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**Court**

**Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 15 February 2023**

**Present:**

Ms Elizabeth Passey Co-opted Member (Convener of Court), Professor Nicola Dandridge (Co-opted Member), Mr David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Theo Frater (SRC Assessor), Professor Nick Hill (Elected Academic Staff Member), Stuart Hoggan (General Council Assessor), Mr Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative), Professor Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mr Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member), Professor Kirsteen McCue (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mr Ronnie Mercer (Co-opted Member), Dr Christine Middlemiss (General Council Assessor), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Dr June Milligan (Co-opted Member), Ms Elspeth Orcharton (Co-opted Member), Lady Rita Rae (Rector), Shan Saba (Co-opted Member), Mr Gavin Stewart (Co-opted Member),Rinna Väre (SRC President), Dr Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member).

**Attending:**

Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer [COO] & University Secretary), Amber Higgins (Executive Officer and Clerk to Court), Professor Martin Hendry (Clerk of Senate),Susan Ashworth, Executive Director of Information Services, Mark Johnston, Director of IT, Neil McChrystal, Director of Technology Strategy and Alun McGlinchey, Chief Information Security Officer for item 4 and Ciara Lightbody, Director of Business Change for Item 6. Observing - Two External lay committee members – Kerry Christie (P&OD and Remcom) and Martin Sinclair (Audit and Risk committee).

**Apologies:**

Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Professor Craig Daly (Trade Union Nominee), Professor Dan Haydon (Elected Academic Staff Member), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member), Paula McKerrow (Trade Union Nominee).

**CRT/2022/29. Announcements**

The Convener welcomed Susan Ashworth, (Executive Director of Information Services), Mark Johnston (Director of IT Services), Neil McChrystal, (Director of Technology Strategy), Alun McGlinchey, (Chief Information Security Officer) and Ciara Lightbody, (Director of Business Change) to the meeting.

The Convener also welcomed two external lay committee members – Kerry Christie (P&OD and Remuneration Committee) and Martin Sinclair (Audit and Risk Committee) to the meeting as observers.

There was the following declaration of interest in relation to business to be conducted at the meeting: Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli as a member of the USS Trustee Company, as an ongoing declaration, given the updates on the scheme.

It was recorded that Rachel Sandison, Vice Principal (External Relations) and Deputy Vice Chancellor (External Engagement) had given a presentation on China - Geopolitics. Court’s thanks for the briefing were recorded.

Court also noted that Information Services had put on a display of a number of items from the University’s Collection. The items were Adam Smith's Burgess Ticket (1762), Adam Smith's presentation copy of TMS to Lord Kames (1788) and the letter from Adam Smith accepting rectorial appointment (1787), and it was noted that this was the tercentenary year of the birth of Adam Smith. This was part of a new initiative to bring to the attention of Court Members parts of the current and past history, and assets, of the University of which they might not otherwise have the opportunity to be aware of. Siobhán Convery, Assistant Director Collections Strategy and Keeper of the Hunterian Books and Manuscripts was thanked for her, and her team’s time for creating the display.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

**CRT/2022/30. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 23 November 2022**

The minutes were approved.

**CRT/2022/31. Matters Arising**

No matters were raised.

**CRT/2022/32. Technology Strategy – progress and next steps**

Court received a presentation by Susan Ashworth (Executive Director of Information Services), Mark Johnston (Director of IT Services), Neil McChrystal, (Director of Technology Strategy), and Alun McGlinchey, (Chief Information Security Officer) on the Information Services Strategic Plan. The presentation provided an update on progress in relation to the University Technology Strategy and highlighted the next phase in the evolution of the strategy.

Court noted that the context of the strategy development had included a legacy of underinvestment in IT; operational structures that were not fit for purpose; the fact that the University was entering a new strategic cycle, extending its physical infrastructure and engaging in transformation; and the declaration of a climate emergency.

Since the last update to Court in February 2022, significant progress had been made in progressing the two major foundational projects – Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and the Network Infrastructure Programme (NIP).

Court noted that the strategy continued to focus on three themes: community, connectivity and challenges. It was noted that there were still significant challenges to overcome, such as: out-of-date business systems and end-of-life infrastructure; complex future IT landscape requiring greater flexibility; and staffing capabilities and capacity. Court also noted that progress was being made on the new Technology Strategy Directorate with a number of key appointments being made over the last year.

During the discussion it was noted that the directorate was helping to support the transformation of the University with a new approach now being taken to enabling new ways of working and to improving the student experience. Court also noted that cyber and information security were key focuses along with campus connectivity.

Court thanked Susan Ashworth, Mark Johnston, Neil McChrystal, Alun McGlinchey, and all IT staff for all their hard work on the strategy and their support for staff and students over the last year.

**CRT/2022/33. Report from the Principal**

*CRT/2022/33.1 Higher Education Developments & Scottish Government Budget*

Court received the report from the Principal – Paper 5 and the following areas were noted:

* Admission updates – SMG had had the opportunity to review UCAS application data, following the UCAS deadline on 25 January 2023 for the majority of undergraduate courses. Data indicated a drop in applications, a trend that had also been seen across the sector. It was noted that application rates had fallen slightly more than at Scottish and UK competitors but the University was still well ahead of 2020 and was expecting to hit or being close to its overall admission targets.
* Government Ministers – Court noted that the First Minister had resigned and that a new First Minister would be appointed in the coming months. Court also noted the changes in the UK Government.
* Cancer Research UK – Court noted the recent decision by CRUK to withdraw funding from the Clinical Trials Unit at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre.

The Convener thanked the Principal for the update.

**CRT/2022/34. Report from the University Secretary**

Court noted the report from the University Secretary – Paper 6. The following areas were discussed in further detail.

*CRT 2022.34.1 Ross Report*

Court noted that Senior Management group had established an Oversight Group charged with implementing all the recommendations of the Ross report on Gender-Based Violence. A new department comprising Legal, Student Conduct and Complaints Resolution was being formed under the leadership of a Deputy Secretary. Additional support was being recruited in key areas in line with Ms Ross’s advice. Court also noted that it was intended that the recommendations would be fully implemented before the start of the 2023/24 academic session.

*CRT 2022.34.2 Industrial Tribunal*

Court noted that the University had recently been involved in an employment tribunal brought by a member of academic staff. The tribunal had found that the member of staff had not been discriminated against, on the grounds of her sex, directly, or indirectly, when her 2020 application for promotion was unsuccessful. The claim made against the University was “dismissed in its entirety” by the tribunal. The employment tribunal made a number of recommendations regarding University policies and procedure and these were being addressed.

It was noted that the University condemned discrimination of any kind and that it had robust, and regularly reviewed, policies, procedures, and processes in place to ensure that staff were treated fairly, equitably and with respect during the promotions process.

During discussion it was noted that there had been issues with the recent round of promotions and that steps were being taken to address these. It was also noted that at present there were limited opportunities for professional services staff in relation to promotion.

*CRT 2022.34.3 Glasgow Green – The University of Glasgow’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan*

Court received an update on the Glasgow Green - The University of Glasgow’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The paper summarised the progress that had been made in reducing carbon emissions in recent years and highlighted other work that had been carried out on campus over the past year relating to the broader commitments made in *Glasgow Green.* Implementation of the strategy continued to be overseen by a working group co-chaired by the University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer and the Director of the Centre for Sustainable Solutions. The post of Director of Sustainability would shortly be advertised, and the successful candidate would head up an expanded Sustainability Team to drive forward our actions in this area.

During the discussion it was noted that the University endowments would be fully disinvested from fossil fuels by 2024. Court also noted that it was important that all areas of the University were aware of the target to be ‘carbon net zero’ by 2030. It was noted there would in due course be a need to consider steps to further reduce the need for use of offsets after 2030.

*CRT 2022.34.4 Transformation Annual Report 2021/22*

Court received an update on the Transformation's impact, both in year and cumulative. The story of 2021-22 was one of reflection, refocus, and rebuilding. The appetite for change remained high, but commitment to the operational input to change needed further work and that affected the pace that the University can deliver at. The University was impacted by a combination of change fatigue as it emerged from Covid, together with a growing transformation portfolio, plus other drivers putting pressure on limited resources.

During the discussion it was noted that timetabling continued to be a key issue for staff and that further work was required to define the financial savings being achieved.

*CRT 2022.34.5 External Relations - Communications update*

Court noted the update from External relations.

*CRT 2022.34.6 Organisational Change*

Court noted the proposal in relation to the restructuring and redesign of roles within Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, primarily within Counselling and Wellbeing and administration services.

It was noted that the changes reflected the wider work of the Student and Academic Services Directorate to create tiered and accessible support services which met the needs of the University’s diverse student population and built on the organisational redesign work that started in 2019. A holistic support model would be developed to facilitate ongoing transformation of the way in which students were supported.  It moved away from the previous reactive model to a flexible, tiered and student-centred model.  A small number of roles at Grade 6/7 would close, but those at risk were expected to secure roles in the new structure.  The overall headcount in the Service was expected to remain the same but this would be dependent on the outcome of the consultation discussions.

Following sight of the Equality Impact Assessment, OCGC was content with the proposal and agreed it could move forward. Formal consultation with the Trade Unions would commence.

*CRT 2022.34.7 New and continuing Court Members*

Court noted that Alan Seabourne, a co-opted external member of the Estates Committee had been reappointed for one further year to January 2024.

Court also noted that Martin Glover, a co-opted external member of the People and Organisational Development Committee had been reappointed for one further year to January 2024.

*CRT 2022.34.8 Student Accommodation Issues*

At the last Court meeting it was reported that there had been a contraction in the Private Rental Sector which had affected the ability of students to find residential accommodation at the start of the academic year. Last semester, the University had assisted all students who came forward, with some put up in hotels until leased apartments could be found. This semester, there were sufficient rooms to address all needs, but it was anticipated that there could be a possible further contraction in the private rental sector this summer. For 2023/24, the University had taken an additional 2400 rooms in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) buildings. The University would continue to work with other universities and stakeholders to address the causes of the contraction. In the medium term, the University planned to build additional student residences on or near the campuses.

*CRT 2022.34.9 USS and Strike Action update*

Court noted update on the USS national discussions and the UCU announcement of further strike action.

The Convener thanked the University Secretary for the update.

**CRT/2022/35. Student Matters, including: Rector’s Report; SEC Report; SRC President update**

*CRT 2022.35.1 Rector’s Report*

The Rector outlined her report which detailed the issues she had been dealing with since the last Court meeting. It was reported that Court fully supported the Rector, and it was acknowledged that she was working hard for students behind the scenes.

Court also noted that the Rector was holding a number of surgeries with students over the coming months. Key issues that had been raised with the Rector were:

* Academic support for students including concerns over class size;
* Mental health support;
* Teaching accommodation;
* Funding for international students;
* Delays in complaints procedures.

*CRT 2022.35.2 SEC Report*

The SRC President reported that the focus for the SEC had been the Student Experience Strategy. It was noted that the final strategy would be presented to the next meeting of Court.

*CRT 2022.35.3 SRC President’s Report*

The SRC President reported that following engagement between SMG members and the SRC Executive, a joint statement setting out an agreed approach to the issue of student numbers on the Gilmorehill campus had been published. It was also noted that the SRC Elections were underway; club and society activity space continued to be a concern for students; and the SCR was working with the Clerk of Senate on good cause issues.

The Convener thanked the Rector and SRC President for their reports.

**CRT/2022/36. Reports of Court Committees**

*CRT/2022/36.1 Finance Committee*

Gavin Stewart, chair of the Committee outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Committee had received an update on the Cash flow assumptions and inflation. It was noted that the current economic outlook continued to remain uncertain with political, national and geopolitical events compounding pressures on national and global economies. The impact of inflation continued to be experienced, in addition to the spectre of impending recession, workplace disputes and increasing interest rate decisions. As a result the projected free cash position in the medium to outer years of the projection had deteriorated to a negative position. It was noted that this was an interim projection and the Committee agreed that an updated paper would be presented at its next meeting March 2023.

The Committee had also received a presentation from Susan Ashworth, Executive Director of Information Services and Nina Douglas, Head of Finance – University Services on the Information Services Investment plan.

The Committee approved: investment request of £3.8m for Student Onboarding; the new lease with Heron Property to lease all four pavilions at Berkeley Square (with a total net new commitment over ten years of £24m); and approved the Resolution authorising Handelsbanken to act as bankers for the University. It was noted by the Committee that the expectation in respect of the lease was that this would facilitate a reduction in overall space once in part by allowing an exit in due course from other existing leases.

Court noted that Barclays had asked for a resolution to demonstrate the delegation of authority given to the Executive Director of Finance to sign documents in relation to electronic banking channels and the power to delegate authority to others to administer relevant systems and approve payments. Online banking was configured to ensure segregation between input and approver. Approvers had to be authorised bank signatories which were only added following approval from the Finance Committee. The Committee was recommending approval of this.

Court approved the Barclays Online Banking Resolution

Court approved the nominations proposal as outlined in the paper.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2022/36.2 Estates Committee*

Ronnie Mercer, chair of the Committee, outlined the report, noting that the strategic property partnership to build student accommodation, a hotel and innovative labs had concluded with no agreement; an alternative delivery mechanism was under development.

During the discussion it was noted that the Committee had agreed that should the construction of the Keystone building receive approval in the months to come, then extending the current Programme Delivery Partnership with Multiplex was the preferred and recommended option. A query was raised about this recommendation and it was noted that the business case for the building would provide further details, and that the topic would be referred to the Audit Committee.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2022/36.3 IPSC*

Frank Coton, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. It was noted that the meeting had covered several topics including cyber security with a detailed update on Multi-Factor Authentication, and an update on the IT programme/project reports. It was reported that 100% of staff in Colleges in the University had completed the enrolment for multi-factor authentication (MFA) and solutions were being explored to progress MFA enrolment for those University Services’ staff who did not have regular access to a smartphone or PC for work purposes.

With regards to investment, £564M was forecast over 15 years (a £45M saving versus the October IPSC forecast) noting 4% had been spent to-date and £147M was forecast to be spent within the budget period.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2022/36.4 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee*

Court noted the report and no substantive matters were raised.

**CRT/2022/37. Senate Matters**

Court noted the report from the Senate meetings held on the 13 December 2022 and 2 February 2023. The Clerk of Senate reported that Senate had received the Library Annual Report, an update from Ian Campbell, Executive Director of Estates, on the University's Estates 2025 Strategy and an update from Christine Barr, Executive Director of People and Organisational Development detailing the results from the 2022 Colleague Engagement Survey.

The Clerk of Senate also noted the recent innovations in AI technology, in particular the launch of ChatGPT. It was noted that Court would be kept updated on the formulation of any policy in this matter.

The Convener thanked the Clerk of Senate for the report.

**CRT/2022/38. Annual Complaints Report – 2021-22**

Court noted the annual report on complaints activity during the academic session 2021/22, noting also a comment from Dr Duncan that the emphasis of the procedure was on resolution and a ‘lessons learned’ approach. It was reported that following the Ross Report resources were being increased in this area - this would help to deal with the backlog of complaints to bring down completion time.

It was agreed that future reports to Court should include more detailed analysis of the types/areas of complaints to help identify any clusters, so that preventive action could be taken.

**CRT/2022/39 Other Business**

*CRT/2022/39.1 Court Business*

Court noted that a Court Dinner would take place after the June meeting. It was agreed that this was a valuable opportunity for members to get together in a more informal setting.

*CRT/2022/39.2 Support for English provision*

A query was raised about the support the University provides for English as a second language or ESL as there was currently a shortage of places; this was causing issues for refugees trying to find work. It was noted that this would be looked into and addressed as appropriate.

**CRT/2022/40. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Court will be held on Wednesday 19 April 2023 at 2pm in the Senate Room. A Pre-Court briefing will take place at 12pm.