

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 30 JUNE 2020**

Present: Maggie Chapman (In the Chair), Colette Backwell, Eleanor Bentley, George Boyne, Nuala Booth, Colin Duncan, Jenny Fernandes, Dariya Koleva, David MacFarlane, Iain Mackay, Gary McRae, Lyndsay Menzies, Martin Mills, Anne Minto, Brian Paterson, Iain Percival, Esther Robertson (from Minute 148 onwards), Joachim Schaper, Jenny Shirreffs, Diane Skåtun, David Steyn, Lindsay Tibbetts, Neil Vargesson, Cecilia Wallback and David Watts.

In attendance: Steve Cannon, Owen Cox, Louise Henrard, Bruce Purdon (Clerk), Iain Torrance KCVO. From minutes 154 onwards David Beattie, Marion Campbell (Minutes 154 to 164), Rob Donelson, Debbie Dyker, Karl Leydecker, Alan Speight, Ruth Taylor and Richard Wells.

Anna Verhamme, AVC Consulting was in attendance for Minute 171-177.

**NEW AND RETIRING MEMBERS**

- 141 The Court recorded its thanks and appreciation to Dariya Koleva, Brian Paterson and David Steyn for their respective service as members prior to their retirement from the Court over the summer.
- 142 The Court welcomed Louise Henrard, who was observing the meeting prior to succeeding Dariya Koleva on 1 July 2020 as a Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) nominated member of Court.

**SENIOR GOVERNOR**

**REPORT FROM THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

- 143 The Court received and noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which provided a report from the Remuneration Committee's meeting of 16 June 2020. The paper detailed clarifications which were proposed following a review of the contractual terms for the position of Senior Governor. The paper also reported on advice that had been received from the University's Tax Advisers on the taxation status of travel and accommodation expenses incurred by the Senior Governor as a result of the introduction of remuneration for the position and Aberdeen being considered the place of work.
- 144 Following discussion, the Court approved adjustments to the Senior Governor's contract as follows:
1. The contracted days should be confirmed at up to 50 per annum and the rate maintained at £400 per day;
  2. That the University Secretary be charged with recording and accounting, on a monthly basis, the time the Senior Governor spends on University business;
  3. That the Senior Independent Governor should take a lead role in the appraisal of the Senior Governor and that, as a matter of course, that appraisal should include an assessment of the time required to undertake the role;
  4. That further advice be sought from the University's Tax Advisors on the treatment of the Senior Governor's expenses but that these would be 'grossed up' if a solution regarding the 'base of work' was not available.

145 The Court also noted that the Committee had considered a draft Severance Policy. The Committee had suggested some amendments to the draft Policy and the Court noted it would be invited to consider it a future meeting following the conclusion of the internal review of the SFC Report on the Payments made to the former Principal (See Minute 148).

146 The Interim Chair of the Remuneration Committee also provided an oral report on a retention payment to a member of staff which he had approved through chair's action.

#### **APPRAISAL OF SENIOR GOVERNOR: CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE**

147 The Senior Independent Governor provided a written and oral report on the outcome of the appraisal process of the Senior Governor, which he had led on behalf of Court.  
[Note by Clerk: The remainder of this minute is confidential to the Court - see Annex]

### **SFC AND OSCR REVIEWS**

#### **REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP TO RESPOND TO THE SFC REVIEW OF PAYMENTS TO THE FORMER PRINCIPAL**

148 The Court received the report and recommendations of the Working Group to Respond to the SFC Review of Payments to the Former Principal (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Working Group had been established by Court with a remit to:

- identify and review the specific issues raised by the SFC report and make recommendations to Court.
- consider the suggestion by the SFC that the University may wish to pay back a further amount either to the SFC or to a 'learning-related' activity and make recommendations to Court.
- consider whether the University should ask the former Principal to repay some, or all, of the payments made to him in this regard and make recommendations to Court.

149 The Court noted that the Group's recommendations, by their nature, also had relevance to and cross-over with the ongoing wider review of governance. The Group had been cognisant of this and intended that its report and recommendations would be helpful in informing that wider review and therefore further contribute to providing the assurance that the Scottish Funding Council had requested on governance and that the University community should also receive.

150 The Court discussed and considered the Group's recommendations in depth and a range of views were expressed with regard to them and the issues highlighted in the report. The Court considered, in particular, the question of whether to ask the former Principal to repay some or all of the payments made to him. Following discussion, the Court resolved that given that the SFC had required the University to repay a proportion of its grant in respect of the settlement made to the former Principal, it should invite him to consider repayment of the same amount to the University.

151 The Court also agreed that the wording of the report's recommendations should be amended to clarify that sub-committees of Court should report to the first available meeting of Court occurring after their meeting.

152 On this basis, the Court approved the following recommendations:

- 1) All members of Court should be regularly reminded of their key responsibilities as charity trustees, of the requirements of the Financial Memorandum, of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, and of the principles of public life in Scotland. The University should review the existing induction information provided to members regarding this to ensure this meets this requirement and the Court should consider holding development sessions annually where all members can be reminded and updated on their duties and responsibilities as charity trustees. These should be held, wherever possible, in the early part of the academic year, soon after student members of Court generally take up office (given the short duration of their appointments to Court);

- 2) Court and all Court Committees should adopt a formal procedure, based on recognised good practice, specifying the time period for the notice of meetings and the circulation of agendas and papers;
- 3) The remit of the Remuneration Committee should be reviewed to ensure its role and responsibilities and the extent of its delegated authority from Court are clearly defined. In particular, the Remuneration Committee remit should be more explicit on its responsibilities for the consideration of value for money issues and with regard to the relevant requirements of the SFC Financial Memorandum, the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, the Court and those of wider stakeholders;
- 4) The procedure for appraising the Principal should be documented. This should specify who should lead that appraisal and to which committees any recommendations arising from that process are made to, in particular, the roles and authority of the Court and the Remuneration Committee respectively (which should also be reflected in the remits/schedule of delegation of each);
- 5) The Remuneration Committee (and all other Court Committees) should ensure it has in place robust procedures for inducting its members and that they are aware of its remit and responsibilities;
- 6) The severance policy currently under development should be put in place together with appropriate documented procedures to support its operation, in particular with regard to dealing with any future issues related to the performance of the Principal and how the Court as a body fulfils its collective responsibilities for this. Specifically, therefore, the severance policy and associated procedures should specify:
  - that the dismissal of the Principal or Secretary is, under the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, a decision reserved to the full Court;
  - who has responsibility for negotiating settlement agreements with the Principal or Secretary;
  - who approves such agreements noting the requirement that decisions related to the Principal and Secretary are reserved to the Court;
  - the consideration of provision of outplacement support in a severance context;
  - when reviewing the overall value of any severance arrangement, the cost of any outplacement support should be included;
  - when internal legal advice on such agreements should be sought;
  - when external legal advice on such agreements should be sought;
  - that where a severance package exceeds the maximum threshold agreed by the Court, the University must consult with the Scottish Funding Council's Accountable Officer prior to approving the proposed severance package;
  - that where a severance package exceeds the maximum threshold agreed by the Court or is novel or potentially contentious, the University must consult the University's external auditor prior to approving the proposed severance package;
  - that the Director of Finance should be informed of all severance arrangements to ensure they are disclosed appropriately in the annual financial statements;
  - the requirements of the Financial Memorandum and Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, including value for money considerations;
- 7) The Court should, as set out in its schedule of decisions reserved to it and the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, take all decisions related to the dismissal of the Principal or Secretary to the University and should, therefore, be the first group within the University to be advised of such decisions (including retirements);
- 8) All committees of Court should provide reports to the next meeting of Court that takes place after the meeting of the committee.
- 9) The University should not repay further funding to SFC or to a 'learning-related' activity. The Court agreed with the Group's finding that £119k, equivalent to the proportion that the University would have received from the SFC, was returned to the SFC on 17

February 2020 and it was not appropriate to pay further funds to the SFC that the University has not received from it. The Court also agreed that it was not appropriate that the University, as an educational charity itself, should divert further funding to other learning-related causes, potentially to the detriment of staff and students who were themselves engaged in a learning-related activity within the University. The Court also noted that this suggestion from the SFC did not form part of the formal recommendations within its report.

- 10) The Court considered the Group's recommendation that the University should formally ask the former Principal to return some or all, of the relevant payments made to him and that it did so, having taken into account legal advice and having considered the reputation of the institution, in particular the action it believed the University's staff and students would consider to be appropriate. The Court resolved that given that the SFC had required the University to repay a proportion of its grant in respect of the settlement made to the former Principal, it should invite him to consider repayment of the same amount to the University.

#### **ORAL UPDATE ON OSCR REPORT ON THE PAYMENTS TO THE FORMER PRINCIPAL**

- 153 The Court received an oral report and noted that the University had received a draft of the OSCR report for fact checking. The final report was expected to be published in mid-July.

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 154 Lindsay Tibbetts declared an interest in minutes 189 as Deputy Dean of the Business School.

#### **MINUTES**

- 155 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2020 were approved.
- 156 The Court noted the updated action log (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

#### **ORAL REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR**

- 157 The Court received an oral report from the Senior Governor who reported on recent meetings she had undertaken on behalf of the Court and the University. The Senior Governor also reported on discussions that the Committee of University Chairs was undertaking with Universities UK regarding the issue of pensions and highlighted the announcement by the Scottish Government of a review by the Scottish Funding Council of further and higher education provision.

#### **ORAL REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL**

- 158 The Court received an oral report from the Principal in which he commented on the University's current assessment of the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic strategically and operationally. While there were some grounds for cautious optimism within Scotland, the situation was highly variable in other parts of the world and remained uncertain. The Principal also reported on work the University was engaged in to support the economic recovery of the North-East of Scotland from the impact of the pandemic.
- 159 The Principal reported that the University had improved its position in the Complete University Guide moving from 29<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> place – the highest ranking Aberdeen had ever achieved in that league table. With regard to the QS World Rankings, however, the Principal noted that while the University had maintained its UK ranking of 28<sup>th</sup> in the UK, in line with most of the UK sector Aberdeen's overall global ranking had dropped (13 places, from 194<sup>th</sup> to 207<sup>th</sup> in the world). While this was disappointing, it was noted that it was based in part on 5 years of historic data, and the deterioration in staff-student ratio in the period to 2018 had produced a strong negative effect on the QS ranking. The Principal noted that the steps taken in recent years to rebuild staff numbers, together with those outlined in the University's 2040 vision, would help the University to build upon its performance in these and other rankings.

### CAMPUS PLANNING GROUP REPORT

- 160 The Court received and noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) from the Campus Planning Group on the University's response to COVID-19 and issues arising from it. The report focused on the work being undertaken to prepare the University for the re-commencement of some research related activities on campus, to assess the capacity of the campuses for teaching under physical distancing conditions and for the delivery of blended learning in the autumn.
- 161 In discussion, it was noted that the University was monitoring the approach of other institutions to reopening to students with most research-intensive institutions planning for a blended approach with a mix of on campus and online provision rather than online only. Since the preparation of the report, further guidance from the Scottish Government had been received for higher education institutions but the situation remained very fluid and the University was planning for a range of scenarios for reopening to students and staff.

### REPORT ON STUDENT RECRUITMENT

- 162 The Court received and noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the latest admissions-related information for academic year 2020/21 and analysis of admissions statistics and market intelligence to provide broad projections for September 2020 entrants, within the context of COVID-19. The paper was supplemented by an oral report to take account of the most recent admissions information available.
- 163 The Court noted that that overall, the University's performance was is in line with the sector for undergraduate (UG) applications, with some encouraging indications in rest of UK numbers; and that Postgraduate Taught (PGT) international applications continued to show strong growth on the previous year. The Court also noted, however, that these figures were tentative and subject to change given the circumstances and uncertainties associated with Covid-19 for applicant behaviour. Significant effort was being made towards conversion of applications into accepted places and to reassure potential students that Scotland's position in terms of Covid-19 was different to other parts of the UK.
- 164 It was noted that a 'dashboard' format of report was being developed and this would be helpful to Court in tracking performance, particularly given the importance of student recruitment to the University's financial forecasts.

### BUDGETS 2020/21 TO 2022/23

- 165 The Court received a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on proposals for the University budget over the next three-year period. The Court noted that the Policy and Resources Committee had considered the paper in detail and had endorsed the recommendations for approval by Court.
- 166 The Court noted that the overall aim of the budget strategy was to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on the University's operating cash reserves, whilst providing a solid platform for post-pandemic recovery. The financial planning that informed the budget had considered three scenarios using the latest predictions from the sector on student intentions with regards to study. These scenarios modelled differing expectations on income generation and speed of recovery. In summary these were noted as follows:

**Scenario 1** - This assumed that mobility and travel restrictions are lifted and Scottish and rUK students could attend campus at the start of the autumn 2020 term. International students would join when they could, with reduced September entry and increased numbers in January.

**Scenario 2** - This assumed that the global pandemic continues, travel restrictions are partially lifted but quarantine restrictions remain in place for visiting students. Scottish & UK Students can attend campus, but international recruitment would be significantly

impacted for both online and on-campus delivery with a minimal intake in September and an increasing January uptake.

**Scenario 3** - This assumed that the pandemic continues and that universities are not able to move back on-campus until January 2021, and that no on-campus delivery is possible in autumn 2020. Students would be taught solely online until Christmas and would transition to campus delivery in early 2021. International recruitment would be significantly impacted for both online and on-campus delivery.

- 167 The Court noted that the University considered Scenario 2 to represent the most likely outcome at this point in time (while also noting the significant unpredictability around the resolution and impact of the pandemic both nationally and internationally). It was, therefore, recommended that the budget adopted for the forthcoming year be based on Scenario 2. This forecast a loss of £24.6 million, rising to £35 million in the worst case scenario (3) and the paper outlined how these losses would impact the University's cash reserves. The Court was also advised of further cash and loan support for higher education which had been announced after the paper had been prepared. The implications of these for the University would need to be analysed and considered further.
- 168 In discussion, the responsibility of Court to ensure that the University did not bind future management teams with the consequences of excessive debt was noted. Members of Court also highlighted their concern regarding the further liabilities and potential costs arising from the USS pension scheme deficit although it was noted that discussions to address this were taking place at national level. The need to address the potential breaching of existing loan covenants was also noted.
- 169 The Court discussed the potential management actions available to control staff costs in light of a major forecast reduction in income together with the importance of staff to the University's recovery from the impact of Covid-19 in the longer term. Clarification was sought on references in the paper to the University being open to potential discussions on efficiencies from the sharing of 'back office' services with other education providers. It was noted, however, that no decisions on reducing staff costs would be proposed to Court until its November 2020 meeting and then only if required.
- 170 Following discussion, the Court agreed the following recommendations but noted that these were conditional on Scenario 2 remaining the most likely position and that given the uncertainties would be liable to change and should be kept under review. Subject to that, the Court:
1. Approved that the budget for 2020/21 be based on Scenario 2 and noted the deficits this produced over the 3 year planning period - £24.6M, £21.5M £11.1M;
  2. Noted the impact on the University's cash balances for all budget scenarios;
  3. Noted that in Scenario 2, a further £13 Million of savings were required by the start of 2021/22 and how this would be achieved;
  4. Noted that in Scenario 3, a further £25 Million of savings were required by the start of 2021/22 and how this would be achieved;
  5. Noted the further work that was being done to examine all new sources of revenue, including new courses, expansion of TNE, CPD and commercial research;
  6. Approved that the £10 Million set aside for the repayment of the Barclays loan be utilised to support in-year working capital requirements and could be refinanced accordingly using the most appropriate method, if required;
  7. Approved that the £50 Million bond will continue to be used for capital expenditure unless agreed otherwise by Court;
  8. Noted the consideration given to redirecting the "Bond" money to support expenditure on the Science Teaching Hub, but approved a recommendation that the "Bond" money

was required to be used for capital projects that would significantly increase the University's revenue generating capacity post Covid-19;

9. Approved that the current arrangements for financing the Science Teaching Hub from cash reserves remain unchanged;
10. Noted that an updated options appraisal on the capital projects to be funded from the Bond would be brought, if possible, to the September Court but that in the meantime following planning determination all work on Bond funded projects would be paused. This should also take into account any new financial risks to these and other capital projects resulting from Covid-19;
11. Approved the acceptance of the £4M loan from the SFC for works to the District Heating System at Hillhead;
12. Noted that in each of the budget scenarios lenders covenants for 2020/21 will be breached and that negotiations with lenders continue to seek a resolution;
13. Noted the system of re-budgeting based on key points in the academic year and that this timetable will be aligned with Court meetings.

## TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

### EXTERNAL REVIEW OF CAMPUS IN SOUTH KOREA PROJECT

- 171 The Court received and considered a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the External Review of Aberdeen Campus in South Korea, which had been prepared by AVC Consulting and commissioned by Court to identify any 'lessons learned' for future transnational education projects.
- 172 In introducing the report, its author highlighted the key findings of the review and added that while not a recommendation in the report, the context of organisational culture and the extent to which it enabled constructive challenge, were always important factors in the decision making and delivery of projects. In discussion, it was suggested by some members that this had been an issue within the University during the Korea project and that it would be important to consider how that could be addressed in the future. In this regard the example of staff whistleblowing champions was suggested. The Court was assured that this point was recognised and that while significant steps to foster a culture which welcomed challenge had been undertaken, it was something that would need to be continuously addressed and nurtured. The suggestion of whistleblowing champions was noted and would be considered as part of the wider review of governance and culture.
- 173 The Court noted the report's findings, in particular, its recommendations as follows:
  1. Develop a strategic framework which assess opportunities descriptively (describes how the opportunity aligns with strategy) and comparatively (assesses whether this opportunity aligns better with the strategy than another opportunity) and enables the Court to question initiatives;
  2. Complete a board assurance framework at the outset which lists the key assurance and governance documents that will be available and when; and which clearly outlines key responsibilities and decision points (e.g. business case approval, monitoring and scrutiny; re-approval at key decision points; resource release);
  3. Formally adopt and operate a best practice project management methodology- such as PRINCE 2 - by experienced practitioners and include practices which embed a culture of psychological safety;
  4. Include clear contingencies in the financial planning and cost those to take account of the stage of the project; to counter optimism bias; and in line with the principles detailed in the UK Government's Green Book – Guidance and appraisal and evaluation';

5. Evolve the University's risk management to include risk management of strategic projects (and link this to the project management methodology);
6. Identify ways of working which are culturally relevant and sensitive at the outset of the project. This may include engaging a native speaker, in-depth intelligence gathering on all partners and time for engagement with partners. Costs need to be included in the financial plan.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL IN RESPONSE TO THE KOREA REPORT**

- 174 The Court received a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the governance of Transnational Education at the University. The paper followed on from the implementation of new and more formalised governance arrangements for the Qatar campus and the preceding external report on the Korea project. The Court noted that the paper sought to provide (i) a clear structure for the overall governance – from idea to inception to operationalisation – of current and future transnational initiatives and (ii) specifically to respond to recommendations made in the external report on the Korea project and to provide clear detail on what is expected in the formulation and approval of future transnational initiatives.
- 175 In addition to the measures outlined in the paper, the Court also noted that future transnational education projects would be subject to the revised arrangements for Project Management that had been agreed and considered separately by the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 176 In discussion, it was suggested that robust assessment of the priority of a project and the staff time required (including professional project management support) were vital lessons to learn and incorporate in the approval process for future TNE projects, particularly in a context where staff resource was finite. It was also suggested that further consideration be given to: clarifying the proposed project approval committee structure; to build in representation of External Relations and consultation with AUSA executive members; and that evaluating geopolitical risks be made more explicit.
- 177 The Court agreed to receive an updated paper and proposal at a future meeting.

#### **ABERDEEN 2040: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- 178 The Court received a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on proposals for strategic key performance indicators (KPIS) to support the delivery of Aberdeen 2040 together with further proposals for the measurement of performance at School level and Professional Services (where appropriate).
- 179 The Court noted that the proposed KPIS had been developed following consultation with the University community and were intended to operate over an initial five-year window. The proposals included establishing a single key performance indicator (KPI), where possible, for each of the 20 commitments made in Aberdeen 2040, to be supplemented by a composite league table measure, and performance indicators at School level, which focus primarily on Education and Research.
- 180 For 2020/21, however, the paper proposed that over the coming year, the University's focus be narrowed to nine commitments which were considered particularly pertinent in light of Covid-19. A one-year operational plan would be developed to manage this, with further work planned to establish exact specifications for all KPIs.
- 181 In discussion, it was suggested that the Court would find it helpful to see individual Schools performance against their targets as part of overall KPI reporting. It was also suggested that consideration be given to how the KPIS could include in other student diversity measures beyond those of SIMD 20.
- 182 Following discussion, the Court:

1. Approved the strategic KPIs proposed at University level to support delivery of Aberdeen 2040.
2. Approved the performance indicators proposed at School level.
3. Approve the initial approach proposed for implementing Aberdeen 2040 over 2020/21, in particular the focus on nine key commitments over that period in light of Covid-19.
4. Noted the outline governance arrangements proposed for managing Aberdeen 2040 and that PaRC and Court in September 2020 would receive an update on progress, including a one-year operational plan focused on the nine prioritised commitments, along with detailed specifications for each KPI.

#### POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT

- 183 The Court received and noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which provided a report on the key items of business discussed by the Policy and Resources Committee (PaRC) at its meeting on 19 June 2020 and those it had considered separately by circulation.

#### REPORTS FROM OTHER COURT COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES OF COURT AND SENATE

##### **AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

- 184 The Court noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) of the principal items of business considered by the Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting on 28 May 2020.
- 185 The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, changes to the Internal Audit Plan for 2020-21. The changes involved a reduction in audit days from 160 to 100 (with 10 contingency days) and a refocusing of reviews, to reflect the significant change in the way the University was working due to Covid-19 and the new risks this presented.

##### **RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE**

- 186 The Court noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) of the principal items of business considered by the Research Policy Committee at its meetings on 9 March and 11 June 2020.

##### **STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

- 187 The Court noted a report of (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) the key items of business that the Student Experience Committee had considered by circulation.

##### **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING**

- 188 The Court noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) of the principal items of business considered by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meetings on 28 April and 21 May 2020.

#### ROUTINE BUSINESS FOR APPROVAL

##### **KING'S COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

- 189 The Court noted an update (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the King's College Transformation Project which included the design proposals for the King's Quarter redevelopment for submission within the planning application (members of Court had also received a presentation on the design proposals prior to the meeting).
- 190 The Court:

1. Noted the current reported position for the programme and cost estimates at project level, which were within the £50million budgetary parameter set for the programme, along with plans to pause the programme once the planning application for each project has been concluded.
2. Approved the design proposals for the King's Quarter redevelopment, and the inclusion of these for submission within the planning application.
3. Noted the requirement for limited work to continue over the coming months, at least for King's Quarter, which would involve external contractors, notably the design team, up to the point of planning determination.
4. Noted that procurement of a design team for the programme for the detailed design phase on each project through to completion had been put on hold given that the programme will be paused.
5. Noted that the University would return to Court with any proposals to re-start the programme, if or when appropriate. Any future next steps will be contingent on the University's financial position, along with other key factors such as projected student numbers and re-assessment of the business case, in particular as a result of any impact from Covid-19.

#### **AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS RESERVED TO COURT**

- 191 The Court noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) setting out amendments to the Court's schedule of decisions that were reserved to it for discussion or decision. The Court approved amendments relating to:
1. The extension of current wording with regard to borrowing commitments;
  2. The addition of wording with regard to the sale of assets;
  3. The addition of wording with regard to the use of the bond funding.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF UCU NOMINATED MEMBER OF COURT**

- 192 The Court received a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the Appointment of the University and College Union (UCU) nominated member of Court. The Court noted that the UCU nomination and election process had been postponed to the Autumn due to COVID-19 and the period of office of the incumbent, Dr David Watts, was due to conclude on 31 July 2020. The UCU had, therefore, requested that Dr Watts' period of appointment by Court be extended to ensure there was no gap in the membership. The Court agreed to extend the appointment of Dr Watts to 31 October 2020.

#### **TRANSFER OF JAMES MCBEY PRINTS TO ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL**

- 193 The Court received a paper from the University's Advisory Group on Collections (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) proposing the transfer in title from the University to Aberdeen City Council of a collection of prints by James McBey. The Court noted the prints, which were on long-term loan to the Aberdeen Art Gallery, had been bequeathed to the University but it had been recently identified that the owner had done so on the mistaken understanding that the Art Gallery was part of the University.
- 194 The Court approved the proposed transfer of title, subject to a condition that should the City Council subsequently decide to dispose of the collection, the University would be given first option on ownership and at a no cost basis.

#### **SENATE REPORT**

- 195 The Court noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the principal items of business considered by Senate at its meeting on 13 May 2020.

- 196 The Court on the recommendation of the Senate approved the draft Resolution 'Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees' which enacted amendments recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee. The Court, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, also approved that the Resolution be passed forthwith so that the regulations could be applied in time for the new academic year 2020/21.

#### ROUTINE BUSINESS FOR INFORMATION

##### **COVID-19 RISK REGISTER**

- 197 The Court noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the strategic risks facing the University as a result of COVID-19. The paper also provided an update on the planned review of the University's risk framework to align with the new Aberdeen 2040 strategy. This included an externally facilitated workshop which had been delayed due to Covid-19 but was now scheduled to take place in the last quarter of 2020.
- 198 In discussion, it was clarified that the paper was a high level summary for Court and that the Audit Committee had considered a more detailed report, which included information with regard to risk owners. This would be made clearer in future reports. It was also confirmed that while the University was anticipating a potential cost overrun on the Science Teaching Hub as a result of Covid-19 it was not of the magnitude that had been suggested in discussion.

##### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT (MMR)**

- 199 The Court noted the Financial Management Reports for the period to May 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

##### **REPORT ON ENERGY TRANSITION ACTIVITIES**

- 200 The Court noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which detailed progress with plans to support Energy Transition, including the Centre for Energy Transition.

#### DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

- 201 The Court noted that the next scheduled meeting would be on Wednesday, 30 September 2020. [Note by Clerk: A further meeting of Court was subsequently scheduled for Friday 21 August 2020].

Note by Clerk: Due to Covid-19 restrictions a signed copy of the minutes could not be arranged. These are, however, confirmed by the Clerk as the agreed record of the meeting.

Date: 21 August 2020