

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 24 NOVEMBER 2020**

Present: Maggie Chapman (In the Chair), Colette Backwell, Eleanor Bentley, George Boyne, Nuala Booth, Owen Cox, Nick Edwards, Louise Henrard, David MacFarlane, Gary McRae, Helen Martin, Lyndsay Menzies, Martin Mills, Anne Minto, Iain Percival, Esther Robertson, Joachim Schaper, Jenny Shirreffs, Diane Skåtun, Lindsay Tibbetts, Neil Vargesson and Cecilia Wallback.

In attendance: David Beattie, Marion Campbell, Steve Cannon, Rob Donelson, Debbie Dyker, Jenny Fernandes, Karl Leydecker, Tracey Slaven, Alan Speight, Hulda Sveinsdottir (for Minutes 339 to 342), Ruth Taylor, Iain Torrance KCVO, Richard Wells and Bruce Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Keith Anderson and Iain Mackay.

WELCOMES AND RETIRING MEMBERS

307 The Court welcomed Nick Edwards, who was succeeding Jenny Fernandes as the Non-Academic Staff nominated member with effect from 1 November 2020, and congratulated Martin Mills on his re-election.

308 The Court welcomed Tracey Slaven, who was in attendance prior to taking up appointment as University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer from January 2021. The Court also noted its thanks to Steve Cannon, for his service as interim University Secretary over the past year.

309 The Court expressed its thanks to Esther Robertson who was stepping down from her role of Senior Governor on 31 December 2020.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND CONSIDERATION OF FORMAL BUSINESS  
AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

310 Lindsay Tibbetts declared an interest in the King's Transformation Projects as Deputy Head of the Business School.

311 The Court noted the standing reminder of the responsibilities of Court and those of members as charity trustees (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

CIRCULATION OF PAPERS

312 The Court noted that some papers had been circulated later than the agreed minimum period of seven days prior to the meeting. It agreed to record that this had been necessary to enable their consideration by either an extraordinary meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee or an extraordinary meeting of the Governance and Nominations Committee.

MINUTES

313 The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 were approved.

314 The Court noted the updated Action Log (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). It was confirmed that the Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities was to be reviewed by the Governance and Nominations Committee at its next routine meeting in February 2021.

## MATTERS ARISING

### DATA BREACH

- 315 The Court received an update from the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee and Chair of the University Development Trust regarding the Blackbaud data breach incident that occurred earlier in the year. The Court noted that Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) had confirmed that no action against the University or Development Trust was to be taken and that the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) had been advised of the breach and it considered the matter closed. The Court also noted that there had been no reports from alumni or donors of any fraudulent activity resulting from the data breach.

### GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- 316 The Court noted that the Interim Chair of the Governance and Nominations Committee had recently been advised of a governance matter by the Scottish Funding Council on which advice would be sought and thereafter considered by the Governance and Nominations Committee and reported to Court.

## ITEMS OF ROUTINE BUSINESS RAISED FOR DISCUSSION

### ANNUAL REPORT ON PROCUREMENT

- 317 The Court received and discussed the Annual Report on Procurement for 2019/20 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) together with an Addendum to the Annual Report on Procurement for 2018-19 to report retrospectively on an a non-compliant procurement process that had been identified. In discussion, it was suggested that the review that was being undertaken of the non-compliant procedure should include legal advice on the position. It was confirmed that the Court would receive a report of that review in due course.
- 318 Following discussion, the Court approved the Annual Report on Procurement for 2019/20 and the Addendum to the Annual Report for 2018-19.

### ANNUAL REVIEW OF MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

- 319 The Court received and discussed the University's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for 2021 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*), as required as part of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Human Trafficking Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015. The Court was advised that the University had received some additional comments on the draft statement which it would take into account and bring an updated version back to Court for approval by circulation.

### HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING REPORT

- 320 The Court received and noted a Report on Health, Safety and Wellbeing (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). In addition, it received an oral update on the work that had been ongoing to support students and staff in relation to the pandemic, in particular with regard to their wellbeing. It was recognised that it had been an extremely challenging time for students and for staff, many of whom were managing high workloads which, together with other issues, would be monitored further through the current staff survey. It was also noted that there had been an improvement in student retention, which was arguably surprising but suggested that the support measures and practices that had been put in place as a result of the pandemic might have produced innovations which could be learned from going forward.

### STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

- 321 The Court received and noted a report on the key items of business discussed by the Student Experience Committee at its meeting on 27 October 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). In discussion, the Chair of the Student Experience Committee noted on its behalf its thanks and appreciation for the extensive work that had been done during the year by staff and the Students' Association to support students. The Chair also highlighted the Committee's report on the Student Partnership Agreement.

## AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

- 322 The Court received and noted a report from the Audit and Risk Committee on the key items of business discussed at its meetings on 1 October and 3 November 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).
- 323 The Court was advised that the University had received some additional comments on a draft policy and procedure on public interest disclosure (whistleblowing) which it would take into account and bring an updated version back to Court for approval by circulation.

## ORAL REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

- 324 The Senior Governor highlighted a number of recent meetings she had attended on behalf of the University, including a report on the key issues that had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Committee of Scottish Chairs. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Senior Governor shared with Court her reasons for stepping down from the role early and her reflections on her experience as Senior Governor in which she emphasised, in particular, the importance of the Court maintaining a renewed commitment and focus on good governance across procedures, behaviours and culture.

## ORAL REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

- 325 The Court received an oral report from the Principal in which he gave an update on a range of issues, of which the following were noted.
- 326 The Principal highlighted the reports elsewhere on the agenda which showed that the pandemic had not impacted on the Autumn student intake as negatively as had been feared might be the case earlier in the year. It was noted, however, that the situation remained variable around the world in different sectors of student recruitment. While the position for the current financial year was expected to be manageable, in 2021/22 the University did not currently expect to have the benefit of the additional financial support from Scottish Government and the Development Trust that it had received this year, with potentially more significant increases in the costs of pension provision coming. To deliver a 'break-even' budget with these cost pressures would require unrealistic levels of student recruitment and, therefore, the University would need to plan to return to that position in a phased way over a longer time frame. More positively, however, the recent progress towards a vaccine and roll-out of mass testing provided grounds for optimism that the external environment would stabilise in the course of 2021.
- 327 The Principal reported that there were several reviews related to the higher education sector underway either within Scotland or across the UK, including the SFC's review of the sector which Court was to discuss separately on the agenda and another regarding the admissions system which had the potential to result in significant change.

## FINANCE, STUDENT NUMBERS AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT

### BUDGET REFORECAST

- 328 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which provided an updated budget reforecast for 2020/21 following the Autumn intake of students, reforecast budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and reported on the resulting updated cash flow and covenant implications.

### 2020/21

- 329 The Court noted that the Autumn student numbers had been much more positive than any of the scenarios presented to Court in June, resulting in a revised forecast of an underlying deficit of £3.1 Million for 2020/21. This translated into a significantly more favourable operating cash balance (excluding bond funding) which was now forecast to fall from £43.5 Million at 1 August 2020 to £35 Million at 31 July 2021, compared to the previous forecast fall in cash balances to £4.8 Million as at 31 July 2021 under Scenario 2 from earlier in the year. However, due to uncertainty around January student intakes and

accommodation uptake rates, a sensitivity analysis had been completed which noted that that the 2020/21 position could range from a deficit of £5.2 Million to a surplus of £1 Million.

- 330 In discussion, it was noted that under this reforecast, the University's external Lenders' and bank covenants would be met. The Court also noted, however, that the sensitivity analysis on the 2020/21 figures showed that in the 'downside' scenario, the University would be very close to the tipping point where the debt servicing covenant was not met. Whilst the gearing covenant would be met in 2019/20, the Court was reminded that in the future this could be significantly impacted by the ongoing USS valuation. Accordingly, whilst the reforecast results were positive, there would not be a general reinstatement of cuts made to operating budgets and tight control would be maintained on staffing costs. It was suggested it would be helpful to build the reasons for this into communications with the wider University community.

#### *2021/22 and 2022/23*

- 331 The paper set out the high level reforecast of the budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23. This showed a small increase from the previous forecast deficit in 2021/22 (rising to £6.6 Million) where the University no longer had access to circa £10 Million of one-off funding and had set aside higher provisions for pension costs, with the aim of returning in 2022/23 to a 'break-even' budget.

- 332 Following discussion, the Court:

1. noted that the reforecast, cash modelling and sensitivity analysis demonstrated that the University is a going concern for at least 12 months from February 2021 and that the financial statements could be prepared and signed on the going concern basis, subject to External Audit review and further consideration by both the Audit and Risk Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee (consideration would be given as to whether, if appropriate, this could be done through a joint meeting).
2. that the Audit and Risk Committee in January and thereafter Court should receive a bridging analysis on the cash position (including potential land sales) and a report on the University's internal covenants.
3. noted that under the University's formal agreement with the Trade Unions, where the 2020/21 deficit is forecast to be below £5 Million the incremental progression for staff salaries will be reinstated, subject to covenant compliance (estimated cost of £1.4M).
4. Agreed to open discussions with the University's Lenders to propose a relatively minor easing of the debt service covenant to provide additional financial headroom.
5. Agreed that as capital expenditure does not have an immediate impact upon covenants, the University should set aside £1M capital to invest in physical and digital infrastructure.
6. Agreed that based on current projections, to maintain the existing strategy to repay the first £10 Million of the Barclays Loan in September 2021 and that no further borrowing is required at the current time.
7. Agreed that the University should prepare a budget in Spring 2021 which returns to a break-even position by 2022/23.

#### **STUDENT POPULATION PLANNING AND NEW STUDENT INTAKE 2020/21**

- 333 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which summarised the overall student population (non-controlled and controlled) in 2020/21 (as at October 2020) with commentary on performance against targets and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) conditions of grant. This showed that:

- The University's student population had contracted by 2.4%, moving from 13,413 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in October 2019/20 to 13,091 FTE in October 2020 as a result of the pandemic. However, the population was forecast to reach 13,918 FTE by the end of the academic year.

- The population was projected to exceed the revised population targets set for the full academic year by 19.1%.
- There had been significant population growth in the TNE and Online populations compared to last year, along with increases in Home/EU populations at PGT and PGR level and in International UG student populations.
- The University had met targets for all the SFC Controlled populations, except for BMus Education. Discussions with the School of LLMVC on actions to rectify the ongoing under-recruitment to controlled places would be undertaken.

334 In discussion, the Court was advised of the process for determining with Heads of School the level of staffing resource they would require to meet changes in the student population and that longer-term project was underway to develop an institution wide workload modelling system.

#### **KING'S TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS**

335 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which revisited the underlying rationale behind the King's Transformation projects to be financed from the bond investment funds and which set out recommendations on the way forward to enable the projects to recommence having been paused after the outbreak of Covid-19.

336 In discussion, it was suggested that the stated Return on Investment (ROI) Discount Rate might be low and it was agreed that a further sensitivity analysis using alternative discount rates would be provided to Court members by circulation. The Court was assured that the level of contingency for the project was considered to be appropriate but given the uncertainties posed by Covid-19 and Brexit, would be monitored. It was confirmed that the University was committed to the projects remaining in the budget envelope and to progressing them on the basis that no further funding would be available.

337 The Court also discussed whether the current review by SFC of the sector might have implications for the projects, in particular, the Business School. It was noted that Brexit, USS and potentially an independence referendum could also change the strategic context for the projects in the longer-term. It was equally noted, however, that the success of the Business School and student recruitment linked to it, were key components of the Court's financial strategy. It was suggested that it would be helpful for Court to receive a presentation from the new Head of the Business School on its future plans.

338 The Court:

1. Noted that the fundamental rationale for both the projects remained intact; student demand continued to remain strong; the business case provided a positive return and the project design had the flexibility to accommodate changes to future working practices.
2. Agreed that naming opportunities for the projects be actively progressed with the indicative financial values as set out in the paper but also agreed that this potential income would not be included within the University's financial planning, but could release resources for other projects if realised. It was further noted that the Director of Advancement was progressing potential prospects for the naming of the Business School.
3. Agreed that the two projects would now be progressed independently, each with its own Project Board and budget, reporting to the Estates Committee.
4. Noted that the procurement of separate design teams for both projects was underway.

5. Approved that a comprehensive exercise be completed to revisit the procurement route for the build phase of both projects and that a recommendation then be made by the Project Boards to the Estates Committee and to SMT and thereafter to P&RC for final approval. It further approved a recommendation that this exercise be supported by a construction expert from outwith the University.
6. Noted the current cost plan, allowances for inflation and contingencies, and that this cost plan will be updated as the projects progress, as a key risk to the projects, with the unknown impact of Covid-19 and construction inflation.
7. Noted the current project risks and that these risks will continue to be defined and managed by the Project Boards.
8. Noted that further Court approval will be required following the outcome of the procurement of both projects and prior to the commencement of construction when costs were known and financial risks fully identified.
9. Noted that lessons learned from the Internal Audits of Procurement and Project Management had shaped the recommendations in the paper and that the delivery of the projects will benefit further from the findings of the Estates Review Group, whose work was ongoing. The Court further noted, following discussion, that it would wish to be assured regarding the procurement and project management procedures for the projects before decision points of 'no return' were taken.
10. Noted that further information on alternative ROI discount rates would be provided to Court by circulation.

#### SFC REVIEW OF COHERENT PROVISION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 339 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which reported on the findings of Phase 1 of the SFC's review of coherent provision and the sustainability of colleges and universities. The paper highlighted the key points arising from the review to date and provided an overview of the University's submission to the Phase 1 consultation, with Phase 2 of the review expected to be completed by SFC in February 2021, with the third and final phase due to be completed in early summer 2021.
- 340 The Court noted that there were some significant risks to the sector and therefore the University from the review and the paper highlighted a number of these including:
- The proposals around research funding;
  - The absence of proposals to address the underfunding of teaching.
  - The lack of commentary on the global competitiveness of Scotland's research-intensive universities which might signal a move away from a global perspective to a more regional role for the sector.
- 341 In discussion, it was noted that there was also a risk should the review move towards equalising the 'unit of resource' for higher education with further education. A number of members noted their view that the review's objective could be to create greater collaboration, potentially focused on a regional agenda, within higher education and between further and higher education, and that rationalisation of the funding model might be the stimulus to achieve this, which would have significant implications for the University. This was likely to also include a focus on where there was overlap and duplication between further and higher education and possibly the S5/6 level of secondary school education. The need to engage with and influence the opportunities and risks presented by the review was noted.
- 342 The Court noted the review and the University's response.

## GOVERNANCE

### GOVERNANCE REVIEW

- 346 The Court received and considered a report of the review of governance in final form prior to its consideration by the external facilitator (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The report had been updated since it was first received in draft form by Court in August 2020 to take account of feedback and comments received at that meeting and subsequently. The review's recommendations (together with a mapping of how the findings of the OSCR and SFC reviews were being addressed) were also enclosed, having been considered further by Court in September 2020 and by the Governance and Nominations Committee in November 2020.
- 347 In discussion, it was noted a minor amendment to reflect the status of the draft severance policy would be made and that some amendments to the timeframe for implementation of the recommendations had been made given that that the new University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer would be taking up post in January 2021. In discussion, it was suggested that given the review's comments on the importance of behaviours and cultures, rather than procedures alone, that following the external review, it would be helpful for Court to discuss governance over an extended meeting or seminar and that this might be externally facilitated.
- 348 The Court:
1. noted and welcomed the final report of the review of governance and that it would now be referred to the external facilitator, as required by the SFC and OSCR, to consider;
  2. agreed that it should hold an extended meeting/seminar specifically to discuss governance following the conclusion of the external review.

### Severance Policy

- 349 The Court received a paper and proposal for a draft Severance Policy (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The paper set out the requirements of the SFC's Financial Memorandum and the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance with regard to severance payments. The paper reminded Court, in particular, of the findings of the SFC's Review of the Payments to the Former Principal with regard to severance policies and how the recommendations of the Working Group established by the Court to consider the implications and lessons learned arising from the SFC review (and the subsequent OSCR review) had been addressed in the proposed draft.
- 350 The Court was advised that some further comments and suggestions for the content of the draft policy had been received and that these would be considered and the policy brought back to Court for approval by circulation, subject to any further comments received from the meeting. It was noted that the draft policy required the University's internal auditors to undertake regular review of the operation of the policy and that this would be built into the Internal Audit Plan.
- 351 In discussion, it was noted that the Director of People would clarify if severance payments made during the course of the last financial year related to any members of the Senior Management Team and if these had been agreed by the Remuneration Committee and if these required to be disclosed in the annual accounts. It was noted that the policy had not been in place at the point where the contractual terms for the new University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer had been agreed.
- 352 The Court noted that the draft policy would be updated and brought back for approval by circulation.

## STRATEGY, RISK MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

### RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- 353 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the management of strategic risks at institutional level in 2020 and the ongoing review of the University's risk management processes.
- 354 The Court noted the update given on the management of strategic risks and the report of progress to date and next steps in the ongoing review of the University's risk management arrangements. Members of Court would also be invited to express an interest in participating in a workshop on the development of the new framework that would take place in December 2020.

### STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20 FINAL REPORT

- 356 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the University's performance against the key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that underpinned its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The paper also reported on the annual performance in the final year of the plan, 2019-20, against these metrics which were being reported on for the final time following the approval of the new Aberdeen 2040 Strategy.

### LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE

- 357 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the University's league table results published in 2020 in the five key league tables monitored by the University: The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide, the Guardian University Guide and the Complete University Guide along with the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) and the QS World University Rankings.
- 358 In discussion, the Court was reminded that the University would be reviewing its League Table targets for 2040 given the progress and success that had been achieved in most of the five rankings. It was also noted that the University had increased its efforts to promote awareness of these successes with internal and external stakeholders and would continue to look at new ways to do this, including with alumni, donors and supporters of the University.

### UPDATE ON BREXIT

- 359 The Court received and considered a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on activities in place to manage the impact of Brexit on the University as the transition period approaches its end on 31 December 2020. The paper noted that, as it was unclear whether a deal would be agreed with the EU, the full scale of the impact on the university sector was not known. The Scottish Government had confirmed that EU students would no longer qualify for free tuition fee funding from September 2021 onwards, but clarity was awaited on whether funding to Scottish universities would be reduced.
- 360 The Court noted that should the transition period end without a deal agreed:
- There would not be an immediate impact on research or student and staff mobility and that the University continued to engage closely with European partners.
  - Changes to immigration, student fee status and qualifications frameworks were being managed through proactive communications with staff and students.
  - Access to cloud services hosted in Europe could be disrupted and the University continues to evaluate the risk to access.
  - The University's EU population had decreased by approximately 700 FTE in the last three years. Risks to tuition fee income and the potential impact on individual disciplines continued to be monitored and a new EU scholarship scheme was under consideration.

## SENIOR GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT AND INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

### SENIOR GOVERNOR: INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

- 361 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the interim arrangements for the leadership of the Court pending the appointment of the next Senior Governor.
- 362 The paper reminded Court, that it did not have a formal position of deputy Senior Governor but that the role of the Senior Independent Member did include deputising for the Senior Governor where required.
- 363 The Court noted that the Governance and Nominations Committee at its meeting of 12 November had asked the Interim University Secretary to write to all independent members to invite any expressions of interest in the role of interim Senior Governor while also referring to the willingness of the Senior Independent Member to undertake the role if required. Any expressions of interest were to be referred to the Committee to consider before making a recommendation to Court. As no other expressions of interest were received, the Committee had confirmed by circulation a recommendation to Court for the appointment of Nuala Booth. The report to Court noted that if that recommendation was approved, the Court would then need to appoint an interim Senior Independent Member with effect from 1 January to ensure an appropriate governance separation of the two respective roles.
- 364 The Court:
1. Approved, on the recommendation of the Committee, the appointment of Nuala Booth as interim Senior Governor with effect from 1 January 2021 until a substantive appointment to the position of Senior Governor is made;
  2. Noted that expressions of interest would now be sought from independent members to undertake the role of Senior Independent Member on an interim basis and referred to Court for decision by circulation.

### SENIOR GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT AND ELECTION PROCESS

- 365 The Court received and discussed a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the recruitment and election process for the appointment of the next Senior Governor. The paper provided a report on the Governance and Nominations Committee's consideration of the item and included:
- an outline of the key stages of the process required under the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act (HEGSA) and the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance;
  - an overview of how the 2018/19 process was undertaken, timeframe, and the lessons learned from it;
  - the role description, person eligibility and criteria, time commitment and remuneration offered in the 2018/19 process;
  - the 2018/19 election rules;
  - proposed next steps and recommendations to Court to enable the process to move forward, including a recommendation for the establishment of the committee required by the legislation to oversee the process on behalf of Court and the authority to be delegated to it to enable the recruitment campaign to be taken forward.
- 366 In discussion, it was suggested that the University's Race Equality Group be engaged in the process but noted that the issue of diversity of candidates had been identified as a priority by the Governance and Nominations Committee. It was also suggested that the Appointment Committee consider making former candidates in the 2018/19 process and members of Court who had retired subsequently aware of the vacancy

367 Following discussion, the Court:

1. Approved, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, the establishment of an Appointment Committee, its terms of reference and delegated authority and composition of eleven members;
2. Authorised the Governance and Nominations Committee to populate the membership of the Appointment Committee;
3. Approved, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, that the recruitment phase of the process be supported by professional search consultants to be appointed by the Appointment Committee subject to procurement requirements;
4. Noted that the Remuneration Committee would be invited to consider the remuneration to be offered for the position and the time commitment and report back to Court with recommendations for approval.

#### UPDATE ON REF PREPARATIONS

- 368 The Court received and noted an update (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the institutional preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. The paper reported on appointments to the REF Steering Group, the development of the REF Code of Practice and provided updates on preparations against all the main submission components of the REF: Staff Numbers; Outputs; Impact; Metrics; Environment; and Staff Circumstances.
- 369 In discussion, it was noted how helpful the introduction of staff to assist with REF impact case studies had been and an undertaking was given to retain staffing support after REF 2021 to help embed impact activities across the academic community.

#### ROUTINE BUSINESS FOR APPROVAL

##### **STRATEGIC FINANCIAL PLANNING FORECAST REPORT TO SFC**

- 370 The Court received a revised Strategic Plan Forecast (SPF) for the period 2019-20 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which had been requested from the University by the SFC on 10 November 2020.
- 371 The Court agreed to:
1. Approve the revised Strategic Plan Forecast for the period 2019-20 to 2020-21.
  2. Note that the revised forecast for 19-20 was based on the University's draft statutory accounts and the revised forecast for 20-21 is based on the reforecast budget paper (Minutes 328-332 refer).

##### **SENATE REPORT**

- 372 The Court received a report from Senate (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the main items of business, considered at meetings held on 14 September, 9 and 21 October 2020.

##### *Rectorial Election*

- 373 The Court, on the recommendation of the Senate, approved a proposal that the next Rectorial election take place between Tuesday 23 February 2021 and Thursday 25 February 2021.

#### ROUTINE BUSINESS FOR INFORMATION

##### **REVIEW OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT CYCLE SEPTEMBER 2020**

- 374 The Court received and noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on the activities undertaken between March – September 2020 to support student recruitment.

## **SFC OUTCOME AGREEMENT – SELF EVALUATION REPORT**

- 375 The Court received and noted the University's Self-Evaluation of institutional performance in 2019/20 which had been approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 27 October 2020 and submitted to the SFC on 31 October 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON REDUNDANCY ACTIVITIES**

- 376 The Court received and noted the Annual Report on Redundancy Activities (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which provided an overview and update on the management of redundancy activities undertaken by Human Resources for the period of 1 December 2019 to 30 November 2020.

## **DECISIONS MADE BY CIRCULATION**

- 377 The Court received and noted a report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) on decisions made by circulation since the last meeting of Court. It was noted that one decision requiring the approval of Court was made by circulation during that time being the appointment of the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer. The Court formally recorded its decision to appoint Tracey Slaven as University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer from January 2021.

## **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT**

- 378 The Court received and noted a report on the key items of business discussed by the Policy and Resource Committee at its meetings on 27 October and 17 November 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

## **COMPOSITE REPORT FROM COURT COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES OF COURT AND SENATE**

## **GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

- 379 The Court received and noted a report on the key items of business discussed by the Governance and Nominations Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The report noted that the Committee had given initial consideration to the recruitment to three vacancies for independent members of Court – one current vacancy and two further vacancies arising by July 2021 and September 2021 respectively – and would bring forward more detailed proposals to the Court.
- 380 The Court approved the Committee's recommendations on the following:
- (a) An addition to the Committee's remit and terms of reference, with regard to its role in considering governance risks.
  - (b) Appointments to two vacancies for independent members on sub-committees, being:
    - (i) to appoint with immediate effect Colette Backwell to a vacancy for an independent member on the Governance and Nominations Committee;
    - (ii) to appoint with immediate effect Keith Anderson to a vacancy for an independent member on the Remuneration Committee.

- 381 The Court also received and noted a report for information on the key items of business discussed by the Governance and Nominations Committee at its meeting on 12 November 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) these being the Interim Arrangements for the Leadership of Court, the Senior Governor Recruitment and Election Process, and an additional item of business that was deferred to a future meeting.

## **RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE**

- 382 The Court received and noted a report on the key items of business discussed by the Research Policy Committee at its meeting on 2 November 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- 383 The Court received and noted a report on the key items of business discussed by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meetings on 7 and 14 October 2020 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 384 The Court noted that an additional meeting to consider the Annual Report and Accounts will be proposed for a date in the second half of February 2021, with the next scheduled meeting being 23 March 2021 9am to 3pm.

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: 23 February 2020