

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COURT

Minutes of the annual meeting held on 24 November 2017

The meeting was attended by 58 members and 39 apologies for absence were received.

17-18/1 Membership

A list showing the current membership of the Court was **received** for information. The Chancellor welcomed the new Chair of Council (Gerard Lemos) and the new Registrar & Secretary (Jo Horsburgh) to their first meeting of the Court.

17-18/2 Appointment of Council Member

The Court **approved** the recommendation that Nicola Inchbald (Group Chair, Rooftop Housing Group) be appointed as a new lay member of the University Council with immediate effect for an initial period of two years until 31 July 2019.

17-18/3 Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Court **received** the Annual Report 2017 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor covering the following matters:

- the current political environment and its implications for sectoral issues such as tuition fees, senior pay, grade inflation and freedom of speech;
- the current negative portrayal of higher education in some branches of the media and government;
- an ongoing government consultation on the new regulatory framework to be established under the Office for Students in 2018;
- implications of Brexit and analysis of the effect on staff turnover for staff from the EU;
- progress to develop a comprehensive estates master-planning framework (including identification of arrival points and different campus 'neighbourhoods');
- latest student recruitment data across different categories including postgraduate and international admissions;
- financial and strategic initiatives to build institutional strength and resilience;
- highlights and notable University events from the last year;
- launch of a major new collaboration with Maastricht University.

During discussion of the Vice-Chancellor's report the following points were **noted**:

- (a) The new estates masterplan would echo the original campus design in its emphasis on inter-disciplinary work in teaching and research, which was a distinctive element of the University's history and culture. The development of flexible spaces and digital/technological infrastructure would serve to enhance such collaboration across different academic disciplines.
- (b) In an increasingly competitive student recruitment environment the University had piloted the introduction of unconditional offers in specially selected departments, with mixed success. Maintaining a high level of entrant quality was a major strategic priority in the context of a limited pool of high performing A-level students at national level. Overall, the University's recruitment profile remained that of a highly selective Russell Group university.
- (c) Consultative and collaborative engagement with the city of York was an essential element of the campus renewal plan. The University was sensitive to the pressures increasing student numbers could place on a small city and it therefore remained committed to increasing and improving the provision of accommodation on its campus. Active dialogue was also being maintained with a range of business and cultural organisations in the city.
- (d) Court members serving in the House of Lords welcomed the briefing that had been provided by the University as the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and associated Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) passed through the House. As regards the TEF, the Vice-Chancellor reported that its title and remit had been extended to include 'student outcomes' and that the University would continue to participate, with a desire to move from a 'silver' to a 'gold' rating in the next assessment. Some clarification was provided regarding technical features of the assessment such as benchmarking metrics, the weighting of elements drawn from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the significance of the associated narrative submission.

17-18/4 Treasurer's Report

The Court **received** the audited accounts of the University for 2016/17 and an oral report from the Treasurer (David Dickson).

The Treasurer drew the Court's specific attention to the following:

- headline financial results, including in respect of income, expenditure and surplus;
- balance sheet movements;
- cash/loans ratio (excluding interest rate swaps);

- level of net cash from operating activities and projected cash flows to 2020/21;
- key facts in relation to capital expenditure, net worth and staff/student number growth;
- risks to financial strategy such as Brexit, tuition fee capping, inflation and the USS pension fund deficit.

In conclusion, the Treasurer commented favourably on the University's improved financial position and strong management team, which provided considerable reassurance as regards the future financial sustainability of the institution.

17-18/5 Presentations

The Court **received** the following presentations:

- Mary Haworth (Director of Development & Alumni Relations) on the fundraising Campaign for York;
- Professor Karen Bloor (Research Champion for Health and Wellbeing) and Professor Simon Gilbody Director of the Mental Health and Addictions Research Group) on health research undertaken at the University;
- Alex Urquhart (SU President) and Charlotte Chamberlain (GSA President) on the annual reports of the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association.

17-18/6 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 4 May 2018.
