

REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - 24 SEPTEMBER, 2015

NOMINATION TO OUTSIDE BODY - ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY COURT

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Council is recommended to consider whether it wishes to make any change to its nomination to Aberdeen University Court.**

2 Background

- 2.1 Reference is made to the Minutes of Meetings of Aberdeenshire Council on (a) 17 May, 2012 (Item 5, Page 13), when the Council agreed to nominate Councillor McKail to Aberdeen University Court, (b) 8 June, 2015 (Item 4), when the Council deferred consideration of making a new nomination pending confirmation of whether it was permitted to change a nominee/appointee to this body mid-term, and (c) 18 June, 2015 (Item 14), when the Council was advised that the University Court had requested that any change in the Council's nomination be with effect from the start of the next academic year and agreed to defer consideration of making a nomination to this body until a future meeting.
- 2.2 Aberdeen University Court have indicated that they would be able to accept a new nomination from the Council from the new academic year in September, which would allow time to conduct an induction process that a new governor would need to receive before taking up an appointment. Details of the role and the responsibilities of a Court member, together with the skills and experience that might be relevant, are attached as Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Court also wishes to bring to the attention of nominating bodies such as the Council, their Statement of Intent on Diversity (which is attached as Appendix B) and requests that the Council also take this into consideration before making a new nomination. There is currently a gender imbalance (in favour of males) on the Court and the statement of intent outlines their commitment to addressing this by increasing the proportion of female members over time.
- 2.4 Finally, under the Court's constitutional arrangements, Council nominees to Court cannot also be a matriculated student of the University or a member of staff of the University.
- 2.5 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and have no comments.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommendation contained within this report will not have a detrimental impact on the protected characteristics of any particular individuals.

3.2 There are no staffing or financial implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Alan Wood
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Alastair Nicol, Principal Committee Officer
13 August, 2015

Appendix A

GOVERNOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

Experience and attributes

The Court is made up of 28 governors, of whom ten are executives of the University or members of Senate. It is important to ensure that across this membership there is a wide range of skills and experience.

However, the key attributes required of members are:

- Significant experience of leadership and management at a senior level in either the public or private sector, preferably gained over a number of years' service across a range of large and complex organisations;
- An ability to evaluate and monitor the performance of the University in a constructively critical manner, whilst mindful of the boundary between governance and management;
- A commitment to the highest standards of governance;
- The ability and the courage to exercise independent judgement;
- A commitment to furthering the values of higher education and the mission of the University of Aberdeen in particular.

Responsibilities

Each governor is responsible, collectively with all members of Court, for the strategic leadership and governance of the University. That translates into more specific responsibilities of which the following are key:

- To ensure that the Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud;
- To exercise oversight in respect of the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource functions delegated to the authority of the Principal as chief executive;
- To ensure that Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Members must at all times regulate their personal conduct as members of the Court in accordance with these standards;
- To establish constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University employees with whom they come into contact, whilst recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management;
- To act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.

Governors may also be asked to serve on Committees of Court or University and complaints and appeals panels by mutual agreement, and to play a role in liaising between key stakeholders and the University and in fund raising.

Governor roles are unremunerated but expenses are paid. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.

University of Aberdeen Court Statement of Intent on Diversity

The Governing Body of the University of Aberdeen (the University Court) is committed to supporting the achievement of excellent practice in embedding the principles of Equality and Diversity across all of the University's activities. In particular, the Court recognises that the increasing diversity of the University staff and student community adds to the University's success and integrity.

The Court believes that its own membership should represent the diverse nature of the University community insofar as is possible and practicable. To this end, the Court will seek, without prejudicing the skills and knowledge requirements of the Court, to address the current gender imbalance within its membership and will aim to achieve and maintain female representation of a minimum of 25%, with aspirations to achieve 40%, over the longer term.

The Court also recognises that Equality legislation protects nine specific characteristics (gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, transgender status, disability, marriage and civil partnership) and will endeavour to promote inclusivity and equality for all groups through its business and in due course may set goals in relation to these particular aspects of diversity. The University will ensure that the recruitment and selection processes for Court appointments are transparent, fair and objective.

All internal or external bodies when electing or appointing members of Court are asked to take this statement and the commitment to greater diversity on Court that it represents, into account.

Approved by Court 25 March 2014