MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2018

Present: Nigel Lindsay (Convenor), Mel Roberts (Vice-Convener), Nuala Booth, Maggie Chapman (Rector), Eric Crockart, Steve Duggan, Colin Duncan, Tom Lynch, Willie MacColl, Duncan Macniven, Jan McRobbie, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Jenny Mordue, Iain Percival, and Brian Wood, with Fiona Urquhart (Lead Alumni Engagement Executive), Nicole Cochrane (Clerk), Chloe Bruce (Alumni Engagement Officer) and Professor Peter McGeorge (Item 3).

Apologies: Victoria Aston, Caroline Inglis, Euan McKenzie, Graeme Nicol, Jennifer Shirreffs, Mary Stephen and Judith Taylor

1. MINUTES
   The minutes from the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING
   - The Convenor thanked Mr Macniven and Mr Duncan for their work on the committee’s Strategic Engagement contribution to the University.
   - Ms Roberts confirmed the migration of the General Council website to the new interface would be complete by the next meeting. Mr Crockart had noted the obsolete information on the current website. Ms Roberts explained that she, Ms Mennie and Ms Cochrane were working with the University’s Web Architecture team on the migration of the site, which would take some time.
   - Ms Roberts noted from the previous meeting the intention to involve the committee with the Reclaim the University movement. Ms Roberts updated that Professor Patience Schell had advised that the meetings were currently on hold, until the group could learn more on Professor George Boyne’s priorities going forward. They hope to align their objectives with the University and will keep the committee updated.

3. PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR PETER MCGEORGE – STUDENT RETENTION
   The Convenor welcomed Professor Peter McGeorge to the meeting. Professor McGeorge’s presentation on non-continuation is attached to this document.

Professor McGeorge took questions from the committee.

Mr McColl asked what resources were available for families and parents, with a concern for a student. Professor McGeorge noted that other institutions have adopted a process of allowing students to nominate a specific person whom the University can contact if they have concerns for a student. He explained that the problem is identifying what is accepted as a trigger for making contact. Professor McGeorge noted that there was some thinking to be done on this and that there was no simple or quick solution.

Mr Wood asked where the responsibility of support lies for those who are from families that have never attended University before. Professor McGeorge stated that the University has a responsibility to all students, regardless of their background. Some people will need more support than others, but that is not necessarily respective of background.
Professor Mordue asked if it is possible to pre-empt support for students based on academic pressure points, mentioning a buddy system. Professor McGeorge noted that students supporting students is great and the issue with that is not finding people to do it, rather it is people not knowing what to do once they are involved. Unless it becomes something which can be meaningfully implemented and monitored then it isn’t useful.

Mr McColl and Ms Mennie asked if it there was potential to have a specific person assigned to students for them to approach if they require support. Professor McGeorge stated that it isn’t possible to tell students who to speak to when they are struggling, however they can ensure there are a number of touch points and that students know who to approach for help.

Mr Wood noted that there is widespread interest in this issue and that he feels the Business Committee can take a more involved approach with student retention. The Convenor noted that Mr Wood has extensive experience in this area and suggested a sub-group be created to explore how the committee can make a positive impact. Mr Wood agreed to lead this project, with Ms Pugh, Ms McRobbie and Mr Duggan volunteering to join the group.

Action: Mr Wood

The Convenor thanked Professor McGeorge for his presentation.

4. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener prepared a written report, which was reviewed by the committee. The committee noted and approved the report.

5. UNIVERSITY ANNUAL MEETING & STATUTORY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The Convener spoke about the University Annual Meeting and Statutory Meeting of the General Council, which took place on 26 January 2019. He noted that overall he felt the meeting was a success, with some areas to be considered.

It was noted that there had been some discussion around holding the meeting in conjunction with University Court, however this was not possible due to the limited number of Court meetings per annum. There was then an extraordinary Court meeting held separately on the morning of the Annual University Meeting and Statutory Meeting of the General Council. The Convener is keen to gain some clarity around this decision.

The Convener noted the need to look at the dates of future meetings, as the winter meeting is now held in January in conjunction with the Annual meeting and the Summer meeting is held in May, in conjunction with May Festival; leaving a four-month and an eight-month gap between meetings.

Ms Roberts commented that having a joint meeting gave status to the committee which had been lacking in recent years. She noted that it was positive that the Convener chaired the entire meeting in January and that it was important to remain in line with the University Annual Meeting in terms of visibility than to be overly concerned about time between meetings.

Mr Crockart agreed that having the Convener chair the meeting as a whole was indeed very positive, however felt that any implications on the change of timescale should be considered and discussed as the year progresses.

Ms McRobbie commented that it would be useful to circulate the full agenda ahead of the meeting.

The Convener noted that there had been no specific feedback received from Ms Inglis or Mr Purdon, Policy Adviser & Clerk to Court. It was agreed that The Convener should arrange a meeting with Ms Inglis and Mr Purdon in order to gain their feedback on the meeting.

Action: Mr Lindsey
6. CONTINUING WORKSTREAMS

Member Engagement

Ms Roberts reiterated the intention to have the new General Council web pages live by the Statutory Meeting on Saturday 25 May 2019. It was noted that she, Ms Mennie and Ms Cochrane has been reviewing the existing website content and streamlining the information, to make the pages more attractive and user friendly. While the work is being completed the existing site will be closed, with an instruction directing visitors to contact Alumni Relations in the interim period.

It was noted that the new web pages will contain a ‘get in touch’ form, which is intended to encourage General Council members to share their views and seek assistance from the Business Committee in University related matters.

Strategic Planning Process

Mr Duncan and Mr Macniven referenced the University's strategic planning day in January, which they both attended. They felt that Principal Professor George Boyne and Senior Vice-Principal Professor Karl Leydecker had been open to suggestions, however noted they had heard no further update since the meeting took place. Mr Macniven agreed to get in touch with Dr Hulda Sveinsdottir for an update.

Action: Mr Macniven

7. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

Ms Urquhart, Lead Alumni Engagement Officer, provided a comprehensive written report to the Committee on alumni relations activity. Highlights included:

- Two new members of staff have now joined the Alumni Relations team. They are Chloe Bruce, Alumni Engagement Officer, and Gary Coull, Alumni Engagement Coordinator. They will be responsible for Alumni engagement in London and Europe and for implementing a student engagement strategy to improve interaction with current students respectively.

- Social media engagement was extremely positive regarding the Valentine’s Day video which was posted to Facebook. The video featured Jenny and Murdoch Shirreffs in King’s Chapel telling the story of how they met at University and were married on campus. The video had over 7,000 views and reached over 15,000.

- The launch of the alumni volunteer programme in June, launching in conjunction with volunteer’s week from 1 – 7 June. The programme features a number of roles for alumni to get involved with, including student recruitment, experience, retention and employability. The programme will officially launch in June with a promotional video.

- The alumni team is currently working with marketing on a poster campaign to be displayed around campus, to inspire current students in their future careers. The campaign will feature notable alumni from professions such as entertainment, sport, business, education and medicine.

Ms Urquhart encouraged committee members to get in touch if they had any suggestions or comments regarding ongoing alumni projects.

8. SUMMER STATUTORY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The Convenor informed the committee that the summer Statutory Meeting of the General Council will take place on the morning of Saturday 25 May 2019, as part of the May Festival weekend.
9. KILT WALK 2019

The Convenor reminded the committee of the desire to create a General Council team of walkers to raise funds for the Development Trust. The Hunter Foundation, who supports the Kiltwalk, pledges to increase all money raised by 40%. The Convenor encouraged the committee to become involved with the team and confirmed that the alumni team would assist with communications to the wider General Council.

10. SPEAKERS FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The Convenor reminded the committee of the previous request for suggestions for future speakers at committee meetings. He noted that Ms Cochrane was currently trying to secure a speaker from Estates to attend the June meeting and that the Principal has agreed to speak at the September meeting.

It was noted that a speaker from International Recruitment would be interesting to hear from, with Dominic Milne, Deputy Head of the International Office, suggested to speak about this in November.

Ms Cochrane agreed to reach out to Dominic Milne.

Action: Ms Cochrane

Suggestions for speakers in 2020 included Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal Research and David Beattie, Director of Finance.

11. COURT MINUTES FROM 11 DECEMBER 2018 MEETING

The Committee noted the minutes.

12. DRAFT COURT MINUTES FROM 26 JANUARY 2019 EXTRAORDINARY MEETING (IN STRICTTEST CONFIDENCE)

The Committee noted the minutes and were reminded of the strict confidentiality of the document.

13. AOCB

It was raised that Mr McKenzie was unable to attend the meeting in person and had requested to join via conference call if possible. Due to the short notice of the request and the limited equipment in the Court Room it was not possible to arrange for this specific meeting, however did raise the question of having this option readily available for future meetings. Many committee members do not live locally and may find it more convenient on occasion to dial into a meeting than attend in person. It was agreed amongst the committee that this should be explored, and Ms Cochrane agreed to work with the AV team to find a suitable location and equipment in order to trial this.

Action: Ms Cochrane

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Business Committee will be held on Thursday 06 June 2019 at 4pm in the Video Conferencing Suite, University Office.