UNIVERSITY OF KENT

COURT

Minutes of the Fifty-fourth Annual General Meeting held on 31 January 2020

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

465 WELCOME

The Chancellor welcomed all those present to the 2020 Annual General Meeting of the University's Court.

The Chair extended an especially warm welcome to the following:

The Mayor of Medway, Cllr. Habib Tejan
The Lord Mayor of the City of Canterbury, Cllr. Terry Westgate
Former Chancellor of the University of Kent, Sir Robert Worcester

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
Professor Bob Smith, Director of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE)

466 MEMBERSHIP AND BUSINESS OF THE COURT

The Court noted Papers CT2019/1, Constitution and Membership, CT2019/2, Current Membership and Paper CT2019/3, Standing Orders.

The Court discussed Paper CT2019/4, a proposal from the Revd Peter Sherred regarding an amendment to the Standing Orders concerning the membership of Court, which was, in brief, that if a member of Court failed to attend two consecutive meetings without tendering apologies, they should cease to be a member of Court unless the Court could be satisfied that there were bona fide reasons for the non-attendance.

Mr Sherred introduced his proposal, which he hoped would encourage more regular attendance at meetings and which was seconded. Points made were as follows;

a) whether this amendment would apply to “ex officio” members of Court, such as MPs;

b) that the wording of the proposal needed clarification as in the second line “attendance” should replace “acceptance”;

c) that the proposal would increase the administrative resource required for Court, for example to record and review the reasons for non-attendance;

d) that it would be difficult to exclude an “ex officio” member, as this would exclude the office in perpetuity rather than the holder of that office, unless it
stated specifically that the termination of membership would only apply to the current office holder and not to the office itself.

It was agreed to amend the wording of the amendment from Mr Sherred and then to ask for views from Council and Senate, so that the proposal could be considered in further detail.

467 MINUTES OF THE COURT’S MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2019

The Minutes of the Fifty-third Annual General Meeting held on 25 January 2019, Paper CT2019/5, were confirmed.

Professor Ian Bruce raised a point about an incomplete representation of a question that he had raised, from Minute 461 Point 2, regarding how the University benchmarked itself against other institutions and recruitment.

The section of the Minute from 2019 was:

“Professor Ian Bruce, Emeritus Professor of Nanobiotechnology, asked about the fall in recruitment and how the University benchmarked itself against other institutions. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University benchmarked its performance against peer comparators, which were a cluster of institutions of similar age, size and shape to Kent and against some aspirational institutions. Regarding the applications, the Vice-Chancellor also said that the University was concentrating on conversion activity and tracking each application closely, with significant action already underway, and confirmed that there were also medium and long term plans to review the portfolio and diversify the student body.”

Although the Minutes of Court meetings were never intended to be a verbatim account, the Secretary has since considered the written notes from the 2019 meeting and has drafted the following, in addition to the section of the Minute shown above.

That Professor Bruce raised the following points;

a) that the diminution of applications was much more than the percentage shown on the graph;

b) which institutions the University used as comparators;

c) whether the University already had a plan in place to address the recruitment issues.

The Vice-Chancellor’s responses included the following points;

i) that some of the areas considered for benchmarking were research income, research quality and NSS score and that the University’s position depended on which area was being considered;

ii) that the University was considering why it seemed to be harder hit than many institutions regarding the decline in applications and that action on this was already underway.

468 ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 2018/2019

1. Presentation of the Annual Review
Professor Karen Cox, Vice-Chancellor and President, gave a presentation on 2018/2019, highlighting both the University’s activities and her outlook on future challenges.

i) **Kent 2025 Strategy**

The Vice-Chancellor stated that 2018/2019 had been a challenging year and that this had made a significant impact on the Financial Statements. During the year the Strategy: Kent 2025 had been approved by Council, which highlighted the University’s vision and strategic priorities for the period up to 2025 and its ambitions around education and the student experience, research and enterprise and engagement and impact, with a greater focus on the University’s role in the region.

ii) **Highlights and Achievements**

The Vice-Chancellor introduced some of the University’s highlights and achievements from the 2018/2019 year, including that the University was ranked 32nd out of 149 UK HE Institutions for its success rate in national research funding, that the University had celebrated the 20 year anniversary of the opening of its first European Centre in Brussels and the University’s significant contribution to the economy of the region, with Universities at Medway highlighted for its contribution of nearly £144m to the south east economy, with an additional £158m spent by students on local businesses and services.

iii) **Outstanding Staff**

The University’s outstanding members of staff were highlighted, with two members of the School of History receiving substantial grants: Dr Jan Loop was set to lead a team of researchers in a new project made possible by an €10 million grant from the European Research Council (ERC) on the impact that the Qur’an had on cultural, religious and intellectual history from 1150-1850, in collaboration with the universities of Madrid, Nantes and Naples and Professor Ulf Schmidt was awarded an ERC Synergy Grant worth €10 million over six years for the coordination of his project, ‘Taming the European Leviathan: The Legacy of Post-War Medicine and the Common Good’.

Kent Hospitality also won the Best University Accommodation for Groups award for the twelfth year in a row at the Group Travel Organiser’s Awards.

iv) **Excellent Students**

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the University’s exceptional students by highlighting the annual Kent Student Awards which were presented in May 2019. The Student of the Year was awarded to Daniel Rozenberg, a Law and Criminology student who won the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community award for providing free legal assistance to vulnerable people in the community by volunteering with the Young Lives Foundation, an independent children’s charity based in Kent, to ensure that the legal process was followed when young people or vulnerable adults were in custody. Daniel also works with the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service to advocate for victims of domestic abuse in court and is a caregiver for an elderly resident in Whitstable.

The Outstanding International/Multicultural Initiative of the Year prize was awarded to Aarish Hyder for his activism which contributed to a change in government policy to gain an extension to the work-study visa and for
organising trips for international students and creating opportunities to learn about different languages and cultures.

v) Queen’s Anniversary Prize

The Vice-Chancellor celebrated the Queen’s Anniversary Prize that was awarded for the exceptional contribution to global conservation made by the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE).

vi) Challenges

The Vice-Chancellor noted the many challenges currently facing higher education, including those around the demographic dip in the number of eighteen year olds in the UK, the increased competition for students both at home and internationally with the resulting pressure on applications, the increasing staff costs from pressures regarding pensions and inflation but no rise in student tuition fees, the significant increase in compliance, regulation and ongoing monitoring, the fall in the league table position and the fact that Kent had more undergraduate students and a lower proportion of international students in relation to its peer group, which meant a lower average income per student.

vii) Issues in 2018/2019

The Vice-Chancellor shared the challenges that had emerged during the year, that the recruitment shortfalls and rising costs meant that the University’s income did not cover its costs, with two difficult recruitment rounds coinciding with the costs required to establish the Kent and Medway Medical School. Initiatives already launched to respond to this were the launch of a voluntary severance scheme, a financial turnaround plan and an increased concentration on marketing with many initiatives to both raise the University’s profile and address the recruitment challenges.

viii) Enhancing the Student Experience

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the improvements that had been made to encourage students to make the most of their time at Kent by taking advantage of the excellent facilities and the range of targeted services provided, and also to focus on the number of opportunities there were for making student views count. An example of this work was “Hello Kent”, a new joined up campaign with Kent Union which focused on an integrated approach to welcome and induction activity, a reaction to student feedback. These initiatives were closely linked to student recruitment performance, as students’ views of their experience were shown to have increasingly high weightings in league tables and to affect the University’s online reputation.

ix) Degree Apprenticeships

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the University was exploring new and different modes of study including degree apprenticeships, which were launched with the first cohort in 2016 and from which the first students had graduated in November 2019. The University’s apprenticeships were seen as high quality and highly desirable, with programmes in place for the Government Economic Service and Kent County Council.

x) Kent and Medway Medical School
The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the Kent and Medway Medical School, due to open in September 2020. It had attracted over 1500 applications for the 100 available places and had attracted over £10 million funding from external sources, as well as scholarship funding from groups and individuals.

xi) Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries

The Vice-Chancellor’s final highlight was the Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries, which had been set up to make collaborative teaching and research in this area as easy as possible, to ensure close connections to industry as well as bodies such as Arts Council England and to celebrate the University’s already very strong research, teaching, impact and engagement in this sector, the fastest growing sector of the UK economy.

The Vice-Chancellor closed her presentation by stating that there was now an urgent need to respond to the financial, political and regulatory challenges facing the University and that this would be her focus going forward.

2. Questions

The first question put to the Vice-Chancellor was written in advance, on the role of the Colleges and College Masters in supporting the student experience and maintaining links with alumni and the wider community. This was put forward by Professor John Baldock, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, on behalf of the Former Staff Association Liaison Group. Professor Baldock added that the Former Staff Association was thriving but that former colleagues were disappointed to see Rutherford College Reception closed, which was considered to be symptomatic of a lack of focus on the Colleges, and believed that a return to a more collegiate approach might make the University more distinctive and attractive to students.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that the role of Colleges and College Masters was currently under consideration and consultation but would change, to provide wider support to Colleges and other residences. She added that the reorganisation of the University that was currently underway was to address current challenges and to streamline activity that was not sustainable. The President of Kent Union added that the University was now very different to how it was fifty years ago, that students were more interested in wellbeing than collegiality and that she welcomed the review of the Colleges and College Masters.

Professor Maurice Vile, Emeritus Professor of Politics, asked about issues that he felt were not being discussed, such as the role of the Colleges during the reorganisation work, as mentioned above, and also the student staff ratio and the proportion of academic staff costs to administrative staff costs.

The Vice-Chancellor responded to acknowledge these points and to say that significant changes were planned and that difficult choices were being made, all to future proof the University and to make it sustainable and efficient.

Professor John Butler, Emeritus Professor of Health Services Studies, had put forward a written question, on the University’s policies with regard to the use of unconditional offers and grade inflation. The Vice-Chancellor responded to say that the University only used unconditional offers as a response to a specific student’s portfolio or interview, with robust procedures in place for the use of this measure and did not use them more generally. It was noted that when such offers had been used in the past it was as part of a relationship between the University and the student’s school. Regarding grade inflation, the Vice-Chancellor said that the University was not an outlier on this and that there was a current debate under consideration.
Professor Ian Bruce, Emeritus Professor of Nanobiotechnology, asked about the Organising for Success project and whether it was a good time to be radically changing the University and trying to confront so many issues at once, with the related effect on staff morale. The Vice-Chancellor responded that it was never an ideal time for a reorganisation and that it had not been entered into lightly, but that the University was not currently financially sustainable and so could not continue as it was. The Vice-Chancellor added that she recognised that this was unsettling for colleagues.

Professor Bruce asked an additional question, regarding the tracking of conversion activity and how to address that more directly and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that this was happening, with a renewed focus on conversion activity, reviewing targets and building on existing strengths.

Professor Ted Parker, Emeritus Professor of Radio Communications, asked the Vice-Chancellor about the success rates of grant applications, following the Vice-Chancellor’s point that the University was ranked 32nd out of 149 UK HE Institutions for its success rate in national research funding, and whether the voluntary severance scheme would harm this. The Vice-Chancellor stated that the University’s success rates were very high and so more and more members of staff were being encouraged and helped to apply for grants so that more income could be generated. There was no data as to how this might be affected by the voluntary severance scheme as they were managed separately within the University.

3. Resolution

The Court resolved to receive and note the Vice-Chancellor’s Presentation of the Annual Review for 2018/2019.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2019

1. Presentation of the Financial Statements

Bob Scruton, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, gave a presentation on the Financial Statements for 2018/2019. Copies of Mr Scruton’s slides and a Paper, Overview of financial performance 2018/2019, were tabled at the meeting. Mr Scruton apologised for the delay to the printed copies of the Financial Statements but confirmed that they had only been signed off by Council that morning and would be available from the University’s website. He stated that if there were any detailed questions following publication he would be happy to receive questions via Council Secretariat (to councilsec-staff@kent.ac.uk).

Mr Scruton started his presentation with a consideration of the Challenges and Risks slide that he had presented last year.

Mr Scruton drew attention to the outcome for the University for the 2018/2019 year and highlighted the reported deficit of £60.1 million, which included the costs of early retirement and redundancy and the £45.3 million attributed to the USS Deficit Recovery provision movement. Mr Scruton also noted that staff expenditure was 59.5% of income compared to 56.4% the year before and the adjusted EBITDA was £7.8 million compared to £24.1 million the previous year.

Regarding the balance sheet, Mr Scruton stated that it remained respectable. The cash position had reduced but that there were still cash/investments equivalent to 51
days expenditure, above the baseline of 40 days. Mr Scruton also noted that debt had reduced to 39.2% of income (41% in 2018).

Mr Scruton confirmed that the capital expenditure had been £31.8 million, just less than in 2017 (£33.1 million), and that this had been spent on the new Kennedy Building for the School of Economics, the Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) building, the student hub and lab refurbishments for the Faculty of Sciences and improvements to learning, teaching and social spaces, and academic equipment and systems. Mr Scruton confirmed that the University was considering its future capital expenditure very carefully to ensure overall affordability but that the KMMS building would be completed and the University would continue to spend to ensure that its facilities and infrastructure were fit for purpose.

Regarding the University's financial outlook, Mr Scruton confirmed that the University was expecting a deficit again in 2019/2020, as there were still the contributing factors of frozen student fees, student recruitment being below target, overseas and postgraduate recruitment growth remaining challenging and staff cost pressures. He also confirmed that cash reserves were expected to reduce but that a plan of financial support was in place and that the planned capital expenditure for the year was £29 million.

Mr Scruton confirmed the many challenges and risks to be faced currently and in the future:

- the continuing intense competition for students;
- the demographic reduction in the age group 18 to 21, which was about to turn the corner;
- the impact of Brexit on EU funding and student recruitment;
- the tough research environment/REF submission;
- cost pressures and the HE funding review;
- greater compliance and stakeholder oversight;
- pension scheme funding issues – 2020 valuations
- the significant savings and restructuring to be delivered, with the according challenges and risks.

Mr Scruton confirmed that the University's plan to return to operational and financial sustainability was challenging but believed to be robust and deliverable.

Mr Scruton reached the conclusion that it had been a challenging year that had accelerated the need for change at the University and that the financial impact of the under-recruitment would have an impact for three to four years. Mr Scruton added that there would be strategic investment in marketing and growth areas, which coupled with contraction in some areas would return the University to a sustainable position. Mr Scruton finished by saying that although the next few years would be difficult, financial support had been agreed until 2022 with the planned return to sustainability by 2022/2023.

Mr Scruton thanked the Director of Finance and her team and the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Group for their work to achieve a sustainable position.

## 2. Questions

Professor Clive Church, Emeritus Professor of European Studies, asked whether any capital expenditure would be cancelled and Mr Scruton replied that nothing had yet been cancelled but that some projects had been postponed.

Professor Ted Parker, Emeritus Professor of Radio Communications, asked whether there was a risk that degree level study would diminish compared with more “skills
based” educational experiences. Mr Scruton replied that the current government seemed to favour “skills based” education but that there should always be a place for further and higher education.

Professor Ian Bruce, Emeritus Professor of Nanobiotechnology, asked about the internal change programme, the turnaround director responsible for it and the revolving credit facility. Mr Scruton said that the revolving credit facility was required to cover the particular times during the year when the University was waiting for the funding for its home and EU students. The Vice-Chancellor said that the turnaround director would project manage the changes that were required to deliver the financial recovery and that this additional expertise and resource was not only helpful in addition to the in house expertise but was also encouraged by the lenders.

Professor Bruce added a point about the transparency of the University’s approach to the current situation and the Vice-Chancellor responded by saying that the University’s response had been built on feedback and that the plans for the reorganisation had been considered by both Senate and Council. The Chair of Council, Sir David Warren, also said that, although the negotiations with the lenders had been necessarily confidential, the results and the following actions should be transparent and that transparency was a fundamental part of the process. The Chair of Council also apologised for the fact that the published Financial Statements were not available for this meeting of Court.

Joanna Griffiths, an alumna of the University, said that it was difficult for members of Court to help, support and challenge the University when Court met only annually, and that members of Court could be more useful if the University would engage with them throughout the year.

3. Resolution

The Court resolved to receive and note the Chair of the Finance and Resource Committee’s Presentation of the Financial Statement of the year ended 31 July 2019.

470 PRESENTATION ON THE WORK OF THE DURRELL INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION AND ECOLOGY (DICE)

1. Presentation

Professor Bob Smith, Director of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), gave a presentation on the work of DICE.

Professor Smith’s presentation included the following points;

a) that DICE was part of the School of Anthropology and Conservation (SAC) and had around 28 academic staff, 40 PhD students, 40 MSc students and 130 undergraduate students;

b) that DICE had won the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for its “Pioneering education, capacity building and research in global nature conservation to protect species and ecosystems and benefit people”;

c) that the DICE mission was to set itself apart from more traditionally-minded academic institutions with clear aims to break down the barriers between the natural and social sciences in conservation, to conduct research that informed and improved policy and practice, to disseminate knowledge and provide expertise on conservation issues to stakeholders and to build capacity in the conservation sector through research-led teaching and training;
that DICE had brought in over £15 million in research income since its establishment and had also made great progress towards addressing eleven of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;

e) that there were DICE projects in forty-six countries and that these projects were very important, for example the project led by Professor Jim Groombridge, the Head of SAC, which successfully relocated the critically endangered Seychelles paradise flycatcher to a different island, to help prevent their extinction, and the work done by Dr Jake Bicknell on the establishment of new national parks in Guyana;

f) that DICE was very proud of its alumni who were working around the world on very important projects, such as Sanjay Gubbi, who won the Whitley Award for his work on reducing deforestation in Karnataka’s tiger corridors in India, which are home to around 20% of the country’s tiger population;

g) that DICE also led on outreach and engagement, with a great deal of press coverage, monthly DICE talks and an annual DICE open lecture, all of which were open to the public, and the publication and dissemination of its research;

h) that future plans included continuing to increase student numbers, to target funding for larger projects, to support the University with its Climate and Environmental Emergency initiatives and to further fundraise for scholarships and other projects;

i) that DICE was already engaging with the wider community in the county of Kent, regarding the economy, climate change, nature and wellbeing, agriculture and farming, working with the Kent Wildlife Trust and other projects; a mixture of challenges, opportunities and inspiration.

The Chair thanked Professor Smith for his fascinating and inspirational talk and congratulated him on the award of the Queen’s Anniversary Prize.

471 THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL

The Chancellor gave his thanks to Sir David Warren, as this would be Sir David’s last meeting of Court as the Chair of the University Council.

472 DATE OF THE COURT’S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN 2021

The Court noted that the proposed date for its next Annual General Meeting would be at the end of January 2021. The Secretary would confirm the detailed arrangements for the Court’s meeting nearer the time. ACTION: Secretary

KJL/hap/JLP
4.01.2021

Attachment: Annex A: Attendance and Apologies for the meeting

Signature of the Chair…………………………………………………………………………….
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

COURT AGM: 31 JANUARY 2020

Present: Dr Gavin Esler (Chancellor); Professor Karen Cox (Vice-Chancellor and President); Sir David Warren (Chair of the Council); Bob Scruton (Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee); Dr Keith Lampard (Secretary to the Council and the Court).

and those members who signed the Attendance Book:
Professor John Baldock; Dame Ursula Brennan; Dr Anna Brown; Professor Mark Burchell; Professor John Butler; Professor Ian Bruce; Professor Clive Church; Alan Chadwick; Professor David Chadwick; Dr Richard Collier; Professor Anna Corrias; Dr Harry Cragg; Professor Hugh Cunningham; Professor Phillippe De Wilde; Dr Alister Dunning; Robert Eager; Mark Ellis; Dr Gavin Esler; Chloé Gallien; Dr Chris Gay; Graham Gibbens; Jane Glew; Joanna Griffiths; Jane Higham; Dr Tim Hopthrow; Revd Bill Hornsby; Stephanie Hrycyszyn; Professor Richard E Jones; Professor Richard Jones; Professor Robert Jupe; Linda Keen; Professor Tracey Kivell; Sasha Langeveldt; Denis Linfoot; Robin Lunn; Dr Owen Lyne; Gabriel MacGregor; Professor Nigel Mason; Professor Keith Mander; Professor Sir David Melville; Dr Anthony Manning; Professor Martin Michaelis; Jan Montefiore; Andrew Newell; Dr Peter Nicholls; David Nightingale; Professor David Ormrod; Professor Jan Pahl; Professor Ted Parker; David Pentin; Ramesh Perinparaja; Brian Phillips; Mark Preston; Tony Quigley; Professor Georgina Randses de Moura; Dr David Roberts; Professor Peter Rodgers; Adrian Roper; Revd Peter Sherred; Professor Bob Smith; John Sotillo; Professor Axel Staehler; Cllr Habib Tejan; Juliet Thomas; Professor John Todd; Professor Roger Vickerman; Professor Maurice Vile; Mark Wass; Cllr Terry Westgate; Scott Wildman; Professor Toni Williams; Zoe Wood; Sir Robert Worcester

Members who submitted apologies:
Professor Paul Allain; Professor Nizaar Allouch; Professor Amalia Arvaniti; Dr Emma Bainbridge; Paul J Barrett Esq MBE; Mary Berg; Dr James Bird; Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce; Professor Peter Brown; Professor Heather Brown; Professor Alan Bull; Colin Carmichael; Paul Carter; Neil Davies; The Viscount De L'Isle MBE; Professor Grayson Ditchfield; Professor Osman Durrani; Professor Mary Evans; Dr Keith Dimond; Chris H D Everett; Professor Kenneth Fincham; Professor Julien Forder; Professor Alex Freitas; Professor Mattias Frey; Ursula Fuller, Sir Roger Gale; Professor Mariano Garcia; Sarah Gibson; Professor Robin Gill; Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow; Damian Green; Professor Nick Grief; Professor John Groom; Revd. Canon Dr Phillip Hesketh; Professor Christina Hughes; Professor David Jackson; Cllr. Alan Jarrett; Dr Tamar Jeffers-McDonald; Professor Andy King; Professor Simon Kirchin; Nick Kirton; Professor Chris Knowles; Professor Sophia Labadi; Professor Ellie Lee; Sian Lewis-Anthony; Professor Peter Linton; Kim Lowe, Craig Mackinlay; Mark Malcomson; Professor David McLellan; Angela McNab; Professor Byron Morgan; Jeremy Park; Dr Claire Peippiatt-Wildman; Stephen Phillipott; Professor Adrian Podoleanu; Dr John Rennison; Professor Gerald Rickayzen; Professor Martin Ridout; Professor Brian Rutherford; Professor Derek Rutter; Professor Richard Sakwa; Professor Sean Sayers; Professor John Shackell; Professor Charlotte Sleigh; Professor Murray Smith; Dr John Spence; Professor Paul Strange; Professor John Strange; Dr Gavin Sullivan; Professor Ellen Swift; Professor Peter Taylor-Gooby; Professor Scarlett Thomas; Cllr Robert Thomas; Professor Mike Tuite; His Honour Judge Nigel Van der Bijl; Professor Sarah Vickerstaff; Alison Wainman; Professor Clive Wake; Professor David Welch; Professor Michael Went; Helen Whately; Dr John Whyman; Professor Jon Williamson; The Very Revd. Robert Willis; Professor Patricia Wilson; Alix Wolverson; Helen Wood; Malcolm Woolley

In attendance: Jo Pearsall (Deputy Secretary of the Council)