Present: Mr Colin Duncan (Convener), Mr Alex Arthur, Ms Christine Burgess, Dr Michael Cooper, Mr Eric Crockart, Mr Stephen Duggan, Mr Nigel Lindsay, Dr Tom Lynch, Mr Willie McColl, Mr Mike McConnell, Ms Lynne Mennie, Dr Alan Milne, Ms Muriel Roberts, Mrs Jennifer Shirreffs, Ms Susan Stuart, Mr Brian Wood, and Ms Jennifer Sewel, with in attendance, Mrs Caroline Inglis and Mr Bruce Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Corinne Blackstock, Mr Alan Campbell, Ms Jacquelynn Craw, Dr Maitland Mackie, Mrs Emily Mitchell, Ms Marjory Reid, Mr Paul Rorie and Principal.

12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2013 were approved.

13 MATTERS ARISING

13.1 Starbucks on Campus (Minute 2.1 of 14 November 2013 refers)

The Convener reported that the Operating Board in November had received and considered further representations from Campus Trade Unions with regard to the University’s decision to bring a Starbucks onto Campus. These had been included in the Board’s report to the Court meeting in December and raised for discussion at Court. The University’s decision with regard to the Starbucks development remained unchanged.

14 PRESENTATION ON WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The Committee received a presentation from Professor P McGeorge, Vice-Principal for Teaching Learning, on widening participation.

The presentation outlined the current approach of the Scottish Funding Council to measuring deprivation, the challenges this posed for the University given the relatively small number of datazones that were defined under this methodology as being in the most deprived 20-40% areas in Scotland, and the key initiatives the University had put in place to widen participation, in particular through working with local schools with low rates of progression to higher education and through increased articulation agreements with Further Education colleges. The presentation also highlighted steps the University had put in place to better support and retain students once enrolled.

In discussion, a number of points were raised including: tariff rates, retention and contextual admissions; the extent to which the University should consider providing more opportunities for part-time and mature adult learners; and the importance of working with all local schools including those which might not be defined as 'low progression' but which had significant proportions of pupils from deprived areas.

15 CONVENER’S REPORT

The Convener congratulated Mrs Inglis on her appointment as Secretary to the University and it was noted that she was the first female to hold the position.

The Convener reminded members that the next Statutory Meeting of the General Council would be on Saturday 10 May 2014.
The Convener noted that it had been proposed that the December 2014 Statutory Meeting of the General Council be timed to precede the University Carol Service on the evening of 10 December 2014. The meeting would be held in the Sir Duncan Rice Library.

The Convener noted that he would attend a joint meeting of the Conveners of the Business Committees of the Scottish Ancient Universities on 11 March 2014.

The Convener noted that the Committee had received with its papers the dates of meetings for next year. He welcomed any suggestions for informal/social events for members.

16 COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Committee received for information a communication from the University Court (BC13-14:5) on proposed changes to the composition of Court and its consideration of a submission from the Business Committee. The report noted the main points of the Court's consideration of the submission and a wider discussion of the proposal to move to a Court of 25 members which the Court had previously endorsed 'in principle', subject to further consultation with the Business Committee of the General Council and Senate.

The Committee noted that, following that further consideration, the Court had agreed that the Governance and Nominations Committee should review in full the proposed change to the size and composition of Court in a more fundamental way than the current proposal (of a Court of 25) including how a 'guaranteed' independent majority could be achieved.

Ms Sewel confirmed that the minute of the December meeting of Court would be reviewed to accurately record the Business Committee's position as articulated in its formal written submission to Court on this matter.

The Committee noted that the Governance and Nominations Committee had met recently to discuss the issue and that further consideration of the issues was ongoing. Ms Sewel confirmed that the new Code of Good Governance for Higher Education was based on the 'comply or explain' principle, and that an option was to explain why the Court's size was greater than the recommended maximum of 25. The University was, however, seeking to comply in full with the Code wherever possible. It was noted that the Scottish Funding Council was expected to make compliance with the Code a condition of grant funding but this had yet to be formally confirmed.

17 GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS REPORT ON THE MEETING OF COURT HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2013

Mr Arthur reported on the meeting of Court held on 9 December 2013. In addition to the discussion of the size of Court, the main item of business had been Court's approval and enthusiasm for a new £288M 10 Year Capital Plan which included a major new Science building. The meeting had also included discussions of Internationalisation, Health and Safety Culture, Admissions, the implications of Scottish Independence for Higher Education, the Strategic Risk Register and Fundraising.

18 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE AND ELECTIONS PROCESS FOR 2014

The Committee received and noted a paper on the current membership and terms of office of the Business Committee and the proposed nominations and elections process for 2014 (BC13-14:6).

The Committee noted that there were currently two vacancies, with a further four members due to retire from the Business Committee on 30 September 2014 who were eligible to stand for re-election in the forthcoming process, being:

Nigel Lindsay, Marjory Reid, Christine Burgess, Susan Stuart.

A total of six vacancies would, therefore, be available for which members of the General Council could stand.
The Committee noted that the Nominations and Election process was regulated by Section 19 of the Standing Orders of the General Council. In accordance with this the following timetable would apply:

Mon 3 March 2014 - Nominations Period Opens

Fri 21 March 2014 - Nominations Period Closes at 4pm.

Sat 10 May 2014 - General Council Statutory Meeting: Announcement of outcome of Nominations or, if required, a Ballot is held.

The Committee noted that in the event that insufficient nominations are received, the Business Committee would be invited to consider at its meeting of 24 April 2014 whether it wished to make recommendations to the May Statutory Meeting for the appointment of members to any remaining vacancies.

The Committee noted that the University would make Nomination forms available on the General Council website together with further information on the nominations process and notification that an election, if required, would take place at the May Statutory meeting. An “E-zine” communication would also be issued by the same date to highlight the same information.

19 REGULATIONS FOR THE NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS ON COURT

The Committee received and noted a paper (BC13-14:7) on the forthcoming nominations and election procedures for the appointment of 2 General Council Assessors on Court.

The Committee received and approved proposed detailed regulations for the Nomination and Election of General Council Assessors, which under the new Ordinance, the Business Committee was required to determine.

The Committee approved the following timetable for the 2014 nominations and elections process, in accordance with the regulations:

Mon 3 March - Nominations Open (for 4 weeks)

Fri 28 March Nominations Close at 12 noon

If no election required, duly elected candidates announced at 10 May Statutory Meeting

W/c 5 May Issue of Voting Instructions to all General Council Members eligible to vote

Mon 12 May Ballot Opens at 12 noon (for 5 weeks)

Thurs 12 June Ballot Closes at 12 noon

The Committee noted that the University would include on the website information on the role of General Council Assessor, the nominations process and timetable and would issue an E-zine communication. It was further noted that the University would engage a professional elections management company to support any electoral process including an online voting platform. The Committee also discussed and noted the importance of the General Council Register being as accurate as possible in the event of a ballot being required.

The Committee also noted that, notwithstanding the ongoing discussions regarding potential changes to the composition of Court including the General Council Assessors, the University was of the view that it was obliged to continue with the nominations and elections process required by the current composition and constitution of the Court.
20 INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Mr Arthur and Mr McConnell, having declared an interest as officers of the UCU Aberdeen Branch, raised for discussion the current industrial dispute with UCU and other campus trade unions. They drew to the attention of the Committee their concerns regarding the approach of University Management to the dispute, particularly with regard to the withholding of a full day’s pay from staff for strike action lasting two hours, the loss of pension contributions and life insurance cover.

Mrs Inglis highlighted a number of points with regard to the University’s position on these issues and that it had offered to negotiate a local solution with the UCU Aberdeen Branch but this had been declined on the basis that it was a national dispute.

The Committee agreed it would be helpful to receive further information on the dispute.

21 UPDATE ON ALUMNI EVENTS

The Committee received and noted an overview of some of the key alumni events and communication plans for 2014 and this would be an item for further discussion at the next meeting.

22 ROLE OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee received and noted a paper setting out its role, which was routinely included for its information.

23 DATE OF GENERAL COUNCIL STATUTORY MEETING

The Committee noted that the next Statutory Meeting of the General Council would be held on Saturday 10 May 2014 at 2pm in Lecture Hall 1, Meston Building, Old Aberdeen.

24 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Committee noted the following suggestions of possible future items of business: Chaplaincy and Multi-faith Centre, Research Themes, Internationalisation and Massive Open Online Courses.

25 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Committee noted the dates for the remainder of meetings to be held in 2014 and also the proposed dates for meetings in 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 24 April 2014</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Committee Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 12 June 2014</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Committee Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 10 November 2014</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 19 February 2015</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 23 April 2015</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 11 June 2015</td>
<td>4.00pm</td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>