UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Eric Crockart (Convener), Alex Arthur, Nuala Booth, Steven Duggan, Graham Hunter, Nigel Lindsay, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Muriel Roberts, Jennifer Shirreffs, Mary Stephen, Susan Stuart, Joe Wallace, Brian Wood, Genna Clark, Karen Scaife (Clerk), with Bruce Purdon

Apologies were received from Corinne Blackstock, Christine Burgess, Michael Cooper, Colin Duncan, Tom Lynch, Duncan Macniven, Marjory Reid, Caroline Inglis

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 were approved.

2 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

The Committee received a presentation from Professor Jeremy Kilburn, Senior Vice-Principal, on a range of recent developments within the University over the past year and how these had shaped the development of the University’s new Strategic Plan. Professor Kilburn also outlined in detail how the University aimed to deliver the objectives of the Plan through a new approach to strategic planning, in particular the development of School level plans.

Professor Kilburn highlighted some of the structural changes that had been implemented in support of the Plan, including the creation of a standalone Business School and the devolution of budgetary responsibility to School level. He outlined the integrated planning approach which linked School strategic and operational plans to the delivery of the University’s overarching KPI’s and what the University might look like in five years time.

The Committee discussed a number of issues relating to the plan including support for international students, the student staff ratio and the need for more emphasis on research priorities and staff gender balance (Athena Swan).

4 REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener gave his report to the Committee, which included the following main points:

- The Convener provided an update on the HE Governance (Scotland) Bill consultation. He referred to a letter from Education and Culture Secretary Angela Constance, circulated to BC members by Joe Wallace, which confirmed that the Scottish Government have no intention of abolishing the position of Rector. The letter did not clarify whether or not Aberdeen Rectors would retain their present right to chair Court. But in referring to the requirements proposed in the Bill for all HEI governing bodies, the letter did make clear that there is nothing in the
proposed Bill to prevent the University from continuing to have four General Council assessors on Court.

- That the next meeting of the General Council would be on 9 December in the Linklater Rooms.

- The Committee’s skills register would be published with the papers for each meeting. The Convener encouraged members to continue to update it.

- That due to administrative changes in the University, the clerking and administrative support to the Committee would be returning to Alumni Relations. The Convener thanked Bruce Purdon for his administrative support over the past few years.

- That members had attended an informal meeting with members of AUSA and the wider student community before the meeting, which had been very informative.

5 ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on current and future alumni relations activity.

6 DRAFT RESOLUTION ON PROCEDURE FOR REMOVAL OF A MEMBER OF COURT

The Committee received for comment a paper on a draft resolution regarding a procedure for the removal of Court members. The Committee made a number of suggested amendments, including the inclusion of a timescale for the submission of papers at certain stages of the process, removing the reference in the supporting policy to the procedure regarding mental health, and the addition of the word “normally” with regard to section 2 of the Resolution. It was noted that these suggestions would be incorporated in the revised draft that would be proposed to Court in December.

7 APPOINTMENT OF REGISTRAR AND CLERK TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The Committee received a paper regarding the appointment of a Registrar and Clerk to the General Council. This noted that the appointment of the Registrar was a matter for the Court with the appointment of the Clerk a matter for the University. These offices were traditionally held by the same person and there was currently a vacancy for both. The Committee noted that the University intended to appoint the University Secretary, Mrs Caroline Inglis, to the role of Clerk to the General Council and recommend that the Court appoint her to the role of Registrar.

8 NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION PROCESS FOR GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS

The Committee received a paper outlining the proposed timetable for nominations, and if required, election of the two vacancies for General Council Assessors to Court arising in 2016. This proposed a nominations period from 10 December 2015 to Friday 29 January at 12 noon, and should it be required, an election ballot opening on 23 May to Friday 24 June at 12 noon. The Committee approved the proposed timetable.

9 DRAFT COURT MINUTES AND REPORT FROM ASSESSORS

The Committee received and noted the draft minutes from the Court meeting of 30 September 2015.

10 AOCB

The Convener encouraged members to provided updated biogs for the website.

11 ROLE OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE
The Committee received and noted the paper routinely included on the agenda regarding the role of the General Council and the Business Committee.

12 MEMBER'S SKILLS REGISTER

The Committee received and noted the Skills Register.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 3 March 2016 at 4pm in Committee Room 2