

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020**

**Present:** Mr H Adam (Chair), Dr Robert Black, Prof J Donaldson, Mr K Fraser, Prof A Green, Mr H Grossart, Mr S Haldane, Mr G Hastie, Mr D Kearney, Prof M MacLeod, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Mr J Muirhead, Prof H Nehring, Rev M Roderick, Councillor C Simpson, Ms Mary Allison, Ms P Crawford, Dr P Cowell, Ms S Gordon, Prof P Hancock, Ms A Smith and Mr G MacLeod.

**In Attendance:** Ms C Gallagher, Ms J Harrison, Mr L McCabe, Mr M McCrindle, 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, Dr L Zhuang, and Mr G Duff.

**Apologies:** There were no apologies for absence.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(19/20) Minutes 6**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May were **approved** as an accurate record.

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

There were no matters arising.

**4. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT UC(19/20) 52**

Court received the report on latest external factors that presented potential challenges to the University, and recent policy developments in the external environment relevant to the Higher Education (HE) sector.

Member discussed in particular the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Scottish Higher Education sector, the Scottish Government’s Route Map out of lockdown, student recruitment, the student hardship fund and tackling racial harassment in Higher Education.

Court **noted** the recent developments in the external environment.

***PLANNING AND BUDGETING***

**5. INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY AND FINANCIAL PLANNING UC(19/20) 53**

Court received a high-level overview of the institutional priorities that would shape decisions affecting the University’s future and delivery objectives. Court also received indicative financial scenarios for the academic year 2020-21, along with a number of proposed actions on how to support delivery of an acceptable budget position against a context of unprecedented uncertainty.

Members discussed the stress testing and sensitivity analysis of the University’s financial position that has been undertaken, the critical assumptions upon which the forecasts were based, the three financial scenarios and a range of possible options that may be considered to mitigate any forecast deficit, deliver an acceptable outturn for 2020-21 and ensure the University is sustainable going forward.

Members discussed in particular the procedures for redundancy set out in Ordinance 68, the implications of reducing the workforce at a time where the University must maximise income, retain a significant offering in the market and maintain an excellent experience for students. It was confirmed that the University would consult with individual employees and trade union representatives to explore possible options to avoid redundancies or reduce the numbers involved.

Members considered implications on the strategic objectives of the University and emphasised the importance of any impact on matters relating to equality to be assessed and understood as part of the decision making process.

Following discussion of the Institutional Priority and Financial Planning paper and scenarios within, Court agreed to support and enact scenario one. The need for flexibility was acknowledged, and if required, Court agreed to move through to scenario two and three if circumstances changed.

Court agreed to delegate authority to the Lay Chair’s Group (comprising the Chair of Court and the lay member chairs of governance committees, the Principal and the University Secretary) to advise the University’s Executive.

**6. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UPDATE UC(19/20) 54**

Court received an update of the capital expenditure plan in light of the immediate and extreme financial pressures faced by the University in the remainder of the current financial year and 2020/21. For its major capital projects the University had obtained legal advice in respect of the building contracts.

Members discussed the indicative capital plan, in particular the investment plans for Campus Central, the sports facilities, student residences and online teaching delivery.

With regard to Campus Central, it was confirmed that the University was in a formal and binding building contract and there were three scenarios for consideration. In considering the next steps, the University had to be certain that decisions made now did not damage future capacity to compete for students and support the student experience. None of the fundamental issues that were supported by the concept of Campus Central had changed and the vision for the University post-pandemic, in terms of the heart of the University and its environment, remained. Recruiting students and providing appropriate facilities for students and staff would be fundamental for success and ongoing financial viability. Members discussed the importance of clearly communicating the vision and rationale for capital expenditure to students, staff and the wider community.

Court **approved** the updated indicative capital plan.

**7. COVID-19 STRATEGIC RISK SUMMARY UC(19/20) 55**

Court received a report on strategic risks identified from considering the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic and noted the approach to identify, assess and manage risks associated with the University’s financial and strategic priorities, taking account of the plan to recover from the significant disruption caused to business as usual operations.

Members noted that the risk summary document was considered to be a strategic planning tool and would be updated on an ongoing basis.

 Court **noted** the Covid-19 risk summary

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**8. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE Oral**

Members received an update on activity from the Students’ Union and an overview of the three key objectives for the forthcoming year: a more inclusive student experience, the promotion of good mental and physical wellbeing, and environmental responsibility.

Court **noted** the update on activity from the Students’ Union.

**9. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(19/20) 56**

Members received an update on staff and employment matters and noted in particular work undertaken to review changes to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and how this continued to support the University financially and in its efforts to return to campus.

Court **noted** the update on staff and employment matters.

***COMMITEE REPORTS***

**10. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(19/20) 57**

Court **noted** the report from the meeting of 3 June 2020.

**11. JOINT POLICY, PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE (JPPRC) UC(19/20) 58**

Court **noted** the report from the meeting of 15 June 2020.

**12. AUDIT COMMITTEE UC(19/20) 59**

Court **noted** the report from the Audit Committee meeting of 19 May 2020 and **approved** the extension of the contract with KPMG to deliver external audit services for one further year to 31 December 2021.

**13. COMBINED JOINT NEGOTIATING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE UC(19/20) 60**

Court **noted** the report from CJNCC for 2019/20, in particular the constructive relationships with trade union representatives throughout this session and more regularly since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic.

***RISKS***

**14. REGISTER OF STRATEGIC RISK UC(19/20) 61**

Court **noted** the updated Register of Strategic Risks.

**15. RISKS ARISING Oral**

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

***OTHER ITEMS***

**16. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

There was no other competent business.

**17. NEXT MEETING**

Court **noted** the regular meetings of Court are scheduled for:

* 21 September 2020
* 23 October 2020 (Strategy Day)
* 14 December 2020
* 29 March 2021
* 14 June 2021

**Policy & Planning**

**June 2020**