UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 24 April 2014

Present: Colin Duncan (Convener), Alex Arthur, Corinne Blackstock, Christine Burgess, Alan Campbell, Michael Cooper, Eric Crockart, Stephen Duggan, Nigel Lindsay, Tom Lynch, Willie McColl, Alan Milne, Marjory Reid, Jennifer Shirreffs, Susan Stuart, Brian Wood and Jennifer Sewel, with in attendance, Karen Scaife, Mark Paterson and Bruce Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies were received from Jacquelynn Craw, Maitland Mackie, Mike McConnell, Lynne Mennie, Emily Mitchell, Marjory Reid, Paul Rorie, Principal and Caroline Inglis.

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of meeting held on 13 February 2014 were approved. It was agreed that members’ titles would not be used in the minutes in future.

27 MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising that were not otherwise covered on the agenda were noted.

28 PRESENTATION ON THE CRUICKSHANK BOTANIC GARDENS

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Mark Paterson, Curator of the Botanic Gardens. Mr Paterson outlined the key features and attractions of the Gardens, their history and their significance in a UK context. In addition to describing the Gardens function in supporting research and teaching, Mr Paterson highlighted the University’s plans to attract more visitors to the Gardens and to realise their potential as a means of engaging the wider community with the University. The Committee discussed these plans, together with issues regarding possible schemes to improve access, the management of wildlife in the Gardens, and the interaction between the Cruickshank Botanic Gardens Trust and the University.

29 APPOINTMENT OF THE CONVENER

The Convener informed the Committee that he intended to retire from the role following the conclusion of his term of office on 30 September 2014.

The Committee considered the process for the appointment of the next Convener and agreed that all members would be invited by circulation to stand or submit nominations for the role by 16 May 2014. Thereafter, if there were to be more than one nomination received, the Committee would be balloted by circulation and the result announced at the next meeting. In the event of only one nomination being received, this would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

30 CONVENER’S REPORT

The Convener reported on a meeting of the Conveners and Clerks of General Council Business Committees of the four Ancient Scottish Universities which he and the Clerk had attended on 11 March 2014. The meeting had considered a range issues of common interest including: the number of General Council Assessors on the respective Courts of each university, the type of business that each Business Committee focused on, and an approach from Dundee University’s Graduate Council to participate in the meetings.

The Convener reported on the ongoing discussions regarding the future composition of the Court and the representations he had made on behalf of the Assessors to the Convener of the
Governance and Nomination Committee in respect of this, including highlighting the role and rationale for General Council Assessors on Court.

The Convener noted that the University had, given its neutral position on the Scottish Independence Referendum, resigned from the Scottish Confederation of British Industries following its announcement that it had registered as a member of the “Better Together” campaign.

The Convener reminded members of the forthcoming General Council Statutory Meeting on 10 May and noted that the election of members to the Business Committee would take place at that meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the statements from candidates would be made available on the website in advance of the meeting.

The Convener highlighted the University’s recent success as an award winner at the recent Commonwealth Game Changer Awards and as one of the shortlisted entries in the Times Higher Education Supplement Leadership and Management Awards.

31 UPDATE ON ALUMNI EVENTS

The Committee noted a paper which outlined the Alumni events programme for 2014.

The Committee welcomed the programme and the improved coordination of events with the Alumnus Association. In discussion, it was agreed that the Vice-Convener would make available a spreadsheet to allow members of the Committee to plan and co-ordinate their attendance at graduation ceremonies.

32 COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Committee noted a report on the principal items of business considered at the Court meeting of 25 March 2014. These included reports on the Court’s consideration of: Aberdeen Institute of Energy, Risk and Strategic Planning, Internationalisation, Estates Development, the Implications of Scottish Independence, the future composition and size of Court, the Court's Statement of Intent on Equality and Diversity in its membership, and the University's Senior Staff Pay Policy.

The Committee agreed it would be helpful to receive a presentation on the new Ten Year Capital Plan at an appropriate point. In discussion, it was noted that the University would issue PR regarding the new Ten Year Capital Plan once the scope and design of the projects had been further developed.

The Committee discussed the Court’s Statement of Intent on Equality and Diversity and a number of views were expressed regarding the most appropriate and effective approach to achieving a gender balance in the membership of Court given that its composition comprised of appointed and elected members.

33 GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS REPORT ON THE MEETING OF COURT HELD ON 25 MARCH 2014

No further issues to those included in the Communication from Court (minute 32 refers) were raised by the Assessors for discussion.

34 TERMS OF OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a point raised by the Vice-Convener regarding the terms of office of members of the Committee.
The Committee noted that the anomaly related to the current rule which required elected members to stand down after serving three terms of three years and demit office for at least a year before being eligible to stand again for election to the Committee. As General Council Assessors were also members of the Committee *ex officio*, it was possible in certain circumstances, where a member was on the Committee for periods as an Assessor and as an elected member, to serve beyond the limit for elected members of three terms of three years.

The Committee noted the potential issue but it was agreed that it arose in large part due to the composition of the Committee including General Council Assessors *ex officio* and that no further action was required.

35 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The Committee noted a report on developments in the higher education sector national pay negotiations.

36 ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee noted a report on the election of members of the Committee to six vacancies, two of which were current with a further four arising from 1 October 2014.

The Committee noted that seven nominations had been received by the deadline of 21 March and that an election would therefore be held at the May Statutory meeting. The Committee noted that a further nomination had been received but was declared invalid due to the University being unable to confirm that the proposer was a member of the General Council.

37 ELECTION OF GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS

The Committee noted a report on the progress of nominations for election to the two vacancies for General Council Assessors to Court.

The Committee noted that at the close of nominations, five nominations had been received, with a further nomination declared invalid. The five candidates were:

Mr Sandy Batho  
Emeritus Professor Nuala Booth  
Mr Eric Crockart  
Mr Colin Duncan  
Ms Tracey Menzies

The Committee approved that the election timetable be revised with voting to open on 29 May and close on 26 June 2014.

*Amendment of Regulations for the Election of General Council Assessors*

The Committee considered a proposed amendment to Section 7 of the detailed regulations for the election of General Council Assessors. The amendment had been proposed because it had been noted that should a General Council member residing in countries overseas request a postal ballot 14 days before the ballot closes, it could take a minimum of 7 days for them to receive that postal ballot and a minimum of 7 days for it to be returned by post. It was, possible, therefore that in such a situation that a vote might not be received in time.

The Committee approved the proposed amendment.

38 ROLE OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Committee received and noted a paper setting out its role, which was routinely included for its information.
39 DATE OF GENERAL COUNCIL STATUTORY MEETING

The Committee noted that the next Statutory Meeting of the General Council was at 2.00pm, Saturday 10 May 2014 in Lecture Hall 1, Meston Building, Old Aberdeen and would include an alumni event “Demystifying the Referendum” with David Torrance and Dr Lynn Bennie.

40 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Committee noted the schedule of meetings:

Thursday 12 June 2014 4.00pm Committee Room 2

Dates for meetings 2014/15

Monday 10 November 2014 4.00pm Venue to be confirmed
Thursday 19 February 2015 4.00pm Venue to be confirmed
Thursday 23 April 2015 4.00pm Venue to be confirmed
Thursday 11 June 2015 4.00pm Venue to be confirmed