

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 5 February 2008

Present: Rector (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amoore, Lady Catto, Ms J Craw, Sir Don Cruickshank, Dr P Edwards, Ms A Fraser, Professor C Fynsk, Mrs S Grant, Professor D Houlihan, Councillor P Johnston, Mr J Leiper, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Ms C Macaslan, Dr A Mair, Mr M Moir, Professor G Robinson, Mr R Ruddiman, Professor C Secombes, with Professor C Gane, Professor N Haites, Professor B MacGregor, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Dr G Mackintosh, Mrs L Manders, Dr P Murray and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Arthur, Professor I Booth, Mrs C Banks, Miss A Harper, Dr M Mackie, Professor A Rodger, Councillor J Stewart and Mr J Wilson

MINUTES

140 The Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2007 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

141 The Principal informed Court that the First Minister had recently visited Aberdeen to launch the University's 'Scotland in the World Forum' series of lectures. The Forum was considered to be distinctive in terms of the public work of Scottish universities.

142 The Principal also noted that the First Minister had met with representatives of the University and the Rowett Research Institute to discuss the proposed merger.

143 The Principal informed Court that funding from UK Research Councils now constituted the largest source of the University's research funding. This was encouraging because such funding was the most competitive.

144 The Principal drew to Court's attention the University's participation in the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance, which would bring £4.2 million of funding to the University. The Principal also reminded Court of the University's involvement in the Translational Medicine Research Collaboration, in which it would receive £4.9 million of funding, the second largest share of any Scottish university.

ROWETT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

145 Professor Logan introduced a revised version of a draft Business Plan for the proposed merger with the Rowett Research Institute (RRI) and an update paper on the progress of discussions with the RRI and the Rural and Environmental Research and Analysis Directorate (RERAD).

146 The Court noted, however, that during discussions, RERAD had indicated that:

1. the request for £15M capital funding was too high, with £10M a more likely contribution;
2. it would not consider an interest relief loan to assist the funding of the new build, and suggested that an approach be made to the Scottish Funding Council;
3. it would issue a letter of comfort indicating that it would continue funding under its current programme to the merged institute;
4. it understood that there would be a pension shortfall on transfer and would give due consideration to funding the shortfall, which was likely to be around £3M; and
5. it was likely to approve the restructuring grant for the farm closure of £900K.

147 The Business Plan had, therefore, been revised to ensure the affordability of the merger in relation to any new build at Foresterhill and discussions would continue to determine the specification and cost.

- 148 Professor Logan informed Court that discussions with the First Minister had more recently taken place and it was possible that additional funding might be available to assist with a merger. He also informed Court of the latest position with respect to the future realisation of the Rowett Research Institute's Estate.
- 149 The Court agreed to endorse the Business Plan in principle, to enable negotiations to progress and, in so doing, noted that the figures within it were not final.
- 150 The Court noted that it was hoped that the Draft Merger Agreement would be presented to the next meeting of the Court.
- 151 The Court agreed to delegate authority to the Principal, Convenor of the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee, Senior Lay Member and the Convenor of the Audit Committee, to take any decision that, for reasons of timing, could not be brought to either any future meeting of the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee or of the Court, but which might be required to allow the merger negotiations to progress.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A DENTAL SCHOOL

- 152 Professor Haites introduced to Court a paper on a proposal to establish a University of Aberdeen Dental School.
- 153 The Court was informed that the project was in response to the Scottish Government's commitment to establish a new Dental School in Aberdeen by the end of 2008. While the School would be part of the University, it would require significant support in the early years from the University of Dundee. It was intended that this would develop to first, a degree awarded jointly by the two universities, and thereafter to the degree being conferred solely by the University of Aberdeen. Entry to the new programme would, in the first instance, be for graduates in Biomedical Sciences. The Court noted that the timescale for the first students to enter the programme by September 2008 was very challenging.
- 154 The Court noted that the University's position was that the capital and recurrent costs of establishing the new School should be fully funded externally. The Court also noted that further work regarding governance arrangements, both corporate and academic, was required.
- 155 The Court agreed to:
- endorse the proposal to create a University of Aberdeen Dental School.
 - introduce a new degree programme of Bachelor of Dental Surgery BDS (graduate entry programme) from September 2008.
 - change the title of the School of Medicine to the School of Medicine and Dentistry.

GOVERNANCE

- 156 Mr Amoores introduced a paper with recommendations regarding the membership of the Governance Committee, the establishment, remit and composition of which the Court had approved at its meeting on 11th December 2007.
- 157 In discussion, the Court noted that the Governance Committee would need to engage closely with both the future Chair of Court and the future Chair of the Operating Board. The Court also noted that the President of the Students' Association was not included in the composition of the Committee and that had previously been agreed by Court. The President of the Students' Association suggested that the holder of that office should be involved when the Committee addressed matters of governance that might impact upon the representation of students. The Court agreed that the Governance Committee should take this into account in its considerations.
- 158 The Court approved the following membership of the Governance Committee, with the position of the Convener to be agreed by the Committee.

Mr Moir Lockhead
 Sir Don Cruickshank
 Councillor Paul Johnston
 Principal
 Professor Chris Secombes

- 159 The Court also noted that with the proposals regarding the position of the Rector and the future governance structure now being taken forward, the Court Effectiveness Review was concluded. The Court recorded its thanks and appreciation to Mr Amoores for his significant contribution as Convenor of the Court Effectiveness Review Working Group.

JOINT PLANNING, FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

- 160 Mr Cannon introduced a paper on proposed car parking regulations on the recommendation of the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee.
- 161 The Court noted that the University was committed to the implementation of a Sustainable Transport Plan but that specific initiatives contained in this plan could not progress until all aspects of an operational car parking policy had been considered and agreed. Court was reminded that it had previously endorsed the principle of car park charging.
- 162 The Court agreed that:
- the proposed Car Parking Regulations offered the best solution to the recognised need for controlled parking;
 - that there should be appropriate consultation with staff, students, and Trade Unions;
 - that the operational regulations be introduced along the timescale outlined in the paper, that is revised permits by August 2008 and charging by August 2009.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS 2008

- 163 Professor Logan introduced a paper outlining the underlying planning assumptions as approved by the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee for use in preparing financial budgets for the years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. (See *Minutes* 187-188).
- 164 In discussion, it was noted that the recurrent capital programme was assumed to be flat and this might mean the deterioration in elements of the Estate. It was also noted that there had been extensive new build and refurbishment of existing buildings which would mitigate against this to some degree.
- 165 The Court approved the planning assumptions that would be used in the budget setting process for years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

STAFFING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Sickness Absence Policy

- 166 The Court received a paper from the Staffing & Development Committee which recommended approval of the Sickness Absence Policy.
- 167 The Court approved the Sickness Absence Policy.

Disclosure Scotland

- 168 The Court received a paper from the Staffing & Development Committee which recommended approval of minor amendments to existing staffing policies and procedures arising from a compliance audit by Disclosure Scotland.
- 169 The Court approved the amendments to existing staffing policies and procedures.

Retirement Procedure

- 170 The Court received a paper from the Staffing & Development Committee which recommended approval of changes to the University's Retirement Procedures as a result of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations.
- 171 The Court approved the changes to the University's Retirement Procedure.

Promotions Procedure

- 172 The Court received a paper from the Staffing & Development Committee which recommended approval of a revised procedure for the 2008 Promotion and Contribution Pay Award Exercise.
- 173 The Court approved the procedure for the 2008 Promotion and Contribution Pay Awards Exercise.

ORDINANCE NO 139
INCORPORATION INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
OF THE ROWETT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

- 174 The Court received the revised Draft Ordinance No 139 [Incorporation into the University of Aberdeen of the Rowett Research Institute], which it had previously approved in June 2007, and which had subsequently been approved by the Senate and the Business Committee of the General Council. Following substantive consultation with advisers to the Privy Council the revised draft Ordinance was presented to Court for formal submission to the Privy Council.
- 175 The Court approved the draft Ordinance for formal submission to the Privy Council as set out in the Appendix to this minute.

INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

- 176 The Court received a paper from the Information Strategy Committee which recommended the approval of University Information Security Policy.
- 177 The Court approved the University Information Security Policy.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- 178 The Court approved a recommendation from the Nominating Committee, that Dr Tom Nichols, History of Art, should be appointed to a vacancy on the Geddes Harrower Chair Committee.

ITEMS FOR HOMOLOGATION

- 179 The Court received an invitation to homologate changes, which had been approved by the Senior Lay Member, the Convener of the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee and the Principal, to the fee structure to the Chartered Teacher Programme.
- 180 The Court agreed to homologate the changes to the fee structure of the Chartered Teacher Programme.

JOINT PLANNING, FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

Rowett Research Institute Merger

- 181 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had received and considered an updated draft Business Plan for the planned merger with the Rowett Research Institute.
- 182 The Court noted that the Committee had endorsed the draft Business Plan, although the figures contained within it were not to be regarded as final. (See *Minutes* 145-151)

Aberdeen Dental School

- 183 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had received an update on the current position regarding the establishment of a University of Aberdeen Dental School.
- 184 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had endorsed the provisional steps that had been taken to maintain the project within the timetable set by the Scottish Government. (See *Minutes* 152-155)

Student Population Planning

- 185 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had received a paper on student population requirements for 2008-09.
- 186 The Court noted that the Committee had approved the intake population requirements set out in the paper for 2008-09 and that it had noted the improvements to date in terms of student retention.

Planning Assumptions and Academic Planning Process

- 187 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had approved the underlying financial Planning Assumptions to be used in preparing budgets for the years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. (See *Minutes* 163-165)
- 188 The Court noted that the Committee had also received the Notes of Guidance on the Planning Process, of which the Planning Assumptions would form a part, which had been issued to Heads of School to assist them in developing formal academic plans for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11.

Monthly Management Accounts 2006-07

- 189 The Court noted that the Committee had received copies of the Monthly Management Accounts for the period ending 30 November 2007.

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee Report

- 190 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee on the following projects: Marischal College, New Library, Central Heating Station, Asbestos Management, Fraser Noble, Oceanlab, the Regional Sports Facilities and Matthew Hay.

Scottish Government Consultation: Designation of the Scottish Agricultural College as a Higher Education Institution

- 191 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a draft University response to a consultation on the Scottish Agricultural College being made a HEI and being funded by the Scottish Funding Council. The Court noted that the Committee had approved the draft response subject to the deletion of the final paragraph.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 192 The Court noted a paper on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which outlined a series of initiatives that had been pursued in 2007. The Committee noted that the development of a CSR Strategy would build on these initiatives and would be taken forward in 2008.

CURRICULUM REFORM UPDATE

- 193 The Court received and noted a paper which gave an update on the progress of the Curriculum Reform Project. In discussion, it was agreed that a paper on graduate attributes be circulated to all Court members.

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME – ANNUAL REPORT

- 194 The Court received and noted the annual report of the Disability Equality Scheme.

FUTURE BUSINESS

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

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

- 196 It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Court would be held on Monday 17th March 2008 at 2pm, Court Room.