered the minutes of the above meeting, submitted as enclosure 61.

The following matters were noted:

99.1 Internal Audit 2017/2018 Review of Payroll and HR (paragraph 42 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on a review of the new Payroll and HR system, which had found limited effectiveness. One high-priority recommendation, four medium-graded recommendations and one low-graded recommendation had been identified. The Committee had also been apprised of areas of good practice.

99.2 Internal Audit 2017/2018 Review of Information Security (paragraph 43 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on a review of Information Security, which had found a moderate level of assurance. One high-priority, five medium-graded and two low-graded recommendations had been identified. Of these, all but two had been implemented at the time of review by the Committee.

99.3 Internal Audit 2017/2018 Review of Preparedness for GDPR (paragraph 44 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on a review of the University's preparedness for GDPR, which had found limited assurance. Four medium-graded and seven low-graded recommendations had been identified, many of which had now been implemented. The review had also identified areas of good practice.

- 99.4 Internal Audit 2017/2018 Review of University Residences  
(paragraph 45 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on a review of the University's residences, which had found a substantial level of assurance with a number of areas of good practice identified.
- 99.5 Internal Audit 2017/2018 Review of Alumni & Development  
(paragraph 46 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on a review of Alumni & Development, which had found a limited level of assurance, with two medium-graded recommendations identified.
- 99.6 Internal Audit 2015/2016 and 2016/2017: Management report on implementation of recommendations  
(paragraph 47 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a report on progress made by management in the implementation of previously agreed internal audit recommendations
- 99.7 Risk Management update  
(paragraph 48 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the refreshed risk management policy and framework.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes of the meeting and commended management's acceptance of recommendations made.

100 FINANCE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 MAY 2018

Court received and considered the minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 62.

The following matters were noted:

- 100.1 Abertay SA Finances and Plan for 2018/2019  
(paragraph 35 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the Students' Association Finances and Plan for 2018/2019, which had already received Court's attention.
- 100.2 Post-occupancy evaluation of the University's Collaborative Learning Suite  
(paragraph 38 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the first iteration of a post-occupancy evaluation of the Collaborative Learning Suite.
- 100.3 University Finance Report  
(paragraph 39 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the University Finance Report, which included an integrated view of the University's current financial position and financial results to date.

In discussion, one Court member asked whether the University intended to draw down resource for the Equally Safe in Higher Education national strategy and was advised that a working group had been convened to

consider how best to implement an inclusive approach to the toolkit. In view of recent events at Glasgow School of Art, members sought assurances that the University had sufficient fire safety measures and precautions in place whilst building works were undertaken over the summer months. The Vice-Principal (University Services) advised Court that more stringent regulations were to be expected and the University was currently considering the difficulties associated with the likelihood of installing a sprinkler system in a listed building. Members were advised that the Principal, the University Secretary, the President of the Students' Association and Abertay Unite had all contacted the Glasgow School of Art to offer support and assistance.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes of the meeting.

101 GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2018

CT/0618/63

Court received and considered the minutes of the above meeting. Court approved the following matters:

101.1 Draft Revised Standing Orders of Court

(paragraph 36 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the Draft Revised Standing Orders of Court, which had been updated to address the new requirement of the Scottish Governance Act. Court accepted the recommendation of the Committee that the revised Standing Orders be approved.

101.2 Draft Generic Role Descriptor for Court Members

(paragraph 38 refers)

Court received and approved the above generic Role Descriptor for members of Court. In discussion, one member emphasised the role of Court in challenging management and noted that such challenges should be accepted constructively. It was agreed that the Chair of Court would discuss this matter further with the member. Court accepted the recommendation of the Committee that the descriptor be approved.

101.3 Proposal for Court Annual Public Stakeholder Event

(paragraph 39 refers)

Court noted and endorsed the Committee's recommendation of a proposal to establish an annual public stakeholder event, which would meet the expectation contained within the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. Members noted that discussions would continue with External and Corporate Relations as to the date and format of the event.

101.4 Draft Revised Scheme of Delegation

(paragraph 40 refers)

Court considered and endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the revised Scheme of Delegation be approved.

101.5 Draft Revised Role of Principal

(paragraph 41 refers)

Court endorsed the Committee's recommendation to approve the revised document on the Role of the Principal, which had been updated to reflect the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance.



Court then noted the following matters:

101.6 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act: Implementation by Abertay University: update

(paragraph 33 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of an update on the University's progress towards implementing the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

101.7 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance: Implementation update

(paragraph 34 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered an update on significant institutional progress made in implementing the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance.

101.8 Social Responsibility: Discussion Paper

(paragraph 35 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a discussion paper on social responsibility.

101.9 Periodic review of the effectiveness of Court: update on implementation of recommendations

(paragraph 42 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the second update on the implementation of recommendations that had arisen from the periodic review of the effectiveness of Court undertaken in 2017.

101.10 Court Membership Report

(paragraph 43 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on the current status of the membership of Court. The Chair of Court noted that the Vice-Chair of Court would demit office on 31 December 2018 and invited any member of Court interested in the role of Vice-Chair to contact the University Secretary in the first instance.

Thereafter, Court approved the minutes.

102 PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 MAY 2018

Court received and approved the minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 64.

The following matter was approved:

102.1 Living Wage Update

(paragraph 75 refers)

Court endorsed the Committee's recommendation that the University formally apply to become an accredited living wage employer. The Chair of the Committee advised Court that members had felt passionately that the institution had a moral imperative to make public its institutional values and had reached this position in the absence of a formal discussion paper.

The following matters were noted:

102.2 Staff Engagement update

(paragraph 72 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of an update on the staff engagement survey.

102.2 Development Review Policy

(paragraph 73 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a draft development review policy but that, following discussion, it had agreed not to recommend the policy to Court for approval in its current form.

Thereafter, Court approved the above minutes as a correct record.

103 PORTFOLIO REVIEW

CT/0618/64

Court received and noted the above report on the portfolio review ongoing during 2018.

104 COURT CONFERENCE REPORT

CT/0618/65

The University Secretary introduced the above report, which provided a record of the recent Court conference held in April 2018.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

105 25 YEARS – COURT SUMMARY PAPER

CT/0618/67

The Vice-Principal (University Services) introduced the above report, intended to apprise Court of current plans and thinking for commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abertay achieving University title.

Court noted the need to strike a balance between celebration and commemoration and to acknowledge the successes of the last 25 years. In discussion, members offered suggestions and were invited to submit any further thoughts to Mr Batho.

106 GRADUATION CEREMONIES

The University Secretary advised Court that the University's Graduation ceremonies would take place on 6 July 2018 and invited members to attend. The Chair of Court urged members to participate in this very positive landmark event for students and their families.

107 DEPARTURE OF MEMBER

The Chair of Court noted that this would be the last meeting to be attended by the outgoing vice-President of the Abertay SA, Ms Daniela Bandeva. On behalf of Court, Mr Frizzell thanked Ms Bandeva for her contribution and wished her every success as she resumed her studies.

108 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of Court advised members that the process of appointing the next Vice-Principal (Academic) had yet to be concluded but that discussions

remained positive.

109 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted.

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**CHAIR**