

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 10 February 2004

Present: Rector, Principal, Mr A Amoore, Professor P Beaumont, Lady Catto, Dr A Dawson, Dr N Dower, Ms J Duncan, Professor G Graham, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Councillor P Johnston, Mr J Leiper, Dr M Mackie, Mr A Mair, Dr G Roberts, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, Mr G Stevenson, Councillor J Stewart, Mr S Styles, with Professor D Houlihan, Professor B MacGregor, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Dr P Murray, Mrs L Manders and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Edge, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Mr D Marr, Dr N Milne, Professor W Cairns Smith and Professor Rodger.

MINUTES

- 148 The minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2003 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 149 The Principal informed the Court that early indications suggested that the numbers of undergraduate applications for entry in 2004/05 in general were good but there were some areas of concern where it would be particularly important to ensure that applications were turned into entrants. The number of applications from overseas students was expected to increase significantly.
- 150 The Principal added that following the SHEFC Institutional visit of December 2003 the University was in discussion with officers from the Funding Council in relation to the minute. Once this was completed the University expected to be able to take formal feedback from SHEFC to the Court.
- 151 The Principal noted that the Court was to receive an update on the restructuring process (*See Minute 160*). He advised Court that parallel to the operation of a scheme for voluntary severance and early retirement, the process of recruitment was also well underway and several high calibre senior appointments were close to being made.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

**Joint Planning Finance and Estates Committee (27.1.04)**

*Strategic and Operational Planning*

- 152 Professor Sewel introduced to the Court the preliminary draft Strategic Plan. The Court noted that the process for developing the Plan aimed to ensure greater involvement of staff with its formulation and to produce a document that would both meet SHEFC requirements and engage the wider community.
- 153 A number of members of Court commented on it. Professor Sewel agreed to take these into account as the Plan developed. Court would see a further draft at a later stage.
- 154 The Court approved the planning process as outlined in the paper.

*Student Accommodation*

- 155 Professor Sewel presented recommendations from the Joint Planning Finance & Estates Committee for the development of the Dunbar site by a third party for the purposes of student residential accommodation.

- 156 The proposals were: -
- (i) the long-term lease or sale (with right to buy back) of the Dunbar site for student residential accommodation;
  - (ii) the advertisement of the availability of the Dunbar site in the Official Journal of the European Communities (OJEC). As part of this process, the University would give a commitment to the successful bidder, for a five-year period in the first instance with an option to renew;
  - (iii) the archaeological survey of the site as identified by the preliminary survey carried out in January 2002.
- 157 It was recognised that there was a need to ensure that whatever new student residential accommodation was developed that the University take steps to ensure the adequate provision of pastoral and welfare support for students.

158 The Court approved the proposals.

*Treasury Management Policy*

- 159 The Court was informed that due to an error the Treasury Management Policy, as circulated, was incomplete. It was agreed that the paper would be brought back to the next Court for approval.

RESTRUCTURING UPDATE

- 160 The Court received a paper updating members on the progress of the restructuring scheme.
- 161 The Court was informed that by 9th February 2004 220 members of staff had lodged formal applications for consideration by the Committee on Restructuring, which had approved 143 of these. Some £2.9 million had so far been allocated and Heads of College were now in the process of assessing the effects against College strategies before determining requirements for the next phase of restructuring.
- 162 The Principal noted that it was important to recognise that staff who would leave under the scheme had made considerable contributions to the University. (*See Min 176 below*)

TUITION FEES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

- 163 Mr Cannon introduced a paper which summarised the main proposals of the English Higher Education Bill and set out comparisons to the system in Scotland. The Court was informed that the Scottish Executive was expected to publish the outcome of the third phase of the Review of Higher Education in Scotland in the next month.
- 164 He noted that there was disagreement on the levels of funding advantage enjoyed by the Scottish system. The Executive had suggested that around 20% more funding was going into higher education in Scotland, while Universities Scotland argued that it was closer to 3.5%. There was a likelihood, that some additional funding would come to the Executive under the terms of the Barnett Formula. It was not certain, however, that this would go to higher education in its entirety.
- 165 It was noted that recent press reports had highlighted the investment needs in the capital estate of universities. Mr Donaldson explained that he had been involved in discussions with representatives of SHEFC and other universities to identify the case for more investment. At present around 48% of the University's estate was considered to be of 'A' standard (As New) or 'B' standard (Operationally Sound or with only minor deterioration). Presently, only 8 out of 18 institutions met the benchmark target of 70% of their estate being condition 'A or B'.

## PAY AWARD

- 166 The Court received a copy of the letter sent to all members to staff outlining the 2003/05 national pay offer. Mrs Inglis explained that the award had already been implemented for support staff, following acceptance of the offer and associated Framework Agreement by their Trades Unions at national level.
- 167 The Framework Agreement covered a number of issues related to terms and conditions of employment. The Association of University Teachers (AUT), the Trade Union representing non-clinical academic and academic-related staff considered the Framework Agreement unacceptable in its current form and was balloting its members with a view to taking industrial action. (See *Min 185 below*)

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS

- 168 The Court homologated the decision of the Senior Lay Member and the Principal that Professor S D Logan, currently Vice-Principal and Head of College of Life Sciences and Medicine, be appointed Senior Vice-Principal for an initial period of three years from 1 August 2004, following the retirement of Professor The Lord Sewel.
- 169 The Court received a further recommendation from the Principal that
- (i) Professor I R Torrance be appointed Vice-Principal and Regent;
  - (ii) Professor C Gane be appointed Vice-Principal (Library and Information Services)
- for initial periods of three years commencing 1 August 2004. These appointments would be at the rate of 0.5 Full-Time Equivalent.
- 170 Mr Cannon explained that the post of University Regent would carry with it responsibility for the pastoral care and welfare support of students. The post of a Vice-Principal for Library and Information Services would put in place a reporting structure that was appropriate for a service that was of particular importance to the academic community.

## SENATE REPORT

*Policies and Guidance Notes on Academic Appeals, Student Complaints and Termination of Studies or Candidature for an Award*

- 171 The Court approved revised Policies and Guidance Notes in regard to Academic Appeals, Student Complaints and Termination of Studies or Candidature for an Award.

*Draft Resolution No 2004  
[Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees]*

- 172 The Court received the draft Resolution No of 2004 [Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees] from the Senate and decided to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966. The Resolution enacted the changes in Degree Regulations recommended by the Academic Standards Committees since March 2003.

## SPORTS FACILITIES: KEITH PARK

- 173 The Court homologated a decision taken on its behalf by the Principal, Senior Lay Member and Convener of the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee, for the purchase of Keith Park at a total cost of £870,000 in order to enhance the current student sporting facilities. It was noted that borrowing might be required to finance this purchase in the next financial year, subject to the revised cash-flow position and the future development of sporting facilities around the King's College Campus. (See *Min 187 below*).

JOINT PLANNING FINANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE  
MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

*Resource Allocation Assumptions*

- 174 The Court noted that the Committee had considered the resource allocation assumptions which would form the basis of the Resource Allocation Model and College budgets for the period 2004/05 to 2006/07. These were based on the best information currently available and would be updated to reflect any changes as they occurred.

*Library Project*

- 175 The Court noted that the Committee had received a presentation regarding issues of space, access and security currently facing the Queen Mother Library and Special Collections.

*Restructuring*

- 176 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on applications to the restructuring fund as at 27 January 2004. (*See Mins 160-162 above*)

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee

- 177 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee that, in general, institutional capital projects were proceeding as per budget, with some exceptions, due to budget phasing and the timing of invoices. The annual recurrent programme was slightly below budget for the year to date.
- 178 The Court noted that the Committee had approved in-year adjustments to the Capital Programme 2003/04 which had no net effect on the level of funding which had been approved previously.
- 179 The Court noted that the Committee had received progress reports from a range of Project Boards including Marischal College; Education Relocation; Sports Facilities; Student Accommodation; Institute of Applied Health Sciences (IAHS); IAHS Clinical Research Facility; Cruickshank and Zoology Buildings; Old Aberdeen Heating Station Replacement; Old Aberdeen Town House and the recently opened Health Centre.

*Financial Reports 2003/04*

- 180 The Court noted that the Committee had received the management accounts for the five months to 31 December 2003, which showed an historical cost deficit of £2.916 million, against a budgeted deficit of £2.075 million. The deficit to date was principally due to the timing of the restructuring expenditure, which would be largely committed before 31 January 2004, whilst related savings would not be generated for some time.

*Cash Flow Analysis*

- 181 The Court noted that the Committee had received a cash flow analysis for the period to 31 July 2007.

*Cash Investments*

- 182 The Court noted that the Committee had considered a report on cash balances, interest on cash and loan finance during the year to 31 July 2003. The Committee approved the proposal that the Finance Section continue to monitor the cash position to ensure the best rate of return.

*Roll Forward of Year end Balances 2002/03*

- 183 The Court noted that core budgets across the University at 31 July 2003 were underspent by £1.648 million. The Court also noted that the Committee had approved the roll forward of £745,000 for capital expenditure projects in the Colleges and Administration.

*Debtors' Report*

- 184 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on current debtors and debt-recovery procedures.

*2003/05 National Pay Offer*

- 185 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on the 2003/05 National Pay Offer comprising a two-year pay deal and Framework Agreement on pay and related matters. (See *Mins*166-167 above)

*Admissions Report 2004*

- 186 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on home and overseas undergraduate applications for 2004 entry.

*Keith Park*

- 187 The Court noted that approval had been given on its behalf for the purchase of Keith Park sports ground. (See *Min* 173 above)

*UASLAS Actuarial Valuation*

- 188 The Court noted that the Committee had received for information a summary of the University of Aberdeen Superannuation & Life Assurance Scheme Actuarial Valuation at 1 August 2002, which had been prepared and signed in accordance with the relevant legislation.

## SENATE REPORT MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

*Sustainability Policy*

- 189 The Court noted that Senate, for its part, had approved the University's Sustainability Policy, which had been approved by Court at its meeting on 16 December 2003.

## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE STUDENT COMPLAINTS CONSULTATION

- 190 The Court received and noted the Scottish Executive Consultation and new system for Student Complaints.

## PAPERS FOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

- 191 The Court noted that copies of the following papers were available on request from the Court & Planning Office (ext 2093)
- (i) STRATEGIC TRANSFER OF FUNDED STUDENT PLACES: SHEFC response to University's request for the strategic transfer of funded student places, dated 19 December 2003.
  - (ii) UCEA UPDATE 03/61: Advertisement of two forthcoming seminars on the personal responsibilities of Vice-Chancellors/Principals, Chairs of Governing Bodies and other Senior Management for health and safety issues on 24 February and 8 March 2004, dated 16 December 2003.

- (iii) SCIENCE RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND (SRIF): Letter from SHEFC, dated 18 December 2003, setting out new arrangements for the payment of the remainder of SRIF1 funds, the initial payment arrangements for SRIF2, and confirmation of the Council's position in respect of allowing institutions to use SRIF1 funds on SRIF2 projects.
- (iv) DIRECTOR OF FUNDING: Announcement of appointment of Riona Bell as Director of Funding for the Scottish Funding Councils for Further & Higher Education, dated 11 December 2003.
- (v) UCEA UPDATE 04/06: Guidance from UCEA on AUT Dispute, dated 14 January 2004.