UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Mel Roberts (Vice-Convener), Nuala Booth, Eric Crockart, Steve Duggan, Colin Duncan, Willie MacColl, Duncan Macniven, Jan McRobbie, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Jenny Mordue, Iain Percival, Judith Taylor and Brian Wood, with Caroline Inglis (University Secretary) Katrina Allan (Head of Alumni Engagement), Maggie Chapman (Rector), Nicole Cochrane (Clerk), Fiona Urquhart and Professor Patience Schell (Item 5).

Apologies: Nigel Lindsay (Convenor), Tom Lynch, Euan McKenzie, Graeme Nicol, Patricia Pugh, Jennifer Shirreffs, Mary Stephen.

1. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 7 June 2018 were approved, with the following amendments:

- **Section 8: David Watts: Gauging Possible Demand For An Affinity Bond**
  - Clarify that the committee approved further investigation of this idea

  *Action: Ms Cochrane*

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener prepared a written report ahead of the meeting, which was raised by the Vice-Convener, Ms Roberts. The committee noted and approved the report.

4. REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES

4A – STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

The paper was approved by the committee.

Mr Macniven explained that he and Mr Duncan were due to meet the Principal the following morning, Friday 09 November 2018. Mr Macniven proposed that the paper should now be shared with the Principal. The committee agreed with this course of action.

Mr Macniven also noted that the paper could now be shared with strategic planning, mentioning that Dr. Hulda Sveinsdottir may be interested to discuss the finished paper.

Mr Milne queried if a summary of the paper would be useful, in comparison with the full paper. Mr Duncan commented that he feels the paper is a tremendous piece of work and should now be shared with the Principal in its entirety; the committee can then take guidance on where this goes next.

Mr Crockart noted that the strategic plan will be discussed at the Court Strategy day the following week (12 – 13 November 2018), and that the meeting with the Principal the following day could influence this.
Mr Macniven discussed that representatives had been invited from the Business Committee to attend the strategy day, and that he would be attending. The committee discussed if it would be beneficial for another member to attend as well, however agreed that Mr Macniven would be sufficient representation.

4B –MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The committee acknowledged the paper submitted by Ms Roberts and Ms Mennie.

Ms Roberts explained that there had been a very positive meeting held with Ms Mennie, Ms Allan and Ms Cochrane on this topic. As per the paper, the General Council website being moved over to the more up to date platform is paramount. The change to a more responsive webpage will assist in improving the accessibility of the Business Committee to the wider General Council. The practicality of this move involves an approval process and assistance from the University Web Team, which will be driven by Alumni Relations. Mr Macniven suggested a target date of 08 February 2019 (anniversary of the Business Committee strategy day), for moving the website to the new platform. This was agreed by the committee.

Action: Ms Cochrane

Mr Crockart noted dislike for the Alumni website tab title, currently ‘Alumni & Giving’, as he worried this might be off putting to alumni. Ms Booth agreed with this comment. Mr Crockart clarified that he is not averse to giving being linked with alumni, simply the title of the tab. Ms Roberts noted that the Business Committee could have more impact on items such if better engagement is achieved going forward, however also noted that a decision such as changing the University website lies beyond the Business Committee.

Mr MacColl noted that better AUSA engagement would be good to consider under the engagement remit and offered to help facilitate. Ms Roberts agreed to arrange a meeting between herself, Mr MacColl and Ms Mennie to discuss this further.

Action: Ms Roberts

4C – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The paper was approved by the committee.

Mr Crockart suggested adding the terms of reference document to every set of papers issued going forward, to be placed after the agenda. The committee was in agreement.

Action: Ms Cochrane

It was agreed that the new Terms of Reference document will be uploaded to the General Council website after the existing website is moved to the new platform.

5. PRESENTATION: PROFESSOR PATIENCE SCHELL – RECLAIMING OUR UNIVERSITY

Ms Roberts welcomed Professor Patience Schell to the meeting.

Professor Schell explained that since Tim Ingold last updated the committee in March 2017 the cultures and values group had been meeting fortnightly. The group is made up representatives from across the University. The group heard the Principal, Professor George Boyne, talk about his priorities and noted that these were largely in line with their own goals and priorities. This led to some discussion on why they would operate in parallel rather than collaborating. The group decided to pause any pending action plans until a better sense of what the Principal’s intentions were in these areas. At the very least there will be an effort not to duplicate any efforts.

The Principal suggested to the group that he would be happy to work in collaboration and the possibility of their having a role in strategic planning on cultures and values. There has been no decision on this reached yet, as they need to ensure agreement from all concerned in this decision
Professor Schell noted that ‘reclaim’ as a term has started circulating in the Higher Education sector, the word taking on its own meaning. An example of this was a large reclaim meeting which happened in London, which was not facilitated by this group. There is the hope to arrange a Scottish reclaim meeting involving all Universities (Glasgow, Edinburgh, St Andrew’s etc.) They are looking at February currently, hoping to involve rectors as well. This is evidence of wider discussions happening across Scotland.

Professor Schell then took questions.

Mr Crockart enquired as to the social media presence of the group. Professor Schell noted this is not particularly strong (no Twitter etc.) There is the WordPress website with the petition attached, which has several hundred signatures. Professor Schell conceded that the group has not been particularly organised in terms of communications and that this is something they will work on.

Ms Roberts queried if there was a vision of what the positive outcomes of this work would be. Professor Schell commented that the cultures and values group is seeking to create a culture of greater questioning, admitting to and learning from mistakes, speaking up, and encouraging creative thinking. There should also be transparent decision making. She noted that it was heartening to hear the Principal say that the culture change takes years to achieve, however we need to consider what can be done now to begin the change.

Mr MacColl asked if there had been alumni involvement. Professor Schell said it would be delightful if there were to be in future. She noted there was some work to be done in learning who is in their wider community. Professor Schell suggested that members of the committee may wish to attend future meetings of the cultures and values group. It was agreed that dates would be circulated to the committee by Ms Cochrane when available. Ms Roberts volunteered to attend one or more of these sessions as representative of the Business Committee, in order to ascertain how the committee can work with the cultures and values group. The committee was in agreement with this.

**Action: Ms Cochrane**

### 6. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

Mrs Allan, Head of Alumni Engagement, provided a comprehensive written report to the Committee on alumni relations activity. Updates further to the publication of the report were:

- Candidates have accepted the two vacant positions within the Alumni Relations team, starting 03 December 2018. Chloe Bruce has accepted the position of Alumni Engagement Officer. Chloe joins the team from RGU, where she was most recently Careers Programme Officer within its Alumni team. Gary Coull has accepted the position of Alumni Engagement Coordinator. Gary was most recently a Special Parliamentary Assistant to two MSPs and prior to that Office Manager for an MP.

- With regards to Winter Graduations there have been 175 responses so far, which is 23% response rate. All responses gathered have opted positively to keeping in touch. Of these responses, only 25% have said no to Development Trust contact.

- GDPR work is currently ongoing and a body of work is happening to support this.

Mr Crockart asked if contacting General Council members would be an issue going forward, wondering specifically how they would be contacted if they haven’t given consent. Mrs Allan explained that being a member of the General Council is statutory for all graduates, so should not be an issue going forward. Mrs Allan also noted that we can still contact alumni by post without express consent post GDPR.
Mr Duncan noted the lack of engagement from the committee with alumni and general council members. Ms Roberts noted that the engagement working group is tackling that issue, further explaining the niche position they are in to create space as a committee to open communication with graduates.

Mr Duncan queried if General Council members had been told they no longer elect assessors to court. Ms Roberts noted that there was not a public announcement, however this was published in the minutes at that time and these are available on the General Council website.

7. GENERAL COUNCIL – CONTACTABLE MEMBERS

The data provided was as follows:

General Council: Total Number of Members – 108,997

General Council: Members Contactable by Email – 53,066

General Council: Members Contactable by Post – 67,854

Mrs Allan confirmed that the data provided is accurate and includes current and former staff members who fit certain criteria. Ms Mennie noted it would be good to check for overlapping if possible (i.e. alumni who are also eligible current staff members). Mrs Allan also noted the importance of reaching out to alumni to make it known that they are members, noting there would be the chance to work with the communications team on this.

Action: Alumni Relations Team

8. CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Mr Crockart noted that those unsuccessful previously might be a good idea to consider. The committee agreed to feedback to The Convenor with their ideas for candidates.

9. KILTWALK 2019

In Mr Lindsay's absence, Ms Allan informed the committee of his desire to create a team for the Kiltwalk, in order to raise funds for The Development Trust. The Committee agreed there would be interest in participating from members of the group. Mr Lindsay to lead this initiative and provide further information to the committee.

Action: Mr Lindsay

10. BUSINESS COMMITTEE – FUTURE SPEAKERS AND SUBJECTS

The Committee are to send their ideas on future speakers to Mr Lindsay.

It was noted to consider how the committee can help speakers with their projects and become thought partners with them.

11. DRAFT COURT MINUTES FROM 27 JUNE 2018 MEETING (IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE)

The Committee noted the minutes.
12. AOCB

Mr Duncan noted the importance for the Business Committee to attend the ‘AGM’ at the of January.

Mr Macniven expressed that the committee would like to convey its warmest congratulations to the University in achieving the Scottish University of the Year award.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Business Committee will be held on Thursday 07 March 2019 at 4pm in the Court Room.