The 309th meeting of the General Council was held in King’s College Conference Centre on 26 May 2018. The Convener of the Business Committee, Mr Nigel Lindsay, was in the Chair and welcomed Professor Margaret Ross, Vice-Principal for People.

The Convener gave apologies for certain members of the Business Committee, who were unable to attend the Statutory Meeting. He gave a special mention to Mr Graham Hunter, who would be unable to attend the remaining meetings of his term of office following a recent fall. Mr Hunter had served the Committee with enthusiasm and dedication, both as Rector’s Assessor and as an elected member over many years.

1 DRAFT MINUTES

The draft minutes of the 308th Statutory Meeting were approved.

2 REPORT FROM THE CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

2.1 The Convener of the Business Committee, Mr Nigel Lindsay, reported on the activities of the Business Committee during the past five months. In March the committee received a helpful and robust presentation on University finances and the challenges it faces from Mr David Beattie, the Director of Finance. The Convener had attended the Annual Meeting of “Ancient” General Council Conveners and Clerks. Discussion at that meeting had focused on the changes to the composition to court and the impact this has on General Council representation. It was noted that St Andrews and Glasgow had both decided to retain two elected GC Assessors on their Courts. Edinburgh will have two Assessors, who will be interviewed and appointed by a joint committee of the General Council and Court following advertisement of the vacancies through the General Council.

The Convener thanked Ms Guste Saduikyte, the Assistant Clerk and Registrar to the General Council, for her hard work and support during the past eighteen months and wished her well for the future.

3 QUESTIONS

One question was received from Mr David Watts, who asked if the other Ancient Scottish Universities had implemented the necessary changes to comply with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. The Convener confirmed that they had. There were no further questions.

4 BUSINESS COMMITTEE STRATEGY DAY, FEBRUARY 2018

4.1 REPORT ON THE DAY

Thanks were given to Mr Willie McColl for leading the Business Committee Strategy Day, which was held in February of this year. It was a successful day. Most members felt that the General Council did not currently have the level of influence it would wish, and that is envisaged by statute. In order to address this a number of subgroups were established. The subgroups were tasked with looking at member engagement, terms of reference, and the strategic plan. A subgroup established previously was preparing a history of the General Council.

4.2 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ms Mel Roberts reported on the sub-group concerned with Member Engagement. This subgroup felt the General Council needs to find a way to reach and engage with members of the General
Council more effectively. Ms Mel Roberts and Ms Lynne Mennie recently met with Mrs Katrina Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement, and discussed ways to engage with members of the General Council. It was decided that the most effective way to do this is by working closely with the Alumni Relations Team and by focusing on redeveloping the General Council website and establishing a way for members of the General Council to contact the Business Committee directly.

4.3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mr Euan Mackenzie reported on the subgroup that were looking at the terms of reference of the committee. The group had drafted a new draft remit which they will take to the Business Committee in June for their comments and approval.

4.4 STRATEGIC PLAN

Dr Duncan Macniven reported on the subgroup that was considering the University’s Strategic Plan. The group is developing priority themes to submit to the Plan development process for endorsement by the Business Committee. The subgroup will aim to have suggestions by September when they are hoping to put these to Professor Boyne.

4.5 HISTORY OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Dr Charles Calder spoke about the work being done by the subgroup to extend and update the work of Louise Donald, who published the 1963 history of the General Council. Dr Calder felt that it was timely to update the history of the General Council and noted three of the themes the new history would encompass. He expressed his thanks to those who were collaborating with him in this task. The Convener added to those themes that of how the General Council had been the first route by which women came to take part in the governance of the University.

5 PROPOSAL TO ALIGN WINTER STATUTORY MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY ‘AGM’

The Convener presented a paper on a proposal to align, on a trial basis, the Winter Statutory Meeting of the General Council with a new University ‘AGM’ style annual public meeting which will be required from the next academic year, 2018/19. It was proposed that to enable the presentation of the University’s Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2018, which will be available in January 2019, the Statutory Meeting and University annual public meeting should be held on a suitable date in January 2019, the specific date to be agreed by the Business Committee of the General Council in consultation with the University.

The paper proposed a motion “To approve the Business Committee’s recommendation that the Winter Statutory Meeting for 2018/2019 be held in January 2019 rather than in December 2018, on a trial basis, so as to coincide with the University’s new annual public meeting.” The Convener proposed an amendment to this motion adding the words “as a joint meeting with the University Court” immediately before the words “on a trial basis” in the original motion. The matter was put to the General Council, which agreed unanimously to accept the amendment and, also unanimously, to pass the motion as amended.

It was accepted that the next steps will be to invite the Court to agree to this proposal, and to work out the exact details of how such a meeting is to be conducted.

6 RESULTS OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

6.1 Under the terms of Standing Order No 19, the following are due to retire from the Business Committee on 30 September 2018 but were eligible for re-election: Mel Roberts, Michael Cooper, Graham Hunter, Willie McColl, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Patricia Pugh, Mary Stephen and Brian Wood.

At the closing date for nominations of candidates, eight nominations for nine vacancies had been received and so the following were duly elected to the Business Committee: Mel Roberts, Willie
McColl, Lynne Menne, Alan Milne, Patricia Pugh, Mary Stephen, Mark Strange and Brian Wood. They will all serve on the Business Committee from 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2021.

7 NOTICE OF MOTION TO VARY STANDING ORDERS

As notified to the General Council at the last Statutory Meeting in December 2017, the composition of the Business Committee in Standing Order No 19 requires to be updated to take account of the new composition of the University Court ceasing to include General Council Assessors. In addition, a number of further references within Standing Orders No 10 and No 12 to such Assessors are as a consequence obsolete and require to be removed.

A further reference at Standing Order No 8 to the position of Rector’s Assessor, a position which also no longer exists on Court, is similarly now obsolete and to be removed.

As a result the Committee proposed an amended version (circulated to attendees in advance of the meeting by email). The General Council approved the amendments.

8 NOTICE OF THE 310th STATUTORY MEETING

Further information about the 310th Statutory Meeting will be released later this year.