

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 12 September 2006

Present: Dr A Mair (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amoore, Professor P Beaumont, Mr T Brotherstone, Lady Catto, Ms J Craw, Sir D Cruickshank, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Professor D Houlihan, Councillor P Johnston, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Ms C Macaslan, Dr M Mackie, Mr R Miller, Mr M Moir, Mr R Ruddiman, Professor C Secombes, Councillor J Stewart, Mr S Styles, with Professor C Gane, Professor N Haites, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Rodger, 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 Professor I Booth, the Rector, Mr J Leiper, and Mrs M Ross.

Dr Mair welcomed Mr Richard Miller to his first meeting as President of the Students' Association and Ms Jacquelyn Craw to her first meeting as a General Council Assessor.

MINUTES

- 1 The Minutes of meeting held on 27 June 2006 were approved.

ROWETT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

- 2 Mr Cannon introduced a paper that set out a possible basis for a merger between the University and the Rowett Research Institute. The paper summarised the due diligence work undertaken to date and possible models of collaboration considered, before recommending that, the two institutions agree, in principle, to pursue a full merger and to consult widely, with staff, students, and other stakeholders on this option.
- 3 In discussion, it was noted that there remained a number of issues to address further, including pension provision and the continuation of core funding to the Rowett provided by the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department. It was also agreed that there should be some revision of the wording of certain aspects of the document. With respect to the suggested governance arrangements, should they be agreed by the Rowett, it was anticipated that the Chairman of the Rowett would become a co-opted member of the Court for a fixed-term appointment. The Court was also informed that should a merger take place, the timing was such that it was unlikely that Rowett staff would be eligible for inclusion in the next Research Assessment Exercise.
- 4 The Court was invited to agree a recommendation that the two institutions agree, in principle, to pursue a full merger and to consult widely, with staff, students, and other stakeholders on this option.

- 5 The Court agreed the recommendation.

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE SUB-COMMITTEE

- 6 Mr Moir introduced a report from the Capital Expenditure sub-Committee, as under:

*Library Project*

- 7 The Court noted a progress report on the Library Project and that the Design Team and the University were continuing to review proposals with a view to securing the objectives of the brief within the agreed budget. The Court noted that it would receive an update at its next meeting.

*Regional Sports Facilities*

- 8 The Court noted a progress report on the Regional Sports Facility Project. A survey had reported adverse ground conditions across the proposed site of the building. The Joint University and City Council Project Board had considered three options:

Option 1

Proceed with the original design, re-use as much material as possible on site and remove the remainder. Estimated cost £3.5 million.

Option 2

Raise the whole building by 0.5m-0.75m, thus reducing the need for excavation and associated costs. Planners had expressed concern over any increase in the building height. One possible solution would be to lower some internal roof heights. This approach would require limited redesign, mainly to the reception area and access routes and would therefore result in minimal delay to the programme. Estimated cost £1.45 million.

Option 3

Raise all parts of the building except the football area. Although this option was likely to be less contentious with the planners than Option 2, it would present significant design challenges. Additional design time, associated building costs and construction inflation would result in an estimated cost of £1.8 million.

- 9 The Court was invited to approve Option 2 and an increase of up to £1.45 million in the University's capital contribution to the project, half of which would be met by additional annual revenue contributions from Aberdeen City Council.

- 10 The Court approved the recommendation.

*Matthew Hay Project*

- 11 The Court noted a progress report on the Matthew Hay Project for which a planning application had been lodged. The report recommended that approval be given to a request for funding of £107k from the University.

- 12 The Court approved the recommendation.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO SFC REVIEW OF  
TEACHING FUNDING METHODOLOGIES

- 13 Professor Logan introduced a paper detailing a draft institutional response to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) consultation on its review of teaching funding methodologies. The paper also included the Universities Scotland response to the consultation.

- 14 The Court approved the draft response.

CONSULTATION ON APPLICATION FOR UNIVERSITY TITLE BY  
QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

- 15 Mr Cannon presented a consultation from the Scottish Executive requesting comments on the application for University Title by Queen Margaret University College (QMUC). This was distinct from a consultation conducted by QMUC on the issue of the name given to the new institution, should its application be approved by the Privy Council (*Minute 24 refers*).

- 16 In discussion, it was noted that the University had previously, via Universities Scotland, intimated its support for the application.

- 17 The Court agreed that the University should reaffirm its support for the application.

### CODE OF PRACTICE ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 18 The Court received a draft Code of Practice on Conflicts of Interest which sought to provide guidelines to help individuals assess whether or not proposed activities could cause a conflict of interest. The Code also outlined a procedure for disclosure of any perceived potential conflict and proposed the establishment of a Committee on Conflicts of Interest.
- 19 The Court approved the Code of Practice on Conflicts of Interest and the establishment of a Committee on Conflicts of Interest, as set out in the paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

### REGIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES - DEVELOPMENT OF SWIMMING FACILITIES

- 20 The Court received a paper which set out options for the development of enhanced swimming facilities for the University. The paper identified three initial options for consideration:
- (a) That the University build a stand-alone 25 metre, 6 or 8 lane pool wholly owned and utilised by the University although there were significant limitations on available appropriate site.
  - (b) That the University partner with the Council to contribute towards the cost of the development of a 50m pool complex on the site of the current Linkfield swimming pool
  - (c) That the University partner with the Council to develop and share the costs of the current 25m pool on the Linkfield site
- 21 The Court approved a maximum of £50,000 as a contribution to the development proposal for a 50 metre pool complex on the Linkfield site and also as funding for a full appraisal on all options for University swimming provision. This would be conditional on the Scottish Executive and Aberdeen City Council committing at least a similar level of funding.

### MATTERS FOR HOMOLOGATION

- 22 The Court homologated the following items that had required decision over the summer period under vacation powers, delegated by the Court in Minute No 441 of 27 June 2006.

#### *Consultation on a New Name for the University of Paisley*

- 23 The University had received a consultation from the University of Paisley intimating that it intended to apply to the Privy Council to amend its name to "The University of the West of Scotland". The University had responded that it was comfortable with the proposed change of name.

#### *Consultation on a New Name for Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh*

- 24 The University had received a consultation regarding Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh's application to change its name to Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.
- 25 The University had responded that it was comfortable with the proposed name of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. (*See also Min 15 above*)

### CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- 26 The Court received a paper which summarised the main points arising from a UK Government consultation on reform of the Research Assessment Exercise and the primary issues it posed for the University.

- 27 The Court noted the paper. Members were invited to submit by 13<sup>th</sup> October any comments that they wished to be considered in the preparation of the institutional response.

#### FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

- 28 The Court noted an update on progress on the implementation of the Framework Agreement. The University had implemented on 1 August 2006 a new pay and grading structure. A number of related implementation issues arising from the new structure were now being addressed.

#### FUTURE BUSINESS

- 29 Members of Court were invited to forward to the Clerk any matters which they felt might be included in Court papers as future business

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 30 It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Court would be held on Tuesday 31 October 2006 at 2.00pm.