

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2021**

**Present:** Mr H Adam (Chair), Ms M Allison, Ms N Cadinanos Gonzalez, Dr P Cowell, Ms P Crawford, Prof J Donaldson, Mr K Fraser, Ms S Gordon, Prof P Hancock, Mr G Hastie, Mr D Kearney, Ms A MacKay, Mr G MacLeod, Prof M MacLeod, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Prof H Nehring, Rev M Roderick and Councillor C Simpson.

**In Attendance:** Mr G Duff, Ms C Gallagher, Ms J Harrison, Ms K Lawson, Mr L McCabe, Mr C McNally, Ms J Morrow, Prof J Phillips, Dr J Rogers, Ms E Schofield, Prof L Sparks, Mr L Spillane, Dr David Telford, Mr M Nichol (Clerk), Prof N Wylie and Dr L Zhuang.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received fromDr R Black and Mr H Grossart.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(20/21) Minutes 4**

Court approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021

**3. MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA**

 There were no matters arising as actions had been completed and reported elsewhere or were underway.

**4. REMIT, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP UC(21/22)1**

Court noted the remit, composition and membership of Court for 2021/22.

**5. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT UC(21/22)2**

Members received an overview of developments in the external environment that included the Covid-19 landscape and the safe and managed return of students for the start of the academic year; Scottish Funding Council Report on Coherence and Sustainability; Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) Pension Valuation 2020; the Admission Cycle 2021; NSS and Student Survey Results; and Scottish Government Programme for Government 2021-22.

Member discussed in particular the managed return of students for the start of the academic year including the uptake in Covid-19 vaccinations, progress of the University’s student satisfaction rankings in a global context, actions to further improve the postgraduate research student experience and the University’s approach to engagement activity with alumni to develop stronger relationships.

 Court noted the recent developments in the external environment.

***INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING***

**6. INTEGRATED PLANNING AND BUDGETING UC(21/22)3** Members received an overview of the integrated planning and budgeting paper which included the quarter four management accounts 2020-21 and the University budget 2021-22.

 It was confirmed that the quarter 4 management accounts presented a preliminary outturn surplus of £2.7m, £1.5m better than the Q3 position and an overall improvement of £2.2m on the ‘Scenario One’ position of £0.5m which was adopted as the University Budget for 2020-21. Work was continuing on the final audited financial statements for financial year 2020-21 for presentation to and approval at the December meeting of Court along with a reconciliation of any material changes to the quarter 4 position presented. It was confirmed that the employer element of any proposed increase to National Insurance contributions would be factored into the quarter 1 position.

 Members discussed the University Budget 2021-22 and the accompanying commentary. It was confirmed that a firmer full forecast in respect of academic year 2021-22 would be reported at the quarter 1 milestone.

Members noted that based on the quarter 4 preliminary outturn surplus of £2.7m, the University would be covenant compliant when tested formally against the 2020-21 financial statements. Members discussed the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), noted a further £10m may be drawn under this facility no later than December 2021 and that the position would be reviewed against the quarter 1 management accounts 2021-22 forecast outturn cash balance.

Members discussed student intake for the forthcoming academic year and noted that the University’s agile approach would adapt to new numbers of incoming students and ensure the focus was on their experience.

Court considered and commented on the integrated planning and budgeting update.

**7. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT UC(21/22)4**

Members received an overview of the Annual Performance Report and discussed the institutional performance in the previous year, informed by analysis of data and comparative performance across the sector or benchmark group.

It was confirmed that the 2020/21 iteration of the Annual Performance Report had been constructed to assess institutional performance relative to Strategic Plan KPI targets and associated Planning and Budgeting considerations, while providing an overview of specific institutional achievements and future priorities. It was confirmed that targets had been reviewed as part of the Strategic Plan Addendum and revised where appropriate to reflect changes in the external environment.

 Court considered and noted the Annual Performance Report.

***CITY DEAL***

**8. CITY DEAL UC(20/21)5**

Members received an update on progress to date with the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal and discussed in particular actions taken to progress the University-led projects and the benefits to be delivered through Phase 1 of Scotland’s International Environment Centre (SIEC) and additional opportunities including the proposed International Marine Science and Environment Centre at Ardrossan.

The Chair congratulated the team on work undertaken for the full business case of SIEC to be approved by the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee on 7 September 2021.

Members discussed governance arrangements for the programme and targets indicated for the completion and approval of subsequent business cases. It was confirmed a review of timescales was being undertaken and that revised timelines would be brought back to Court for consideration.

Court noted the report.

 **[ACTION: Executive Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer]**

***GOVERNANCE***

**9. ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTIONAL-LED REVIEW** **UC(20/21)6**

Members received an overview of the annual submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on our Institution-Led Review activities for the academic year 2020/21. It was confirmed that the report was composed according to the guidelines, requirements, and standards as set down by the SFC on reporting Institution-Led Review activity.

Court approved the Annual Report on the Institutional Led Review for SFC and signed off the ‘Annual Statement of Assurance’ in the name of the Chair of Court.

***POLICY AND PLAN DEVELOPMENTS***

**10. BUSINESS TRAVEL AND EXPENSES POLICY UC(20/21)7**

Members received an introduction to the revised Business Travel and Expenses Policy that included updates to ensure the University met its duty of care in respect of the welfare and safety of its staff and students whilst travelling on University business, and the environmental impact of business travel was given appropriate consideration.

Members discussed the potential for provision within the policy for staff with caring responsibilities, and the implications for individuals in terms of benefit in kind tax. Members also discussed the need to maintain a proportionate approach to the assessment of risk associated with business travel and sought assurance on procedures for the assessment of risk with regard to cyber security when individuals were travelling on University business.

 Court approved the revised Business Travel and Expenses Policy.

**11. STANDBY AND CALL OUT PAYMENTS POLICYUC(20/21)8**

Members received an overview the Staff on Call Policy. It was confirmed the purpose of the policy was to ensure that key University services can be adequately supported out of core hours and that this applied to a limited number of staff who work as part of an on-call rota to support defined business critical services outside of normal operating hours. The aim of the policy was to standardise and simplify standby and call out arrangements and provide a coherent approach across the University.

 Court approved the Standby and Call Out Payments Policy.

**12.** **RESEARCH CONCORDAT UC(20/21)9**

 Members received an introduction to the Research Concordat paper and discussed the work undertaken to deliver on the commitments to support the career development of researchers. This took into account the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on this group in particular.

 Court noted the contents of the paper.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**13. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(20/21)10**

Members received an update on recent Students’ Union activities including freshers and welcome events, academic representation, activities and opportunities for volunteering, guidance issued to sports clubs on the assessment of risk and the de-colonise the curriculum project. The Chair thanked the Students’ Union and students for providing support and donations to Start Up Stirling.

Court noted the activity update from the Students’ Union.

**14. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(20/21)11**

Members received an update on staff and employment matters including the Furlough and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), USS Pension Scheme, the Pay Award 2021/22 and the Agile Working Framework.

Members discussed in particular the uptake and levels of satisfaction with the Employee Assistance Programme, and the further development of methods to engage with staff including focus groups and surveys.

Court noted the staff and employment update.

***COMMITTEE REPORTS***

**15. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(20/21)12**

Members received an introduction to the report from the Academic Council meeting of 15 September 2021.

Court considered the report from the meeting of 15 September 2021.

***RISKS***

**16. RISKS ARISING Oral**

Court considered risks associated with items discussed in the context of the agreed risk appetite statement.

***OTHER ITEMS***

**17. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

**18. NEXT MEETING**

Members noted the Court Strategy Day on Friday 29 October 2021 and the next full meeting of Court was scheduled for Monday 13 December 2021.