

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 09 November 2009

Present: Lady Catto (Convener), Mr S Robertson, Mr G Hunter, Mr S Cannon, Professor GJA Burgess, Ms C Duncan, Mr J Keating, Professor WF Long, Mr S McKinnon, Mr R Parker, Ms K Ross with Mrs J Chalmers, Mr A Donaldson, Mr M Seed, Ms Y Gordon (Clerk), Ms N McPake.

Apologies: Mr L Forsyth, Mr J Simpson, Ms K Christie (Clerk)

Welcome

The Convener welcomed Mr Stephen Robertson, Rector; Mr Derek Smith, representing Campus Services on behalf of Leith Forsyth and Dr Lucy Foley, representing Student Support Services.

7. Minute

- 7.1 On the amendment of two errors, noted in the attendance list and section 2.2, the minute was approved.

(copy filed as SAC/091109/06)

8. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Administration of the Students' Association (minute 2.1 refers)

- 8.1 The Committee noted that with the Student Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI) scheduled to occur in the near future, and given the Students' Association (SA) wish to review its mission and constitutional basis, the SA considered it appropriate to suspend discussions with the University on the transfer of administrative support. This issue will remain under review.

Bus Travel (minute 3.3 refers)

- 8.2 The SA President announced the reinstatement of the daily student bus ticket as a direct result of lobbying by the Aberdeen Student Forum (ASF).
- 8.3 The Committee was informed that the University was currently in discussions with First Bus over the inclusion of Foresterhill in the route of the No 20 service. A meeting between the University and First Bus has been scheduled to which the SA President is invited.

Student Accommodation (minute 4.3 refers)

- 8.4 The Committee was provided with an update on the accommodation situation since the start of term when additional properties at Spring Gardens and King Street Exchange, King's Hall and the Premier Lodge were used to house new students.
- 8.5 By 19th October 2009 all students who were temporarily placed in the Premier Lodge had been placed in alternative accommodation. King's Hall continues to house 110 students; this is likely to remain the case for the remainder of the academic year.
- 8.6 The Committee noted that complaints had been received regarding the differing standard of service available between University owned and UNITE properties. Students who reside in UNITE properties have a direct contract with the company; as such the University can be of only limited assistance in resolving issues. A meeting between the University and UNITE to discuss matters is scheduled for the near future.
- 8.7 The Committee was informed that the University is considering a proposal to create over one hundred additional beds at Hillhead. It is hoped that this initiative, together with the ongoing

programme of refurbishment will result in a wider range of affordable accommodation available to students.

9. Development of a Single Equality Scheme

- 9.1 The Committee noted that a University-wide consultation process for the creation of a Single Equality Scheme is currently taking place. The development of this scheme is to harmonise and extend the University's existing schemes and to comply with EU legislation, namely the upcoming Equality Bill. It is hoped that the scheme will be completed by February 2010.
- 9.2 While the consultation to date has predominantly received responses from staff, the Equalities Officer urged students to respond to the consultation.

10. Students' Association

Rocking Horse Nursery

- 10.1 The Committee noted that the University is currently investigating possible models and venues for a new nursery facility. The Care Commission's recommended model supports a 108 place facility; should this be pursued, the capacity would be double that of the Rocking Horse Nursery's current facilities.
- 10.2 The Committee further noted that the University had undertaken to provide a facility that was financially, but not necessarily commercially viable.

Wardens

- 10.3 The Committee noted some issues in regard to the Wardenial system within Halls of Residences, and noted that a review of the service, and training needs had recently taken place.

Restructuring of the University Administration

- 10.5 The Committee noted the University, in common with all universities and public sector organisations across the globe, is facing challenging financial times and the level of financial support available to the University will almost certainly decline in future years.
- 10.6 The Committee further noted that using the resource made available by not filling the role of Director of Student Affairs, additional resource would be made available to front-line student services. To facilitate this, two new Directorates had been created: (i) the Directorate of Academic Affairs, lead by Dr Gillian Mackintosh and comprising the Registry, Centre for Learning and Teaching and the Careers Service and (ii) the Directorate of Student Affairs, managed by Leith Forsyth, and encompassing Campus Services, Student Support Services and Residential and Catering. Non-academic complaints and disciplines would continue to be referred to Student Support Services, specifically Dr Lucy Foley.

Outsourcing University Services

- 10.7 The Committee noted consultants have been engaged to examine the provision of a range of support services in Campus Services and in Estates in a process intended to benchmark our current provision against private sector providers across a range of measures including quality, value and price. It is likely that this review will extend in time across the administration.

Butchart

- 10.8 The Committee noted the SA would be relocating to Butchart, but the University will continue to use Butchart for hosting examinations. A date for the SA move to Butchart has yet to be agreed; the SA and Director of Estates will liaise on this.

Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV)

- 10.9 The Committee noted the popularity of the Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV), but also the delay caused by insurance procedures in replacing damaged nets.

- 10.10 SA concerns regarding the cost of hiring ASV facilities for training purposes was also noted and it was suggested the SA may wish to discuss this issue with the Director of Estates and ASV.

University Job advertisement via Joblink

- 10.11 Campus Services agreed that, where appropriate, they would advertise vacant posts via Joblink.

Report of SA President

- 10.12 The Committee noted the following recommendations of the SA President which the Secretary to the University will bring to the attention of Court.

- [The University should] commit to financing of new student accommodation, without the involvement of a private accommodation provider.
- Court members ought to lobby politicians about the economic significance of this University and argue for its financial support from government to remain as close to current levels as possible.
- The University should avoid the outsourcing of Campus Services and parts of Estates, in order to maintain the current levels of service and the excellent sense of community found on campus.
- The University should work together with the City Council, the Association and other stakeholders to improve the provision of transport and accommodation relevant to the University.
- Court should seek assurance that the Human Resourcing of Student Support and Welfare continues to be effective and sufficiently resourced.

Action: Clerk

11. AOCB

- 11.1 The Committee noted that a plan to build a performance space was within the University's 10-year Capital Plan, however given other projects such as the new Library and relocation of the Rowett research facilities it was not a current priority.
- 11.2 The Committee further noted that the MacRobert Drama Studio was available for students to use for rehearsals or performances, and that space was to be made available for such activities in Butchart when the SA relocated. The Convener commented that the East Kirk of St Nicholas was due to be converted into a performance space and the University could consider a bid to make use of this facility.

12. Reports

- 12.1 The Committee noted the following reports:

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| (a) | Students' Association | (copy attached as SAC/091109/10) |
| (b) | Student Experience Coordinator | (copy attached as SAC/091109/11) |

13. Dates of Meetings in 2009/ 2010

- 13.1 The Committee noted meeting dates in 2009/ 2010, to be held in Committee Room 2 on the following dates:

- Monday 22 February 2010 at 2 p.m.
- Monday 10 May 2010 at 2 p.m.