

***Draft Subject to Approval by the University Court at the meeting of 15 April 2022*****UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS**

VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 21 JANUARY 2022 AT A MEETING OF THE COURT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

**Present:** Ms Catherine Stihler, *Senior Lay Member*, (presiding); Professor Sally Mapstone, *Principal*; Professor Stuart Monro, *Deputy Chair of Court*; Professor Lorna Milne, *Master of the United College and Deputy Principal*; Mr Adrian Greer, *Chancellor's Assessor*; Ms Stella Maris, *Rector's Assessor*; Cllr Altany Craik, *Provost of Fife's Assessor*; Mr Iain Anderson, Mr Jonathan Hewitt, *General Council Assessors*; Professor Mark Harris, Professor Sharon Ashbrook, Dr Derek Ball, and Dr Morven Shearer, *Senate Assessors*; Dr Lorna Dargan, *Non-Academic Staff Assessor*; Dr Malcolm Petrie, Mr Alex Duncan, *Trade Union Nominees*; Ms Lottie Doherty, *President, Students' Association*; Ms Leonie Malin, *Director of Education, Students' Association*; Mr Tim Allan, Ms Alison Johns, Mr Frank MacInnis, Ms Eve McCurrich, Professor Anu Ojha, Ms Jenny Stewart, *Non-executive Members*.

**In regular attendance:** Professor Brad MacKay, *Senior Vice-Principal International Strategy and External Relations*; Professor Tom Brown, *Vice-Principal Research and Innovation*; Mr Alastair Merrill, *Vice-Principal Governance*; Professor Clare Peddie, *Vice-Principal Education (Proctor)*; Mr Derek Watson, *Quaestor and Factor*; Mr Andy Goor, *Chief Financial Officer*; Ms Ester Ruskuc, *Director of Strategy and Policy*, Ms Margaret Sinclair, *Executive Officer to the University Court and Senate*.

**In attendance (part only):** Ms Lesley Caldwell, *Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer*.

**In attendance (advisory capacity):** Mr Niall Scott, *Director of Corporate Communications*.

**Apologies:** Dr Leyla Hussein, *Rector*; Lord Duncan of Springbank, *Non-executive Member* (apologies sent post meeting); Professor Katie Stevenson, *Vice-Principal Collections, Music and Digital Content*.

**PRELIMINARIES**

The Senior Lay Member formally opened the meeting.

**WELCOME**

The Senior Lay Member welcomed all attendees and noted apologies.

**STARRING OF ITEMS**

Members noted those items currently starred on the Agenda, and that PARC Business - Item 8 - Projects for Information had been starred at the request of Professor Stuart Monro.

## **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were intimated.

### **I. OPENING BUSINESS**

#### **1. Meeting minutes and matters arising**

##### **i) Minute of the Court Meeting held on 22 October 2021**

The minute of the Court meeting held on 22 October 2021 (on file, Minutes 2021-2022 No.1, pp 1-16) was agreed as a correct record.

##### **ii) Covid -19 Update**

The Vice-Principal Governance provided a verbal update on the University's activities to manage the Coronavirus pandemic and recent developments.

- The surge in Covid cases feared over Christmas amongst student remaining in the University did not materialise. Numbers were starting to rise as most students returned, and at 21 January there were 56 student and 16 staff active cases.
- The University had reviewed its resilience plans over the Christmas period to cope with potentially large numbers of students and staff either infected or having to self-isolate.
- The Safe Use of University Buildings tier 1 risk assessment had been updated before Christmas, and again in early January in the light of easing of restrictions.
- The Scottish Government had signalled a significant shift in tone, talking of learning to live with the virus and having proportionate and sustainable measures. The First Minister had announced lifting of most social restrictions from 24 January, and stated that we had "turned the corner". In England, further relaxation of rules was announced in Parliament, and DFE's guidance for higher education had now removed the guidance to work from home and, from 27 January, the requirement to wear face coverings in communal areas.
- There is unlikely to be a coherent 4 nations approach. It is anticipated that the Scottish Government will continue to be more cautious, both in terms of the timing of lifting further restrictions, and in the extent to which they are lifted. The Scottish Government is drafting a revised strategic framework to be published in the next few weeks. This is likely to include encouragement to continue wearing face coverings in crowded areas, as well as ongoing focus on ventilation. On ventilation, the University has been at the forefront of introducing CO2 monitors, together with the use of air purifiers where required by HSE guidance. St Andrews was highlighted as an exemplar of

good practice in this regard by one of the national trade union representatives at the Scottish Government's Ministerial Covid Recovery Group.

- The University has started the new semester with the same cautious approach as taken in semester 1, with all large lectures online, and most modules at or around 35. The situation would be reviewed for the mid-semester break.
- Key messaging to students and staff focused on face coverings, vaccination, and testing, with refreshed signage across campus. There has been a major push on vaccination, encouraging students to have boosters before return to St Andrews. The University has worked with Public Health Scotland to ensure daily drop-in clinics at the Community Hospital.
- There was an ample supply of tests – 1500 kits (10k individual) LFD tests had been distributed last fortnight. Students (and staff) were being encouraged to test before in-person teaching or social events and the University was working with the campus trade unions to promote the LFD collect scheme.
- The picture on Covid was cautiously positive. So far no significant issues had been identified, and resilience plans were holding up in the face of increasing staff absences. The Covid Rapid Response Team and Covid helpdesk had been reinforced and were coping well with the increasing numbers of cases. The next fortnight would be critical, as Omicron burns through north-east Fife, but hopefully by the time of the inter-semester break, the University will be able to return to a more familiar way of life.

Court noted the update.

### **iii) ELIR Report and Next steps**

Court approved the ELIR follow-up report (on file, Court/21/27), and noted the next steps detailed therein.

## **2. Senior Lay Member – Demission of Office**

Court noted with regret the resignation of Ms Catherine Stihler OBE from the position of Senior Lay Member, with effect from April 2022.

The Vice-Principal Governance introduced the paper (on file, Court/21/28) which invited Court to consider proposals for handling the transition period following the current Senior Lay Member's departure, and preparing for the recruitment of a successor.

The process to appoint a Senior Lay Member is prescribed in detail by legislation in the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. It is a complex and lengthy process, which requires careful preparation and management at every stage. There was a need to provide for a lengthy period of transition, and to provide ongoing resilience and stability during the transition phase.

Court agreed that the Governance and Nominations Committee, reinforced by Jonathan Hewitt, Court Intermediary, should convene an emergency meeting to provide recommendations for the management of the transition period and initiate preparations for the recruitment of a new Senior Lay Member. The meeting should be convened as the earliest opportunity, with recommendations passed to Court for endorsement by correspondence<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Report from the Principal**

#### **(i) Written**

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/21/29) which provided an update to Court on recent events, activities and general University news.

Court noted its contents.

#### **(ii) Verbal report and update**

The Principal provided a verbal report to Court on a number of matters as detailed below.

The Principal began her first update of the new calendar year by expressing thanks to Court for its continued focus on doing what was best for the University community and for its commitment, its support, and the challenge that it provided to the Principal's Office team through its oversight role.

#### **Philanthropy**

The Principal had been unable to visit the United States in January as planned due to the exceptional prevalence of Omicron in the US and the risk to alumni and supporters of asking them to meet in some large groups. The planned London visit had taken place and had involved a busy and unequivocally positive schedule of meetings with key London based donors. People remained hugely supportive of the University, its ethos and successes, and of the plans for the future. The Principal had also engaged in a number of online meetings to the West and East Coast of the States, including with Joe Russo who intends to visit St Andrews for the film festival at the end of March.

Fundraising is going well. The Principal expressed gratitude to all supporters, and expressly to friends and donors George and Wendy David whose very recent \$10M dollar pledge was recorded in paragraph 95 of her report.

#### **Budget Settlement**

The indicated outcomes of the budget settlement for next year, and the multi-year settlement discussions currently working their way through the Scottish Parliament, remained highly unpropitious. The Principal in her capacity as Vice-

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting scheduled for 26 January 2022

Convener for Universities Scotland, had undertaken an early allocation setting meeting online with Karen Watt, the CEO of the Scottish Funding Council – (the SFC essentially brokers the arrangements between Government and individual universities via Universities Scotland).

It was clear that Higher Education did not feature as a current Scottish Government priority for funding. For institutions, the situation is discouraging both in relation to the unit of resource and particularly in relation to capital. Although indicative allocations will be coming through in March REG funding allocations will be delayed until the REF results are out in May.

### **Challenges**

There are manifestly a variety of further coming challenges on the horizon this semester, beyond Covid. These include the prospect of further industrial action in relation to the USS pension scheme and the current pay dispute, and the challenges faced by escalating construction costs. The Principal confirmed that Court members would be kept well sighted collectively in relation to all of these, but reminded Court members that the Principal and the PO team stood available to address any matters which Court members wished to raise individually.

### **Covid**

The University's approach has been distilled to three simple but important requests to students and staff: wear a face-covering inside University buildings; test regularly, daily if necessary, before you mix with other people; and be considerate to one another. Given the national direction of travel, this should be the semester in which the University begins to step back as the authority on and interpreter of national Covid guidelines, and trusts to the University community to know the guidance, and respond accordingly.

### **Spiking**

The Principal informed Court that she will be giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee on behalf of University Principals and Universities Scotland in a session being held on 26 January as part of its current enquiry into spiking.

### **Changes in the PO**

Court noted the reference in Paragraph 5 the report to Professor Katie's Stevenson's forthcoming move to Monash University, Australia and joined with the Principal to express congratulations to Professor Stevenson on her appointment as Dean of Arts at that institution. The Principal informed Court that a restructure of PO portfolios and membership is currently underway, and that the Principal expected to be in a position to report to Court on this in the next couple of months.

### **New Year Honours**

Court joined with the Principal to offer congratulations to those members of the University honoured in the recent New Year Honours, including Court member (and alumnus) Tim Allan, CBE.

Following the update, the Principal answered questions and responded to comments from members on:

(i) The financial settlement - providing reassurance that steps were being taken to lobby for funding both at a national and local level, and to ensure that the University remained well placed to identify and to take advantage of any funding opportunities which presented themselves.

(ii) Widening access – Members commented on the University's success in widening participation as reflected in the SIMD statistics and emphasised the importance of advertising this success. The Principal agreed that this success was something to be promoted, as was the important fact that the University had an impressive retention rate for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

(iii) There was discussion of methods of assessment and, in particular, the implications of students entering the University without having undertaken formal written examinations during the pandemic. The Principal indicated that methods of assessment were the subject of much discussion both at institutional and sector level. These conversations were ongoing and would be inflected by the experience of students. The University already offered a mixed assessment diet and gateway programmes, and had demonstrated the ability to adapt and offer flexibility during the pandemic.

It was clear that this was a topic of considerable interest to Court, and the Principal suggested that it be scheduled as a discussion item for a future Court meeting with a presentation from the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor). This would also provide an opportunity to hear from student representatives as to the views of students on assessment, and specifically on the outcome of the recent consultation undertaken by the Students' Association on this topic.

#### **4. Report from the Rector**

There was no written report on this occasion.

The President of the Students' Association provided a verbal update on a number of items of interest including:

- the completion of the first ever employability strategy by the Students' Association. This had been undertaken with input from the Careers Centre and work had begun on the implementation of its key suggestions;
- an update on the steps being taken to address concerns raised by incidences of spiking and the work being done by the Students' Association to implement increased safety measures and to update policies and procedures to ensure that any incidents reported are dealt with swiftly, properly and compassionately. It was confirmed that to date there had

been 15 reports of spiking reported to the Students' Association. There had been no reports of incidences of spiking having taken place in the Students' Association;

- the completion of the Commuter Student Survey; and
- recent motions passed by the Student Representative Council, including to support the St Andrews on Ecosia Campaign (which has resulted in the default search engine for all student facing University computers being changed to Ecosia).

The Rector's Assessor provided additional information as to the steps being taken by committees in Halls to limit the potential for spiking and drew the attention of Court to the Santander Union Black initiative, which had also been highlighted in the most recent *In the loop*.

## **5. Strategy refresh Update**

The Director of Strategy and Policy presented this item, expanding on the content of the paper (on file Court/21/30) which provided an update on the process of refreshing the University Strategy; an overview on developments across each of the revised pillars (World-leading; Diverse; Digital; Sustainable; and Entrepreneurial); and on the next stage of the Strategy refresh which will run until the end of March.

Court noted that it will receive an update at its next meeting in April and that the first outline of the refreshed strategy is scheduled for June.

Questions and comments for members covered the areas of (i) KPI's - in relation to which as confirmed that there would be review of KPIs in the context of the refreshed Strategy to ensure that they remained relevant; (ii) the role of the Global Office in forging partnerships; (iii) the importance of ensuring continuity in Digital (in the light of Professor Stevenson's move).

Progress since the Court Away Day was commended, as was the work to get implement the operationalisation work necessary. Members also suggested that, to aid communication and encourage engagement with the Strategy, a single page summary (preferably in diagrammatic rather than textual form) of the Strategy be produced once the refresh was complete.

Court noted the update and expressed thanks to the Director of Strategy and Policy for the valuable work undertaken to date.

## **II. PARC BUSINESS**

### **6. Minute of the Meeting held on 17 December 2021**

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/21/31).

### **7. Projects for Approval**

The Quaestor presented the paper (on file, Court/21/32).

Court noted that PARC had, at its meeting of December, approved the requests for approval and funding as detailed in the paper relating to:

- a. Millar's Shed , Guardbridge
- b. St Andrews West
- c. Main Library - Court noted and endorsed the approval by PARC of the Outline Business Case for the Main Library. A Full Business Case will be presented to PARC in May 2022, and forwarded to Court for approval in June 2022.

## **8. Projects for Information**

Court received the Projects for Information paper (on file, Court/21/33) which provided a summary of in-train and planned capital projects. The Appendices to the summary included updates on the following: - The Laidlaw Music Centre; Eden Campus Professional Services Relocation; BMS Reinstatement and Modernisation; Eden Campus; Younger Hall Refurbishment; Learning and Teaching Commons Butts Wynd/LOUD Refurbishment; Purdie Labs 322-324; Bat Colony; Student Residences – Gap Site 3; Albany Park (see below); Grange; North Haugh Hub; Kenly Wind Farm; New North Haugh Building; and Madras-New College.

### **Albany Park**

The Quaestor provided an update as to the current status of the Albany Park Project, and on developments since the meeting of PARC in December 2021.

The minutes of the December PARC meeting (on file Court/21/31) recorded the discussion at PARC of the challenges facing the Albany Park project as a result of the substantial escalation of construction costs during the stage 2 tender process. The sub-group of Court members referred to in the minutes had now met to work with the Quaestor and Director of Estates to consider the challenges faced and to formulate proposals and strategy on how best to progress. The Quaestor briefed Court on the outcome of the meeting, the advice received from the members of Court on the sub-group<sup>2</sup>, and the range of options and suggestions for resolution currently being pursued.

Court discussed the update and the current complexities to be negotiated. Court emphasised that the project remained central to the University strategy to provide additional residential accommodation and endorsed the current strategy and approach being followed by the Quaestor and his team.

Court noted that PARC would receive a full update at its meeting in March.

## **9. Accommodation Fees Update**

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<sup>2</sup> Frank MacInnis; Eve McCurrich; Tim Allan; and President of the Students' Association.



Court received the paper (on file, Court/21/34) presented for information. Court noted the process followed to agree proposed rent increases for the academic session 2022-23, and the agreement reached to increase the rent for the academic year 2022-23 by c.3.5% (1.4% below the September RPI of 4.9%).

Responding to a question from a Court member, the Quaestor confirmed that RPI rather than CPI remained the correct comparator (as it was the measure cited in the agreement in place with the Students' Association, approved by Court in 2004, which assumed that rental levels will increase in line with UK RPI annually).

#### **10. Entrepreneurial St Andrews Update**

Court received the paper (on file, Court/21/35) which provided an overview of progress towards the implementation of Entrepreneurial St Andrews during the year.

#### **11. Annual Sustainability Report**

Court received the paper (on file, Court/21/36) which shared the University's Annual Sustainability Report for 2020/21. The report demonstrated progress on developing a University wide environmental sustainability strategy, centred on a vision for Net Zero 2035.

#### **12. Summary Financial report to 31 October 2021**

Members received the report (on file, Court/21/37) which provided a summary of the University's financial position as at 31 October 2021.

The Chief Financial Officer was commended on what had been a strong out-turn in a challenging period.

#### **13. University Collections Annual report**

Court received the joint report from Museums and Special Collections covering the period December 2020 to November 2021

#### **14. Institutional Indicators Update**

Members noted the report (on file, Court/21/39) which contained the regular update on strategic performance indicators presented to PARC.

#### **15. Draft SFC Outcome Agreement**

Court noted the paper (on file Court/21/40) presented for information, and the draft SFC Outcome Agreement 2021-2022 annexed.

### **III DISCUSSION ITEM**

#### **16. Community Engagement and Responsibility**

The Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer joined the meeting for this item. The Principal provided an introduction and an explanation of the role of the Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer to give context for the presentation.

The post had been introduced three years ago as part of the University's commitment to social responsibility and to effective engagement with the local community. The Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer reported jointly to the Principal and to the Director of Corporate Communications and had proved extremely effective in initiating and fostering relationships and acting as a conduit for the local community to engage with the University.

Ms Caldwell then delivered a comprehensive and well received presentation on the topic of Community Engagement and Social Responsibility. The Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Officer affirmed the view of the University that community engagement and social responsibility "begins at home", informing Court that, with continued focus on this, there had been notable improvements in relations between the University and key local groups, and that the concept of the boundaries of town and gown was changing, as was the understanding of what community means.

The presentation provided an overview of the role of the Community Engagement Officer; detail on key developments to date; information on the University Community Fund; an introduction to One St Andrews (an umbrella initiative to encapsulate the aim to deepen the relationships between the University and the local community); the role of the University in the community during Covid; and important next steps and future plans. There was also discussion (prompted by questions from members) of current and potential future concerns in the community as to e.g. housing issues, and the impact of increased student numbers, and of steps which could be taken to encourage alumni and students who were working remotely to engage with the social responsibility agenda.

Members thanked Ms Caldwell for her presentation, affirming the importance of the work being done.

### **IV REGULAR BUSINESS**

#### **17. Audit and Risk Committee**

Jonathan Hewitt, Convenor of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) presented the minutes of the ARC November meeting and summarised the main business considered at that meeting.

**(i) Minutes of the Meetings held on 24 November 2021**

Members noted the report of the meeting (on file, Court/21/41).

**(ii) EARIAG Annual Report (encompassing UTREC and AWEC Annual reports)**

Court received the EARIAG Annual report (on file, Court/21/42). The Convenor highlighted the discussion that had taken place around this report, and the report of the Health and Safety Assurance Group ((iii) below). The impact of Covid had been a common theme in both, affecting working practices and process. The Committee had been impressed and thankful for the work done to mitigate this impact.

**(iii) Annual Report of Health and Safety Assurance Group**

Court received the Annual Report of the Health and Safety Assurance Group (on file, Court/21/43).

Members sought reassurance in relation to the completion of Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs);(the HSAG report identified this as an area where work was continuing or where delay had been encountered). Members were reminded that the report related to the AY 2020/21 when progress on FRAs had been affected by the closure of, or the restriction of access to buildings as a result of the pandemic. The University had adopted a clear prioritisation approach based around statutory compliance and remained fully compliant with its statutory obligations. In addition, the Safe Use of University Buildings guidance provided for a detailed risk assessment process which encompassed fire and all other risks.

**(iv) Update on Risk Register**

This paper (on file, Court/21/44) presented for information provided the quarterly risk report for Q4, 2021 (risk dashboard and narratives).

The Convenor highlighted the robust discussion on the issue of cyber security which had taken place at ARC (reflected in the minute). ARC would continue to monitor this key issue, and to challenge the Executive on it. The Convenor emphasised that ARC was fully supportive of the work being done by the Chief Information Officer and his team, ARC's concern related to the pace (not direction) of travel, and the apparent difference in approach to compliance with cyber security protocols between the Professional Services and Academic communities.

Further suggestions and comments from members affirmed the positive response from staff to the service provide by Occupational Health; asked whether absences due to Covid be captured in sickness reporting; and sought information about benchmarking for sickness reporting (the latter two points to be discussed further with the Vice-Principal Governance offline).

## **18. Governance and Nominations Committee (G and N)**

Professor Stuart Monro (Convenor of G and N) presented the items of business forwarded to Court by G and N.

### **i) Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021**

The minutes (on file, Court/2/45) were presented for information. The Convenor noted the plans for the Court Effectiveness Review, succession planning, including recent committee and assurance group appointments; and for the election of a new Deputy Chair of Court.

### **ii) Composition of PDAG**

Court noted and welcomed the approval of G and N to the amendment to the composition of PDAG, as set out in the paper (on file, Court/21/46), to include the Students' Association Director of Wellbeing and Equality as a co-opted member, and the consequential amendment to the PDAG terms of reference.

### **iii) Revised ARC Remit**

Court noted the revisions to the ARC remit, approved by G and N at its November meeting (on file, Court/21/47).

### **iv) Restructure of the Students' Association**

The paper (on file, Court/21/48) outlined the Students' Association plan to alter its structure from being a conventional Scottish registered charity with individual trustees to one with a single corporate trustee of which the trustees are directors. G and N had approved the proposals. Court noted and endorsed this approval.

## **19. Remuneration Committee**

Adrian Greer, Convenor of the Remuneration Committee presented the Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee (on file, Court/21/49) which covers the main activity of the Remuneration Committee in the academic year 2020/2021.

Court noted the report.

## **20. People and Diversity Assurance Group**

**i) Minute of the meeting on 8 December 2021**

Court noted the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/21/50) presented for information. The Vice-Principal Governance had chaired the meeting, in the absence of the Convenor, and provided some additional commentary.

- The meeting had been attended by Ellie Highwood of SUMS Consulting. SUMS was conducting the Race and Ethnicity Review on behalf of the University. The review was now underway with the intention to widen engagement to focus groups within the next month. PDAG had welcomed the progress that had been made.
- The results of the Staff Survey, which had closed in December, were being processed and analysed. It was confirmed that Court would be provided with an update (via PDAG) at a future date.
- PDAG had welcomed the response sent on behalf of Court to the Staff BAME network, and appreciated Court's positive and constructive consideration of the testimonials and in particular the role the Rector had played in convening the informal meeting of Court to discuss them.

**ii) Response to the Staff BAME Network**

Court received and noted the response to the Staff BAME Network sent on 25 October 2021 (on file, Court/21/51).

**21. Senate****i) Minute of the meeting held on 15 December 2021**

Members noted the report of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 (on file, Court/21/52).

**VI DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Court will take place on Friday 15 April 2022 at 10 am in Upper College Hall.

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Catherine Stihler, Senior Lay Member (Presiding)

Margaret Sinclair,

Executive Officer to the University Court & Senate

Clerk to Court

27 January 2022.