UNIVERSITY OF KENT

COURT

Minutes of the Fifty-second Annual General Meeting held on 26 January 2018

The list of members present at the meeting and submitting their apologies for absence is given in Annex A to these Minutes (appended).

449 WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed all those present to the 2018 Annual General Meeting of the University’s Court.

The Chair extended an especially warm welcome to the following:

The Viscount De L’Isle MBE, Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Kent.

The Chair introduced the officers who were to speak to the annual reports for the Court’s meeting and those others who would be taking part in the presentations:

Professor Karen Cox, Vice-Chancellor and President
Bob Scruton, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee
Dr Peter Nicholls, Dean of KentHealth

450 MEMBERSHIP AND BUSINESS OF THE COURT

The Court noted Papers CT2017/1, Constitution and Membership, and CT2017/2, Current Membership.

The Court approved Paper CT2017/3, draft Standing Orders, once the requested amendments had been made to points 4.3 and 5.2.

451 MINUTES OF THE COURT’S MEETING ON 3 FEBRUARY 2017

The Minutes of the Fifty-first Annual General Meeting held on 3 February 2017, Paper CT2017/4, were confirmed.

452 ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 2016/2017

1. Presentation of the Annual Review

The Chair welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Karen Cox, to her first meeting of Court and also made the following announcements regarding the past year.

a) Professor Colin Seymour-Ure

That, since the production of the Annual Review, the University had learned of the sad death of Professor Colin Seymour-Ure, who was one of the founder members of the University, joining it on its establishment in 1965, and one of the world’s leading political communications and mass media scholars. He was a Council member of the Hansard Society and Chair of the Study of Parliament Group. Colin served the University as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Head of Department, was made Professor in 1980 and
Emeritus Professor in 2002, and had continued to contribute to the musical life of the University until recently. The Chair confirmed that Professor Seymour-Ure would be included in the 2018 Annual Review.

b) **Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow**

That, at last year’s Court meeting, the Chair had omitted to record the University’s thanks to the departing Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow, and that it was appropriate to record it at this meeting as the Annual Review under discussion contained many achievements from Dame Julia’s last year as Vice-Chancellor and President.

Professor Karen Cox, the new Vice-Chancellor and President, presented the Annual Review for 2016/2017, highlighting both the University’s activities and her outlook for the future. Copies of the Vice-Chancellor’s slides were tabled at the meeting.

i) **First impressions**

The Vice-Chancellor related that she had received a very warm welcome from the University and a great deal of support from her colleagues in the Executive Group, and that her slides represented some of the work of the Executive Group and her predecessor, Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow.

ii) **Achievements**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that during the 2016/2017 year the University had been awarded a gold rating, the highest, in the UK Government’s Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and had been ranked 22nd out of 121 HE institutions in the 2018 Guardian University League Table.

Other highlights were the £1 million grant for the University arts centre, Gulbenkian, which was awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by Arts Council England, and the University being named one of only four UK HE institutions in the Times Higher Education Alma Mater Index (Global Executives) 2017, which showed the best institutions at producing senior business leaders worldwide.

iii) **Nobel Prize**

Congratulations were recorded for the University of Kent alumnus, Kazuo Ishiguro, who studied BA English and Philosophy at the University and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2017.

iv) **Outstanding Staff**

The University’s outstanding members of staff were highlighted, including Dr Henrik Schoenefeldt, from the Kent School of Architecture, who was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The NTF, one of only 55 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales for 2017, recognised, rewarded and celebrated Dr Schoenefeldt’s outstanding impact on student learning and the teaching profession, and is the seventh to be awarded to a member staff at the University.

Professor Richard Griffiths, from the School of Anthropology & Conservation, received the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) Marsh Award for Conservation Biology, and groups of University staff also won awards, including Kent Hospitality, which won the Group Travel Organiser magazine’s “Best University Accommodation for Groups” for the tenth consecutive year.
v) Excellent Students

The annual Kent Student Awards were presented in May 2017 and notable successes were the Students of the Year, the prize jointly awarded to Rowena Bicknell, a second year PhD student in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, and Tom Ritchie, a second year PhD student in the School of History. Sarah Louise Brock, a second year student in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, won the award for “Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community” for her work as a volunteer with SERV Kent (Service by Emergency Rider Volunteers), a vital blood delivery service, and Martina Li, from the School of Politics and International Relations, won the “Outstanding International/Multicultural Initiative of the Year” award, for being a very pro-active President of the Chinese Society and enriching the whole student community at Kent by promoting cultural understanding and exchange.

vi) Kent Union

Kent Union’s work on student welfare and student activities was highlighted, with student volunteers logging over 90,000 volunteering hours, and for supporting the many active student societies, from the Art Society to the Yoga Society, with 57% of students having taken part in Kent Union activities.

vii) Building our Estate

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the latest building projects including the completion of the Sibson Building and the core work on the Templeman Library, and investment in a new building for the School of Economics and a new student hub in Park Wood.

viii) Challenges facing higher education

The Vice-Chancellor noted the challenges currently facing higher education, including those around increased competition, student fees, senior pay, freedom of speech and value for money, and highlighted the way that the traditional media now engaged with higher education and the power of social media and “fake news”. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the need for academic institutions to communicate their research and expert insight.

ix) The University Plan

The Vice-Chancellor stated that work was underway to review the University Plan 2015-2020, which would build on the University’s success over the last 50 years and meet the challenges of the future.

x) Enhancing Education and Student Experience

The Vice-Chancellor spoke of the importance of recruiting students and providing a transformational experience; the use of technology and digital technologies and the physical environment to support new approaches to teaching and learning; and also drew attention to new opportunities, such as the Kent and Medway Medical School bid, and the chance to review the University’s existing programmes and consider new possibilities. One particular success story was the Student Success (EDI) Project, which had won the Outstanding Support for Students Award at the 2017 Times Higher Education Awards, where the judges said that Kent “stood out from the pack with its impressive and innovative approach to improving academic outcomes for the least advantaged students.”
xi) Building Future Research Success

The Vice-Chancellor stressed the importance of research success to the University’s reputation, profile and financial income, and indicated that the University’s signature areas, such as biotechnology/molecular medicine and cyber security would be key to this, with the Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Cyber Security promoting wide-range multidisciplinary research across the University.

xii) Addressing Engagement

The Vice-Chancellor noted some very positive activity regarding engagement, including KMTV, which was launched in July 2017, and the Community Newsletters, which had been distributed to 12,500 homes and business around the Canterbury campus and central Canterbury, and that it was vital that the University worked towards a strong region and had an excellent relationship with the local community.

xiii) Global Reputation

The Vice-Chancellor stated that internationalisation was an important part of life at the University, whether providing opportunities for current students, enabling international collaborations between researchers or welcoming international staff and students to the University’s campuses and centres. It played a key part in the University’s aspiration to be inclusive and embrace difference. The University’s tag line “the UK’s European university” highlighted this dimension and needed to be utilised as a key selling point.

2. Questions

Tony Quigley, former Chair of the University’s Finance & Resources Committee, asked about the construction company, Carillion, which had gone into liquidation in January 2018, and whether this had left the University with any difficulties. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the University did not have any current contracts with Carillion.

Joanna Griffiths, an alumna of the University, asked the Vice-Chancellor about her background and her impressions of Kent. The Vice-Chancellor replied that the issues were familiar from her previous role as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Nottingham, but that there was a distinct feel and flavour to Kent, particularly in its inclusivity and the feeling of community. The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the University of Kent’s research performance, which needed to be improved and the need to communicate better the University’s strengths, such as its fantastic student experience. The Vice-Chancellor stated that the University should work harder to make itself the first choice for students.

The Reverend Peter Sherred, an alumnus of the University, said that he was pleased to see that the University’s students had undertaken more than 90,000 hours of volunteer work, and asked what sort of work they were doing. The Vice-Chancellor and the President of Kent Union responded to say that the students were invited to log their volunteering hours and the different roles included a wide range of activities such as acting as the President of a sports club at the University or caring for the elderly in the community.

Mr Sherred also expressed his disappointment that the death of Professor Colin Seymour-Ure had not been included in the 2017 Annual Review and hoped that there would be a full tribute next year. Mary Berg, former member of the University Council, confirmed that Professor Seymour-Ure’s death had not been immediately announced by his family and added that he had been a brilliant Public Orator.
The Chair of the English Speaking Union for East Kent asked the Vice-Chancellor about her plans for promoting the use of the English language and the Vice-Chancellor responded that the University’s programmes were taught in English and that the University celebrated the diversity of language and encouraged communication and friendship.

Councillor Jennifer Samper, former Lord Mayor of the City of Canterbury, asked the Vice-Chancellor about her plans for the future and noted that plans could easily be knocked off course by events. The Vice-Chancellor responded by saying that the University was currently reviewing its strategic Plan and would use this to set out its priorities and a road map for the future, whilst endeavouring to be as responsive and agile as possible, taking advantage of any opportunities.

3. Resolution

The Court resolved to receive and note the Annual Review for 2016/2017.

453 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2017

1. Presentation of the Financial Statements

Bob Scruton, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, presented the Financial Statements for 2016/2017. Copies of Mr Scruton’s slides for his presentation were tabled at the meeting.

Mr Scruton drew attention to a satisfactory outcome for the University and a future that would present significant challenges. Mr Scruton highlighted the surplus of £16 million, £10 million higher than last year, but noted that it flattered the underlying position due to unbudgeted capital grants, the accounting conventions for pensions, casual pay savings, lower expenditure on student bursaries, lower depreciation charges and an increase in the unrealised market value of investments. Mr Scruton stated that another measure of the University's financial position was the adjusted EBITDA, which was within the acceptable range but £4 million less than at the same time last year.

Regarding the balance sheet, Mr Scruton stated that cash flow was within acceptable levels and that generally the balance sheet was strong, with finances in line with the University’s long term planning and fixed assets at an increased level. Cash days were at 80, well above the minimum level although down on last year, and debt had decreased to 33% of income (37% in 2016).

Mr Scruton confirmed that capital expenditure had been £34.5 million, less than in 2016 (£51 million), and that this had been spent on completion of the new Sibson Building and the extension and improvements to the Templeman Library, amongst other projects. He also confirmed the University’s plans to invest £169 million over the next five years, to include the completion of the building for the School of Economics and further space for Student Services and activities, which would continue to improve the quality of the University of Kent experience for staff and students.

Regarding the University’s financial outlook, the budgeted surplus for 2017/2018 was £2.6 million, with increasingly serious cost pressures predicted around further staff expenditure (on pensions and the apprenticeship levy) and other issues, and with efficiency savings being sought. The budgeted capital expenditure for the year ahead was £59.4 million, with a further planned reduction in cash reserves.

Mr Scruton confirmed that the University was on track to deliver its forecast for
2017/2018 but there were many challenges and risks to be faced currently and in the future:

- the intense competition for students;
- the demographic reduction in the age group 18 to 24 providing a dip in the UK target market;
- cost pressures and the tuition fee review;
- the expansion of the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) into subject areas (variable fees);
- the role of the new regulator, the Office for Students;
- the impact of Brexit;
- the global perception of the UK and its migration policies;
- greater compliance requiring increased resource;
- increased competition for postgraduate recruitment;
- the tough research environment;
- pension scheme issues.

Mr Scruton reached the conclusion that the University had reported a sound financial performance in 2016/2017 with a healthy balance sheet and that although the University was well placed and was already responding with its own initiatives and plans and by investing in the future, there were huge challenges ahead.

Mr Scruton thanked the University’s finance and management team and also thanked his fellow members of the Finance & Resources Committee, with whom he would be sharing the list of challenges and risks for the future.

2. Questions

Robin Lunn, an alumnus of the University, asked about the USS pension deficit, and the Vice-Chancellor responded that it was a challenge; that the University was trying to get the best possible pension arrangements for colleagues and that it was a sector wide issue. Mr Lunn also made a point about the demographic figures shown by Mr Scruton and Mr Scruton agreed that it would be better to take a long term view of the future of higher education, to address the demographic upswing in the 2020s.

Professor Ted Parker, Emeritus Professor of Radio Communications, asked about the USS deficit and its effect on the financial results, which seemed to be minimal. Mr Scruton stated that this was based on a valuation made three years ago and that current estimates of the 2017 valuation suggested that further and larger costs would come.

3. Resolution

The Court resolved to receive and note the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2017.

454 PRESENTATION ON MEDICAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

1. Presentation

Dr Peter Nicholls, Dean of KentHealth, gave a presentation on medical research and education and reported that the University had made a bid for medical school places, in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), which, if successful, would result in the establishment of a Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS).
Dr Nicholls said that the reasons behind the bid were as follows;

- the prowess, expertise and talent available at both Universities, as Kent and CCCU had unique and complementary strengths;
- the unique demographic and geographic region of Kent and Medway;
- that a medical school in this region would have a huge beneficial impact on an increasing and ageing population;
- that it could assist with the recruitment and retention of staff for the NHS in the region;
- that it could assist with widening participation and student recruitment;
- to engage with the regional community, responding to a considerable shortage.

Dr Nicholls gave further information about what this joint medical school would look like;

- that it would be based in Canterbury but with an impact across Kent and Medway;
- that its parent partner would be the Brighton and Sussex Medical School and that KMMS would include a focus on research and offer an intercalated Masters degree to its students;
- that it would utilise the existing strengths in medical research at Kent, in Biosciences and many other areas across the University, including Computing, Tizard and Psychology;
- that it would be based on a new and innovative teaching model, with placements early on to encourage holistic training, embedding students within primary care settings first and encouraging soft skills;
- that it would utilise the considerable and widely praised placement activity and expertise that already existed within CCCU healthcare programmes.

Dr Nicholls concluded by stating that the result of the bid for medical places would be known in March 2018 but that the University's work on health within its region would continue regardless.

2. Questions

Professor Ted Parker, Emeritus Professor of Radio Communications, had a question regarding the physical buildings and specialist equipment required for a medical school. Dr Nicholls and the Vice-Chancellor responded to say that mobile units were now available for specialist work and that a great deal of training was now undertaken virtually, with impressive simulation facilities already available at CCCU.

Professor John Butler, Emeritus Professor of Health Services Studies, asked whether there was any further news regarding a new hospital in East Kent. Dr Nicholls confirmed that the University's plans covered the whole of Kent and Medway and that this did not have a direct bearing on whether there would be a new local hospital.

Professor Joe Connor, Emeritus Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, asked whether the University would partner with the University of Greenwich for this project. Dr Nicholls confirmed that the University had consulted with Greenwich and that Greenwich was happy to support and assist Kent with its bid, but did not wish to make its own bid.

Dr Owen Lyne, academic staff member of the University Council, asked for reasons why the KMMS would be the first choice for students. Dr Nicholls responded by highlighting the uniqueness of the offer, with the focus on research at an undergraduate level and the intercalated Masters. He also confirmed that the East Kent NHS Foundation Trust had a fantastic reputation for education.

The Chair thanked Dr Nicholls for his fascinating and inspirational talk and thanked
all for attending the 2018 meeting of Court.

455 DATE OF THE COURT’S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN 2019

The Court noted that the proposed date for its next Annual General Meeting would be at the end of January 2019. The Secretary would confirm the detailed arrangements for the Court’s meeting nearer the time. **ACTION: Secretary**

Any queries about the above should be directed to Dr Keith Lampard, Secretary of the Court [K.J.Lampard@kent.ac.uk].

KJL/hap/JLP
20.04.2018

**Attachment:** Annex A: Attendance and Apologies for the meeting