

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COURT

Minutes of the annual meeting held on 7 December 2012

The meeting was attended by 52 members and 43 apologies for absence were received.

12-13/1 Membership

A list showing the current membership of the Court was **received** for information.

12-13/2 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 18 May 2012 were **approved**.

12-13/3 Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Court **received** the Annual Report 2012 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor covering the following areas

- general economic and political context, including government spending cuts, reform of the funding system and visa issues;
- the University's performance in terms of financial targets, student recruitment and research;
- awards and developments, including estates projects, medium-term plans and 50th anniversary celebrations in 2013;
- examples of significant research projects from across the University's subject base;
- approach to future challenges by capitalising on principal strengths.

12-13/4 Treasurer's Report

The Court **received** the audited accounts of the University for 2011/12 and an oral report from the Treasurer, Mr David Dickson.

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

- highlights from the accounts;
- results for the year (income, expenditure and surplus);
- cash flow figures;
- balance sheet at 31 July 2012;

- financial indicators (operating surplus as percentage of income, gearing ratio and debt servicing as percentage of income);
- key features from the last five years;
- projected cash flow to July 2016;
- summary of current position and basis for further development.

In response to questions from members of the Court, the following points were **noted**:

- The planned budgetary contingency was based on modelling and financial scenario-planning (e.g. in respect of inflation, salaries, pension costs etc). The contingency would allow the University to address financial and other risks in a manner which did not impinge on its longer-term strategic plans.
- The University's interest rate swap arrangements would provide mitigating protection against changes in interest rates over the next ten years. Beyond that period, the planned levels of contingency and surplus would provide cover against interest rate movements. It was noted in this context that a significant proportion of the University's loan finance was not re-payable until 2047.
- Staff/student ratios (SSRs) were monitored continuously via the medium-term planning process through which targets for student recruitment were set at departmental level. This formed part of the strategy for academic quality assurance in the context of a changing environment in which prospective students were able to access a wide range of information about different courses and institutions.

12-13/5 Annual Report of the Students' Union

The Court **received** an 'Impact Report' from the Students' Union for 2011/12 and an oral report from the current President, Mr Kallum Taylor.

The President's report covered the following areas of SU activity:

- awards and celebrations;
- sports and societies;
- volunteering and RAG;
- social events;
- community work;
- democracy, representation and use of social media;
- support and advice for students;
- finances, resources and commercial services;
- future plans and aspirations.

Following the President's presentation, the following points were **noted** in discussion:

- The SU's impact beyond York included support for a number of international charities.
- The Kids Camp volunteering programme was an increasingly popular scheme through which underprivileged children aged 10-15 were provided with a range of activities at residential camps.
- In the new high fee environment prospective and current students took a keen interest in the value for money aspect of the totality of the student experience. The SU maintained a positive dialogue with the University on matters such as accommodation, travel, library provision etc. The level of student engagement in this area was high and a relatively large number of York students had recently participated in a national NUS demonstration in London on the issue of education and employment.

12-13/6 Report from the Graduate Students' Association

The Court **received** the Annual Report from the Graduate Students' Association for 2011/12 and an oral report from the current President, Mr Keke Zu.

The President drew particular attention to the Association's achievements and future plans in the following areas:

- representation
- academic advice and welfare support
- service provision (sports, events and trips)
- community building

In response to a query, the President confirmed that the GSA collaborated closely with the SU, while at the same time providing a bespoke service for the postgraduate community (e.g. through the Postgraduate Community Fund). The GSA also actively supported University activities to enhance postgraduate employability, especially through internships and support for entrepreneurial activities.

12-13/7 Research Presentations

Following an introduction by the Director of the Humanities Research Centre (Professor Judith Buchanan), the Court **received** presentations on research projects currently being undertaken by two doctoral

fellows in the Centre (James Legard, History of Art and Mariana Lopez, Theatre, Film & Television).

12-13/8 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 10 May 2013.

NOTE: Following the meeting, a Morrell Fellowship award was presented to University benefactor, Sir Richard Storey (citation address delivered by Professor Mike Cordner of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television - attached for information).